

Steps Into Sorrow

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

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

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	Tier + 2	Correct answer in hand; guide spirits favor you; rival stalled.
Controlled	Tier + 3	Stable footing; time to think; relevant lore or tokens.
Risky	Tier + 4	Clock pressure; partial clue; split attention.
Desperate	Tier + 5 or more	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 Rival Lead [+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
Broken Promises	<i>Runekeepers:</i> Patron's authority can compel door compliance (+1 Effect). <i>Invokers:</i> Symbols reveal which oaths were to which patrons.
Final Regrets	<i>Casters:</i> Elemental magic can reshape reenactments (Fire for passion, Water for acceptance). <i>Cantors:</i> Songs provide +1 die to alternative endings.
Unfinished Songs	<i>Cantors:</i> Auto-success on melody completion if theme matches patron. <i>Runekeepers:</i> Rites can harmonize with city's rhythm (reduce Rift Instability).
Unsent Letters	<i>Invokers:</i> Symbols authenticate letters as "patron-approved." <i>Casters:</i> Air magic can deliver letters instantly (but attracts echoes).
No Farewell	<i>Runekeepers:</i> Patron favor allows safe pruning (+1 Position). <i>Summoners:</i> Spirits can test entanglement without gear loss.
Abandoned Vows	<i>All Paths:</i> Vow-related magic gains +1 Effect. Breaking a magical vow here costs double Obligation/Backlash.
Drowned Forum	<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 SB 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.