

# Steps Into Sorrow

A Two-Part Exploration Arc for *Fate's Edge*

Tiers II–IV — 6–9 sessions — Philosophy puzzles, planar hazards, rival expeditions

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## What This Is

A complete arc that begins on the legendary **Bridge of a Thousand Steps** and descends into the shadow-rift metropolis of **Seven-Sorrows**. It emphasizes **Position** play, fail-forward travel, environmental puzzles, and escalating rival pressure. The finale centers on the **Orrery of Lost Worlds**.

## At a Glance

- **Part I — The Bridge of a Thousand Steps** (Tier II): Each step poses a moral riddle or personal reckoning; failure costs gear, memory, or time instead of lives.
- **Part II — The Sunken City of Seven-Sorrows** (Tier III–IV): A thematic “district crawl” where sorrow-aspect challenges unlock the Orrery.

**System Notes.** **Position** sets your approach to hazards and social scenes; treat s as codified outcomes (keys, escorts, permits) that re-frame **Position** before rolling. Clocks pace rivals, environment, and dread. When 1s appear, spend **SB** to twist the route, split the party, or advance a rival *rail*. Keep dice scarce by rewarding preparation.

## Core Tools for the GM

### Position & DV Quick Reference

| Position   | Typical DV              | Examples of Fictional Advantage                                 |
|------------|-------------------------|---|
| Dominant   | <b>Tier + 2</b>         | Correct answer in hand; guide spirits favor you; rival stalled. |
| Controlled | <b>Tier + 3</b>         | Stable footing; time to think; relevant lore or tokens.         |
| Risky      | <b>Tier + 4</b>         | Clock pressure; partial clue; split attention.                  |
| Desperate  | <b>Tier + 5 or more</b> | Rift surge; taboo breached; rival in your face.                 |

### Suggested DV Ranges by Part

| Part              | Common DV Range | Notes   |
|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| I: Bridge         | 3–5             | Late steps escalate; spend Diamonds to reduce DV for one team member.           |
| II: Seven-Sorrows | 4–6             | Districts start at DV 4; the Orrery begins at DV 6, dropping per solved sorrow. |

### SB Spend Menus

#### Bridge of a Thousand Steps

- A step misinterprets intent; reroll at higher DV or pay a *Toll* (gear lost, memory tithe, or Dread +1).

- A crosswind of whispers moves a stone; party splits unless someone anchors with a confession.
- Another traveler manifests (echo of a PC's past) and demands to "walk with you" as a complication.

### **Seven-Sorrows**

- Sorrow-echo duplicates a PC's last mistake in public, worsening crowd **Position**.
- Rival expeditions get ahead; tick **Rival Lead** [+1] and close a route.
- Rift surge changes district aspect; DV +1 until checked by a rite or offering.

### **Rivals (Use 1–2)**

- **Black Ferrule Company** — mercenary treasure-rights. *Edge*: anchors, explosives. *Tell*: iron ferrules on boots.
- **Order of the Last Dawn** — apocalyptic zeal. *Edge*: sacramental wards. *Tell*: ash-smudged fingers.
- **Gulls of the Chart** — scholar-cartographers. *Edge*: partial maps, clever shortcuts. *Tell*: salt-ink stains.

Create a **Rival Progress** [6] and a **Rival Lead** [3]. Each SB you spend can tick one; PCs can reduce them with victories or bribes.

## **Part I — The Bridge of a Thousand Steps (Tier II)**

### **Frame**

The bridge is not continuous: each stone appears when a riddle is answered *in deed or word*. Steps draw questions from the travelers' regrets and values. Failing a step means cost, not death.

### **Crossing Clock**

Use a **Crossing** [8] to track fatigue and conditions. Each setback ticks it. On fill, an enforced *camp-on-air* scene occurs: safety at the price of a Toll.

### **Approaches**

Each step can be met by different approaches; match to playbooks and talents.

- *Lore/Insight*: reason, recall, pattern.
- *Resolve/Spirit*: confession, vow, acceptance.
- *Athletics/Wits*: leap, counter-gust, lateral thinking.
- *Magic/Rites*: sanctify a step, bind a doubt, mirror a truth.

## Step Table (Roll or Choose)

| d6 | Prompt   | Consequence (on Cost/Miss)  |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | “Which promise still binds you when none watch?” | Lose a minor item you brought to impress; it sinks into the air.              |
| 2  | “What price would you pay to know the end?”      | Memory tithe: choose a pleasant memory; it’s hazy until journey’s end.        |
| 3  | “Whom did you fail to bury?”                     | A sorrow-echo follows, repeating a last conversation at bad moments.          |
| 4  | “What tool do you reach for too quickly?”        | Tools feel heavier; add +1 DV to <i>force</i> approaches until confessed.     |
| 5  | “What do you refuse to forgive in yourself?”     | Dread +1. A later apology to a party member clears it.                        |
| 6  | “What would you save if only one thing?”         | A stranger ahead now holds it; bargain or race (tick <b>Rival Lead</b> [+1]). |

## Signature Scenes

**The Philosopher’s Truss.** Interlocked stones demand three truths told in sequence: self, companion, stranger. Ordering them well grants a (Guide’s Favor) that downshifts **Position** once/scene on the bridge.

**The Toll-Taker.** An old keeper asks for coin, confession, or a scar. Paying grants *Anchored Footing* (ignore one split/shift SB). Cheating the Toll-Taker ticks **Crossing** [+2].

**Mirrored Step.** Each PC must answer the other’s prompt. On a miss, swap burdens for a scene; the wrong person suffers the cost—often revelatory, never lethal.

## Bridge Climax Options

- **Leap of Fellowship:** Combine efforts (group action) to bridge a missing span. On cost, one PC leaves something behind (gear, memory, or favor).
- **Answer in Deed:** Resolve a party member’s step by acting it out now. Grants a group (Shared Vow) usable once per part.
- **Summon a Way:** Magic shapes a temporary stone. It lasts exactly as long as the caster holds their breath in honesty.

## Part II — The Sunken City of Seven-Sorrows (Tier III–IV)

### Frame

Seven districts embody seven kinds of sorrow. Each solved sorrow weakens the rift and lowers the Orrery’s DV by 1 (to a minimum of 3). Districts invite non-combat problem-solving; violence tends to multiply echoes.

## City Clocks

- **Rift Instability** [6] (surges close or rotate streets)
- **Rival Progress** [6] (shared with Part I)
- **Civic Memory** [7] (how much of the city remembers itself)

## District Menu (Choose 3–5)

**District of Broken Promises.** Doorways recite oaths. *Challenge:* correctly amend an oath to include true limits. *SB:* doors bargain with rivals. *Reward:* (Right of Passage) through any one sealed portal.

**Quarter of Final Regrets.** Plazas show last choices. *Challenge:* stage a reenactment with a different ending that *could* have been. *Fail-forward:* the crowd insists on an encore at the worst time.

**Hall of Unfinished Songs.** Melodies lack final lines. *Challenge:* complete a refrain that heals rather than conquers. *Magic:* resonant spells can take the melody's shape. *Reward:* reduce **Rift Instability** [-2].

**Market of Unsent Letters.** Stalls sell words never mailed. *Challenge:* purchase the right unSENT letter and deliver it to a living recipient. *Cost:* you must leave an unSENT letter of your own. *Reward:* (Bearer's Seal).

**Gardens of No Farewell.** Plants grow from farewells withheld. *Challenge:* prune without killing: a careful **Position** test. *SB:* roots entangle gear; lose something symbolic.

**Tower of Abandoned Vows.** Steps climb but do not descend; each level asks a vow renewed or released. *Challenge:* name what continues, and what ends. *Reward:* (Clear Conscience): once, ignore a social taboo's penalty.

**Drowned Forum.** Debate pits beneath shallow black water. *Challenge:* argue submerged; breath sets the tempo. *Reward:* set crowd mood for next public scene; reduce **DV** by 1 for a debate.

## The Orrery of Lost Worlds (Finale)

A chamber of spheres, rings, and chains, orbiting a blank star. Start at DV 6; each district solved reduces DV by 1. Three *Pillars* hold the mechanism in fate:

- **Axis of Names.** The city remembers who it was. *Counter:* place true names recovered from letters and songs.
- **Weights of Debt.** Tallies of bargains hold the orbits. *Counter:* cancel or forgive a meaningful debt on-screen.
- **Gnomon of Return.** A shadow-mark sets the city's angle. *Counter:* align with the Bridge's rhythm (Shared Vow, Guide's Favor, or a sacrificial pause).

## Outcomes

- **Seal the Rift:** The city stabilizes as a twilight district accessible by rite. Each PC chooses one sorrow they have *truly* laid down; gain a lingering boon.
- **Map the Paths:** The Orrery points to other lost places. Rivals depart rich; you earn routes and obligations.
- **Offer to a Patron:** Trade the Orrery's motion for a boon. The city changes—and so does the world nearby.

## NPC Roster (Quick-Use)

| Name                               | Desires, Leverage, Tell, Voice  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Captain Brann of the Black Ferrule | Contracts; explosives, anchors; boots scrape stone; blunt, soldierly. |
| Sister Ysol of the Last Dawn       | Purity; sacrament wards; ash-smudge ritual; fervent, precise.         |
| Cartographer Pell of the Gulls     | Knowledge; partial charts; hums while plotting; eager, scattered.     |
| The Toll-Taker                     | Toll paid; rules of passage; weighs your words; wind-dry, patient.    |
| The Conductor of Unfinished Songs  | Completion; choirs of echoes; gestures a downbeat; resonant hush.     |

## A Session 1 (Bridge) — 3 Hours

1. **Arrival (15 min):** Establish why each PC must cross. Show a visible Diamond (Guide's Favor hint).
2. **First Five Steps (45 min):** Mix prompts 1–3. Offer a fail-forward that grants a temporary boon with a cost.
3. **Pressure Beat (30 min):** Wind shift splits the line; group action to reunite or pay a Toll.
4. **Set-Piece (30–40 min):** Philosopher's Truss; earn Guide's Favor or tick **Crossing** [+2].
5. **Camp-on-Air (10 min):** On fatigue, rest with a choice of coin, confession, or scar.

## B Printable Clocks

**Crossing** [8]

**Rival Progress** [6]

**Rift Instability** [6]

**Civic Memory** [7]

**Rival Lead** [3]

## Appendix C: Player-Facing Handouts

**Crossing Rights.** “The bridge admits those who answer in deed. Pay with what weighs you most.”

**Sorrow Map (Text).** A circular diagram of seven districts; connect any three to weaken the Orrery.

*Steps Into Sorrow* — A Fate’s Edge adventure.

## C GM Enhancements Overview

Included options:

- **XP milestone awards** for character progression.
- **Magic path specializations** tailored to each district challenge.
- **Expanded fail-forward examples** for tricky bridge steps.
- **Position shift guidelines** for usage.

## D XP Progression & Milestones (Total: 54–90 XP)

| Milestone         | XP Award | Triggers When                                 |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| Bridge Completion | +12 XP   | Entire party reaches Seven-Sorrows            |
| District Solution | +6 XP    | Each of first 3 districts resolved            |
| Sorrow Mastery    | +8 XP    | 4+ districts solved or major echo pacified    |
| Orrery Access     | +10 XP   | Chambers unlocked (before finale)             |
| Final Resolution  | +15 XP   | Orrery outcome achieved                       |
| Session Base      | +6 XP    | Per session (exploration, roleplay, setbacks) |

## E Magic Path Integration by District

### District-Specific Advantages

| District                | Magic Path Benefits   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Broken Promises</b>  | <i>Runekeepers:</i> Patron's authority can compel door compliance (+1 Effect).<br><i>Invokers:</i> Symbols reveal which oaths were to which patrons.                |
| <b>Final Regrets</b>    | <i>Casters:</i> Elemental magic can reshape reenactments (Fire for passion, Water for acceptance). <i>Cantors:</i> Songs provide +1 die to alternative endings.     |
| <b>Unfinished Songs</b> | <i>Cantors:</i> Auto-success on melody completion if theme matches patron.<br><i>Runekeepers:</i> Rites can harmonize with city's rhythm (reduce Rift Instability). |
| <b>Unsent Letters</b>   | <i>Invokers:</i> Symbols authenticate letters as "patron-approved." <i>Casters:</i> Air magic can deliver letters instantly (but attracts echoes).                  |
| <b>No Farewell</b>      | <i>Runekeepers:</i> Patron favor allows safe pruning (+1 Position). <i>Summoners:</i> Spirits can test entanglement without gear loss.                              |
| <b>Abandoned Vows</b>   | <i>All Paths:</i> Vow-related magic gains +1 Effect. Breaking a magical vow here costs double Obligation/Backlash.  |
| <b>Drowned Forum</b>    | <i>Casters:</i> Water magic provides breathing advantage. <i>Runekeepers:</i> Storm/Sea patrons grant debate leverage.  |

## F Fail-Forward Reference (Bridge Steps)

### Expanded Consequences

| Step               | Partial Success (1 Boon)                              | Miss (2 Boons + Cost)                                      |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Promise Binding    | Recall who you made it to; gain +1 die vs that person | Vow becomes audible to rivals; they can use it against you |
| Price of Knowledge | Learn the question's origin; gain lore advantage      | Foresee a comrade's potential demise; Dread +2             |
| Unburied Failure   | Echo appears but offers useful memories               | Echo merges with a rival; they gain your mannerisms        |
| Overused Tool      | Recognize dependency; next use gains +1 Effect        | Tool becomes sentient and refuses certain tasks            |
| Self-Unforgiveness | Apology to party member clears Dread immediately      | Project failure onto ally; they suffer your consequence    |
| Save One Thing     | Item becomes indestructible for this journey          | Rival now possesses it and knows its significance to you   |

## G Diamond Position Shifts — Quick Reference

| Diamond          | Position Shift                 | Limitations  |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Guide's Favor    | Desperate → Controlled         | Once per bridge segment; must help another traveler  |
| Right of Passage | Risky → Dominant               | Single portal; expires at sunset                     |
| Bearer's Seal    | Controlled → Dominant (social) | Only for delivery missions; recipient must be living |
| Shared Vow       | Group +1 Position step         | All participants must uphold vow terms               |
| Clear Conscience | Ignore taboo penalty           | One use; must be narratively appropriate             |
| Anchored Footing | Immune to <b>SB</b> splits     | Until next toll or camp                              |

## H Part I Aids — The Bridge of a Thousand Steps (Tier II)

### Enhanced Magic Interactions

#### Step Solutions by Path:

- *Runekeepers*: Invoke patron rites to answer steps—counts as “deed” but marks +1 Obligation.
- *Casters*: Elemental magic can create temporary handholds/footholds—provides +1 die but risks backlash on 1s.
- *Invokers*: Symbol display allows ritual answers—slower but safer (no Toll on failure).
- *Cantors*: Songs can answer melodic steps automatically—but attract sorrow-echo audience.
- *Summoners*: Spirits can test steps first—Leash ticks instead of PC paying cost.

### XP Triggers — Part I

- **Each 2 steps solved**: +2 XP (max +10 XP for bridge)
- **Philosopher's Truss success**: +4 XP
- **Toll paid meaningfully**: +3 XP (confession/scar > coin)
- **Mirrored Step resolved**: +3 XP per pair
- **Bridge completion**: +12 XP (total Part I: ~32 XP)

## I Part II Aids — The Sunken City of Seven-Sorrows (Tier III–IV)

### Magic Path Finale Advantages

#### Orrery Pillars — Path Specializations:

- **Axis of Names**: Runekeepers/Invokers gain +2 dice (patron connections).
- **Weights of Debt**: Casters can manipulate with elemental balance (+1 Effect).
- **Gnomon of Return**: Cantors/Summoners align with rhythm (+1 Position).

## XP Triggers — Part II

- **Each district solved:** +6 XP (max +42 XP for 7 districts)
- **Rival setback:** +4 XP per major rival obstacle overcome
- **Rift stabilization:** +8 XP (per successful surge calming)
- **Orrery access:** +10 XP
- **Finale resolution:** +15 XP (total Part II: ~75 XP)

## J Session Planning with XP — Sample 3-Session Arc

**Session 1 (Bridge Start):** ~18 XP

- 4 steps solved: +8 XP
- Philosopher's Truss: +4 XP
- Session base: +6 XP

**Session 2 (Bridge End):** ~20 XP

- Bridge completion: +12 XP
- Meaningful toll: +3 XP
- Session base: +6 XP

**Session 3 (First District):** ~16 XP

- District solved: +6 XP
- Rival obstacle: +4 XP
- Session base: +6 XP

## K Enhanced NPC Magic Interactions

| NPC                | Magic-Specific Hooks   |
|--------------------|--|
| Captain Brann      | Respects Runekeepers with warlock patrons; distrusts “wild” casters      |
| Sister Ysol        | Offers sacraments that function as temporary s for religious magic users |
| Cartographer Pell  | Seeks magical mapping assistance; pays in ritual components              |
| Toll-Taker         | Recognizes patron bonds; may waive tolls for respectful invokers         |
| Conductor of Songs | Recruits cantors for city harmonies; offers musical lore                 |

## L Player-Facing Magic Guidelines

**For Casters:** Your magic reacts strongly to sorrow-echoes. Backlash may manifest as amplified regrets or temporal echoes.

**For Runekeepers:** Your patron watches this place closely. Obligation marks may come with visions of the city's past patrons.

**For Invokers:** Symbols hum with recognition here. Rituals take half time but attract echo-witnesses.

**For Cantors:** Unfinished songs seek completion. Your performances may temporarily heal rift instability.

**For Summoners:** Spirits behave oddly here. They may remember things from the city's past or refuse certain commands.