

# Fate's Edge

## System Reference Document

November 9, 2025

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# 1 Welcome to Fate's Edge

Fate's Edge is a narrative-first tabletop RPG where every action carries weight, every choice has consequence, and every spell risks backlash. This quickstart guide covers the core rules from the SRD.

## 2 Core Resolution

### 2.1 The Art of Consequence

All significant actions follow this three-step process:

1. **Approach:** Player describes intent and method
2. **Execution:** Roll Attribute + Skill d10s (6+ = success, 1 = SB)
3. **Outcome:** GM interprets successes vs DV, spends SB for complications

### 2.2 Attributes (1-5)

- **Body:** Strength, endurance, physical action
- **Wits:** Perception, cleverness, reaction speed
- **Spirit:** Willpower, intuition, resilience
- **Presence:** Charm, command, social force

### 2.3 Skills (0-5)

- **Melee, Ranged, Athletics**
- **Sway, Deception, Insight**
- **Stealth, Survival, Command**
- **Arcana, Lore, Craft**

### 2.4 Difficulty Values (DV)

| DV | Situation                                     |
|----|---|
| 2  | Routine: Clear intent, modest stakes          |
| 3  | Pressured: Time pressure, mild resistance     |
| 4  | Hard: Hostile conditions, active opposition   |
| 5+ | Extreme: Multiple constraints, high precision |

## 2.5 Position & Effect

- **Position:** Controlled (safe), Risky (default), Desperate (high stakes)
- **Effect:** Limited (weak), Standard (expected), Great (strong)

## 2.6 Shifting Position in Play

Position changes as fiction changes:

- **Improve Position:** Smart prep, flanking, leverage, correct tools, or spending a Boon (+1 step).
- **Worsen Position:** Alarms, time pressure, being pinned, darkness, or GM SB spend (−1 step).

[Evolving Position] **Start:** Controlled (quiet corridor). **After a noisy lockpick (SB=1):** Risky (guards alerted). **After reinforcements arrive (SB=2):** Desperate (crossfire, no cover).

## 2.7 Outcome Matrix

| Result                             | What Happens                                      |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Successes DV, 0 SB                 | Clean Success: Intent achieved                    |
| Successes DV, 1+ SB                | 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)] GM spends SB to introduce narrative twists:

- **1 SB:** Minor pressure (noise, trace, +1 Supply)
- **2 SB:** Moderate setback (alarm, lose position, lesser foe)
- **3 SB:** Serious trouble (reinforcements, gear breaks)
- **4+ SB:** Major turn (trap springs, authority arrives)

## 3 Description Ladder

How you describe actions affects the roll:

- **Basic:** Roll as-is (all 1s generate SB)
- **Detailed:** Re-roll one die showing 1
- **Intricate:** Re-roll all 1s + add flourish on success

**Note:** Re-rolling 1s doesn't remove their SB; new 1s on re-rolls add more SB.

## 4 Boons: Reward for Meaningful Failure

When you **Miss** (0 successes) on a significant action with stated stakes, gain **2 Boons**.

When you achieve a **Partial** (successes < DV but > 0), gain **1 Boon**.

### 4.1 Using Boons

- Re-roll one die in any pool
- Activate an on-screen Asset
- Improve Position by 1 step
- Convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (once per session, max 2 XP)

### 4.2 Boon Limits

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

### 4.3 Action Economy

Each character turn consists of:

- **1 Action:** Attack, cast, use a skill, or perform another significant task.
- **1 Move:** Shift one Range Band (Close Near or Near Far). A Dash (costs the Action) moves two bands.

Some talents or abilities may grant bonus actions, reactions, or allow splitting one action into multiple smaller tasks. Channeled magic may require multiple actions across turns, and fatigue or harm may restrict available actions.

## 5 Combat System

Combat uses the same core mechanic with tactical positioning.

### 5.1 Combat Procedure

1. Declare action and approach
2. GM sets Position (Dominant/Controlled/Desperate)
3. Roll Attribute + Skill dice
4. Count successes vs DV, 1s generate SB
5. GM resolves outcome and spends SB

[Combat Position] In combat, Position reflects immediate danger *this exchange*:

- **Controlled:** Advantage, cover, tempo.
- **Risky:** Default melee exchange, shifting ground.
- **Desperate:** Outnumbered, flanked, exposed, or under a doom clock.

GM can shift Position mid-round with SB spends or fictional turns (terrain, reinforcements, hazards).

## 5.2 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.

## 5.3 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 (Controlled → Risky → 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.

## 5.4 Harm System

- **Level 1:** Minor injury (−1 die to related actions)
- **Level 2:** Serious wound (−1 die to most actions)
- **Level 3:** Critical injury (incapacitated/dying)

## 5.5 Tactical Clocks

Track persistent combat conditions:



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

## 6 Magic System

### 6.1 Three Paths of Magic

- **Caster (Freeform):** Weave & Cast using Eight Elements (requires Caster's Gift)
- **Rites User (Runekeeper):** Patron-based rituals with Obligation (requires Codex)
- **Invoker (Symbol Path):** Ritual magic using Patron Symbols

### 6.2 Magic in Combat

- Casting: Channel + Weave = 2 actions
- Rites: 1 action to Invoke (can Push for +1 Obligation)
- Invokers: DV + 1 Player Turns for rituals, or Crack the Seal for instant cast

### 6.3 Examples by Path

**Caster (Freeform).** **Weave Fire + Channel Spirit** to lash a flaming whip (DV 3, Risky, Standard Effect). **Weave Stone** to raise cover (DV 2, Controlled, Limited→Standard with tools).

**Runekeeper (Rites).** **Bind Sigil:** Restrain a foe in spectral chains (DV =  $\max(\text{Obligation} - \text{Spirit}, \text{Tier})$ ; +1 Obligation on Push). **Ward Line:** Draw a boundary spirits cannot cross (as above; Partial = shorter duration).

**Invoker (Symbols).** **Seal of Storms:** Call a lightning strike (DV 4, Risky; *Crack the Seal* for instant cast but Desperate). **Seal of Veils:** Cloak an area in shimmering concealment (DV 3; Partial = flickers under stress).

### 6.4 Disruption & Push

- **Interrupted:** If a caster is silenced, disarmed, or *harmed before resolution*, the spell/rite fails.
- **Push:** Resolve now with added risk—mark +1 Fatigue or +1 Obligation/Corruption as appropriate.

[Interrupted Casting] A Cantor begins a hymn (DV 3). Before resolution, an arrow deals Harm 1. The Song is *Interrupted*: treat as Failure and generate SB from any rolled 1s.

## 7 Character Creation

### 7.1 Starting Build

- **30 XP** to spend
- Attributes: 1-3, Skills: 0-2
- Can take bonds (+2 XP) and complications (+4 XP total)

### 7.2 Key Talents

- **Caster's Gift (2 XP)**: Freeform magic access
- **Familiar (2 XP)**: Patron features access
- **Codex (4 XP)**: Runekeeper rites and Obligation
- **Patron's Symbol (4 XP)**: Invoker ritual access

## 8 Range Bands & Movement

### 8.1 Range Bands

- **Close**: Arm's reach, melee combat
- **Near**: Same room/area, quick movement
- **Far**: Distant but same location
- **Absent**: Off-screen, requires travel

### 8.2 Movement

- 1 Move shifts one band (CloseNear or NearFar)
- Dash (action) shifts two bands
- Melee Flag: Mark engaged opponents in Near range

## 9 Travel Framework

### 9.1 Travel Procedure

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

## 10 Deck of Consequences

Optional tool for narrative complications:

- **Hearts:** Social/emotional complications
- **Spades:** Physical/violent setbacks
- **Clubs:** Resource/wealth problems
- **Diamonds:** Mystical/supernatural events

### 10.1 Deck Triggers & Suits

**Draw 1** when any of the following occurs (max 3 draws/scene):

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

**Suits:** *Spades* = harm/danger, *Hearts* = social/reputation, *Clubs* = resources/fatigue, *Diamonds* = arcane/mystical.

## 11 Advancement

### 11.1 XP Awards

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

### 11.2 Spending XP

- Attributes: New rating  $\times$  3 XP
- Skills: New level  $\times$  2 XP
- Talents: As listed (2-6+ XP)
- Followers:  $\text{Cap}^2$  XP

## 12 GM Quick Reference

### 12.1 Adjudication Loop

1. Player describes intent and approach
2. Set DV (2-5+) and Position
3. Roll pool = Attribute + Skill
4. Count successes (6+) and SB (1s)
5. Resolve outcome from matrix
6. Spend SB for complications

[SB Spend: Scene Dials] >1 X 1 SB Minor pressure: worsen Position *or* tick a 4/6 clock by 1, reveal a soft complication.

2 SB Moderate setback: remove cover, split the party, tick environmental clock, call a lesser foe.

3 SB Serious trouble: reinforcements, break a key asset, force a hard choice, escalate Position to Desperate.

4+ SB Major turn: scene transformation, authority arrival, collapse/eruption, Patron interference.

## 13 Worked Examples

[From Controlled to Desperate] **Setup:** Thane (Controlled) charges a hex-brute (DV 3). **Roll:** 6d10 → 10, 9, 7, 6, 3, 1. Successes=5, SB=1. **Outcome:** Hit lands (Great Effect). GM spends 1 SB: rubble collapses, reducing cover. **Next Beat:** Lyra's shot is now *Risky*. Another 2 SB later, reinforcements arrive—Position drops to *Desperate*.

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

**Roll:** Wits 2 + Stealth 2 = 4d10 → 8, 6, 3, 1

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

**Outcome:** Lock opens, GM spends 1 SB: "The lock clicks open but the last tumbler makes a loud snap - guards turn toward the sound."

[Combat Attack] **Situation:** Kael attacks cultist with imbued blade

**Roll:** Body 3 + Melee 2 = 5d10 → 9, 7, 5, 2, 1

**Result:** 3 successes ( DV 2), 1 SB

**Outcome:** Cultist defeated, GM spends 1 SB: "Blood sprays across the ritual sigil - energy flares, accelerating the summoning."

[Partial Success] **Situation:** Negotiating with a suspicious merchant

**Roll:** Presence 3 + Sway 2 = 5d10 → 7, 6, 4, 3, 1

**Result:** 2 successes (< DV 3), 1 SB

**Outcome:** Partial success - deal possible but with harsh terms, gain 1 Boon. GM spends 1 SB: "The merchant agrees but demands an additional favor later."

## 14 Getting Started

### 14.1 Session 1 Agenda (60–120 minutes fast start)

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

1. Create characters with 30 XP
2. GM prepares starting situation using travel framework
3. Play through scenes using core resolution system
4. Award XP based on accomplishments and choices
5. Let consequences drive the narrative forward

[Key Design Principles]

- **Narrative Primacy:** Mechanics serve the story
- **Risk as Drama:** Every roll carries potential cost
- **Meaningful Growth:** Advancement changes characters and world
- **Consequence Weight:** Choices ripple outward
- **Fail Forward:** Misses fuel future opportunities

**Remember: In Fate’s Edge, nothing is free. Every victory has a price, and every choice shapes the world around you.**

## 15 Core Resolution

### 15.1 The Art of Consequence

All significant actions follow this three-step process:

1. **Approach:** Player describes intent and method in narrative terms.
2. **Execution:** Roll a pool equal to Attribute + Skill (in d10s). Each die of 6–10 counts as a success. Each die showing 1 generates a Story Beat (SB), which the GM spends to introduce complications.
3. **Outcome:** Compare successes against the Difficulty Value (DV). GM interprets results using Position & Effect, resolving clean success, partial progress, or costly failure.

## 15.2 Group Actions

When multiple PCs attempt the *same* task together, choose a leader:

- **Pool:** Leader rolls normally; up to two allies add +1 die each if fictionally helping.
- **SB:** Every 1 rolled by any participant still generates SB for the GM.
- **Consequence Spread:** On Partial/Miss, the GM may split costs among helpers (harm, position loss, resource ticks).

## 16 Sample Characters

These pre-generated characters let you jump into play immediately.

### 16.1 Kael, Blade of the Dawn

IX

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**Attributes** Body 3, Wits 2, Spirit 2, Presence 2

**Skills** Melee 2, Athletics 1, Survival 1, Command 1

**Talents** Familiar (Patron: Isoka), Caster's Gift

**Notes** A wandering knight who channels sunlight through his blade. Strong frontline presence.

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### 16.2 Seris, Whisper of Ash

IX

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**Attributes** Body 1, Wits 3, Spirit 3, Presence 2

**Skills** Stealth 2, Arcana 2, Deception 1, Insight 1

**Talents** Codex (Runekeeper Rites), Patron's Symbol

**Notes** Shadow-touched rite-user who bargains with forbidden patrons. Plays with risk and consequence.

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### 16.3 Daro, Lantern-Guide

IX

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**Attributes** Body 2, Wits 2, Spirit 3, Presence 3

**Skills** Sway 2, Insight 2, Lore 2, Craft 1

**Talents** Invoker (Patron Symbols), Boon Recovery

**Notes** A traveling mystic who keeps groups together with charm and ritual light. Excellent support character.

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## 17 Regional Seeds

## 18 Regional Seeds

### 18.1 Roadside Waystation (d6)

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| d6 | Detail  |
|----|---|
| 1  | Overcrowded caravan yard; prices up 50%.          |
| 2  | Quiet, watchful guards; rumors of a witch-binder. |
| 3  | Shrine with flickering offerings; patron omens.   |
| 4  | Black-market stall (forbidden components).        |
| 5  | Hungry refugees; Supplies Clock starts at 2/6.    |
| 6  | Rival mercs arrived first; Reputation Clock +1.   |

---

### 18.2 Collapsing Ruins (d6)

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| d6 | Feature   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Singing stone; echoes worsen Position on a 1.       |
| 2  | Rune vents; Arcane Backwash [6] starts at 1/6.      |
| 3  | Knife-thin ledges; Athletics DV +1 while moving.    |
| 4  | Bound spirit; can bargain (Boon cost) for guidance. |
| 5  | Unstable pillars; Environmental Collapse +1/tick.   |
| 6  | Hidden reliquary; discovery grants 1 XP each.       |

---

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---

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| 4  | Bound spirit; can bargain (Boon cost) for guidance. |
| 5  | Unstable pillars; Environmental Collapse +1/tick.   |
| 6  | Hidden reliquary; discovery grants 1 XP each.       |

## 18.5 Travel Roles & Beats

Assign any of the following:

- **Guide:** Sets route; on success, DV −1 for movement challenges.
- **Scout:** Spots hazards; on success, ignore the next 1 SB spend.
- **Quartermaster:** Manages supplies; on success, reduce Supplies Clock by 1.
- **Watch:** Prevents ambush; on success, improve Position to Controlled at scene start.

Advance the **Travel Clock** [4]; on completion, roll a regional generator or trigger a set-piece.

## 19 Starter Scenario: The Lantern at Dusk

This scenario is designed for one session (3–4 hours) with 3–5 players. It introduces travel, core resolution, combat, and magic.

### 19.1 Premise

The party is hired to escort a relic lantern across the haunted trade road known as the Duskway. Rumor says that when the lantern is lit, forgotten souls stir. Your Patron, allies, or enemies may all have stakes in whether it arrives intact.

### 19.2 Setup

- Party begins at **Tier I** unless continuing from pregens.
- Relic Lantern: counts as an Asset. If broken or stolen, Patron consequences are triggered.
- GM prepares a **Travel Clock** [4] to represent the Duskway journey.

### 19.3 Encounter Seeds

#### 1. Crossing the Shattered Bridge



- DV 3 to cross safely (Athletics, Survival, or Craft).
- SB Spend: falling stones, reinforcements on far side, time pressure.
- On failure: bridge partially collapses, advance Travel Clock +1.

## 2. The Toll of Cinders

- Bandits demand toll: 4 SB already banked by GM.
- Negotiation (Presence + Sway/Deception) or Combat.
- Success = pass unharmed; Partial = pass but lose 1 valuable item; Miss = fight breaks out.

## 3. Lantern Awakens

- When Travel Clock fills, lantern flares with ghostlight.
- PCs face **Restless Dead Mob [6-Clock]**.
- SB Spend: Lantern leaks corruption; terrain becomes treacherous; Patron stirs.

## 19.4 Scene Clocks

- **Travel Clock [4]**: Each leg of the journey. Complications on completion.
- **Lantern Integrity [6]**: Advances whenever lantern is damaged, corrupted, or stolen.
- **Bandit Morale [4]**: Collapse if filled by player pressure or SB spend.

## 19.5 Possible Outcomes

- **Success**: Relic Lantern delivered. Each PC gains +6 XP, Patron's favor, and 1 new contact.
- **Mixed**: Lantern arrives damaged or corrupted. PCs gain XP but also an ongoing Obligation to a Patron.
- **Failure**: Lantern lost. PCs earn only +2 XP, and GM introduces a new Patron Foe in the next session.

## 19.6 Scaling Notes

- At Tier III or IV, increase DV by +1 and add an additional Mob clock.
- Higher-tier parties should face rival Patron agents instead of common bandits.

## 19.7 Travel Roles & Beats

Assign any of the following:

- **Guide**: Sets route; on success, DV −1 for movement challenges.

- **Scout:** Spots hazards; on success, ignore the next 1 SB spend.
- **Quartermaster:** Manages supplies; on success, reduce Supplies Clock by 1.
- **Watch:** Prevents ambush; on success, improve Position to Controlled at scene start.

Advance the **Travel Clock** [4]; on completion, roll a regional generator or trigger a set-piece.

## 20 Quick GM Toolkit

This section provides essential tools for running Fate’s Edge in one-shots or campaigns.

### 20.1 Session Pacing

- **Opening Hook (15–20 minutes):** Establish stakes, characters, and first challenge.
- **Rising Action (60–90 minutes):** Build tension through Travel, Social, or Combat encounters.
- **Climax (45–60 minutes):** Present a high-stakes scene where SB economy and Position matter most.
- **Resolution (15 minutes):** Award XP, check Boons, note Patron consequences.

### 20.2 The GM Loop

1. Set Position (Dominant/Controlled/Desperate) and DV (2–5+).
2. Roll Attribute + Skill; 6+ counts as a success, 1s generate SB.
3. Check outcome matrix (Success, Success+Cost, Partial, Miss).
4. Spend SB to escalate the scene or introduce complications.
5. Advance clocks, adjust fiction, keep momentum moving.

### 20.3 SB Economy in Play

- **Start with 0 SB.** Build tension by banking SB from rolls.
- **Spend early and often.** Players should feel pressure from minor setbacks before the climax.
- **Escalate deliberately.** Move from 1 SB annoyances (noise, broken gear) toward 3+ SB scene-changers.
- **Never hoard SB.** Idle SB deflates tension; active SB drives story forward.

[GM as Facilitator] Your job isn’t to defeat the players—it’s to *spend SB to keep the story moving*. State stakes, set Position and DV, honor player creativity, and let consequences reframe scenes rather than stall them.

## 20.4 Using Clocks

Clocks are visual timers representing threats, conditions, or long-term stakes.

- **4-Clock:** Short obstacle (guard patrol, quick chase).
- **6-Clock:** Standard challenge (mob fight, corruption spread).
- **8-Clock:** Major arc or environmental shift (siege, collapsing fortress).

Mark slices as progress is made or SB triggers complications.

## 20.5 Framing Consequences

When spending SB, consider four categories:

- **Harm:** Injuries, fatigue, or resource drain.
- **Position:** Shift from Controlled → Risky → Desperate.
- **Resources:** Supplies, wealth, or equipment lost.
- **Fictional Twist:** Patron interference, rival arrival, mystical surge.

## 20.6 GM Principles

- **Consequence First:** Always tie outcomes back to the fiction.
- **Escalate, Don't Stall:** Failure should push story forward, not shut it down.
- **Respect Player Creativity:** Reward intricate descriptions with rerolls and narrative weight.
- **Patrons Matter:** Use them as ever-present forces shaping the world and complicating choices.

## 20.7 Improvisation Tools

- **Deck of Consequences:** Draw a suit to inspire a complication type.
- **Yes, But...:** On partial success, grant progress with a cost.
- **No, And...:** On a miss, deny intent and introduce new pressure.
- **Flashbacks:** Allow players to spend Boons or XP to retroactively prepare for a twist.

## 20.8 XP Reminders

At session end, award XP for:

- Meaningful risks taken.
- Discovery of new truths or places.
- Advancement of character Bonds or Complications.
- Defining victories or defeats tied to Patrons.

## 21 What's Next?

You now have everything needed to run Fate's Edge with your friends. This Quickstart is intentionally light, focusing on the core loop and essential rules. For more depth:

- Explore the **Full SRD** for expanded rules, advanced talents, and detailed GM advice.
- Try a short arc using the **Travel Framework** and let consequences ripple outward.
- Experiment with **Patron play**, integrating Rites, Obligation, and Symbol Paths into long-term campaigns.

*Remember: Every choice carries weight. Every roll is a step toward destiny or downfall.*

## 22 Designer's Notes

Fate's Edge was built around these guiding ideas:

1. **Fail Forward:** Failure is story fuel, not a dead end.
2. **Fiction First:** The dice matter, but description always comes before resolution.
3. **Consequences Drive Drama:** Risk creates tension, tension creates story.
4. **Player Agency:** Characters reshape the world through their actions, bargains, and sacrifices.

The Quickstart emphasizes a *learn by play* approach. Rather than memorizing charts, lean on the Outcome Matrix, SB spends, and clocks as your core tools.

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

## Quick GM Reference

|X|

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**Position** Dominant (safe edge), Controlled (typical), Desperate (high risk / high reward)

---

**Effect** Limited (partial impact), Standard (full), Great (above expectation)

---

**Fatigue** Each Fatigue adds a *re-roll* on successes. At 4+, start marking Harm.

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**Harm** Harm 1 = Minor (narrative drag). Harm 2 = Moderate (roll penalties). Harm 3 = Severe (loss of Action type). Harm 4 = Incapacitated.

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**Story Beats (SB)** GM spends 1–3 SB for Complications: clock advances, enemy reinforcements, resource drain, position shift.

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**Deck of Consequences** Spades = Harm, Hearts = Social, Clubs = Resource, Diamonds = Arcane. Draw on critical failure/Desperate fallout.

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## Example Rites

### Ward of Ash (Runekeeper)

**Cost:** 1 Fatigue. **Effect:** Allies gain +1 Position against environmental hazards for the scene. **Risk:** If disrupted (Harm 2+), the ward collapses.

### Cantor's Lament (Invoker)

**Cost:** 2 Fatigue, 1 SB to GM. **Effect:** Create a Desperate push: target must re-roll their highest die. **Risk:** Adds corruption clock tick.

### Flame-Bind (Invoker/Hybrid)

**Cost:** 1 Fatigue. **Effect:** Target restrained until they spend an Action to break free. **Risk:** On 1, flame spreads—Deck draw (Clubs).

## Regional Flavor (Quick d6)

### Duskway Caravan Route

1. Lantern-lit rest point, but half the supplies are spoiled. 2. Patrol demands a toll “for your safety.” 3. Sky full of storm-hawks—ominous omen. 4. Collapsed bridge, reroute through marsh. 5. A rival caravan overtakes you, tensions rise. 6. Abandoned shrine still warm from use.

### Sunken Archive Approaches

1. Drowned staircases leading nowhere. 2. Statue’s eyes weep brine that whispers secrets. 3. Crabs dragging torn pages into holes. 4. Broken ward runes flash at random. 5. Submerged corridor hides skeletal guardians. 6. Vault door pulses with faint light.

## Sample Characters (30 XP)

### Thane, the Shield-Bearer

Body 4, heavy armor, Inspire 1, Harm soak. **Edge:** Can absorb Harm to raise Position for allies.

### Kestra, the Voice

Body 2, Inspire 3, Boon support. **Edge:** Generates Boons when allies fail nearby.

### Lyra, the Scout

Body 3, ranged specialist, Mobility 2. **Edge:** +1 Effect when striking from new Position.

### Cael, the Cantor

Body 2, Invocation 3. **Edge:** Gains a free Boon when pushing corruption clock.

## .1 The GM Quick-Kit: Fast, Fluid Adjudication

When the game is moving fast, you do not need deep rules recall—you need simple tools that make confident decisions. The Quick-Kit turns the entire SRD into fast, actionable choices.

### .1.1 1. Five-Second Position & Effect

Ask these two questions:

## What is the Risk?

**Controlled:** Safe, prepared, low threat

**Risky (default):** Pressure, danger, uncertainty

**Desperate:** Immediate danger, overmatched, exposed

## What is the Impact?

**Limited:** Partial progress or minor effect

**Standard (default):** Normal success

**Great:** Powerful, overwhelming, high-impact

*Example:* A player charges a cultist across open ground. Risk = standard danger ( $\Rightarrow$  Risky). Impact = standard attack ( $\Rightarrow$  Standard). **Risky / Standard. Roll.**

### .1.2 2. The Lazy DV Table

Pick DV based on narrative weight, not math.

| 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 |

**If in doubt: DV = 3.**

### .1.3 3. No-Thinking SB Spending

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

#### **Spend 1 SB:**

Minor complication.

Noise, track left behind, small loss of gear, or tick a clock +1

#### **Spend 2 SB:**

Moderate complication.

Alarm raised, lose Position, broken tool, tougher foe, or tick a clock +2

#### **Spend 3+ SB:**

Major complication.

Reinforcements, collapsing terrain, ally endangered, or fill 3+ clock segments

Never overthink it. One spend is enough.

#### .1.4 4. The Three-Clock Rule

Only three active clocks at once:

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

If a new complication appears, fold it into an existing clock. This keeps the table focused and the fiction tight.

#### .1.5 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 a force wall under fire? TAG = Barrier, scale = Scene  $\Rightarrow$  DV 3. Casting in melee  $\Rightarrow$  Risky. **Risky / Standard, DV 3. Roll.**

**The Director Mindset.** You are not a rules engine. You are a director choosing the next shot:

- Clean win
- Costly win
- Partial success
- Spiraling disaster

Use the Quick-Kit to make fast decisions and keep the story moving.

## A Core Principles

### A.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.



## A.2 A World of Consequences

### A.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.

### A.2.2 The Central Question

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

### A.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.

## A.3 Key Concepts

### A.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.

### A.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.

### A.3.3 Affinity

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

### A.3.4 Prestige Abilities

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

### A.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.

## B Core Mechanic

### B.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

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#### 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.

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[Difficulty Ladder] IX

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#### DV Typical Case

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- 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

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*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:

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

**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**Risky:** +1**Controlled:** +0**Dominant:** -1

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

[Outcome Matrix] IX

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**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.

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**Fail Forward: Every Roll Matters** **Partials 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.

### B.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.

### B.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).

### B.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.

#### B.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.

#### B.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 ( $\geq 6$ ) and  $C$  be SB (number of 1s rolled).

| Case                    | Guidance  |
|-------------------------|---|
| $S \geq DV$ and $C = 0$ | <b>Clean Success:</b> Deliver the intent crisply.                             |
| $S \geq DV$ and $C > 0$ | <b>Success &amp; Cost:</b> Grant the intent; spend/bank SB for complications. |
| $0 < S < DV$            | <b>Partial:</b> Progress with a fork. Award 1 boon                            |
| $S = 0$                 | <b>Miss:</b> No progress. Cash/bank SB. Award 2 boons                         |

[title=**Critical Success & GM Heat**,colback=white!97!gray,colframe=black!80!gray,sharp corners,boxrule=0.4pt] **Rule Summary.** A *Critical Success* represents a decisive shift in control, while *GM Heat* measures the world's reaction to the heroes' growing dominance.

#### Crit Effect.

On a Critical Success, immediately **raise your Position** by one step:

Desperate  $\rightarrow$  Risky  $\rightarrow$  Controlled  $\rightarrow$  **Dominant.**

If already at *Dominant*, gain **+1 Success** instead.

Each Crit also adds **+1 Heat** to the GM's pool.

#### Dominant Position.

Dominant is the highest attainable Position, representing decisive advantage. While Dominant:

- All actions begin with one automatic success.

- Further Crits add +1 Success per excess tier.
- Any Complication, Consequence, or GM Heat spend immediately lowers Position by one step.

### GM Heat.

Heat reflects rising narrative tension. It resets to 0 at the end of each scene.

- **Gain 1 Heat:** Whenever any player scores a Crit.
- **Spend 1 Heat:**
  - Degrade a PC’s Position by one tier.
  - Introduce a Complication or Clock tick.
  - Mirror or escalate a previous Story Beat.
- **Spend 2 Heat:** Manifest a major twist, environmental hazard, or factional response.

**Balance and Flow.** • Spending *Momentum* or invoking a Rite while Dominant consumes your edge, returning Position to Controlled.

- GM Heat ensures rising power is met with proportional world response, maintaining narrative tension.

### Result Bands.

| Result                      | Effect                       | Position Shift |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Miss (1–3)                  | Failure + Cost               | ↓ 1 tier       |
| Weak Hit (4–6)              | Success + Consequence        | —              |
| Strong Hit (7–9)            | Clean Success                | —              |
| <b>Crit (10 or 2 at 8+)</b> | Position Bump + +1 Heat (GM) | ↑ 1 tier       |
| <b>Crit while Dominant</b>  | +1 Success + +1 Heat (GM)    | —              |

**Design Intent.** This rule transforms Crits from “bigger wins” into shifts in control and tension. Players’ momentum raises their Position, while GM Heat keeps the narrative world responsive, ensuring ebb and flow without trivializing challenge.

## B.2 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> |

### B.2.1 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.

| @    Y@       |                                     |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 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:

| @    Y@  |  |                               |
|----------|--|-------------------------------|
| 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.

### B.3 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.

### B.4 Time Guidance Framework

#### B.4.1 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.

#### B.4.2 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.

## B.5 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 (Controlled → Risky → 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.

## B.6 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.

## B.7 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.

### B.7.1 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.

## B.8 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.

## B.9 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.

## B.10 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.

## B.11 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.

## C Combat Encounters

### C.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.

### C.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.

### C.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.

### C.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).

## D 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.

## D.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.

## D.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.

## D.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.

## D.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.

## D.5 Weapons & Armor

### D.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.

### D.5.2 Weapon Tags (Optional, +4 XP each, max 2)

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

## D.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*

## D.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.



## D.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.

## D.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.

## D.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.”

### D.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

## E 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.

## F Miniatures and Tactical Layer

### F.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.

### F.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.

### F.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.

### F.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.

### F.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).

## F.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.

## F.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.

## F.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.

## G Talents and Advancement

### G.1 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.

## G.2 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.

## G.3 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.

## G.4 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.

## G.5 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).

## H Melee Combat Talents

### H.1 Minor Talents

#### H.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.

#### H.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.

#### H.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.

#### H.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.

### H.2 Major Talents

#### H.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.

### H.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.

### H.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)

**Requirements:** 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 on the *Channel* or initial roll. This talent allows the caster to veil magic in story, song, or symbol rather than force.

**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.

## H.3 Prestige Talents

### H.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.

## H.4 Epic Talents

### H.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.

## H.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.

## H.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?

## H.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.

## H.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.*

## H.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.

### H.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

### H.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

#### Major Enchantments (6+ XP):

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

### H.9.3 Sample Enchantments

#### Weapon Enchantments:

- **Keen Edge (2 XP):** +1 die to hit against armored targets
- **Flaming Blade (4 XP):** Deals Fire elemental damage, +1 Effect vs cold creatures
- **Soulfire Weapon (6 XP):** Ignores 1 point of armor, deals Spirit damage
- **Thunder Hammer (8 XP):** On critical hit, knockback adjacent targets (Hazard +2)

#### 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 per scene, phase through 1 attack (become intangible)

#### H.9.4 Enchantment Limitations

- Maximum enchantments = Spirit attribute (prevents stacking abuse)
- Enchantments on same item cannot stack if they provide identical benefits
- Damaged/Neglected equipment may lose enchantment benefits temporarily
- Removing enchantments requires ritual (Arcana DV 4) and costs 1 XP per enchantment level

#### H.9.5 Creating New Enchantments

Use existing Talents as benchmarks:

- Minor (2-4 XP): Equivalent to small narrative tricks or situational bonuses
- Major (6-8 XP): Comparable to significant mechanical edges or new capabilities
- Prestige (10+ XP): Campaign-defining effects similar to Patron abilities

Price enchantments relative to their mechanical impact and campaign power level.

## I 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.

### I.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.

### I.2 Casting (Freeform)

**Weave & Cast** Casters describe the effect in terms of the Eight Elements (Earth, Fire, Air, Water, Fate, Life, Luck, Death). The GM sets DV and Effect based on scope.

- **Weave:** Player builds dice pool and rolls. On success, they stabilize the spell's form.
- **Cast:** A second roll channels the effect into the world.

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

**Limits** Casters can attempt any effect that can be described, but the larger the scope, the higher the DV. Improvisation is costly; reliable effects require repeated use and narrative justification.

### I.3 Rites Users (Runekeepers)

**Requirements** A Patron bond, a Thiasos (Familiar; small spirit in the form of a creature/construct), and a Codex (4 XP) mark a character as a Runekeeper.

#### Invocation

- **Action Cost:** Invoking a Rite requires 1 Action.
- **Obligation:** Each Rite used marks Obligation on its clock.
- **Push It:** Once per Rite, you may Push to increase its duration or potency by +1 step at the cost of +1 Obligation.

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

### I.4 Rites Difficulty Value

The Difficulty Value (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. This reflects the Patron's toll for the magic.

#### Spirit:

The caster's Spirit attribute. Each point reduces the effective weight of the Obligation, representing inner resilience and willpower.

#### Tier:

The Rite's intrinsic difficulty based on scope or potency. DV can never fall below this floor.

### I.5 Invokers (Symbol Path)

#### Patron's Symbol

- **Minor Asset, 4 XP each.**
- Each Symbol is consecrated to one Patron and grants ritual access to that Patron's Rites.
- You may hold multiple Symbols, one per Patron.

## Rite Invocation via Symbol

- **Time.** Invoking a Rite via Symbol takes DV + 1 rounds.
- **Obligation.** On completion, mark +1 Obligation (in addition to any listed Rite costs, if applicable).
- **No Push.** Invoker Rites cannot use *Push It* benefits.
- **Symbol Display.** The Symbol must remain visible throughout the invocation.
- **Materials.** Symbols replace any Thaisos and Codex requirements.

**Crack the Seal (Instant Cast)** As part of an Invoker Rite, you may immediately resolve the effect by setting the Symbol to *Compromised* and marking +2 Obligation segments (+3 if High-Power). The GM may spend 1 SB on-theme. The Symbol remains but must be restored in downtime.

**Restoring Symbols** A Compromised Symbol is inert until repaired. Use a downtime action and test (DV 3 or fiction-appropriate). Success restores it; a shaky result leaves it Neglected (rituals work but cost +1 Obligation).

## Invoker Path Limitations

- Cannot Push.
- Max simultaneous rituals = Spirit. Starting a new ritual ends the oldest or adds +1 Obligation to it.
- Carrying 4+ Symbols causes interference: the first ritual each scene marks +1 extra Obligation.

## I.6 Patron's Gift (Imbuements)

### Patron's Gift (Free, Requires Thiasos)

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

Effect: Imbue one item with +1 Weapon (Melee) and +1 Thematic Skill (Patron domain) 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).

## I.7 Mixing the Paths

Players may combine Casting, Rites, and Invoking, but each path introduces its own bookkeeping:

- Casters track Backlash.
- Rites users track Obligation.
- Invokers track Symbol states (Maintained, Neglected, Compromised).

Mixing provides flexibility but less efficiency than specialization. Specialists gain stronger benefits, while mixers gain narrative breadth.

## J 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.

## K 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 (§J). Players may accept +1 (SB) to push an effect one step (position/effect/scale) if fictionally supported.

### 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 (§J).

- **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.

## L 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 (15 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*; 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.

### Corruption Clock

- You gain a personal **Corruption Clock** equal in segments to your **Body** rating.
- Each time you cast a Song or whenever the Keeper spends a Story Beat involving you, mark +1 segment.
- When the Clock fills:
  - You immediately gain a trait of corruption from the **last Patron** whose Rite you performed.
  - All of your followers, retainers, or familiars also gain a trait of the same corruption (NPCs manifest visibly unsettling traits).



- Reset the Clock to empty.
- Corruption traits gained in this way fade at the next Downtime, unless reinforced by further Patron influence.

## Outcomes

### Success:

The Low Rite takes effect as written.

### Partial:

The Rite manifests with reduced effect (–1 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:

- Song resolves immediately instead of next round.
- Mark **Fatigue 1**.
- Add +1 to your **Corruption Clock**.
- Keeper immediately triggers a **Story Beat**, representing fallout from a Patron, the Road, or social attention.

## 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 Keeper’s discretion.
- **Obligation Transference:** Whenever a Rite would increase Obligation, it instead increases Corruption—the debt taken into the soul, not the ledger.

## Downtime Transition

At any Downtime, a character with **Cantor’s Path** may permanently exchange this talent for initiation into a Thiasos and access to its Codex. This represents the Patron or their agents taking note of the Cantor’s repeated Songs and recruiting them into a formal structure. The Cantor loses their personal **Corruption Clock** and instead adopts the standard **Obligation** and **Codex access** mechanics of a Runekeeper. Any existing corruption traits carry forward as “first marks” of Patronal bond, shaping how the Thiasos views and employs them.

## L.1 Corruption Fading

### Natural Fading

At the beginning of each Downtime, reduce a character's current **Corruption** by 1 segment. Lingering or “pesky” effects, such as Patron whispers or moral distortions, persist until they are addressed through roleplay or explicit purification. Natural Fading represents the quiet grace of time and distance, but not absolution.

### Act of Contrition

Perform a genuine act that contradicts the Patron's influence or repairs its harm. Suitable examples include:

- Publicly oppose the Patron's themes or agents.
- Aid those harmed by similar Corruption.
- Destroy symbols or relics of the Patron's dominion.
- Make amends with those offended by your past actions.

**Effect:** Remove 1 Corruption segment and clear one persistent effect. Contrition must cost the character something—reputation, certainty, or comfort—to be genuine.

### Ritual Purification

Undertake an act of cleansing aligned with faith, penance, or sacred balance. Common examples include:

- Seek absolution from an opposing or rival divine figure.
- Complete a pilgrimage or penitent journey.
- Perform service for those harmed by your actions.

**Effect:** Remove 2 Corruption segments and clear all persistent effects. The Keeper may require the character to mark temporary Fatigue or Obligation to represent penance.

### Patron Bargain

Negotiate directly with the Patron that marked you. A bargain may take many forms:

- Accept a divine or infernal quest in service to the Patron's goals.
- Trade **Obligation** for **Corruption** at a 1:2 ratio.
- Offer something of deep personal or moral value.

**Effect:** Remove 1–3 Corruption segments depending on the quality and gravity of the exchange. This method never comes without consequence; the Keeper should introduce a narrative cost or condition.

### Bound Grace

If a character retains unresolved **Obligation** to the same Patron, their **Corruption** cannot fall below 1. Divine debt stains even the most earnest repentance until service is rendered or renounced.

## Persistence

Corruption effects do not clear through rest or routine healing. They require deliberate narrative resolution, confession, or meaningful acts of change. Every method above is an opportunity for character development and moral play, not bookkeeping.

## High Cantor (24 XP Major Talent) *Prerequisite: Tier II+*

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 and gains +1 die to its primary effect.
- You automatically mark +1 **Corruption** after resolution.
- This bonus stacks with *Push It* but cannot be reduced or transferred.

**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 from entities attuned to that frequency. Repeated use within a single scene risks drawing the Keeper’s focus: add +1 DV to all subsequent *Resolve* rolls for moral fatigue.

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

## L.2 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 @

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| 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* (2 XP) *Codex* (4 XP) + Familiar (2 XP) *Patron’s Symbol* (4 XP each)

**How It Works** Call (1 action) → Bind (Boon/Fatigue) → Command. Spirit acts each round, tied to a **Leash** clock Perform Song (1 action) → 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

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**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.

## M 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

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### Mechanic Description and Requirements

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**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** Set Leash = **Cap** + **Command** 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 split focus, a rival contests it, it moves *Close* → *Far* rapidly, or crosses a [WARD] (*DV* = *Cap*).

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

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## 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:** Record Leash = **Cap** + **Command** segments. Draw a clock to track strain.
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 split focus or perform other significant actions while it acts on your order, 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.

## 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 their summoner.
- **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.

**Example.** *Kestra calls a Cap 3 fire elemental to aid in battle. She spends 1 Boon to Bind it. The elemental's Leash is 7 segments (3 + Command 4). When it takes Harm, the GM ticks the Leash. Later, Kestra splits focus to issue orders while attacking, ticking again. Careful management and Boon Finesse keep the bond stable—until the elemental's fury tests her will.*

# N Story Beats and Boons

## N.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.

### N.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.



### N.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).

### N.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.

## N.2 Boons

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

### N.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.

### N.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).

### N.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.

## N.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.

## N.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.*

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

## O 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.

## P 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.

## Q 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*.

## R 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).

## S 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)

## T 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.

## U 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.

## V 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.

## W 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.

## X 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).

## Y 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.

### Y.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 §U).

**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.

## Z 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.

## 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.

### .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.

## 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.

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.

### .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.

### .2 Casting and Free-Form Magic

Improvised casting is possible with the **Caster's Gift** Talent (**2 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.



### .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.

### 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.

### .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.

Table 2: Rituals at a Glance

| Rituals at a Glance |      |            |  |  |  |
|---------------------|------|------------|--|--|--|
| 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.  |

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)      |

| <b>Patron</b>   | <b>+1 Thematic Skill</b> | <b>Gift / Lore Bestowal</b>  |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| 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.



## 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.   |
| Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargainer)                        | The Witness (Truth, Revelation)                         | The bargain lies veiled until truth unmasks it.                                       |
| Livaea (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.





## .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.

## Tags & Effects Library

### .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 §.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.).

## .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.

## .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.

## .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).

## .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.

## .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.

## .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.

## .8 Elemental Backlash Coloring (Reference)

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

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

## .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).

## 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.

### .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 §, 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.

## .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.

## .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.

## .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 §.7.

## .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.

## .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.

## Character Creation & Starting Build

### .1 Starting Build Points

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

### .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.

### .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.



## .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.

## .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.

## .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.

## **.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.

## **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.

### **.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).

#### **.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

## .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.

## .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).

## .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*<sup>2</sup>. 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 2 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).

## .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.

## .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.

## .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.

## Range & Position Quick Reference

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

### .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.           |

### .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.

### .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.

### .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].                   |

### .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.

### .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.

## .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.

## 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.

### .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**.

### .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.

### .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.

#### .4 Encounter Frequency

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

#### .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.

#### .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.

#### .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.

## 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.

#### .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.                     |

## .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.

## .3 Jokers (Optional)

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

## .4 Usage in Play

- **Trigger:** GM may draw when a roll shows multiple 1s, when SB overflows, or during travel (see §).
- **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.

## .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.

## .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.

## .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.



## 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.

### .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.

### .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.

### .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.

### .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.

### .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.

## 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.

## .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.

## .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).

## .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).

## .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.

## .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.

## .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.

## 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

### .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.         |

### .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.                   |

### .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.

### .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.

### .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.

### .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.

### .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.

## 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.

## .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.*"

## .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 *Controlled/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?"

## .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.

## .4 Defaults That Keep Things Moving

- **Range/Position:** Assume *Near* and *Controlled/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.

## .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.

## .6 Narrative-First Rulings (with Examples)

**Example 1: The Locked Gate** Player: "I pick the lock fast before the patrol rounds the corner."  
GM: "Controlled/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.

## .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.

## .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.

**.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*)

**.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).

**.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.*