Political Intrigue Campaign Framework

for *Fate's Edge* — Version 0.2 (Playtest)

Design Goals

- **Why:** Enable long-form play focused on courts, city-states, guilds, and synods where choices echo across seasons.
- **Mechanical Need:** Formalize social conflict and faction play using existing engines (Position, DV, SB, clocks).
- **Narrative Richness:** Turn every roll into a living thread—alliances, scandals, mandates, and crises.
- **Player Appeal:** Provide levers (Favor, Leverage, Reputation, Strings) without heavy bookkeeping.

Principle: This module adds procedures, not new math. Use core rules for rolls; this tells you what to prep, track, and tick.

Quickstart (2 minutes)

1. Pick a **Seat of Power** (city, court, guildhall, synod).
2. Create **3–5 Faction Sheets**. Give each faction an **Influence** clock [6], an **Exposure** clock [6], and a **Stability** clock [6–8].
3. Place **Campaign Dials**: *Mandate* and *Crisis* at 2 (0–6 each) unless fiction says otherwise.
4. For each session, declare a **Situation Clock** [4–8] for the immediate political question.
5. Play scenes. Any **1s generate SB**; the GM uses *Social SB options*.
6. Between sessions, run the **Intrigue Cycle** to advance clocks off-screen and seed the next scandal.

Contents

Faction Play: Components & Templates

Faction Sheet (Template)

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[FACTION NAME]
Tier: (street / guild / city / crown / synod)
Aim: (what they want this season)
Stance toward PCs: (Allied / Wary / Hostile)
Levers (3): (money, law, clergy, blades, secrets, ships, votes, rites...)
Leader & Lieutenants: (names + one sentence intent)
Reputation Tags (2): (Merciful, Ruthless, Old-Blood, Reformers, Ascetic...)
Clocks:
- Influence [6]: how aligned they are with PC aims; fills to grant access/patronage
- Stability [6{8]: how coherent the faction remains; fills → schism/coup/purge
- Exposure [6]: public risk & scandal; fills → scandal event triggers
Holdings/Assets: (2{5 named assets with a sentence of function)
Strings: (1{3 hooks tying them to locales, laws, rites, or other factions)
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When to tick (with examples)

- **Influence:** Tick when PCs advance or protect the faction's *stated Aim* or humiliate an *active rival* of that Aim. (e.g., secure a river charter the Harbor Guild wants = +1; discredit the Tide-Chart Office opposing them = +1.) Routine gifts without movement on the Aim do not tick.
- **Stability:** Tick when internal strains surface beyond normal bickering: succession wobbles, ideological schism, budget shortfalls, a key lieutenant defects, or magical overreach taxes rites/logistics. (e.g., failed purge = +1; whispered heresy in the Ember-Temple = +1.)
- **Exposure:** Tick on visible missteps: public concessions/humiliations, failed high-profile actions (especially with Social SB spends), leaks of leverage, or collateral harm to bystanders. (e.g., bribery discovered = +2; foiled blackmail exposed = +1.)

Strings — What They Do

A **String** is a concrete tie: "Controls river tolls," "Holds three Synod votes," "Custodian of the Lantern Rites," "Patron of the Playhouse."

- Acting *with/through* a relevant String: improve **Position +1** *or* treat **DV as −1** (once per scene).
- Acting *against* a target's String: **Position −1** *or* GM banks +1 SB.
- Cutting or seizing a String is a **4–6 segment clock**; on fill, move the String to the victor or strike it.

Relationship Map (Strings & Stakes)

Sketch the web. For every arrow between two factions, write a **stake** (e.g., "river tolls," "chapter-house votes," "forbidden codex"). Mark two arrows **volatile**; these will pop first under pressure.

Volatility Triggers

- When either linked faction's **Exposure** fills, immediately trigger the volatile stake as an on-screen complication or new Situation clock.
- When **Crisis** rises by 1, the GM may trigger one volatile arrow anywhere on the map.
- A targeted **Social SB** spend may flip a volatile stake early (GM choice; announce loudly).

Map-to-Action Hooks

- Acting along an arrow where you have **positive Strings** on either node: **+1 Position** or **DV −1**.
- Acting against a node with **negative entanglement** (Hostile stance or disgraced tag): **−1 Position** or GM banks +1 SB.
- These are caps; do not chain multiple arrows for stacking.

Campaign Dials

Mandate (0–6) Table's public legitimacy and door-opening power.

Crisis (0–6) Pressure from rivals, costs, and backlash. Set both to 2 at start unless fiction says otherwise.

Mechanical Hooks

Mandate

- 0–1: Cold reception. Public venues start **Desperate** unless you bring Favors/Strings.
- 2–3: Recognized. Once per social scene, treat Position as **one step higher** when invoking a relevant Favor or String.
- 4–5: Credible power. Once per session, **cancel** one Social SB spend targeting you in public venues; public institutions set **DV −1** versus your petitions.
- 6: Standard-bearers. Start public scenes **Controlled** unless fiction strongly opposes; your endorsements create a 4-clock *Bandwagon* on targets.

Crisis

- 0–1: Calm waters.
- 2–3: Tension. At the start of each session, GM banks +1 SB for political scenes.
- 4–5: Boiling. First failed social action each session ticks party **Exposure +1**.
- 6: Breaking point. Start political scenes with a **Counter-Clock [4]** in play.

Scene Procedures for Social Conflict

2.0 Social Conflict at a Glance

1. **Intent → Position/DV → Roll → Outcome → Ripple**.
2. Set Dominant/Controlled/Desperate and DV from fiction. **Any 1s generate SB** in social scenes.

Intrigue Actions (examples)

Each uses the table's attribute/skill list. Suggested positions/DVs and on-hit effects below.

- **Petition (Presence+Sway):** Present a case to a decision-maker. Dominant with writs/favors; Desperate when hostile. DV 2–4. Hit: fill Situation; strong hit: tick ally Influence.
- **Bribe (Wits+Streetwise/Lore):** Move resources to open doors. Controlled; worsens if watched/holy ground. DV 2–3. Hit: create a temporary tag (*Greased Palms*); miss: tick Exposure.
- **Blackmail (Wits+Investigation):** Apply leverage. Controlled → Desperate if unverified. DV 3–5. Hit: concession now or place a 4-clock *Compromise* usable later for Position Dominant.
- **Broker (Presence+Diplomacy):** Reconcile two parties. Controlled on neutral ground; Dominant with ritual hospitality; Desperate if blades present. DV 3–4. Hit: reduce both parties' Exposure by 1; fill Influence for the favored side.
- **Expose (Presence+Performance):** Publicly reveal truth/forgery. Dominant with corroboration; Desperate with hearsay. DV 3–5. Hit: add *Disgraced* tag; fill 2–3 segments on target Exposure.
- **Shield (Wits+Tactics/Lore):** Pre-empt rival plays via law/protocol/counter-messaging. Controlled; Dominant with counsel/rites. DV 3. Hit: reduce incoming Social SB by 1 this scene; mark ally Stability −1 (cohere under pressure).
- **Host Feast/Vigil (Presence+Performance/Rite):** Gather elites; set tone. Dominant if traditions observed; Desperate if taboo. DV 2–4. Hit: create Audience tags; if triumph, *Mandate +1*.
- **Infiltrate (Body/Wits+Stealth/Deception):** Plant evidence, steal ledgers, ghost a meeting. Desperate when warded/sanctified. DV 3–5. Hit: gain *Leverage (1)* or fill Situation; on partials, start a *Security* or *Rumor* counter-clock.

Social SB Options

When 1s appear, GM spends SB to:

- Trigger faux pas; spread rumor; demand concessions; rival interjects; gallery turns; patronage flips.
- **Currency hits:** lose 1 Favor with an implicated institution; a used Leverage becomes public (tick either party's Exposure +1); shift an Audience/Institution tag against the PCs.

Resolution

A scene resolves when the **Situation Clock** fills or fiction dictates. Then ripple:

- Advance/reduce involved **Faction Clocks** (Influence/Stability/Exposure).
- Adjust **Mandate/Crisis** (usually ±1 each based on victory and visible costs).
- Record lasting **Audience/Institution Tags**.

Situation vs. Faction Clocks — Default Ripple

- **Success (PC-favoring):** Allied *Influence +1* (or +2 if it advances their Aim); if win was clean, allied *Exposure –1*; hostile *Exposure +1*.
- **Failure (PC-hurting):** Opposing *Influence +1* (or +2 if on-Aim); allied *Exposure +1*. If failure was internal, also tick that faction's *Stability +1*.
- **Compromise:** Each side *Influence +1* or both *Exposure +1*, guided by fiction.

The Intrigue Cycle (Between Sessions)

Use once per session (or per in-fiction week/month on jumps).

Step A — Update World State

For each active faction, advance *Stability* or *Exposure* by 1 if they suffered public pressure or internal strain. Tick unresolved thread clocks by 1 or start a 4–6 clock.

Step B — Draw/Prompt for Events

Method: Draw blindly from a standard deck or deliberately pick suits matching themes. Use **Suit** for type (Hearts=court/crowd; Spades=violence; Clubs=resources/strikes; Diamonds=environment/omens) and **Rank** for severity (low=+1, mid=+2, face/ace=+3 segments).
Apply: Place each card on a faction/clock and immediately tick by severity; write one sentence of fallout that must surface next session.
Examples: Hearts 7 → public oath/romance, tick *Exposure +2*. Clubs 10 → trade shock/strike, start a 6-clock *Shortages*.

Step C — Off-Screen Actions

Each PC directs one off-screen move using a follower/asset/network. Resolve with one roll at *Significant Time* scale; on 1s, bank SB and/or tick Exposure.

Step D — Recompute Dials

If wins were visible and valued, **Mandate +1**. If costs, scandals, or riots mounted, **Crisis +1**. Both may move.

Step E — Prep Next Situation

Name the next immediate political question. Put a **4–8** clock on it. Grab 2–3 complications tied to factions and prior tags.

Currencies: Favor, Leverage, Exposure, Reputation

Favor (Table Currency)

Earn a Favor when you deliver visible benefit or save a leader's face. Spend a Favor to:

- Improve Position by one step *against that person/institution.*
- Cancel one Social SB spend aimed at you in their venue.
- Access a restricted office/archive/sanctum once.

Favors are narrow; specify scope ("Harbormaster's Office," not "All of Kahfagia"). Three unspent favors from the same seat convert to **Standing (Tag)** with them.

Leverage (Portable)

- One **Leverage (1)** forces a concession (1 segment on a Situation Clock) *or* holds Position at Controlled when it would drop to Desperate.
- **Decay:** Only *public* uses count. After two public uses of the same leverage, convert it to *Exposure +1* on you or the target (your choice). Private uses do not decay it, but three private uses make it stale; refresh with new proof/witness/circumstance before it functions again.

Exposure (You & Them)

Track **Exposure [6]** for the party (or per face) and on major factions. When a track fills, trigger a **Scandal Event**: public censure, hostile audit, inquisitorial summons, riot, duel demand, etc. Clear 2 on a successful *Shield* scene or by accepting a humiliating concession on-screen.

Reputation Tiers

Check at arc end (or every 2–3 sessions). If two are true, advance Reputation Tier:

- Convert 3 favors from one institution into **Standing (Tag)** *or* hold Standing with two institutions.
- End with **Mandate ≥ 4** *or* resolve a city-scale Situation Clock [8] in your favor.
- Your deeds create/resolve a *regional law/rite* or seat/remove a leader.

Gatekeeping Effects: Higher tiers grant default access to higher-tier factions/venues; DVs for petitions to lower-tier offices drop by 1; clocks scale up (use 6–8 segments at higher tiers; 4–6 at low tier). When your tier outstrips a scene's stakes, the GM may simply hand you the room unless opposing Strings/Leverage are present.

Followers & Assets in Politics

On-Scene

Assign a follower to Assist or to take an independent scene action with its own risk. Harm to followers often lands as *Stability* or *Exposure* ticks on their home faction.

Off-Screen Orders (Intrigue Cycle)

Each PC may direct one follower/asset on a *Significant-Time* operation (surveil, seed rumors, counter-bribe, audit a ledger, escort witnesses). This can occur mid-adventure as a cutaway or between sessions. Resolve with one roll using the follower's capability as positioning; on a hit, apply 1–2 segments to the intended clock; on 1s, bank SB and mark *Exposure +1*.

Upkeep & Entanglements

Track names, not ledgers. When the GM spends 2+ SB in a political arc, an ally may face the consequence instead (compromised informant, bribed clerk, stolen seal). Convert entanglements into new *threads* and *clocks* rather than binary losses.

Generators (Scandal Decks & Prompts)

Suits as Political Color

Hearts: court favor, marriages, oaths, crowd mood.
Spades: violence, duels, arrests, street pressure.
Clubs: resources, trade shocks, supply, strikes.
Diamonds: environment, festivals, omens, disasters.

Ranks as Severity

Low (2–5): gossip/minor obstruction (+1 segment).
Mid (6–9): scandals, votes, riots, inquisitors (+2 segments).
Face/Ace: institutions shift; laws change; thrones wobble (+3 segments; start/finish a major clock).

Draw Procedures

Quick Hook (2): what's the scandal, who is entangled?
Full Seed (4): place each onto a faction/clock; one-sentence fallout per card.
Act Builder: Establishment → Escalation → Resolution; note which clocks must move.

Worked Examples

- **Hearts 7:** A scion's oath of love becomes public; tick *Exposure +2* on their house; start a 4-clock *Secret Betrothal*.
- **Spades King:** A duelist challenges the Tide-Marshall; start a 6-clock *Public Blood*; if it fills, *Mandate –1* for the city guard.
- **Clubs 6:** Dockworkers strike; tick Harbor Guild *Stability +1*; create tag *Pickets at Dawn*.
- **Diamonds 9:** Omens sour during a procession; tick *Exposure +2* on the Ember-Temple unless rites appease it.

Regional Starting Kits (Seeds)

Thepyrgos — Synod & Collegium

Factions: Archons' Synod; Collegium of Keys; Harbor Guild; Ember-Temple; Vagrant Companies.
Sparks: Charter revision threatens Collegium privileges; Harbor Guild bankrolls reform; Temple schism spills into streets.

Silkstrand — City of Bridges

Factions: Dye Syndicate; Archivolt; Riverine Patrol; Bridge-Lords; Playhouse Mummers.
Sparks: A curse knits into tithe ledgers; river patrol seizes a rival's barge; a mummer's satire names names.

Viterra — Hedge-Law Realm

Factions: Parish Courts; Crown Surveyors; Dike Brotherhoods; Village Moots; Tithe-Keepers.
Sparks: Boundary survey voids ancestral rights; moot declares hedge-law embarrassing a duke; floodworks need a vote *now*.

Ecktoria — Marble & Fire

Factions: Legions Remnant; Sun-Temples; Merchant Courts; Imperial Exarchs; Civic Aqueducts Office.
Sparks: Lost patent resurfaces; relic procession turns political; Exarch audits Aqueducts before summer.

Kahfagia — Lantern-Law Harbors

Factions: Admiralty; Pilots; Fog-Bell Wardens; Tide-Chart Office; Salt Syndicates.
Sparks: Lantern-law reform collapses smuggler bargains; a bell-line goes dark in storm week; pilots strike.

Example of Play (Short)

Frame: PCs want the Harbor Guild to endorse their candidate for Tide-Marshal.
Setup: Situation *Guild Endorsement* [6]; Counter *Rival Frames You as Smugglers* [4]; Mandate 3; Crisis 2; Harbor Guild Influence 2/6; Exposure 1/6.

Scene 1 — Petition Position Controlled (sponsor pilot), DV 3. Partial: fill 1 on Endorsement; GM SB: concession required (guild donation). PCs pay; Position holds.

Scene 2 — Expose (Counterplay) Position Dominant (documented proof), DV 3. Strong hit: fill 2 on Endorsement; +2 on rival Exposure; gallery warms; tag *Smell of Salted Justice*.

Scene 3 — Shield Position Controlled, DV 3. Success: reduce incoming Social SB by 1; tick Guild Stability −1 (they rally behind rules).

    Resolution: Endorsement fills in Scene 4 after a *Broker* action. *Mandate +1.* Rival Exposure hits 6/6 → scandal: treasurer resigns. Next hook writes itself.

Guidance for Use

- **Stay Visible:** Every spend changes the map: a tag, a clock, a dial.
- **Escalate Honestly:** When Crisis climbs, show it: protests, inquisitors, budgets, bans.
- **Reward Face-Saving:** In intrigue, dignity can be worth more than coin.
- **Keep It Human:** Even in a world of rites and spirits, politics is people.

Changelog

v0.2 — Clarified tick triggers; gave Strings concrete effects; added volatility triggers and map hooks; defined Mandate/Crisis mechanical hooks; established default Situation→Faction ripple; expanded Social SB options; confirmed *all 1s generate SB* in social; clarified Leverage decay; added Reputation Tier checks; clarified follower Significant-Time orders; added scandal examples; added a core summary box; tightened Quickstart wording.

This file presents procedures only; defer to the Fate's Edge core SRD for roll math and basic adjudication.

Blood on the Belworth

A Political Intrigue adventure for Fate's Edge using the v0.2 framework

Backdrop

Duke Fenwood has ruled nearly forty years from Tarlington, former seat of the Tarling Kings of Viterra. Soon after aiding the new Queen of Viterra to ascend her throne, he was gravely injured in an assassination attempt. Eight years ago he invaded and sacked Lence, the Vhasian capital, causing a succession crisis. Now, as the duke lies infirm, his sons—the even-keeled heir Constano and his hot-headed martial brother Seniro—must keep House Fenwood's power on both the Vhasian and Viterran sides of the Belworth River.

Using This Adventure

This module is built on the Political Intrigue Campaign Framework (v0.2):

- Run each major question with a Situation Clock (4–8) and at least one Counter-Clock (4–6).
- Use Strings to tune Position/DV and as prizes/failure states.
- Apply Mandate/Crisis dials and the Situation→Faction Ripple rules after each scene.

Intended length: 2–4 sessions. **Tone:** border-court drama, false flags, rites of hospitality, hedge-law wrangling.

Seats, Locales & Assets

- **Tarlington (Viterra):** ducal seat; marble halls, Hedge-Law Moot Court, lantern beacons along the river stairs.
- **Belworth River Corridor:** ferry towns, reedmarshes, customs towers, lantern-law posts, ruined fortlets from the Tarling era.
- **Lence (Vhasia):** half-rebuilt after the sack; Restorationist salons; a palace-in-exile flavor.
- **The Red Span:** a half-finished bridge across the Belworth; a scandal of budgets and graft.
- **Lantern-Rites House of Oria:** neutral ground by custom; oaths, feasts, and river burials are sanctified here.

Named Assets (examples):

- Ferry Passbooks (who may legally cross at dusk)
- Tarler's Seal (ducal customs stamp)
- Ledger of Tithes (grain barges)
- Lantern-Rite Basin (ritual hospitality)
- The Black Scrip (indemnities owed by Lence)
- Red Span Budget Roll (inflated contracts)

Factions (Sheets)

House Fenwood (Viterra)

Tier: crown
Levers: blades, law, tolls
Reputation: Old-Blood, Stern
Clocks: Influence [6], Stability [8], Exposure [6]
Strings: Custodian of the Lantern Beacons; Controls Red Span work crews; Holds oaths of three ferry captains

Vhasian Regency Council (Vhasia)

Tier: crown   Aim: Cement a success
Levers: law, clergy, spies   Leaders: Lady-Envoy N
Reputation: Restorers, Grievant
Clocks: Influence [6], Stability [6], Exposure [6]
Strings: Custodian of the Black Scrip; Holds exile petitions; Sanctions river pilgrimages

Lantern-Rites Custody (Neutral Clergy)

Tier: synod   Aim: Keep
Levers: rites, hospitality, crowds   Leader: Sist
Reputation: Merciful, Unbending in ceremony
Clocks: Influence [6], Stability [6], Exposure [6]
Strings: Neutral Sanctum of Hospitality; Funerary authority on the Belworth; Oath-tablet registry

River Syndicate (Pilots & Ferrymen)

Tier: guild   Aim: Profit from stability and exemptions
Levers: ships, tolls, rumor   Leader: Captain Pell Rivermark
Reputation: Practical, Superstitious
Clocks: Influence [6], Stability [6], Exposure [6]
Strings: Ferry Passbooks; Night-lantern routes; Smuggler hush-oaths

Red Span Contractors (Graft Bloc)

Tier: merchant   Aim: Keep funds flow
Levers: coin, labor, saboteurs   Leader: Master Mason
Reputation: Gilded, Cut-Rate
Clocks: Influence [6], Stability [6], Exposure [6]
Strings: Hold on budget rolls; Union stevedores; Secret pact with Seniro's quartermaster

Lence Restorationists (Radicals)

Tier: street→guild   Aim: Public trial of Fenwoo
Levers: crowds, broadsheets, knives   Leader: Jaska the Poet
Reputation: Zealous, Wounded
Clocks: Influence [6], Stability [6], Exposure [6]
Strings: Printing house in the Reeds; Honor cult of the fallen; List of collaborators

Relationship Map (Strings & Stakes)

- Fenwood Regency: Black Scrip indemnities; volatile.
- Fenwood River Syndicate: Ferry exemptions; volatile.
- Regency Restorationists: Street muscle vs legitimacy.
- Fenwood Red Span Contractors: Overruns & kickbacks; volatile.
- Lantern-Rites Everyone: Hospitality oaths.
- Syndicate Contractors: Work crews & permits.

Volatility Triggers: Exposure fill on either node; Crisis +1; or targeted Social SB spend.
Map Hooks: Acting with a positive String on a node: Position +1 or DV –1 (once/scene). Acting against a hostile node: Position –1 or GM banks +1 SB.

Campaign Dials (Start)

Mandate 2 (recognized) • Crisis 2 (tension). Move them honestly: public wins/losses change access and pressure as per rules.

Inciting Incident — "Blood on the Ferry"

At dusk, the ferry *Belworth Grace* drifts to shore with its lanterns guttering. A Vhasian courier and two clerks lie stabbed; a Fenwood quartermaster's armband is nailed to the mast. Survivors whisper conflicting tales. The river turns to rumor overnight.

Immediate Situation Clock6: Contain the Spiral — keep the border calm for 24 hours.
Counter-Clock4: Hotheads March — Seniro's men assemble to cross at dawn.
Counter-Clock4: Justice Now! — Restorationists demand arrests at the Lantern-Rites House.

If the PCs do nothing: Crisis +1; Fenwood Exposure +1; Regency Influence +1; volatile stake Black Scrip triggers (audit squads arrive).

Act I — Holding the River

Goal: Prevent escalation; establish inquiry ground rules under Lantern-Rites.

Core Scenes (pick 2–3):

1. **Petition (Presence+Sway)** at Lantern-Rites to claim neutral inquest rights.
   - Position: Controlled with offerings; Desperate if arriving with blades. 3–4.
   - **On hit:** Situation +1–2; Lantern-Rites Influence +1. **On miss:** Exposure +1 (you profane rites).

2. **Shield (Wits+Lore/Tactics)** to keep Seniro's captains from marching.
   - Position: Controlled with Hedge-Law dicta; Dominant if you secure Sister Oria's writ. 3.
   - **On hit:** Reduce incoming Social SB by 1 this scene; Fenwood Stability –1 (they cohere behind rules).

3. **Broker (Presence+Diplomacy):** a dusk truce between Regency envoys and Fenwood stewards.
   - Position: Dominant if hosting at Lantern-Rites; Desperate if in army camp. 3–4.

- **On hit:** Both sides Exposure –1; choose a concession clock "Shared Inquest" [4].

4. **Infiltrate (Body/Wits+Stealth/Deception)** the Red Span site to see who planted the armband.

  - Position: Desperate at night among saboteurs. 4–5.
  - **On hit:** Gain Leverage (1): "Seniro's Quartermaster took bribes" or fill Contain the Spiral by 1.

End of Act I: If Contain the Spiral fills, Mandate +1. If any counter fills first, Crisis +1 and trigger a volatile arrow (GM choice).

Act II — Ledger and Blood

Goal: Follow money and oaths; identify the hand behind the ferry murders.

Clue Threads (any 3 get you to the culprit):

- Tithe Ledger shows missing customs stamps the night of the murder (Syndicate → Contractors String).
- Printing House in the Reeds ran broadsheets hours after the killings (Restorationists prepped the narrative).
- Black Scrip clerk in Lence was due to sail—his blood is on the ferry; he carried a planned indemnity renegotiation.
- Quartermaster's Armband fibers match a Red Span uniform batch, not Fenwood's armory (Contractors frame-job).

Likely Culprits (choose at prep or by play):

- Ghiro's Contractors staged a false flag to prolong funding and tie Seniro closer.
- Restorationists struck to collapse any indemnity deal, forcing a hard break.
- Syndicate hardliners provoked crisis to win permanent night-route exemptions.

(Tip: leave two culprits plausible; the third is a red herring that still moves clocks.)

Core Scenes (pick 3–4):

1. **Expose (Presence+Performance)** budget graft at the Moot Court.

  - Position: Dominant with corroboration (ledger + witness). 4–5.
  - **On hit:** Target gains Disgraced tag; Exposure +2. Mandate +1 if public.

2. **Blackmail (Wits+Investigation)** a Syndicate captain to reveal hush-oaths.

  - Position: Controlled → Desperate if leverage unverified. 3–5.
  - **On hit:** Place Compromise [4] on the captain (later shift Position to Dominant once).

3. **Host Feast/Vigil (Presence+Performance/Rite)** to cool the crowd at Lantern-Rites.

  - Position: Dominant if rites observed. 2–3.
  - **On hit:** Create Audience Tags (Warmed, Sobering); Mandate +1 on triumph.

4. **Petition the Regency** to stay arrests for 72 hours.

  - Position: Controlled; 3.
  - **On hit:** Tick Shared Inquest [4] twice; Regency Influence +1.

End of Act II: If culprits identified on-screen and public mood calms, reduce Crisis –1 (min 0). On messy wins, tick Fenwood Exposure +1 (your methods smelled of witchery or law-twisting).

Act III — Judgment on the Water

Goal: Secure a settlement that prevents war, punishes the guilty, and sets the river's law.
Final Situation Clock8: Bind the Belworth Accord.
Counter6: March at Dawn (Seniro) or Honor the Fallen (Restorationists) depending on Act II.

Settlement Options (pick one primary + one concession):

- **Hedge-Law Trial at the River:** Culprit faction yields its leader to a public rite at Lantern-Rites.
  - **Effect:** Mandate +1; culprit Exposure fill → scandal.
- **Indemnity Rescript:** Black Scrip terms renegotiated; Lence gets relief; Fenwood pays in river tolls (not gold).
  - **Effect:** Regency Influence +1; Syndicate gains Standing (Tag) Night-Routes Deputized.
- **Red Span Purge:** Contractors ousted; work crews handed to Syndicate and Lantern-Rites oversight.
  - **Effect:** Fenwood Stability –1 (short term), Mandate +1 (public cleansed).
- **Marshal's Oath:** Seniro swears to Constano before Sister Oria to obey lantern-law in all crossings.
  - **Effect:** House Stability +1; if broken later, automatic Exposure fill.

Resolution Scenes (choose 2):

- Broker the Accord (4–5); Expose last-minute sabotage (3–4); Shield the rite from blades (3); Petition queen's chancellor to ratify terms (4).

  If PCs succeed:
- Fill Bind the Belworth Accord. Mandate +1; Crisis –1. Apply Settlement effects; advance allied Influence +1 (+2 if it directly satisfied their Aim).

  If PCs fail:
- Counter fills; a crossing turns bloody. Crisis +1 (maybe +2). Tick House Fenwood Stability +1 (schism risk) and Exposure +1 (butcher tales). Rival Influence +1.

Scandal & Event Prompts (use deck)

- Hearts 9 — River Oath Broken: A ferryman violates hospitality; tick Exposure +2 on the Syndicate and start Honor Debt [4].
- Spades 7 — Night Blades: Masked men assault a witness's boat; start Witness Intimidated [4]; on fill, your Compromise clock vanishes.
- Clubs 8 — Short Rations: The Red Span crews strike; Fenwood Stability +1; tag Pickets at Dawn.

- Diamonds King — Blood Moon on the Belworth: Public panic; all public scenes start one Position lower until appeased.

NPCs at a Glance

- **Constano Fenwood (heir):** careful, pragmatic, favors courts; wants a durable accord.
- **Seniro Fenwood (marshal):** decisive, angry, tempted by force; wants fear to keep order.
- **Sister Oria (Lantern-Rites):** courteous, iron ritualist; wants peace kept in the rites.
- **Lady-Envoy Mael Vesht (Regency):** smiling lawyer; wants leverage for Lence's successor.
- **Captain Pell (Syndicate):** superstitious pilot; wants exemptions and no riots.
- **Master Mason Ghiro (Contractors):** perfumed operator; wants the Red Span forever unfinished.
- **Jaska the Poet (Restorationists):** martyr-maker; wants spectacle and justice on camerae.

Voice & Levers (use in play):

- Constano: "By hedge-law precedent..." (Strings: Moot Court access)
- Seniro: "River justice is steel." (Strings: Border patrols)
- Oria: "Within the lantern's ring, all are guests." (Strings: Hospitality sanctum)

Rewards, Standing & Fallout

On a public, clean win: convert 3 favors from Lantern-Rites or the Syndicate into Standing (Tag), grant Audience Tag: Steady River, and set Mandate +1. On messy wins: rival Exposure +1 but allied Stability –1. On failures: the volatile Black Scrip stake triggers (audit, seizures, or arrests), setting up the next arc.

Running Notes

- Keep human dignity visible: funerals on water, oaths before witnesses, the cost of fear.
- Use Strings as positional levers and as victory spoils.
- Spend Social SB to erode consent, leak leverage, or twist crowd tags rather than to "nope" the PCs.
- Let magic (if present) move Position/tags, not erase hard choices.

Quick Prep Checklist

- Print Faction Sheets & Strings.
- Mark Mandate 2 / Crisis 2.
- Lay Act I clocks: Contain the Spiral [6]; Hotheads March [4]; Justice Now! [4].
- Choose/seed 2 likely culprits; plant 3 clue threads.
- Pick 2 scandal prompts to foreshadow.
- Decide settlement option most desired by each faction.