

Fate's Edge

A World of Consequences

System Reference Document (SRD)

Contents

I	Core Principles	7
1	Identity of Fate's Edge	9
1.1	A World of Consequences	9
1.2	Design Goals	9
1.3	The Central Question	9
1.4	Tone of Play	10
1.5	Identity in Brief	10
2	Key Concepts	11
2.1	Narrative Time	11
2.2	Complication Points	11
2.3	Affinity	11
2.4	Prestige Abilities	12
2.5	On-Screen vs. Off-Screen	12
2.6	Why These Concepts Matter	12
II	Core Mechanic	13
3	The Art of Consequence	15
3.1	Procedure	15
3.2	The Description Ladder	15
3.3	Complication Points	16
3.4	Design Intent	16
4	Advancement & XP	17
4.1	Awarding XP	17
4.2	Spending XP	18
4.3	Tiers of Reputation	18
4.4	Archetypes in Play	18
4.5	Training & Mentorship	19
4.6	Optional Systems	19
4.7	End-of-Session Checklist	19

III	Character Framework	21
5	Starting XP & Complications	23
5.1	Starting Pool	23
5.2	Optional Trades	23
5.3	Starting Complications Table	23
5.4	Example	24
6	Attributes & Skills	27
6.1	Attributes	27
6.2	Skills	27
6.3	Attributes and Skills in Play	28
7	XP as Currency	29
7.1	The Three Paths of XP	29
7.1.1	Enhance Self	29
7.1.2	Acquire Assets	29
7.1.3	Learn Talents	30
7.2	Economy of Choice	31
8	Archetypes & Prestige Abilities	33
8.1	Archetype Examples	33
8.2	Prestige Ability Examples by Tier	34
8.3	Talent Progression by Tier	34
8.4	Cultural Talent Examples	35
9	Followers & Off-Screen Assets	39
9.1	Concept	39
9.2	Buying Followers & Assets	39
9.2.1	Followers (On-Screen)	39
9.2.2	Off-Screen Assets	40
9.3	Condition Tracks & Upkeep	40
9.3.1	Triggering Degradation	40
9.3.2	Maintaining a Resource	41
9.3.3	Effects by Condition	41
9.3.4	Repair & Recovery	41
9.4	Stress, Harm, & Loss (GM Tools)	41
9.5	Loyalty & Bonds (Optional)	41
9.6	Promotion & Replacement	42
9.7	Quick Reference Tables	42
9.8	Examples in Play	42
9.9	GM Guidance	43
9.10	Activating Off-Screen Assets	43
9.11	Activating Off-Screen Assets	45

<i>CONTENTS</i>	5
10 Table Contract & Player Presence	49
10.1 The Unbreakable Contract	49
10.2 The Hands-On Patron	49
10.2.1 Mechanical Requirements	49
10.2.2 Example Patron Build (31 XP)	49
10.3 Off-Screen Assets vs. On-Screen Followers	50
10.4 Death, Replacement & Downtime	50
10.4.1 Promote a Follower	50
10.4.2 Heir or Partner Steps In	50
10.4.3 New Character	50
10.4.4 Temporary Absences (Captured, Lost, Waylaid)	51
10.5 GM Guidance: Keeping the Contract	51
10.6 Designer Note	51
11 Boons and Failure's Gift	53
 IV Magic & The Arts	 55
12 Philosophy of Magic	57
12.1 The Nature of Magic	57
12.2 The Caster's Burden	57
13 Casting Loop	59
13.1 Example of Backlash	59
13.2 Design Intent	59
 V GM Toolkit	 61
14 Logistics as Drama	63
14.1 Core Principle: The Fiction Is the Ledger	63
14.2 The Supply Clock	63
14.3 Fatigue	64
14.4 Gear Damage	64
14.5 XP and Logistics Assets	64
14.6 Example in Play	65
15 Philosophy of Magic	67
15.1 The Nature of Magic	67
15.2 The Caster's Burden	67
16 Casting Loop	69
16.1 Backlash Severity Table	69
16.2 Design Intent	70

17 Deck of Consequences	71
17.1 Structure of the Deck	71
17.2 Using the Deck	71
17.3 Guidance for Mundane Skills	72
18 Player Archetypes at the Table	73
18.1 Assumptions for Examples	73
18.2 The Solo	73
18.3 The Mixed Player	74
18.4 The Mastermind	74
18.5 Comparative Guidance at a Glance	75
18.6 Balancing the Spotlight	75
18.7 Advancement Notes	76
A Sample Characters	77
A.1 The Solo — Sable Kestrel, Road-Worn Duelist	77
A.2 The Mixed — Bryn of the Ledger, Field Archivist	78
A.3 The Mastermind — Ash Thorne, Quiet Conductor	79
A.4 At-the-Table Play Examples	80
A.5 Conversion Notes & Reskinning	80
B Quick Reference Sheets	83
C GM Toolkit: Gear, Kits, and Artifacts	87
C.1 Design Philosophy	87
C.2 Standard Kits	87
C.3 Weapons and Armor	88
C.4 Rare Gear (Story Rewards)	88
C.5 Artifacts and Relics	88
C.6 Creating New Gear	89

Part I

Core Principles

1 Identity of Fate's Edge

1.1 A World of Consequences

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.

In this world, victory is rarely clean, and defeat is rarely final. Every roll pushes the story forward, not just by resolving what happens, but by revealing what it costs.

1.2 Design Goals

The design philosophy of *Fate's Edge* rests on three core goals:

Narrative Primacy

Mechanics exist to serve the story. Rules reward creativity and descriptive play, ensuring that characters are defined as much by their choices as by their numbers.

Risk as Drama

Every roll carries the potential for triumph and the shadow of complication. Tension, not certainty, drives the narrative.

Meaningful Growth

Advancement is more than improving statistics. Players invest experience not only in personal ability but also in influence, legacies, and the world around them.

1.3 The Central Question

At its heart, *Fate's Edge* asks:

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

This question is both philosophical and mechanical. Players gamble with fate every time they act, and the consequences—good or ill—become the foundation of their legend.

1.4 Tone of Play

Fate's Edge is designed to produce stories that feel:

- **Cinematic**, with pacing tied to narrative beats rather than strict measures of time.
- **Consequential**, where even small choices ripple outward in meaningful ways.
- **Collaborative**, empowering both GM and players to co-create the unfolding drama.

1.5 Identity in Brief

Fate's Edge is a world balanced on a knife: every decision sharpens or dulls the blade, every risk cuts both ways.

2 Key Concepts

2.1 Narrative Time

Time in *Fate's Edge* is measured by story weight, not by clocks. Actions are framed in four narrative scales:

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

This framing gives players and the GM a shared sense of pacing and tension. The focus is always on narrative rhythm, not stopwatch precision.

2.2 Complication Points

Whenever a player rolls dice, each result of 1 generates a **Complication Point**. These are not mere penalties—they are narrative fuel. The GM spends them to introduce twists: broken weapons, misplaced trust, sudden weather, collateral damage.

Complications ensure that even a success carries texture. A hero may win the duel but lose the crowd's favor; a spell may ignite, but it leaves behind smoke and whispers.

2.3 Affinity

Races and cultures in *Fate's Edge* do not define characters through numbers alone. Instead, each provides an **Affinity**: a narrative edge or metaphysical bond. Affinities make certain Arts, skills, or actions more reliable, weaving identity into mechanics.

Wood Elves find quiet in nature; Dwarves in stone; Humans in adaptability. Each Affinity is a way the world itself leans in your favor.

2.4 Prestige Abilities

Prestige Abilities are high-level talents unlocked by mastering cultural arts or philosophies. They are narrative milestones as much as mechanical ones. A High Elf Echo-Walker, a Dwarven Spirit Shield, or a Human Bannerlord does not simply roll better—they reshape the story around them.

2.5 On-Screen vs. Off-Screen

Fate's Edge distinguishes between resources you see at the table and those that shape the world in the background:

- **On-Screen Resources** are companions, hirelings, or allies who stand beside you in danger. They add dice pools and flavor, but they can falter, be taken, or die.
- **Off-Screen Resources** are taverns, estates, titles, or networks of informants. They never swing a blade in combat, but they shape the story between sessions, turning XP into narrative leverage.

The choice between the two defines whether a character invests in independence, leadership, or legacy.

2.6 Why These Concepts Matter

Together, these concepts shift the game away from strict measures of efficiency toward dramatic consequence. Time is elastic, outcomes ripple, and choices reach far beyond the battlefield. This keeps the table focused not only on *what happens*, but also on *why it matters*.

Part II

Core Mechanic

3 The Art of Consequence

At the heart of *Fate's Edge* lies a single design principle: **every action carries consequence**. Dice do not merely determine success or failure; they shape the unfolding narrative by introducing new problems, twists, or opportunities. The system thrives on tension between intent and outcome, where even the best successes may carry unexpected costs.

3.1 Procedure

All significant actions follow a three-step process:

1. **Approach** — The player describes both *what* their character wants and *how* they attempt it. This defines the primary Skill and clarifies the fiction.
2. **Execution** — Build a dice pool equal to *Attribute + Skill* and roll that many d10s. Each die of 6 or higher counts as a success. Each 1 rolled generates a *Complication Point*.
3. **Outcome** — The GM interprets total successes against the difficulty of the task. Complication Points are then spent to weave narrative setbacks, collateral costs, or escalating danger.

3.2 The Description Ladder

The quality of the player's description affects the resilience of their roll against complication. More detail means more control over how the dice fall:

Basic Action Roll the pool as-is. All 1s remain as Complication Points.

Detailed Action A clear, descriptive flourish allows the player to re-roll one die showing 1.

Intricate Action A richly described, multi-sensory action allows the player to re-roll *all* dice showing 1, and add one positive narrative flourish to the scene if they succeed.

3.3 Complication Points

Complication Points (CP) are the engine of drama. They are not simple penalties, but narrative levers. The GM spends CP to introduce setbacks appropriate to the context, such as:

- 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.

3.4 Design Intent

This mechanic ensures that every roll changes the story. Success without risk is rare, and even failure opens new narrative avenues. The dice shape the texture of events, but the story itself remains in the hands of the players and GM, always circling back to choice and consequence.

4 Advancement & XP

In *Fate's Edge*, characters do not advance through levels. Instead, growth flows from **Experience Points (XP)** — the universal currency of progression. XP may be spent to hone the self, acquire worldly assets, or unlock cultural prestige. This design ensures that every moment of advancement is the result of a meaningful choice.

4.1 Awarding XP

The GM distributes XP at the end of each session or arc. Choose a pacing mode appropriate to the campaign:

Gritty: 4–6 XP per session (slow burn; each purchase is weighty).

Standard: 6–10 XP per session (default pace).

Heroic: 10–14 XP per session (fast growth; shorter arcs).

Session Awards

- 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 (leaning into drawn Complications): +1–3 XP
- Bond/Flag Driven Play: +1–2 XP
- GM Curveball Award: +0–3 XP for standout creativity

Milestones

At the conclusion of a major story arc, grant:

- +8–12 XP to all players
- +2 XP bonus to one player for a signature moment of the arc

Complication Dividend

If a player accepts a high Complication card as drawn, without mitigation:

- Face Card: +1 XP
- Ace: +2 XP

4.2 Spending XP

Attributes: Cost = new rating \times 3. Downtime = new rating in days.

Skills: Cost = new level \times 2. Downtime = new level in days.

On-Screen Followers: Cost = Cap². 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).

Rush Rule

A player may skip downtime, but the GM creates a **Haste clock** of four segments. If the clock fills, the new ability or asset carries flaws or narrative complications.

4.3 Tiers of Reputation

Though there are no levels, XP spent creates soft “tiers” that shape world response:

Tier I – Rookie (0–40 XP): Local reputation; prestige locked.

Tier II – Seasoned (41–90): Regional notice; prestige abilities may be unlocked.

Tier III – Veteran (91–150): National influence; second follower slot suggested.

Tier IV – Paragon (151–220): Movers and shakers; rivals emerge to challenge.

Tier V – Mythic (221+): Legendary status; kingdoms and cults respond.

4.4 Archetypes in Play

The Solo

Invests XP primarily in self. *Strengths:* always ready, iconic spotlight. *Risks:* narrow toolkit; may lag in social or resource scenes.

The Mixed Player

Balances XP between self and assets. *Strengths:* adaptable, bridges party gaps. *Risks:* upkeep spread thin.

The Mastermind

Builds networks, followers, and assets. *Strengths:* broad reach, drives strategies. *Risks:* Complication fallout; vulnerable allies.

4.5 Training & Mentorship

- Training from a PC or NPC with Skill ≥ 3 or Attribute \geq new rating halves downtime.
- A vivid training montage may convert 1 day of downtime into on-screen play (twice per arc).
- Research or crafting may be handled as Significant Time with a simple project clock.

4.6 Optional Systems

Patronage Track

Spending 8+ XP on civic, guild, or temple projects grants a *Patron tag*. Once per arc, a Patron may erase a resource-related Complication (Diamonds suit).

Respec & Drift

- Light respec: Once per arc, redistribute up to 6 XP worth of Skills.
- Major pivot: With narrative justification, reclaim one Talent or Prestige at 50% refund.

4.7 End-of-Session Checklist

1. Did we reach a Major Objective? (+2–4 XP)
2. Who embraced Complications? (+1–3 XP)
3. Did Bonds or Flags drive scenes? (+1–2 XP)
4. Any discoveries or lore revealed? (+1–2 XP)
5. Attendance and GM Curveball awarded? (+2 +0–3 XP)
6. Any XP spending declared? Note downtime or begin Haste clocks.

Part III

Character Framework

5 Starting XP & Complications

5.1 Starting Pool

Characters begin with a baseline of **30 XP** to allocate across Attributes, Skills, Talents, and Assets.

5.2 Optional Trades

At character creation, players may increase their starting XP by accepting story complications.

- **Obligation Deficit:** You may begin with a *deficit of up to 2 XP*, representing debts, unfinished business, or personal weakness. This deficit must be paid off with your first earned XP before further advancement.
- **Complication Trade:** You may accept up to **2 Complications** during Session 0, each granting +1 XP. Complications are drawn from the Deck of Consequences (or selected by the GM) and permanently attached to your backstory.

5.3 Starting Complications Table

At Session 0, players may either draw randomly or roll 1d10 on this table for each Complication taken. The GM should weave these into the campaign's opening act.

d10	Starting Complication
1	Debt Mark: You owe coin or favor to a guild, syndicate, or noble family. Collectors will come calling.
2	Broken Heirloom: Begin play with one signature item already <i>Compromised</i> . Repairing it is costly or politically fraught.
3	Enemy at Large: Someone you wronged (or their heir) is alive and plotting. They will cross your path again.
4	Dark Patron: A whispering spirit, godling, or demon has touched your life. It may offer help, but always demands a price.
5	Notoriety: You are famous (or infamous) for something unsavory. People recognize you, and not always kindly.
6	Haunted: Nightmares, visions, or a literal ghost troubles your sleep. Occasionally, this interferes with your actions.
7	Cursed Token: You carry an item that brings ill luck. The GM may spend 1 Complication Point per session to invoke its curse.
8	Fractured Loyalty: You belong to two groups, guilds, or families with conflicting demands. They will not tolerate neutrality forever.
9	Lost Ally: A former follower, familiar, or friend is missing. You may one day recover them, but until then you carry the burden.
10	Blood Feud: Your kin, clan, or culture is sworn against another. The feud may be dormant, but never gone.

5.4 Example

A player wants to begin with 32 XP. They accept 2 Complications: they roll a 2 (*Broken Heirloom*) and a 7 (*Cursed Token*). Their character begins with a bent Viterran longsword and an ominous carved stone. The GM now has two strong narrative hooks to introduce in play.

Backstory Bonds & Initial Boons

At character creation, players are encouraged to tie their backstories together. Each bond represents a shared history, debt, rivalry, or mutual respect that grounds the party in the world.

- **Initial Boon:** Two characters may gain *one Boon each* if they establish a mutual backstory tie.

- **Consent Required:** Both players must agree to the bond; it cannot be imposed.
- **Maximum:** Each player may earn up to 4 Boons this way during character creation. They can also be added or removed between sessions, again with consent all around.
- **In-Play Rewards:** A GM may award additional Boons or 1 XP when players call upon these ties in-session, provided the bond meaningfully shapes the scene.

Examples of Bonds:

- You and another character once fought in the same doomed levy and survived together.
- You saved another character's kin from debt-slavery; they owe you, and you both know it.
- You and another character were rivals in the same guild, and your rivalry sharpened you both.
- You and another character share a forbidden secret that neither dares speak aloud.

Design Note: Boons gained from backstory are a narrative resource. They reinforce the social fabric of the party, and they encourage players to invoke personal history as part of ongoing play.

6 Attributes & Skills

Characters in *Fate's Edge* are defined not by long columns of modifiers, but by the interplay of four **core attributes** and a lean, narrative-focused **skill list**. Together they shape dice pools, guide player expression, and reinforce the philosophy that *who you are* matters as much as *what you do*.

6.1 Attributes

Attributes represent broad aspects of a character's being. They are archetypal, not granular, and apply across many situations.

Body Strength, endurance, and physical action. Lifting a gate, wrestling an ogre, or running across rooftops all call on Body.

Wits Perception, cleverness, and reaction speed. Spotting an ambush, solving a puzzle, or drawing first in a duel depend on Wits.

Spirit Willpower, intuition, and resilience. Resisting fear, sensing lies, or pressing on through pain come from Spirit.

Presence Charm, command, and social force. Inspiring allies, bending wills, or commanding a hall all rely on Presence.

Each Attribute is rated from 1–5 for most mortals. Exceptional beings (angels, demons, dragons) may reach higher.

6.2 Skills

Skills are focused expressions of talent. They sharpen attributes into action and give players narrative handles for describing their characters. Each Skill is tied loosely to one or more attributes, but creative players may justify alternative pairings if the narrative fits.

Skill List

- Athletics — climbing, running, swimming.
- Brawl — fists, grappling, improvised fighting.
- Melee — blades, axes, polearms.
- Ranged — bows, crossbows, thrown arms.
- Stealth — hiding, shadowing, evading.
- Survival — tracking, foraging, navigation.
- Craft — smithing, alchemy, tinkering.
- Lore — history, cultures, languages.
- Arcana — magical theory, rituals, spellwork.
- Insight — intuition, empathy, lie detection.
- Diplomacy — negotiation, mediation, etiquette.
- Deception — disguise, misdirection, bluffing.
- Command — leadership, intimidation, rallying.
- Performance — music, oratory, storytelling.

Skill Ratings

- **0: Untrained** — You rely on raw attribute alone.
- **1: Familiar** — Basic competence, a journeyman's touch.
- **2: Skilled** — Trained and reliable in most circumstances.
- **3: Expert** — Professional mastery or long experience.
- **4: Master** — Renowned, your work or ability is widely recognized.
- **5: Legendary** — Almost supernatural; few mortals reach this level.

6.3 Attributes and Skills in Play

When players attempt a significant action, they combine the relevant **Attribute + Skill** to determine their dice pool. Attributes set the foundation of capability, while Skills give the roll texture and identity.

Body + Melee is raw steel and sinew.

Wits + Melee is anticipation and precision.

Presence + Melee is flourish, feint, and intimidation.

The same Skill, seen through different Attributes, tells a different story.

7 XP as Currency

In *Fate's Edge*, Experience Points (XP) are not a tally of victories. They are the **universal resource of progression**—a currency spent to shape your character, your influence, and your place in the world. Growth always comes from choice: hone the self, strengthen bonds, or weave deeper ties into the setting.

7.1 The Three Paths of XP

Players may allocate XP across three broad categories. Each represents a different philosophy of growth.

7.1.1 Enhance Self

XP buys personal mastery.

Attributes Raising an Attribute costs XP equal to $(\text{new rating} \times 3)$.

Example: Body $2 \rightarrow 3$ costs $3 \times 3 = 9$ XP.

Skills Raising a Skill costs XP equal to $(\text{new level} \times 2)$.

Example: Stealth $1 \rightarrow 2$ costs $2 \times 2 = 4$ XP.

7.1.2 Acquire Assets

XP can be invested into property, holdings, networks, and followers—worldly influence rather than personal prowess.

Off-Screen Resources. Purchased with XP, these assets provide leverage *between sessions*: a tavern, a title, a mercantile charter, a safehouse network. They solve problems off-screen but cannot intervene in an adventure scene.

On-Screen Followers (Assistance). Allies who act *in the scene* and lend their specialty.

- **Cost:** A follower with Specialty Cap C costs C^2 XP (one-time).
- **Specialty:** Define one narrow lane (e.g., *Bodyguard in melee*, *Scout on overland navigation*, *Archivist for ancient scripts*). The follower only assists in that lane.

- **Assist Dice:** When applicable, the follower adds *help dice* equal to $\min(C, \text{yourrelevantSkill})$, capped at +3 dice.
- **Slot Limit:** Only *one* follower may assist a given action.
- **Upkeep:** Each Downtime, pay Coin equal to C or spend a Scene tending the relationship. Miss two upkeeps: the follower becomes *Unreliable* until mended.
- **Risk:** If the GM spends 2+ *Complication Points* on an action you take with assistance, they may endanger, injure, or separate the follower instead of you if fictionally appropriate.

Why C^2 and a +3 cap? A Cap 5 helper used to be the best XP deal in the game. Squaring the cost and capping assist dice keeps followers powerful but *not* more efficient than raising your own Skills. Followers become scene-shaping *tools* with obligations and risks, rather than a cheap dice battery.

7.1.3 Learn Talents

Talents are unique abilities that expand what a character can do. They are purchased with XP and often serve as stepping stones toward Prestige Abilities. They may be:

- **General Talents** — broadly available to any character.
 - *Battle Instincts* (Cost: 6 XP): Once per scene, re-roll a failed defense roll.
 - *Silver Tongue* (Cost: 4 XP): Gain +1 die when persuading or deceiving through speech.
 - *Iron Stomach* (Cost: 3 XP): Immune to mundane poisons and spoiled food; halve Complications from toxic sources.
- **Racial or Cultural Talents** — tied to Affinities and philosophies, reflecting the arts of a people.
 - *Stone-Sense* (Dwarves, Cost: 5 XP): Detect flaws in stone or earth; gain +1 die on Engineering or Craft rolls underground.
 - *Backlash Soothing* (Wood Elves, Cost: 6 XP): Once per session, reduce a magical Backlash Complication by 2 points when in natural terrain.
 - *Blood Memory* (Ykrul, Cost: 5 XP): After a battle, meditate to gain one temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics for the next scene.
- **Prestige Abilities** — narrative-capstone powers available only at high investment. These are the pinnacles of a culture's arts.
 - *Echo-Walker* (High Elf, Cost: 20 XP; Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4): Step briefly into Aerisahl; once per arc, turn any Complication into a boon.

- *Warglord* (Ykrul, Cost: 18 XP; Req: Body 5, Leadership 3): Rally scattered warbands into a single host; once per campaign, may unify tribes under one banner.
- *Spirit-Shield* (Dwarves, Cost: 15 XP; Req: Spirit 4, Resolve 3): Once per session, erase up to 3 Complications from an ally's roll, taking 1 Backlash yourself.

7.2 Economy of Choice

Because XP is the sole currency, every expenditure forces tension:

- Invest in yourself to become unmatched in one arena.
- Invest in the world to gain influence and resources.
- Invest in talents to expand into new, unique possibilities.

There is no “wrong” choice — only the question: *Will you be remembered for what you mastered, what you owned, or what you became?*

8 Archetypes & Prestige Abilities

Archetypes represent broad playstyles, while Prestige Abilities are the capstone talents tied to culture, philosophy, or exceptional mastery. This section offers examples across the tiers of advancement to demonstrate how XP investment and narrative identity converge.

8.1 Archetype Examples

The Blade-Seeker (Solo Archetype)

Theme: The lone duelist whose personal mastery becomes legend.

XP Focus: Attributes (Body, Wits) and direct combat skills.

Play Impact: Thrives in spotlight scenes; less reliable for logistics or diplomacy.

Prestige Gateways: Duelist's Insight, Echo-Killer.

The Bond-Keeper (Mixed Archetype)

Theme: A hero who balances self-growth with allies, networks, or family.

XP Focus: Skills and Off-Screen Assets, with some Attributes raised.

Play Impact: Strongest when weaving personal hooks into group play.

Prestige Gateways: Hearth-Banner, Oath-Bound Captain.

The Spider (Mastermind Archetype)

Theme: The strategist who commands webs of allies, followers, and secrets.

XP Focus: On-Screen Followers, Off-Screen Assets, Presence.

Play Impact: Shapes campaigns through schemes, but risks backlash if resources collapse.

Prestige Gateways: Shadow Broker, Master of Coin.

8.2 Prestige Ability Examples by Tier

Tier II (41–90 XP)

Duelist’s Insight *Req: Body 3, Melee 3.* Once per duel, re-roll all failed dice if you describe a flourish tied to your rival’s weakness.

Hearth-Banner *Req: Presence 2, Leadership 2, Off-Screen Asset (Homestead).* Allies defending your home or banner gain +1 die to all rolls within its borders.

Tier III (91–150 XP)

Oath-Bound Captain *Req: Presence 3, Leadership 3, one On-Screen Follower.* When leading a unit, you may convert one Complication per roll into a rallying boon: grant +1 die to all allies on their next action.

Echo-Killer *Req: Wits 4, Arcana 3, Affinity (Elven).* Once per scene, negate an incoming magical effect by paying its Complication cost yourself.

Tier IV (151–220 XP)

Shadow Broker *Req: Presence 4, Subterfuge 3, Off-Screen Asset (Network).* Once per arc, declare that you “already had an agent there.” Spend 6 XP to permanently expand your Network’s reach into that region.

Spirit-Shield *Req: Spirit 4, Resolve 3.* Once per session, you may erase up to 3 Complication Points from an ally’s roll, at the cost of taking 1 Backlash Complication yourself.

Tier V (221+ XP)

Master of Coin *Req: Presence 5, Commerce 4, three Off-Screen Assets.* You may treat wealth as narrative leverage: once per session, erase a Diamonds-suit Complication by spending from your fortune.

Echo-Walker *Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4, Affinity (High Elf).* Once per arc, step briefly into the demi-plane of Aerisahl, gaining one automatic success on a roll *and* reshaping one drawn Complication into a boon.

8.3 Talent Progression by Tier

Talents are organized into tiers of investment. Early Talents broaden a character’s toolkit, Mid-Tier Talents deepen specialization, and Prestige Abilities represent cultural pinnacles and narrative milestones.

8.4 Cultural Talent Examples

Each culture offers its own path of growth. Early Talents establish identity, Mid-Tier Talents deepen specialization, and Prestige Abilities embody cultural myths and pinnacles of mastery.

Name	Cost (XP)	Requirements	Effect
Early Talents (3–5 XP)			
Battle Instincts	4	None	Once per scene, re-roll a failed defense roll.
Silver Tongue	3	Presence 2+	Gain +1 die on Persuasion/Deception rolls.
Stone-Sense	5	Dwarf only	Detect flaws in stone/earth; +1 die on underground Craft/Engineering rolls.
Iron Stomach	3	Body 2+	Resist mundane poisons; halve Complications from toxins or spoiled food.
Mid-Tier Talents (6–10 XP)			
Backlash Soothing	6	Wood Elf only, Spirit 2+	Once per session, reduce a magical Backlash by 2 points in natural terrain.
Blood Memory	7	Ykrul only, Body 3+	After a battle, gain one temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics in the next scene.
Commanding Presence	8	Presence 3+	Followers gain +1 to morale rolls; allies re-roll one failed die when obeying your orders.
Familiar Bond	9	Spirit 3+	Gain a magical familiar (Cap 3). Counts as an On-Screen follower.
Prestige Abilities (12+ XP)			
Echo-Walker	20	High Elf only; Wits 5, Arcana 4	Step briefly into Aerisahl. Once per arc, transform a Complication into a boon.
Warglord	18	Ykrul only; Body 5, Leadership 3	Rally scattered warbands; once per campaign, unify tribes under one banner.
Spirit-Shield	15	Dwarf only; Spirit 4, Resolve 3	Once per session, erase up to 3 Complications from an ally's roll; take 1 Backlash yourself.
Shadowbinder	16	Tulkani or Dark Elf; Wits 4, Stealth 3	Manipulate shadow as substance; once per session, negate visibility or tracking entirely.

Table 8.1: Talent progression tiers with examples.

Name	Cost (XP)	Requirements	Effect
Humans			
Versatile	3	None	Once per session, swap one Skill die for another you lack.
Guild Ties	7	Presence 2+, Membership	Call in favors from a guild or order once per session.
Banner-Bearer	15	Presence 4+, Leadership 3	Inspire an allied unit: once per battle, erase 2 Complications for the group.
Dwarves (Aeler)			
Stone-Sense	5	Dwarf only	Detect flaws in stone; +1 die to underground Craft/Engineering rolls.
Spirit Shield	8	Spirit 3+	Commune with ancestors; once per session, block 1 Complication for an ally.
Forge-Patriarch	18	Body 4+, Craft 4	Found a forge-citadel; gain loyal smiths and engineers who count as On-Screen specialists (Cap 5).
Wood Elves			
Backlash Soothing	5	Wood Elf only	Once per session, cancel 1 Backlash die in natural terrain.
Ranger's Step	9	Wits 3+, Stealth 2	Move unseen in forests; treat terrain penalties as one step lower.
Wild Speaker	18	Spirit 5+, Nature 4	Speak to beasts and trees; once per session, command local wildlife as allies.
High Elves			
Lorekeeper	4	High Elf only	Recall obscure history or magic without rolling once per session.
Weave Anchor	8	Wits 3+, Arcana 3	Reduce magical Backlash by 1 when casting Intricate spells.
Echo-Walker	20	High Elf only; Wits 5, Arcana 4	Step briefly into Aerisahl; once per arc, turn a Complication into a boon.
Ykrul			
Blood Frenzy	4	Body 2+	When reduced to half health, gain +1 die on melee rolls.
Blood Memory	7	Body 3+	After battle, gain 1 temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics in the next scene.
Warglord	18	Body 5, Leadership 3	Rally scattered warbands; once per session, if slain, gain +1 die on next roll.

9 Followers & Off-Screen Assets

9.1 Concept

Followers (on-screen allies) and Off-Screen Assets (titles, safehouses, networks) are powerful—but they require upkeep. Instead of coin ledgers, *Fate's Edge* uses narrative condition tracks, downtime, and XP to model drift, loyalty, and wear.

Design Aims

- **Agency First:** Assets amplify characters; they never replace on-screen presence (see §?? *Unbreakable Contract*).
- **Fiction Is the Ledger:** Stress, scarcity, and politics degrade resources; players repair with *time* or *XP*.
- **Meaningful Tradeoffs:** Keep a network sharp or grow your stats—you usually can't do both.

9.2 Buying Followers & Assets

Followers use a simple **Cap** rating (their specialty dice). Assets use **Tiers**. XP costs below include creation/buy-in.

9.2.1 Followers (On-Screen)

Cap 1 3 XP — Competent assistant (e.g., Porter, Squire).

Cap 2 5 XP — Trained specialist (e.g., Scout, Bodyguard).

Cap 3 8 XP — Veteran operative (e.g., Spymaster's Agent).

Cap 4 12 XP — Elite aide (e.g., Master-at-Arms).

Cap 5 17 XP — Exceptional lieutenant (rare).

Assist Dice: When the follower's specialty applies, add a bonus pool up to their Cap. The PC still rolls the action; followers don't take turns away from players.

Limits & Liabilities

- **Spotlight Cap:** A PC may benefit from at most **one** follower's assist per roll.
- **Exposure:** Any roll that uses a follower exposes them to *Complications*; the GM may spend CP to *Harm* or *Degrade* that follower (see §9.3).

9.2.2 Off-Screen Assets

Minor 4 XP — Safehouse, small shop charter, parish patron, petty title.

Standard 8 XP — Noble title, guild chapter, spy ring, estated farm.

Major 12 XP — City license/monopoly, regional network, fortress lease.

Use: Assets solve problems between scenes, seed clues, or grant *+1–2 dice* when you *personally* leverage them on-screen. Assets never play the scene for you.

Face Requirement To buy an Asset, you must show personal capability:

- **Civic/Title:** Presence 3+ or Command 2+.
- **Spy Network:** Wits 3+ or Subterfuge 2+.
- **Mercantile Charter:** Presence 3+ or Diplomacy 2+.
- **Workshop/Hold:** Spirit 3+ or Craft 2+.

9.3 Condition Tracks & Upkeep

Each Follower or Asset has a **Condition** clock:

Maintained → *Neglected* → *Compromised*

9.3.1 Triggering Degradation

At the end of an arc (or after heavy use), the GM flags any resource that was:

- **Heavily Used** (front-line risk, repeated favors, overclocked),
- **Put at Risk** (nearly burned, hunted by creditors/guards),
- **Under Strain by Default** (titles, networks, and rents decay without tending).

Flagged resources degrade one step unless *Maintained* by Time or XP (below).

9.3.2 Maintaining a Resource

Choose one per flagged resource:

Downtime Spend **Significant Time** personally (a week) training, smoothing politics, repairing. No parallel training/projects.

XP Injection Pay **XP equal to Tier/Cap** (e.g., Cap 3 follower costs 3 XP; Standard Asset costs 8 XP).

9.3.3 Effects by Condition

Maintained Full capability; no penalties.

Neglected -1 die when used (assist or leverage). Narratively: slower, sullen, short-staffed.

Compromised Unavailable. Narratively: captured, burned, seized, defected.

9.3.4 Repair & Recovery

- **Neglected** → **Maintained**: Downtime *or* pay $\lceil \text{Tier}/2 \rceil$ XP.
- **Compromised**: Requires a **Quest/Operation** to recover the person/asset *then* Downtime *or* full **Tier/Cap XP** to restore to *Maintained*.

9.4 Stress, Harm, & Loss (GM Tools)

When a follower is used in a risky scene, the GM may spend Complication Points to:

Pin The follower is separated/boxed out; no assist next roll/scene.

Wound The follower is **Injured**: until treated off-screen, their Cap counts as 1 lower.

Burn Mark **Neglected** immediately (blown cover, angry creditors).

Seize Escalate to **Compromised** (capture, flight, betrayal) if dramatically earned.

PC Choice Lever: The GM should *offer the player a save*: protect the follower (accept a harsher on-screen complication for the PC) or let the follower take the hit.

9.5 Loyalty & Bonds (Optional)

Track a simple **Loyalty** tag per follower: *Wary / Steady / Devoted*.

- **Raise**: Meaningful risk shared, fair pay, defended in public.
- **Lower**: Broken promises, scapegoating, repeated neglect.

Devoted followers can *once per arc* convert one GM Complication targeting them into a lesser setback; *Wary* followers cost +1 XP to Maintain.

9.6 Promotion & Replacement

- **Promote:** Pay the *difference in XP* to raise a follower's Cap; requires a brief training or milestone scene.
- **Replace:** Buying a similar new follower costs full XP (they don't know your ways; loyalty starts *Wary*).

9.7 Quick Reference Tables

Follower Cost & Upkeep

Follower	Buy (XP)	Maintain (XP)	Repair Neglected (XP)
Cap 1	3	1	1
Cap 2	5	2	1
Cap 3	8	3	2
Cap 4	12	4	2
Cap 5	17	5	3

Asset Cost & Upkeep

Asset Tier	Buy (XP)	Maintain (XP)	Repair Neglected (XP)
Minor	4	2	1
Standard	8	4	2
Major	12	6	3

Compromised always requires a mission *plus* the Maintain cost or Downtime.

9.8 Examples in Play

The Mastermind's Agent (Cap 3)

After a heist, the GM flags the Cap 3 agent. The player can:

1. Spend a week of Downtime to mentor and cover tracks; stays *Maintained*, or
2. Pay 3 XP to keep them sharp, or
3. Do nothing: the agent becomes *Neglected* (assist rolls at -1 die) and a creditor shows up next use.

The Noble's Title (Standard Asset)

A Standard title constantly grinds. At arc end, it's flagged. The player:

- Pays 4 XP to keep retainers loyal, or
- Spends a week in court, delaying personal training, or
- Lets it slip to *Neglected*: -1 die when leveraging the title; rivals whisper.

9.9 GM Guidance

- **Flag, Don't Flog:** Only mark resources that mattered this arc.
- **Offer the Fork:** Present a clear *time vs. XP* choice every time.
- **Let It Bite:** If players neglect resources, let fallout drive new adventures.
- **Keep It Human:** Followers are people. Name them, give them a want, and let loyalty shift.

9.10 Activating Off-Screen Assets

Off-Screen Assets (titles, safehouses, spy rings, charters, workshops, etc.) are levers you can pull to affect the world. They do not act on their own; you *activate* them when the story demands.

The Cost

- **To activate any Off-Screen Asset**, the player must spend **1 Boon or 2 XP**.
- This cost is per *distinct ask* or *discrete scene effect* (see Scope below).
- Spending XP represents burning favors, cashing ledgers, or indebting the future; it is the “break-glass” option.

Scope & Examples

An activation accomplishes *one clear outcome* that the asset is plausibly able to produce. Assets are spent off-screen, generally between sessions.

- **Safehouse Network (Standard):** “Hide us for the night and get us past the cordon at dawn.” (1 Boon)
- **Spy Ring (Standard):** “Pull the magistrate's travel plan for tomorrow.” (1 Boon)
- **Noble Title (Standard):** “Secure an audience this afternoon.” (1 Boon) *OR* “Quash these charges quietly.” (2 XP, high heat)

- **Workshop (Minor):** “Rush a field repair to remove the *Compromised* tag on our mail.” (1 Boon)
- **Mercantile Charter (Major):** “Float a short-term convoy credit to bribe the garrison and open the gate at dusk.” (1 Boon; 2 XP if no Boons remain)

Limits & Stacking

- **One Asset, One Outcome:** Each activation buys one concrete effect. A second, different effect requires another activation.
- **No Off-Screen Auto-Wins:** Assets *enable* outcomes; they do not bypass scenes wholesale. If an activation moves the fiction to a new scene, play that scene.
- **Plausibility Gate (GM):** If an ask is beyond the asset’s plausible reach, the GM may: (a) refuse, (b) offer a reduced effect for the same cost, or (c) set a *Setup* requirement (a short scene or roll) and then allow activation.

Complications Still Apply

Activation guarantees the *asset cooperates*; it does not guarantee a frictionless world.

- The GM may still spend *Complication Points* (from rolls in the scene) to attach consequences to the activation’s outcome (e.g., “Yes, the smuggler opens the culvert—and the river swells at midnight”).
- If an activation is the only lever in the moment (no roll), the GM may draw from the *Deck of Consequences* at low severity to lace in texture without nullifying the effect.

Interaction with Condition Tracks

Activation is separate from upkeep (see §9.3).

- **Neglected:** The asset functions, but any roll *leveraging* it suffers **-1 die**.
- **Compromised:** The asset cannot be activated until recovered (quest/operation) and restored (Downtime or XP).
- **Emergency Spend:** You may still pay 2 XP to attempt an activation of a *Neglected* asset; the penalty applies. *Compromised* assets cannot be activated.

Why Boons?

Boons represent *story credit* earned by embracing risk (see §Boons). Tying assets to Boons:

- Rewards players who play into complications.
- Keeps XP focused on character growth, making 2 XP activations rare, high-drama choices.

Quick Reference

Action	Cost
Activate any Off-Screen Asset	1 Boon <i>or</i> 2 XP
Activate again for a second, distinct outcome	+1 Boon <i>or</i> +2 XP
Activate while Asset is Neglected	Normal cost; related rolls at -1 die
Activate while Asset is Compromised	<i>Not possible</i> (recover first)

GM Guidance

- **Say what it costs, then ask:** “Your spy ring can get that letter—*1 Boon or 2 XP?*” If they pay, it happens.
- **Keep the scene alive:** Activation changes position, not authorship. Use it to *open doors*, then play what’s inside.
- **Reserve 2 XP moments:** When a player spends XP to fire an asset, spotlight it like a spell: show the favors called, the ledger smudged, the bridge burned.

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- This cost is per *distinct ask* or *discrete scene effect* (see Scope below).
- Spending XP represents burning favors, cashing ledgers, or indebting the future; it is the “break-glass” option.

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An activation accomplishes *one clear outcome* that the asset is plausibly able to produce.

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- **One Asset, One Outcome:** Each activation buys one concrete effect. A second, different effect requires another activation.
- **No Off-Screen Auto-Wins:** Assets *enable* outcomes; they do not bypass scenes wholesale. If an activation moves the fiction to a new scene, play that scene. Between-session activations have between-session consequences.
- **Plausibility Gate (GM):** If an ask is beyond the asset’s plausible reach, the GM may: (a) refuse, (b) offer a reduced effect for the same cost, or (c) set a *Setup* requirement (a short scene or roll) and then allow activation.

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- Rewards players who play into complications.

- Keeps XP focused on character growth, making 2 XP activations rare, high-drama choices.
- Boons are capped at 5 total at any given time.

Quick Reference

Action

Activate any Off-Screen Asset

Activate again for a second, distinct outcome

Activate while Asset is Neglected

Activate while Asset is Compromised

A Player may only carry 5 Boons at a time, any extra boon is converted to XP, 2 to 1, up to 2 (so, up to 2)

GM Guidance

- **Say what it costs, then ask:** “Your spy ring can get that letter—*1 Boon or 2 XP?*”
If they pay, it happens.
- **Keep the scene alive:** Activation changes position, not authorship. Use it to *open doors*, then play what’s inside.
- **Reserve 2 XP moments:** When a player spends XP to fire an asset, spotlight it like a spell: show the favors called, the ledger smudged, the bridge burned.

10 Table Contract & Player Presence

10.1 The Unbreakable Contract

Every player-character must have on-screen agency during play.

- **Agency:** Each player must have meaningful choices to make for their character every session.
- **Presence:** The character appears in scenes and participates directly. Off-screen assets never replace the character’s involvement.

Design intent: Investment in holdings, titles, and networks is powerful, but it augments a character who acts on-screen. “Pure patrons” who never leave their estate are not valid PCs.

10.2 The Hands-On Patron

Archetype intent: A PC who invests heavily in Off-Screen Assets but *leads from the front*: traveling, negotiating, and facing danger personally.

10.2.1 Mechanical Requirements

Face Requirement You cannot purchase an Off-Screen Asset unless you meet a relevant threshold:

- **Noble Title (Standard):** *Presence 3+* or *Command 2+*
- **Spy Network (Major):** *Wits 3+* or *Subterfuge 2+*
- **Mercantile Charter (Major):** *Presence 3+* or *Diplomacy 2+*
- **Stonehold (Minor):** *Spirit 3+* or *Craft 2+*

No Empty Chair A character sheet must include on-screen capabilities (Attributes, Skills, or Followers) sufficient to act in scenes. Assets are tools, not a proxy PC.

10.2.2 Example Patron Build (31 XP)

- **Presence 3** (9 XP), **Command 2** (6 XP total)

- **Off-Screen:** Noble Title (Standard) (8 XP), Safehouse (Minor) (4 XP)
- **On-Screen Follower:** Bodyguard (Cap 2) (4 XP)

Result: 5-die social/command pools, portable authority, and a modest on-screen retinue—always present, never abstracted away.

10.3 Off-Screen Assets vs. On-Screen Followers

Off-Screen Assets Holdings resolved between sessions (keeps, charters, titles, spy webs). They **create opportunities** and **solve background problems** but do not intervene mid-scene.

On-Screen Followers Stat-light allies with a *Skill Cap* who add dice in their specialty when present. They are **narrative liabilities** and **can be threatened, swayed, or lost**.

10.4 Death, Replacement & Downtime

When a PC is slain or removed from play, choose one:

10.4.1 Promote a Follower

- The player takes control of a loyal follower already established on-screen.
- Grant a lump sum equal to **50% of the deceased PC's total XP**.
- Transfer a *reasonable* share of assets explicitly tied to that follower (retainers, a stipend, or a minor charter).

10.4.2 Heir or Partner Steps In

- Introduce an heir, sibling, apprentice, or business partner foreshadowed by the fiction.
- Start with **20–30 XP** plus a *fraction* of Off-Screen Assets that make sense (with GM sign-off).

10.4.3 New Character

- Create a fresh PC by standard rules.
- GM integrates them swiftly: tie to an existing Asset, contract, or faction introduced by the party.

10.4.4 Temporary Absences (Captured, Lost, Waylaid)

- Use a **Peril Clock**: each session absent ticks it forward; when full, a hard consequence lands (ransom due, injury, asset seized).
- Offer targeted rescue/escape scenes to restore agency quickly.

10.5 GM Guidance: Keeping the Contract

- Frame scenes where **every** PC has a lever: talk, scout, strike, scheme, or safeguard.
- When Assets would solve a problem off-screen, **surface a new on-screen complication**: a guild veto, a rival's counter-claim, a courier intercepted.
- Spotlight balance: rotate beats between Solo specialists, Mixed players, and Masterminds; ensure no one dictates outcomes without table consent.

10.6 Designer Note

This contract is the spine of play. XP economies and Assets broaden stories; they must never replace the character's presence at the table. If a build trends toward absenteeism, redirect with the Face Requirement, on-screen costs, and scene framing that demands the player's direct choices.

11 Boons and Failure's Gift

Core Idea

In *Fate's Edge*, failure does not mean nothing happens — it always moves the story forward. To emphasize this, every time a player suffers a ****Complication from failure**** (not just a rolled 1, but an actual failed action with narrative fallout), they also earn a ****Boon****.

What is a Boon?

A Boon is a small token of narrative resilience, representing how characters learn from mistakes, seize unexpected opportunities, or grow under pressure.

Spending Boons

Boons are flexible, but limited. They can be spent in two ways:

Limits

A character may carry up to five boons at any given time. Four can be gained from interlocking backstories between sessions for the next session. So, a player can gain 5 during play, spend them, and gain four... or gain four, or some combination.

Re-roll Opportunity: During a session, a player may spend **1 Boon** to re-roll a single die (success or failure) after rolling. This must be declared immediately.

Asset Activation: To activate an Off-Screen Asset for a specific purpose, a player must spend **1 Boon** (preferred) or **2 XP** (emergency use). This guarantees cooperation within the asset's scope, though the GM may introduce fitting complications.

Experience Conversion: Between sessions, a player may convert **2 Boons = 1 XP**. This reflects growth from adversity and encourages long-term investment.

Guidelines

- A Boon is only awarded when failure has narrative teeth — the GM must introduce a complication or setback.
- Boons are tracked individually, not as a group resource.
- The GM may offer additional narrative color when Boons are earned (“You stumble on the climb, but you notice a hidden sigil carved into the stone — mark a Boon.”).
- A character may only have 4 Boons max, overflow are converted: 2 boons to 1 XP.

Design Philosophy

Boons ensure that *failure still rewards play*. They turn setbacks into fuel for later triumphs, embodying the core philosophy of *Fate's Edge*: every consequence carries opportunity.

However, Boons are earned only through **meaningful engagement**. The attempt must matter in the fiction—taking risks, advancing the story, or revealing character. Empty actions taken solely to trigger failure do not qualify. This prevents players from “fishing” for Boons, an ineffective and disruptive form of grieving.

In short: *fail forward, not sideways*. Every Boon represents a lesson paid for with genuine dramatic weight.

GM Callout: Awarding Boons

Ask yourself: *Did this action move the fiction forward?*

- If **yes**, award a Boon—even if the roll failed.
- If **no**, deny it—this was fishing, not play.

Boons mark dramatic risks taken, not empty gestures.

Part IV

Magic & The Arts

12 Philosophy of Magic

Magic in *Fate's Edge* is not a tool of convenience but a dangerous negotiation with the fabric of reality. It is powerful, flexible, and transformative — yet every attempt to shape it carries risk. The dice never merely ask “*does it work?*” but always whisper “*what is the cost?*”

12.1 The Nature of Magic

- **Volatile by Design:** Magic is not fully understood, even by its most adept practitioners. Every working pushes against boundaries that resist being bent.
- **Risk Embodied:** Each spell generates Complication Points. These points do not vanish; they manifest as *Backlash*, unpredictable consequences that ripple outward.
- **Narrative Weight:** Casting is always a story moment. Even a “successful” spell alters the scene in ways the caster did not intend.
- **Thematic Consequence:** Backlash is not arbitrary; it aligns with the opposing or uncontrolled element of the Art invoked (flame flares out of control, shadows linger too long, storms roll beyond command).

12.2 The Caster's Burden

Magicians are defined not by what they can do, but by what they are willing to risk. A cautious spellcaster describes carefully, invests in detailed actions, and may survive long. A reckless one courts power at great personal and narrative cost. Both choices shape the story.

13 Casting Loop

All spellcasting follows a structured sequence called the *Casting Loop*. It unfolds across two phases of play: gathering strength, then weaving it into form.

1. **Channel** — The caster focuses, rolling **Wits** + **Arcana** to gather *Potential*. Each success becomes fuel for shaping the spell. Each 1 adds Complication Points immediately.
2. **Weave** — On the following turn, the caster rolls **Wits** + (**Art**) to shape Potential into a defined effect. The Description Ladder applies: Basic/Detailed/Intricate descriptions reduce or redirect Complication Points.
3. **Backlash** — Complication Points spent by the GM manifest as uncontrolled consequences. These are thematic to the Art and scale with the number of points spent: minor nuisances at low levels, dangerous disasters at high levels.

13.1 Example of Backlash

Fire Flames leap to unattended surfaces, smoke blinds allies, or the heat weakens structures.

Shadow Illusions persist too long, unseen things whisper truths best left hidden, morale crumbles.

Storm Winds scatter allies' plans, lightning arcs toward unintended targets, storms linger beyond the caster's will.

13.2 Design Intent

The Casting Loop keeps magic tense and thematic: no spell is “free.” Every magical act alters not just the world, but the flow of narrative itself.

Part V

GM Toolkit

14 Logistics as Drama

14.1 Core Principle: The Fiction Is the Ledger

In *Fate's Edge*, arrows, rations, and waterskins are tracked only in the fiction. Mechanics engage only when those resources become **scarce**. The focus is always narrative tension, not bookkeeping.

14.2 The Supply Clock

A shared condition for the entire party, the Supply Clock represents food, water, and basic gear.

Full Supply (0 filled) The party is well-equipped. No penalties.

Low Supply (2 filled) Minor narrative complications: bland food, damaged arrows, thinning waterskins.

Dangerously Low (3 filled) Each character gains **Fatigue**.

Out of Supply (4 filled) Severe penalties; starvation, dehydration, failing gear.

Filling the Clock

- Harsh travel or lost pack animals (GM fiat).
- GM spends **2+ Complication Points**.
- The party chooses to travel light for advantage.

Emptying the Clock

- Reaching civilization resets to **Full**.
- Foraging/hunting: group Survival check clears 1 segment.
- Downtime in safety removes 1 segment.

14.3 Fatigue

Fatigue represents exhaustion, hunger, and strain.

Effect: On their next roll, a character must reroll one success.

Stacking: Each level adds another forced reroll.

Recovery: A night's rest with adequate supply removes 1 Fatigue. Fatigue cannot be removed while the party is **Dangerously Low**.

14.4 Gear Damage

Gear does not have hit points. It suffers only when drama demands it.

Compromised Items

- Introduced via Complication Points or narrative consequence.
- A **Compromised** item gives -1 die on relevant rolls.

Breaking Point

If a **Compromised** item suffers another setback, it breaks entirely.

Repair

Field Repair: Temporary; Craft or Survival check removes penalty for one scene.

Proper Repair: Permanent; requires tools, materials, and downtime.

14.5 XP and Logistics Assets

Upkeep between adventures is assumed trivial unless the party is destitute. XP investments make logistics part of the character's story.

4 XP: Signature Weapon A named heirloom or crafted masterpiece. If lost or damaged, recovery becomes a personal story hook.

8 XP: Superior Workshop Off-screen asset. Enables permanent repairs, masterwork crafting, and party-wide gear quality during downtime.

14.6 Example in Play

Three days into a desert crossing, the GM fills two Supply segments. The party is now at **Low Supply**. A player scouts for water, rolling two 1s. The GM spends those Complications to fill another segment—**Dangerously Low**. Everyone gains **Fatigue**. Later, in combat, the fatigued archer rerolls one success. The arrow flies wide, the lack of water written into the dice themselves.

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15.2 The Caster's Burden

Magicians are defined not by what they can do, but by what they are willing to risk. A cautious spellcaster describes carefully, invests in detailed actions, and may survive long. A reckless one courts power at great personal and narrative cost. Both choices shape the story.

16 Casting Loop

All spellcasting follows a structured sequence called the *Casting Loop*. It unfolds across two phases of play: gathering strength, then weaving it into form.

1. **Channel** — The caster focuses, rolling **Wits** + **Arcana** to gather *Potential*. Each success becomes fuel for shaping the spell. Each 1 adds Complication Points immediately.
2. **Weave** — On the following turn, the caster rolls **Wits** + **(Art)** to shape Potential into a defined effect. The Description Ladder applies: Basic/Detailed/Intricate descriptions reduce or redirect Complication Points.
3. **Backlash** — Complication Points spent by the GM manifest as uncontrolled consequences. These are thematic to the Art and scale with the number of points spent: minor nuisances at low levels, dangerous disasters at high levels.

16.1 Backlash Severity Table

CP Total	Guidance for Backlash Severity
1	Minor nuisance: cosmetic damage, a brief distraction, harmless magical echo.
2–3	Noticeable setback: ally inconvenienced, unintended target struck, short-term vulnerability created.
4–5	Serious complication: uncontrolled spreading effect, structural harm, dangerous foe empowered or alerted.
6–7	Major consequence: battlefield-shaping hazard, lasting injury, environment altered in hostile ways.
8+	Catastrophic backlash: spell escapes caster’s intent entirely, permanent scars on landscape or soul, new long-term threat unleashed.

Table 16.1: Backlash guidance by Complication Points (CP).

16.2 Design Intent

The Casting Loop keeps magic tense and thematic: no spell is “free.” Every magical act alters not just the world, but the flow of narrative itself.

17 Deck of Consequences

The Deck of Consequences is a shared tool that externalizes risk and narrative fallout. Whenever a check generates Complication Points, the GM may draw from the deck instead of (or in addition to) improvising outcomes. This provides consistent tone and escalating tension.

17.1 Structure of the Deck

- **Suits = Domains of Complications**

171 Cups Emotional, social, or relational fallout.

171 Swords Harm, danger, or escalation of conflict.

171 Pentacles Resource strain, economic or material cost.

171 Wands Magical, spiritual, or cosmic disturbances.

- **Ranks = Severity of Complications** Higher ranks indicate more enduring or severe consequences:

Ace–3 Minor inconvenience or flavor complication.

4–6 Moderate setback with some narrative teeth.

7–9 Significant consequence altering the course of action.

10–King Major fallout, introducing new problems or lasting scars.

17.2 Using the Deck

1. Player rolls; each 1 generates a Complication Point.
2. GM may draw a card for each Complication Point.
3. The suit frames the type of complication; the rank determines severity.
4. GM interprets and narrates based on context.

17.3 Guidance for Mundane Skills

Not every task should rely on freeform GM invention. The following table offers examples to keep complications consistent across play.

Skill	Complication Domain	Examples by Severity
Athletics	Swords (harm)	Ace-3: Twisted ankle; 4-6: Lose grip, drop equipment; 7-9: Injury forces pause or retreat; 10-King: Serious wound, out of action.
Stealth	Cups (social) or Swords (harm)	Ace-3: A creak alerts suspicion; 4-6: Minor evidence left behind; 7-9: Spotted and pursued; 10-King: Ambushed or captured.
Crafting	Pentacles (resources)	Ace-3: Wasted materials; 4-6: Minor flaw, item unreliable; 7-9: Precious resource ruined; 10-King: Catastrophic failure or danger from collapse/explosion.
Persuasion	Cups (emotional/social)	Ace-3: Offended someone mildly; 4-6: Reputation takes a small hit; 7-9: Relationship strained; 10-King: Alliance broken, enmity gained.
Scholarship	Wands (cosmic) or Pentacles (resources)	Ace-3: Misremember detail; 4-6: Hours wasted chasing false lead; 7-9: Dangerous knowledge misapplied; 10-King: Catastrophic misunderstanding with lasting fallout.

Table 17.1: Mundane Skills and Example Complications

18 Player Archetypes at the Table

Not every group plays the same way. These archetypes describe *how* players spend XP and seek spotlight. They are styles, not classes; most characters drift between them across a campaign.

18.1 Assumptions for Examples

Unless noted, examples assume a 30 XP starting budget.

Costs: Attributes = (new rating \times 3), Skills = (new level \times 2), Followers = C^2 (Cap C), Assist bonus = $\min(C, \text{your Skill})$ up to +3 dice.

Off-Screen Assets: Minor 4 XP (single town, narrow help), Standard 8 XP (regional reach), Major 12 XP (multi-region, political teeth). Assets act between sessions; no direct scene dice.

18.2 The Solo

Definition: Invests XP primarily in **Attributes and Skills**. Minimal followers, minimal holdings. All power is *on the sheet*.

Typical XP Spread: 70–90% Self; 0–10% On-screen help; 0–20% Off-screen.

Solo: Example Build (30 XP)

- Raise **Body** 2→3: $3 \times 3 = 9$ XP
- Raise **Wits** 2→3: 9 XP (18 XP total)
- Skill **Melee** 0→3: $2 + 4 + 6 = 12$ XP
- *Remaining:* 0 XP

Result: Melee pool 6 (Body 3 + Melee 3) *or* a finesse line at 6 (Wits 3 + Melee 3). With Intricate descriptions, the Solo mitigates Backlash/Complications by rerolling 1s and leans on personal reliability.

Strengths Consistent scene impact; fewer moving parts; resilient to follower loss.

Risks Limited fiction reach between sessions; can stall when problems want logistics or networks.

GM Guidance Feed high-ceiling tests (tight DCs, layered stakes). Reward description—let Intricate actions sing. Give *hard* softlocks (locks, codes, customs) that force the Solo to collaborate or creatively frame scenes.

18.3 The Mixed Player

Definition: Splits XP between self-growth and **one or two** meaningful assets (either a small follower or a reliable holding).

Typical XP Spread: 50–65% Self; 15–25% On-screen help; 15–25% Off-screen.

Mixed: Example Build (30 XP)

- Raise **Presence** 2→3: 9 XP
- Skill **Sway** 0→3: $2 + 4 + 6 = 12$ XP (21 XP total)
- **Follower** (Cap 3 *Archivist*): $3^2 = 9$ XP

Result: Social pool 6 (Presence 3 + Sway 3). In scenes involving ancient texts, the Archivist grants up to +3 help dice (capped) if the PC's own Lore/Research is at least 3; otherwise, the help is limited by the PC's skill.

Strengths Versatile: credible in scenes, *and* has a lever for special problems.

Risks Juggling upkeep (Coin or scenes). The helper can be targeted when the GM spends 2+ Complication Points.

GM Guidance Present multi-key problems: one key favors the PC's sheet, one calls the follower/asset. Let off-screen assets set up on-screen advantages (credibility, entry, rumors) but never free wins.

18.4 The Mastermind

Definition: Prioritizes **followers, cadres, pets/familiars** and **off-screen networks**. Their sheet is the hub of a larger apparatus.

Typical XP Spread: 25–40% Self; 35–55% On-screen help; 20–40% Off-screen.

Mastermind: Example Build (30 XP)

- Attribute **Wits** 2→3: 9 XP
- Skill **Tactics** 0→2: $2 + 4 = 6$ XP (15 XP total)
- **Follower** (Cap 4 *Scout/Ranger*): $4^2 = 16$ XP
- **Off-Screen Asset** (Minor Safehouse Ring): 4 XP

*Over by 5 XP—trim by dropping Tactics to 1 (2 XP) and downgrading the asset to a single Safehouse contact (2 XP), or start with 35 XP if your chargen allows it. **Result:** In any navigation/stealth approach, the Scout provides up to +3 dice (capped by the PC's relevant skill). The Safehouse ring solves travel/logistics in downtime and seeds rumors.*

Strengths Scene control through assistance; strategic reach between sessions; strong heist/social planning play.

Risks Dependency on assist lanes; followers can be endangered on 2+ Complication Point spends; upkeep pressure.

GM Guidance Make lanes matter. Spotlight costs: only *one* assistant per action, +3 cap. Use consequence targeting fairly; endangering a follower should escalate stakes, not punish creativity.

18.5 Comparative Guidance at a Glance

	Solo	Mixed	Mastermind
XP Focus	Attributes/Skills	Split	Followers + Assets
Core Dice	Highest personal pools	Good pools + situational +3	Moderate pools + frequent +3
Off-Screen	Light	Some leverage	Strong leverage
Fragility	Low (self-reliant)	Medium (one helper)	Higher (helper risk, upkeep)
GM Dials	Hard DCs, layered stakes	Multi-key scenes	Lanes, logistics, comp-targeting

18.6 Balancing the Spotlight

- **Solos** earn spotlight through Intricate action—reward rich description with rerolls and fictional position.
- **Mixed** characters should unlock doors others can't, via their one specialty follower or asset.

- **Masterminds** shine in plans coming together; ensure each step needs a different PC so orchestration lifts everyone.

18.7 Advancement Notes

- **Followers Scale Fast:** C^2 costs keep high-Cap help rare. A Cap 5 bodyguard is 25 XP—roughly the same as taking a Skill from 0 to 4 *and* nudging an Attribute.
- **+3 Assist Cap:** Maintains parity—raising your Skill above 3 still matters; help doesn't eclipse mastery.
- **Off-Screen Assets** don't add dice; they *change the fiction*. Use them to set position (entry, cover, rumors, writs) so they feel worth the XP without stealing scenes.

A Sample Characters

This chapter presents three ready-to-play exemplars of the archetypes defined earlier. Each is system-legal using the costs defined in this book (Attributes: new×3; Skills: new×2; Followers: C^2 ; Assist cap +3; Off-screen assets by tier). Use them as pregens, benchmarks, or templates.

A.1 The Solo — Sable Kestrel, Road-Worn Duelist

Concept

A blade for hire who trusts steel, footwork, and a cool read of the room more than favors or retainers.

Build Summary (30 XP)

- **Attributes:** Body 3 (9 XP), Wits 3 (9 XP), Spirit 2, Presence 2 *18 XP*
- **Skills:** Melee 3 (2+4+6 = 12 XP), Observation 1 (2 XP) *14 XP*
- **Total:** 32 XP → drop Observation 1 (2 XP) or start at 32 XP tables. **Baseline 30 XP:** Body 3, Wits 3, Melee 3.

Dice Pools (Common)

- **Body + Melee:** 6 (brutal, direct)
- **Wits + Melee:** 6 (feints, tempo control)
- **Wits + Observation:** 3 (if taken)

Signature Move

Intricate Riposte: Declare a narrow objective (“*disarm without blood*”), describe footwork and angle; roll Wits+Melee (6d10). On 1s, Intricate rerolls minimize Complications; on a clean success, add a flourish (*opponent’s blade clatters to your boot*).

Complication Hooks (GM)

- *Overreach*: Fatigue clock; armor strap loosens; duel attracts unwanted gambler attention.
- *Collateral*: Stray blow nicks a banner; a house guard demands reparations.

Advancement Path

- Short term: Melee 3→4 (8 XP); Observation 0→2 (6 XP).
- Long term: Presence 2→3 (9 XP) to open a credible social line.

A.2 The Mixed — Bryn of the Ledger, Field Archivist

Concept

A scholar-adventurer who solves problems with keen recall and a single trusted specialist.

Build Summary (30 XP)

- **Attributes**: Presence 3 (9 XP), Wits 3 (9 XP), Body 2, Spirit 2 18 XP
- **Skills**: Sway 3 (2+4+6 = 12 XP) 12 XP
- **Follower**: Cap 3 *Archivist* (Lore/Research specialist) (9 XP)
- **Adjust**: To stay at 30 XP, delay Wits 3 until first advance *or* start at 33 XP tables.
Baseline 30 XP: Presence 3, Sway 3, Follower Cap 3.

Dice & Assist

- **Presence + Sway**: 6 (negotiations, permissions, de-escalation)
- **Archivist Assist**: Up to +3 dice on *Lore/Research/Occult* actions, capped by Bryn's own relevant Skill (encourages training to 3).

Signature Move

Stamped and Countersigned: Start a parley with a citation (*charter, doctrine, ledger mark*); roll Presence+Sway (6d10). If Complications, the GM may introduce red tape (*a missing counter-seal*); spend a minute with the Archivist to produce the cross-reference and earn a *position* advantage on the next roll.

Complication Hooks (GM)

- *Academic Rivalry*: A jealous clerk disputes your citation.
- *Paper Trail*: Your documents help you now but later implicate an ally.

Advancement Path

- Short term: Wits 2→3 (9 XP); Research 0→3 (12 XP).
- Long term: Off-screen Asset (Minor Scriptorium Cell, 4 XP) to seed rumors and requisitions.

A.3 The Mastermind — Ash Thorne, Quiet Conductor

Concept

A calm planner whose small crew and safehouses convert problems into steps.

Build Summary (30–34 XP)

- **Attributes**: Wits 3 (9 XP), Presence 3 (9 XP), Body 2, Spirit 2 18 XP
- **Skills**: Tactics 2 (2+4 = 6 XP), Skullduggery 1 (2 XP) 8 XP
- **Follower**: Cap 4 *Scout/Ranger* (16 XP)
- **Off-Screen Asset**: Minor Safehouse (4 XP)
- **Trim Options**: Drop Skullduggery 1 and the Safehouse to hit 30 XP; or accept 34 XP at generous tables.

Dice & Assist

- **Wits + Tactics**: 5 (planning, route selection, timing)
- **Scout Assist**: Up to +3 dice on movement/stealth/survival lanes, capped by Ash's Skill.

Signature Move

Three Doors Ahead: Ash frames the approach with two decoys and one true lane (Tactics roll). On success, pick one benefit: *split heat between decoys*, *advance a clock two ticks*, or *bank +1 forward* for the next ally action. On 2+ Complication Points, the GM may *target the Scout* or compromise a decoy.

Complication Hooks (GM)

- *Crew Liability*: The Scout's old feud surfaces.
- *Burned Safehouse*: A rival pays a porter to misdirect deliveries.

Advancement Path

- Short term: Skullduggery 1→3 (6+8 = 14 XP) to self-cap assists at +3.
- Long term: Follower Cap 5 bodyguard (25 XP) *or* Standard Safehouse Ring (8 XP) for regional reach.

A.4 At-the-Table Play Examples

Heist Entry (Intricate Actions)

Solo cases the guard's stance (Wits+Melee as feint-reading): success, banks a disarm detail for later. **Mixed** flashes a merchant writ (Presence+Sway), Archivist supplies a ledger note: +2 dice assist. **Mastermind** runs the decoy wagon (Wits+Tactics): success splits heat; one Complication Point: a junior guard memorizes faces.

Duel in the Courtyard

Solo declares "*first blood, no scars*", wins on clean 6+, rerolls 1s via Intricate. **Mixed** keeps the crowd aligned: reduces fallout with Sway; on Complication, a heckler changes the mood. **Mastermind** positions allies: next turn the Scout provides climbing lines (+3 capped assist) for a swift exit.

Debrief & Downtime

Solo buys Skill 3→4 to keep personal ceiling high. **Mixed** trains Research 0→2 and deepens the Archivist's narrative ties. **Mastermind** invests XP into a Standard Safehouse Ring to convert future *position* into on-screen advantage.

A.5 Conversion Notes & Reskinning

These statlines are intentionally lean. To reskin:

- Swap **Melee** for **Marksmanship** on the Solo to make a sniper.

- Change the **Archivist** to a **Quartermaster** (assist lanes: Logistics, Forgery, Procurement).
- Rebuild the **Scout** as a **Whisper-Familiar** for casters; same Cap rules, different fiction.

B Quick Reference Sheets

These condensed sheets summarize the core procedures, costs, and tables for use at the table. They are designed for GMs and players to keep the flow of play without flipping through chapters.

Core Mechanic: The Art of Consequence

1. **Approach:** Player states intent and method (Attribute + Skill).
2. **Execution:** Roll dice pool of d10s. Each 6+ is a success; each 1 is a Complication Point.
3. **Outcome:**
 - Basic** Roll as-is; tally Complications.
 - Detailed** Re-roll one 1.
 - Intricate** Re-roll all 1s; add one positive flourish if successful.

Attributes & Skills

Body Strength, endurance, physical force.

Wits Perception, cleverness, reflexes.

Spirit Willpower, intuition, resilience.

Presence Charm, command, social force.

Skill Ratings (0–5)

- 0 Untrained — rely on raw Attribute.
- 1 Familiar — basic competence.
- 2 Skilled — reliable training.
- 3 Expert — professional mastery.
- 4 Master — renowned in your field.
- 5 Legendary — near-mythic talent.

XP Costs

Attributes New rating $\times 3$.

Skills New level $\times 2$.

Followers (On-Screen) Cap² XP (e.g., Cap 3 = 9 XP).

Off-Screen Assets Tiered cost (Minor 4 XP, Standard 8 XP, Major 12 XP).

Deck of Consequences

Draw from the deck (or roll a d52 equivalence) when Complication Points are spent. Suits = type of complication. Rank = severity.

Suit	Complication Domain
Hearts	Emotional / Social fallout (fear, anger, betrayal)
Diamonds	Resource / Wealth loss (gear breaks, expenses rise)
Clubs	Physical harm / Obstacles (injuries, blockades, fatigue)
Spades	Mystical / Narrative twists (omens, curses, chance)

Ranks (1–10, J–K–A):

- 2–5: Minor setback, scene continues smoothly.
- 6–9: Moderate complication; new obstacle or clock starts.
- 10–King: Severe twist; alters stakes of the scene.
- Ace: Catastrophic turn; reshapes narrative or mission goal.

Magic Casting Loop

1. **Channel:** Wits + Arcana roll to gather Potential.
2. **Weave:** Wits + Art roll to shape spell.
3. **Backlash:** Complication Points spent through Deck of Consequences, themed to the opposing element.

Player Archetypes

- **Solo:** Invests in Attributes + Skills. Strong spotlight.
- **Mixed:** Balances self with one follower or off-screen assets.
- **Mastermind:** Multiple followers + networks, but more narrative liabilities.

Narrative Time

A Moment A heartbeat; single action.

Some Time A few minutes; quick exchanges.

Significant Time An hour or more; downtime actions.

Days Extended travel or projects.

GM Guidance at a Glance

- Spend Complication Points to **add story problems**, not punish.
- Always tie consequences back to **thematic domains** (Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, Spades).
- Encourage Intricate actions: reward description with rerolls and narrative control.
- Let Off-Screen assets resolve downtime problems but keep adventures on the table.

C GM Toolkit: Gear, Kits, and Artifacts

This chapter provides guidance and ready-to-use gear for *Fate's Edge*. Unlike the player-facing primer, this section is designed for GMs. It contains condensed tables of common kits, weapons, armor, rare items, and magical artifacts. It also offers rules of thumb for creating new gear without tracking individual numbers.

C.1 Design Philosophy

- **Narrative, not accounting.** Gear matters when it changes the story, not as a spreadsheet.
- **Complications drive gear drama.** Items break, spoil, or splinter when the dice say so.
- **XP defines weight.** Items that are always-on or arc-defining should cost XP. Flavorful, narrow, or once-per-session items may be free at creation or as treasure.

C.2 Standard Kits

Characters begin with one free kit. Upgraded versions may cost XP, but mundane versions are assumed to be coin-purchased or handwaved.

IX Kit Narrative Effect

Traveler's Pack Baseline supplies. Without it, a PC suffers Fatigue one step sooner than the party.

Scout's Rig +1 die to a Survival/Stealth roll per session. Loses bonus if Supply is Dangerously Low.

Scholar's Satchel +1 die to a Lore/Arcana roll per session. Requires light.

Burglar's Tools +1 die to Skulduggery/Stealth vs. mundane locks or traps. May become Compromised.

Healer's Bag Once per session: Spirit+Craft roll to remove 1 Fatigue from an ally or stabilize the dying.

C.3 Weapons and Armor

Coin buys mundane versions. XP upgrades represent cultural edges or masterwork reliability.

IX Item Narrative Effect

Ykrul Recurve Bow Powerful composite bow. If Compromised, requires rare materials to repair.

Viterran Longspear Once per scene: +1 die against a charging mounted foe.

Duelist's Rapier On Intricate attack, reroll one failed die. Bends (Compromised) on failed roll with Complications.

Knight's Heater Shield May forgo attack to give ally +2 dice to next defense. Compromise is a story event.

Aeler-forged Hauberk Counts as armor. When gaining Fatigue, roll a die; on 6+, avoid it.

C.4 Rare Gear (Story Rewards)

These are not purchased; they are discovered, inherited, or earned. A GM may attach XP "Attunement" costs if players want to keep and rely on them.

IX Item Narrative Effect

Rothari War-Kit Once per session: cancel 1 Complication from a stealth/ambush roll.

Whisper-thin Elven Cloak Stealth in natural terrain: reroll one 1. At Full Supply, reroll all 1s.

Lence Dueling Gauntlet +2 dice to Presence when issuing challenges or demanding satisfaction.

Oshiiran Abacus On trip-planning, add +1 free Supply segment if Lore roll succeeds.

Sihai Warrior-Monk Gi If unarmored, may use Wits instead of Body for defense rolls.

C.5 Artifacts and Relics

Artifacts reshape arcs. Always introduce them with strong narrative hooks.

IX Artifact Narrative Effect

Sundered King's Coin Payment always creates ripples. GM draws 2 Consequence cards, applies one.

Echo-Wrought Blade May strike spirits. On hit, can inflict Fatigue instead of damage.

Khemesh-Scale Cloak Wearer breathes underwater for Significant Time; failed Spirit roll causes Fatigue.

Unkwa Ward-Post Wards camp from natural Supply loss. Failed Spirit roll attracts hungry things.

Silent Bell Once per arc, erase all Complication Points from a roll. Debt returns later as

larger problem.

C.6 Creating New Gear

GMs should keep new items simple and narrative-facing. Use these guidelines:

- **+1 die once per session** — Minor, 0–2 XP if made permanent.
- **Cancel 1 Complication** — Mid-tier, 3–4 XP.
- **Always-on swap or defense** — Major, 6+ XP.
- **Arc-shaping artifact** — 8–10 XP. Found, not bought.

Tie items to culture, history, or gods of the setting to deepen immersion. A dwarven hammer is not “just” a hammer — it is a relic of a guild feud or an heirloom lost in a kingdom’s fall.