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## [PREFACE]

## [INTRODUCTION]

Talebones is a roleplaying game about stories. For one it is about the stories you and your friends will embark on, the twisting and winding paths your characters will take, and the many folktales, legends and horror stories you are going to encounter, act out and subvert. On the other hand, Talebones is about stories more generally. How they inspire people (mostly humans in the real world), how they shape perception and how they compel us to dream. But really Talebones is about nightmares. The nightmares that start when you are incapable of waking the next morning, forced to tread deeper and deeper on a path to assured madness.

Adventures played in Talebones can reach in tone from delightfully whimsical to deep existential horror, with all facets in between. Generally, it is by its nature fantastic and narrative focused, but there is a large focus on making combat more narratively satisfying and scenic as well.

Talebones intends to put the dynamic conversation between game master (GM) and the players front and centre and acknowledge its central role in telling the story at the table.

## THE WORLD AND YOU

Talebones is played in a mystical world after the end of the world. Centuries ago, almighty old gods ravaged and destroyed everything, leaving in their wake a deeply broken land with drastic changes done to how things worked.

The good news is that these old gods are gone now. Leaving their broken plaything behind, to torture a different kind of people. The bad news is that the changes seem very much irreversible.

Stories are essential in this new order. They shape everything that happens, give everything the correct appearance of a dramatic tale, even against the wishes of the freshly chosen protagonists. Some of the stories are remnants of the world before, some are new tales. Told by the elderly at fireplaces, over and over, to a point where a story gets its whole own way of being alive. And alive things need nourishment. This way stories leach of the people in the world, somehow making them follow their every whim.

These people in the world. They are not quite what you might know from your world. Maybe you are familiar with humans, maybe even with different races like elves, gnomes and orcs. Maybe this world was the same once, but since the apocalypse everyone is just Folk. Every folk is completely unique in their appearance, form and abilities. Free from limits in size, skin tone, or even the old laws of nature, Folk can take any shape, completely independent of their parents or farther ancestors. A Folk with green skin and tusks may have a child that is a sentient and telepathic, wooden barstool, who someday will marry a little guy with a big red pointy hat.

To spite this new way of creation, folk still manage to think in boxes though. Anything that is significantly larger than average they call Treefolk. Anything significantly smaller, Grassfolk. They huddle up in small communities, cut off from others like theirs by the untamed wilderness that sprung up in the wake of grand civilisation. Every other village or commune is just that. “The others”. And the things that don’t live in groups, not scared of everything outside their palisades? Those are “the rest”. Folk are used to living in abstract fear of everyone and everything they cannot categorize. And the world does not tend to freely explain itself.

You step into this splintered world as an outsider. Because everyone is somewhere an outsider. But you might just be strong, smart or charming enough to wrangle the last figments of free choice you get from the stories. And everyone knows. Subverting a worn-out trope, is sometimes the best way to breathe life into a tale.

## THIS BOOK

In this first chapter you may gain an overview of what Talebones has to offer. After a quick introduction, you get a first look at what is left of the world you are playing in. At the end of the chapter, there is a basic overview of the Challenge mechanic and dice rolling system of Talebones.

The next chapter leads you through the character creation process, which are the means to bring your very own Folk to life. Talebones does not have any classes, specific races or similar, so you are nearly completely free in following your imagination.

In chapter 3, There is a list of reactive actions. These are combat specific ways to interact with things happening around you, outside of your turn. This is the core mechanic of Talebones’ combat and allows it to be very fast and fluid.

Afterwards there will be an overview of Abilities, which are powerful traits your character may acquire on their adventure, to bolster their actions.

In chapter 5\*? the magic of Talebones will be explained. To cast spells, or rather so-called Incantations, a Folk needs to break their own bones to released stored energy, shaping reality around them.

Chapter 6 goes in depth on the topic of combat, including initiative, special weapon mechanics and of course taking damage and dying.

Chapter 7 gives a more detailed insight into the world of Talebones, including several locations the game master may use in their adventure and additional tables to generate random places for the players to visit. Chapter 8, chapter 9 and chapter 10 are primarily the domain of the game master, chapter 8 going into detail on enemy and non-player character mechanics and chapter 9 helping the game master with tips and advice for running an adventure in Talebones. Reading this as a non-game master should be cleared with your game master first, to avoid avoidable spoilers.

Wrapping up the book is a short adventure, the game master can use to introduce the players (and possibly themselves) to Talebones and how it is played.



## WHAT ARE ROLEPLAYING GAMES?

All roleplaying games are a form of structured cooperative storytelling. At heart it is very similar to children playing games of make believe. A group of people come together and agree that a shared set of beliefs is true for the duration of play.

While playing each player gains control over one character of their own making, while the game master controls any other non-player characters that might come up during the story as well as being the final arbiter of rules. Additionally, the game master has prepared the basic story framework the group is going to play through. This framework is not fleshed out and clearly defined at the start, as that is the task of the group to explore cooperatively.

Any scene, both planned or completely improvised ones, usually starts with the game master giving a quick overview of the surroundings and current goals of the characters. From this point onwards the game master steps back, and it is the challenge of the players to talk between each other or interact with characters in the scene or the scene surroundings. At any point the game master may ask a player, or a player may request from the game master, to make a dice roll for the current action they are doing. This may occur because the outcome of the action is indeterminate, or a failure could affect the story meaningfully. Generally, a dice roll should not occur for actions that are sure to work out to the players expectations, or do not have interesting consequences. This is dependent on the opinions of everyone though, so if someone feels as if something should not require a dice roll, or oppositely should require one, they may attempt to argue for it. On topics of dice rolls the game master has the last word, to allow for a regulated flow of the game.

<h3>Example of Play</h3>
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Consequences for bad dice rolls or other situations, should be a product of cooperative storytelling. Every player should take pride in being able to narrate their character tripping in a dramatic moment or having to put a relative to rest. The game master should relinquish control of as many moments as possible, to allow for players to have the impression that they are not powerless in the face of consequences, but rather accomplices in putting their characters through bad times.

Note that the game master has surprisingly few required duties to attend to during play. Largely they play the role of an instigator and enabler for the players and their characters, allowing them to shine with what their characters are good at. You do not need to be the plotting mastermind behind all machinations to be a good game master. And while a firm grasp on the rules helps your role, it is by no means essential. Players usually have a good idea of the rules as well and will help, if you reach out. All other parts come through experience. Just remember to communicate your style of game

mastering with your players as early as possible, so they are prepared for the type of game you are going to run. And do not be afraid to make in the moment rule decisions or to make up whole new rules! Just review the decision after the session of play and communicate with your players, if you are sticking with that in the moment call or reverting it. Noone asks you to never go back on your word. Homebrewing, as it is called, was the origin of the development for Talebones, so feel free to perpetuate that practice.

The social contract is a mindset that every player at the table wishes to enjoy their time and enable the enjoyment of other players. The game master is a player in this as well, so even they are here to enjoy their time and make the experience memorable for all other players. This contradicts directly a competitive reading of role-playing games, so there should not be winners or losers, and the goal should be for everyone to feel included and valued as a person.

Conflict between player characters, or conflict between player character and non-player characters will occur, and Talebones even encourages these kinds of interactions in game. During all of this, the actual players should stay in constant contact and communication, working together to tell the best story. That may include one player having to decide that their character suffers a defeat, embarrassment or loss, but that should never occur in direct opposition of that player. This requires self-reflection and control of everyone involved, especially if the conflict deals with sensitive topics like relationships, death or trauma. To facilitate a healthy and welcoming gaming group, this book presents the safety tool of the “X card” as well as “Lines and Veils”. Whilst these are the safety tools we present here, there are other options. If you would like to find out about alternatives, there are many more that can be found online.

## X Card

The X-Card is an optional tool (created by John Stavropoulos) that allows anyone in your game (including you) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen till it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction people don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise.

The X-Card is any piece of paper or chat message marked by a visible "X". If anyone wants to skip the current scene or content, they just need to tap, lift, or send the X-Card and the content is skipped without any further questions.

On how to introduce the X-Card, do read the original document for the "X-Card by John Stavropoulos" (<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>).

## Lines & Veils

Lines and veils are established boundaries for the story and are defined by each player individually. Generally, they are shared with the GM, either as a group or in private, before the start of a game or campaign. Lines are hard boundaries that exclude specified content from the game, no questions asked. This could include anything, but common lines are children being harmed, rape or sexual violence, or racial discrimination. Veils are softer limits where the player is ok with it being included in the game, but it isn't explicitly described. Things that are specified as veils will be hand-waved without going into detail or happen off-screen, like the fade-to-black sex scenes in a PG movie. (Source: *Golden Lasso Games*)

## A SESSION OF TALEBONES

A game of Talebones is usually played by a group of three to six players over the course of at least one session. Each session of Talebones is around three to six hours but do listen to everyone's gut feeling which duration is best for your group.

An adventure that only takes a single session is called a Oneshot and a good way for new players or game masters to get a feel for the game. These stories usually focus on a slice of an implied greater story, with already established characters that tend to not have a notable arc over the course of that one session.

Longer form adventures take course over more than one session, shorter ones around five to fifteen, longer ones without any upper limit. In these kinds of stories, the players and game master are able to dive into detailed character and story arcs with multiple stages and twists and turns. Usually this takes the form of an overarching campaign story arc, interspersed with more personal character focused arcs. In these character focused narratives, the players take turns highlighting the story, development or relationships of one player character at a time, enabling each other to get a moment in the spotlight.

## Executing themes

During a session of Talebones you might encounter themes of horror, whimsy, gore, and wonder. While Talebones wants to illustrate the inherent connection between these apparent opposites, the final content of your game is completely up to you and your group.

To highlight the horror side of your adventures, put the players into situation without apparent escape, focus on the characters being alone and describe their surroundings in terms of their senses. Strange scents, screams and flashing lights set a certain vibe for the adventure. Do refrain from “showing your monster” early, let the enemies of the player characters affect their surrounding by warping or killing everything they touch for example. Do pay some mind for your play environment. Make use of mood lighting or appropriate ambient music.

If your group prefers the lighter tones of storytelling, cater to them with quirky, light-hearted non-player characters that have a positive outlook on life. Include themes of hope and encourage players to try stupid plans even if opposed to sound reasoning. You should remember that whimsy does not necessarily mean low stakes or lack of conflict though. It just guides the tone of those parts of the game.

For a gorier experience, you should necessarily check in with everyone on their Lines and Veils regarding body horror and similar. Do take the safety tool serious and keep in close contact with everyone throughout the game. It is possible that someone discovers their discomfort only during play. If this communication is given, describe every grotesque body part of a creature in abject detail. If anything transforms, do introduce steps to it, describing every step. Your facial expressions and body movements are a great way to enhance the effect of this form of narration.

A sense of wonder generally comes from the prospect of bountiful secrets with chances of discovering them. Anytime the characters enter a new setting their wonder will correlate with the questions being unveiled and their ability to interact with those secrets. If you want to create a wondrous place, create many small parts that by themselves are hard to explain or grasp, but together paint a larger story (e.g. a lair of a dragon might have constant falling cinders, ground warm to the touch, and fluctuating winds). A wondrous character usually does things without having an obvious reason to. Either courageous and heroic things to surprise their audience or mysterious and cunning things to catch them off guard.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play a session of Talebones you need the following:

- **This Rulebook.** In an accessible format to look up rules if necessary.
- **Five to eight 20-sided dice or any digital dice rolling app or website.** Talebones requires only 20-sided dice. How many depends on your character, but dice may be shared between players or be rerolled if necessary.
- **Character Sheet.** To bookkeep all rule information about your character.
- **Notepaper and Pencil.** To bookkeep all other information.
- **A Game Master.** To game master the game.
- **Some Players.** To play the game.

- **Tokens to represent Characters.** Talebones' combat requires at times a representation of the current battlefield.

Additionally, you may decide to use:

- **Square or Hex Grid Paper.** May be introduced to simplify discussions about distances during combat.
- **Game Master Screen.** Any visual barrier to prevent players looking at the game master's notes. Can be used for additional space to display rules lookups for the game master.

## CHALLENGES

Talebones uses exclusively 20-sided dice. You are able to buy these in your local game store or online. But any app or website that offers digital dice rolls works, as long as you check in with your game master. In this book sometimes when a dice is referenced, it is abbreviated to "d", followed by the number of sides (i.e. d20). A number before the "d", may represent the number of dice of that kind to be rolled (e.g. 3d20).

Challenges are the system to resolve character actions. Whenever your character does something, the game master may decide to ask for a challenge of any type. This usually occurs if the outcome of the action is undetermined or significant to the story.

Any challenge determines a number of successes, which define how well your character performed during the action. The more successes achieved in a challenge, the better the result. A task of average difficulty performed by a character with average skill can be achieved without major consequences with three successes.

As the game master calls for a challenge they (or the rules) define which base attribute the challenge is using. You, the player performing the challenge, then collect a number of d20 equal to the points your character has in that base attribute.

For example, if your character has three points in Feel, a Feel challenge starts out with a dice pool of 3d20.

### Base Attributes

Any folk and many inanimate objects have the following eight base attributes, although some might have no points in some. Player characters always have at least one point in each base attribute.

Three points is an average amount of points in any base attribute.

- **Force.** Exerting kinetic energy, either by strength or speed.
- **Body.** The limits of the physical form before breaking.
- **Speed.** Movement speed and dexterity to dodge and evade.
- **Intelligence.** Logical reasoning and planning.
- **Feel.** Intuitive understanding of own skills and the surrounding.
- **Experience.** Knowledge gained by repeated lessons, study or training.

- **Impression.** Effect on other folk by being around them.
- **Luck.** Chances of advantageous events occurring without intent.

From this point on you have to argue why any of your character's talents have prepared them for the task at hand. This is intended to spark a conversation with your game master about how your character plans to approach the challenge, for example by coming across scholarly to people preventing them from entering a library. This could be a useful application of the talent "Knowledge" (for more details on all talents, see chapter 2).

Your talents or profession grant you either to be considered skilled or pool points. For each pool point applicable due to your talent, you may add another d20.

Afterwards you roll all gathered d20s and tally up your successes. If you are not considered skilled in the challenge, any dice that rolled higher or equal to thirteen are considered successes. If you are considered skilled, the number to beat is an eight. A twenty on a die always counts as two successes.

Achieving three or even more successes, can be quite difficult for a character, if they are not specialized on the current task. This is by design, as any challenge can be helped or assisted by all other players. Another player must describe how they help you being successful in the task and roll their own challenge. The final successes are being added together. This does not have to be the same challenge; it just has to be helpful to the process.

- ❖ Talebones uses exclusively 20-sided dice
  - Referred to as d20
  - 3d20
- ❖ Challenges are the rule framework to resolve character actions
  - You roll a d20 whenever your character tries to do something that the DM decides has a chance of both success and failure.
  - Determines a number of successes
    - The more successes, the more successful
  - Any challenge has a chosen base attribute connected by the gm or rules
    - The player rolls as many dice as their character has points in that base attribute
  - [Base Attribute overview]
  - Talents and Profession are advantages the player may apply
    - Due to these the player gains skilled or pool points
    - Per pool point uses one additional die
    - If skilled the number to beat with any dice is lowered
  - Talebone requires characters to help each other to succeed
    - Any character may describe how to help the currently acting character

- Does their own challenge and adds the successes
- 3 Successes are average quality of an average task

#### - Introduction

##### - Setting

> Who, what , where , why are we playing?

##### - This Book

> Verbal description of contents chapter by chapter

##### - System Description

##### - How to Play

> What dice to use, how to play etc.

##### - Framing of the play

> What form takes a campaign/session/Adventure

## [CHARACTER CREATION ART PAGE]



## [CHARACTER CREATION]

Your character in Talebones is a Folk at the whims of narrative storytelling. Either they have been enveloped by a Tale since their birth, they have been found by their story before the start of the adventure, or they start out the adventure as an unremarkable everyday Folk, at least for now. Over the course of your play you will build on the foundation you put down in the character creation process and will use the tools given to you by the rules and game master.

But you are a part of other stories as well. The story of the game master which will guide you through play and the stories of your fellow players that will enrich each game session with interactions and life. Be active in your communication with everyone throughout the process, to allow for even greater, communal, storytelling.

If everyone tries their best to be the best, most enabling supporting role for every other character and story, every story has a rich cast to play off.

Character creation has been itemized into five steps. The first step defines your character in the broadest strokes, by giving them a Name, a Species and a Profession. Step 2 to 4 define the general and more specific rule-based abilities your character can utilize and call upon. Step 5 closes with thoughts on building on a, possibly shared, backstory for your character.

### Character Concepts

Anyone may have a different process to create their character. Some may know directly what character they want to play in which way, while others only discover these things during play. Beyond the very rules-oriented steps in this chapter, you should roughly know the appearance of your character, as well as any, otherwise supernatural, abilities they possess. Beyond that you are free to find out more about your character at your own pace.

Every character in Talebones is unique. Any character could look, interact and live differently than their parents, their community or their stereotype. This puts a lot of power in the hands of players, but also brings some responsibility with it.

No character should be naturally gifted in everything, so do pay some mind to the other players when choosing special abilities for yourself.

Here is a list of examples of how to find a character to play:

- **From 0.** You already have a concept in mind and create a character based on that concept.
- **Be inspired.** You do not need to be the sole source for your character. If you like a character from any media or story you know, just try to create them in Talebones.

Maybe even introduce them as their own Tale. You are of course free to adapt them in any way you like and change things about them to your liking.

- **Feature focused.** You pick an ability, reactive action or incantation you want to use and go from there. Imagine a cool, fun or absurd character that uses this feature and figure out their stats.
- **Weapon focused.** You pick a weapon you want to use and go from there. Imagine a cool, fun or absurd character that uses this weapon and figure out their stats.

### Quick Create

To quickly create a character, follow these steps:

1. Choose a Name, Specie and Profession.
2. Start every Base Attribute at 1 Point.
3. Distribute 10 Base Attribute Points.
4. Choose 2 Talents to be skilled at.
5. Distribute 3 Pool Points on Talents.
6. Choose 2 Weapon Talents to be skilled at.
7. You know the Reactions: Dodge, Riposte, Heal and Panic.
8. Choose 1 Reaction or Incantation to learn.
9. Prepare around 3 Talebound Epithets from your backstory.

## Step 1: Name, Species, Profession

At first define your character in the broadest strokes. Those being how your character looks and what they do, while not on an adventure.

### Name

Your Name is what others use to call upon you. The world of Talebones is culturally fractured, so you can use any naming pattern you can come up with. Not all villages use First and Last name, some might use descriptive names like “No-ear”, or use special types of communication for names, like whistling. All characters should have a pronounceable transcription of their name though, to be used by other players and the game master.

### Specie

Everything is **Folk**. But there are two ways how to further specify the general group belonging of your character. They may either be Grassfolk or Treefolk, which describes only their general size.

**Grassfolk** are any Folk smaller than the average Folk. Usually everything below 4 feet or 1.50 meters is seen as Grassfolk.

**Treefolk** are everyone larger than the average Folk. Treefolk children are usually at least 6 feet or 1.80 meters. With adults being larger of course.

Grassfolk and Treefolk do not have a finite bound for their size. So microbic Grassfolk and mountainous Treefolk are possible, but it is highly advised to stick to manageable sizes, except explicitly allows by the game master. This is so other character can interact with you.

Villages usually stick to one Specie as its population, for the infrastructure to not have to facilitate a wide range of sizes. Special circumstances of the community may change that of course. Achieving homogeneity is never an easy process, as any child born may grow up to be a different specie than their parents. Due to that most villages have a handful of mostly younger people of different Folk groups among them.

## Profession

Your Profession is what you have done before starting the adventure. That can be a job description (e.g. baker, fletcher, hunter, criminal) or a life experience (e.g. street urchin, noble, elder). The choices for your profession start and end with your imagination.

### [Actual Play Example]

## Step 2: Base Attributes

Your Base Attributes describe what your character can do. There are seven Base Attributes that you can affect, and there is Luck. Luck is not quite within the power of your control but defines the general relationship of your character with fate.

Each base attribute starts with **1** point, so there is no way you can't roll a challenge due to not having any dice.

During character creation you distribute **10** points beyond across the Base Attributes. You may not have more than **5** points in any single base attribute.

You are not able to increase your Luck Base Attribute during this step. It always starts with a maximum value of 3 points.

### [Actual Play Example]

## What do the Base Attributes Mean?

Here are some examples, how different values in Base Attributes may express themselves. Your character may express their lack or excess in any attribute differently.

### Force

**0 (Points):** Unable to physically interact.

**1:** Barely able to throw a punch.

**2:** Can hold themselves in a fight and defend themselves in bad situations.

**3:** Can actively participate in fights and is able to do some damage to objects. (Average)

**4:** Trained individual, wins most contests of force.

**5:** Peak of strength or speed.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of strength and speed, little can stand in your way.

### Body

**0 (Points):** Unable to be destroyed or damaged.

**1:** Fragile, the slightest damage is too much.

**2:** Sickly and fatigued.

**3:** Healthy and well sustained. (Average)

**4:** Resilient against many sicknesses and damages.

**5:** Peak of constitution and resilience.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of constitution and resilience, little can harm you.

### Speed

**0 (Points):** Unable to move without assistance.

**1:** Sluggish movements and low reflexes.

**2:** Barely can keep up with fast movement or react to sudden events.

**3:** Can keep up with most regular Folk. (Average)

**4:** Trained individual, few things are a challenge.

**5:** Peak of speed and agility.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of speed and agility, little can keep up with you.

### Intelligence

**0 (Points):** No thought.

**1:** Barely can conclude anything, doesn't plan.

**2:** Forms simple plans, can put ideas into correlation.

**3:** Can conclude reliably based on evidence, knows how to plan properly. (Average)

**4:** Intelligent individual, most plans succeed.

**5:** Peak of logic and planning.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of logic and planning, little can keep up with you.

### Feel

**0 (Points):** No way to empathize or perceive.

**1:** Ignorant to the world around.

**2:** Struggles to connect with others or the world.

**3:** Can empathize with and is perceptive to most events around them. (Average)

**4:** Highly sensitive individual to the feelings and world around them.

**5:** Peak of empathy and intuition.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of empathy and intuition, little can keep up with you.

### Experience

**0 (Points):** No knowledge or training.

**1:** Barely interacted with the world or education.

**2:** Little knowledge of the world or skill.

**3:** Average level of training, education and travel experience. (Average)

**4:** Learned and experienced individual.

**5:** Peak of knowledge and skill.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of knowledge and skill, you always know how to react.

### Impression

**0 (Points):** Unable to invoke desired reactions.

**1:** Incapable of sustaining any desired effect beyond first contact.

**2:** Unequipped to stay calm in conversation.

**3 Points:** Manages to convey desired emotion in most interactions. (Average)

**4:** In control of most conversations.

**5:** Peak of social graces and control.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of social graces and control, little can keep up with you

## Step 3: Talents

There are eight Talents which broadly categorize the trained skills your character has, all of them described in Chapter 3. Each talent can be skilled and have up to two Pool Points.

Being skilled in a Talent describes your training and study of this skill set. How that skill is expressed, is up to you.

Pool Points in a Talent describe an innate talent for these kinds of tasks, for example by natural abilities or cultural framing.

You may choose two Talents to be skilled in.

Breach and Knowledge are Cumulative Talents. Cumulative Talents can be skilled more than once. Each time you skill these talents you can define another way you may apply that talent (see the Cumulative Talent Table for details). You can only be considered skilled in a Challenge that concerns one of your specified options.

<b>Talent</b>	<b>Name of List</b>	<b>Meaning of Entry</b>	<b>Pool Points in this Talent...</b>
Breach	Ways of Entry	Complete training and experience in the task.	... describe your general ability to avoid and overcome obstacles.
Knowledge	Fields of Academic Study	Complete academic knowledge of the topic.	... describe your general ability to learn and work things out.

Furthermore, you may distribute 3 Pool Points on any Talents. This does not depend on which Talents you are skilled in.

You may apply Pool Points from a Cumulative Talent to a challenge, even if you are skilled but are not currently using one of your specified options.

## Weapon Talents

A Weapon Talent groups all similar Weapons into one general way of how to use them. Skill with a Weapon Talent describes your ability to use any Weapons for which that Weapon Talent applies in all situations reliably.

You may choose two Weapon Talents to be skilled in.

## [Actual Play Example]

### Step 4: Reactions & Marrowing Incantations

Reactions are your ability to react to events around you and use them to your advantage. They are largely used in the context of initiative and combat, but some do help in generally stressful situations as well. Especially if speed is of concern.

Marrowing Incantations are patterns of magic, that you practised enough to perform them in any situation and headspace. See Chapter 7 for more details on Marrowing, Incantations and alternate options of using Marrowing.

You always know the Reactions:

- Dodge
- Panic
- Riposte
- Help

Beyond that you may choose **1** additional Reaction **or** **1** Marrowing Incantation during Character Creation. You receive access to more over the course of your adventure.

## [Actual Play Example]

### Step 5: Talebound Epithets

When you fracture a Talebone during play, you avoid death but are burdened with a Talebound Epithet. That Talebound Epithet relates either to the circumstances of your near death, or to a part of your backstory, most likely a part that you do not want people to freely know. See Chapter 6 for more details on Talebones and Talebound Epithets.

During Character Creation, try to think of around three Epithets, that relate to your backstory and note them down. This way you have some at the ready when you come around to fracturing a Talebone.

## [Actual Play Example]

### Conversation Topics

After having decided on most of what your character is or is not able to do, a conversation with your Game Master should start. This conversation should not end with the start of the adventure and actual play, but rather be an ongoing process of developing and evolving your character.

### Goals

You should communicate clearly, if you have certain goals for your character. Either as a want that the character feels, or a meta-goal that you the player have, for where you want your character to end up. The Game Master cannot give you everything you want of

course, but it is useful to talk about these things, and worst case maybe discuss alternatives, if some goals are completely unachievable, according to your Game Master.

## Body

Due to the wildcard nature of Talebone's Character Creation, a character does not need to be of the standard "humanoid" mold. Communicate clearly what your character can do with their body and discuss setting limits for otherwise supernatural capabilities that can be achieved by different body structures and different limb arrangements.

## Senses

Your character may have different senses than the standard Folk. Do let your Game Master know, so they can include that in their planning and are able to describe scenes to you according to your senses.

## Movement

There is not any limit set to what types of movement your character can perform. As these options change adventure design drastically, always let your game master know before the adventure starts, which abilities your character has. Do not change these abilities without having another conversation with your Game Master. The Game Master may always disallow any certain way of movement but should work with you to figure out alternatives.

## Character Advancements

As you play you progress in the overarching story, the story of other characters and your own character's story. Generally, that correlates with an increase in capability and experience, so you can gain new skills and abilities as you go on.

### Plot Points

At the end of each play session, the game master asks you character specific questions (see "Questions for Plot Points"). For each question you can answer with "yes" for your character, you gain one Plot Point.

#### *Questions for Plot Points (PP)*

1. Did you participate in the session? (You always gain 1 PP per session)
2. Did you fracture a Talebone?
3. Did you discover new information?
4. Did you have a meaningful conversation with another character?
5. Were you able to help another character have a standout moment?
6. Did you face and overcome a Legend?
7. Were you affected by one of your Talebound Epithets?

As soon as you gathered 5 Plot Points, you may increase your Level and gain the benefits from it. After Character Creation your character starts at level 1.

## Levels

While levelling up, every character follows the same process from level 1 to 6. At level 7 every character may pick to either follow the Tragic Tale levelling path or the Heroic Tale levelling path.

This changes the process for these two paths, until level 10 is shared among everyone once more.

**R+I:** The sum of Reactions of any type and any Incantations you know.

**Signature Move:** see Chapter 5 p.124.

**Weapon Mastery:** see Chapter 5 p.124.

**Ability:** see Chapter 3 p.123.

## Embodiments

If you are an Embodiment of a certain story, you gain special advantages, reserved for your type of story.

### Tragic Tale Embodiment

You can contribute two Actions or Reactions to any Reaction Chain.

### Heroic Tale Embodiment

You can spend your own Action Points on Actions of other characters.

### Folktale Embodiment

You can always use any Reactions or Incantations you have access to.

Story Arc						
Level	Title		Upgrade			R+I
1	Talebound					5
2	Talebound		Choose 1 additional Action Add two Base Attribute Points Choose a Signature Move			6
3	Talebound		+1 Action Choose an Ability			7
4	Folkhero		+1 Action Choose Weapon Mastery Choose one additional Skilled Talent			8
5	Folkhero		+1 Action Add three Base Attribute Points			9
6	Folkhero		+1 Action Choose an Ability			10
Branching Paths						
Level	Title	Upgrade	Level	Title	Upgrade	R+I
7	Tragic Tale	+1 Action Choose Weapon Mastery	7	Heroic Tale	+1 Action Add three Base Attribute Points	11



8	Tragic Tale	+1 Action Tragic Tale Embodiment	8	Heroic Tale	+1 Action Heroic Tale Embodiment	12
9	Tragic Tale	+1 Action Choose an Ability	9	Heroic Tale	+1 Action Choose an Ability	13
<b>Finale</b>						
<b>Level</b>	<b>Title</b>		<b>Upgrade</b>			<b>R+I</b>
10	Folktale		+1 Action Folktale Embodiment			14

### Option 1: Beyond Folktales

If your players have reached level 10 of the normal progression, you can just continue levelling. Either start back at the start of the Upgrade List and just count up, or transition to Option 2.

### Option 2: Free levelling

If you plan to run a longer form adventure, the standard progression might be not extensive enough. You may want to opt for a free levelling approach in that case. Generally, each level should give players at least one additional Reaction or Incantation. Beyond that you should regularly allow players to pick additional character choices like abilities, base attribute increases or skilled talents.

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## Marrow Witches

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# [Rules Glossary]

## Glossary Conventions

The glossary uses the following conventions:

**Abbreviation.** The abbreviations below are commonly used in the glossary and elsewhere.

AP	Action Points
HP	Hit Points
NPC	Nonplayer character
PC	Player character

## Rules Definitions

### Ability

An ability is a passive ability that your character may have or gain to support or enhance your actions.

### Action

An action in the context of initiative is a discrete activity that costs AP to perform. Any action can be the trigger for a reaction, unless stated otherwise.

Actions defined in the glossary are:

Attack Action

Help Action

Movement Action

Draw Action

### Advantage

If you have advantage on a challenge, you subtract a specified number from the difficulty of the challenge. Advantage is specified as for example “advantage (-3)”.

### Action Points

Any participant of initiative has an amount of AP at their disposal. Most actions during initiative cost AP to perform. You regain all AP at the start of your round. You lose all unspent AP at the end of your turn.

### Attack Action

An attack action is any action that involves an attack challenge of any kind. It costs AP dependant on the Weapon used.

## Attack Challenge

An Attack Challenge always uses a Weapon (see Unarmed Attack for exception). You can be skilled in the challenge, if you are using a Weapon of your Weapon Talent. The challenge dice pool is determined by your base attribute and the weapon dice pool.

## Base Attribute

Anything can have eight Base Attributes – Force, Body, Speed, Intelligence, Feel, Experience, Feel and Luck - each has points attributed. If the Base Attribute has no points, you are unable to make challenges based in it.

## Base Attribute Challenge

A challenge based just based in a Base Attribute is specified like for example: “roll a Speed Challenge”. The Challenge Dice Pool is equal to your points in the Base Attribute.

## Body Attacks

If you walk into the space of someone, they may roll a Body Challenge, dealing damage to you equal to the successes. This Action does not cost AP.

## Challenge

A challenge is a roll of d20s equal to the [Challenge Dice Pool] of the challenge, representing an action a character performs. The game master has the final word, if a challenge is required for any action.

## Challenge Dice Pool

The Challenge Dice Pool defines the number of d20 you roll for a given challenge.

## Compound Challenge

A Compound Challenge is composed of multiple Base Attributes. For the Challenge Dice Pool, add up all points in the corresponding Base Attributes.

## Cumulative Talent

## Contest

If one Challenge contests another one, successes cancel out one to one. Only the remaining successes count towards the Challenges Success Pool.

## Critical Failure

If a challenge has no successes one of the following events takes place:

**Challenge Dice Pool equal to one:** The action fails completely and cannot be reattempted.

**Challenge Dice Pool greater than one:** The action fails spectacularly, and serious consequences transpire.



**Challenge was an Attack Challenge:** Target gains the opportunity to react with a Riposte.

## Damage

If you take damage, you first take Poise Damage until your Poise is expended and afterwards take Hit Point Damage. If you take more Poise damage than you have Poise left, the leftover damage gets turned into Hit Point damage. If a rule states Poise or Hit Point Damage explicitly it cannot be converted by any means. Exceeding damage vanishes.

## Death

If you drop to zero hit points and do not fracture a Talebone, you die. Confer with the game master about how you wish your player character's story is to be recalled by NPCs.

## Difficulty

The Difficulty of a challenge is a number between one and twenty. Any dice of the Challenge Dice Pool must roll equal or greater to the difficulty to be counted towards the Success Pool.

The base Difficulty for an unskilled Challenge is **13**.

The game master can adjust the Difficulty by any amount, usually by up to five in either direction.

## Disadvantage

If you have disadvantage on a challenge, you add a specified number to the difficulty of the challenge. Disadvantage is specified as for example "disadvantage (+3)".

## Downed

While Prone you lie on the ground and are considered Tripped.

## Draw Action

During a Draw Action you either Draw or Stow any object on your person you are able to hold in your hands.

## Elevation

If you are above your target, you gain advantage (- height difference in Steps) on any challenges interacting with the target. If you are below your target, you gain disadvantage (+ height difference in Steps). Height difference is measured at the start of your action and ignores changes during the action.

## Encounter

An encounter is a group of NPCs that work against the PCs and their allies during initiative. All members of an encounter share a single pool of AP.

## Heavy Object

Some weapons and other objects can be Heavy. At all times you are only able to carry one heavy object or gain the Status Effect Prone.

## Help

If you Help an ongoing Challenge, you explain how you intend to help the successful outcome of it. The GM then asks you to roll your own Challenge. All successes get added to the original Challenge.

## Help Action

During your turn you can take the Help Action once, to use the Reaction Help once without paying AP until the end of your round.

## Hit Points

Hit points (HP) are a representation of how healthy or intact your character or an object is. Hit Point Damage reduces HP and healing restores them. You can never have more HP than your Body Points \* 20 and less HP than zero.

## Hit Point Damage

Hit Point Damage reduces HP by a given amount. It is possible to reduce Hit Point Damage to nothing.

If you receive Hit Point Damage, you gain the Status Effect Staggered.

## Incantation

An incantation is a trained pattern Marrow Witches are capable of reproducing in any situation. An Incantation always involves a Marrowing Challenge. Furthermore, a Marrowing Challenge is defined by the following:

<b>AP</b>	AP cost to cast the Incantation.
<b>Type</b>	If the Incantation is a Reaction, and which type.
<b>Base Attribute</b>	Which Base Attribute is used for the Marrowing Challenge.
<b>Effect</b>	The effects of the Incantation, usually scaling with Successes of the Marrowing Challenge.

## Initiative

Initiative determines the order of turns during combat or tense scenes (see Chapter 5).

## Jumping

When you Move you can always Jump 1 Step as part of that movement, as many times as you wish.

If you have taken any Movement Action before during your current round, you may instead Jump any fraction of your current Movement Action. Jumps always have to be in a straight line.

Jumps are only measured horizontally; the possible height of the Jump is up to the GM but may be oriented on the rule of: Maximum Height of Jump in Steps equals Points in Speed.

## Luck

Luck is a Base Attribute, that can be used in Challenges normally but cannot apply Talents or Profession.

Whenever you roll a challenge that is not based in Luck, you may spend any number of Points of Luck to add one Success to the Success Pool of the Challenge.

You regain one Luck Point every Rest, up to your maximum Luck Points.

## Marrowing Challenge

A Marrowing Challenge has a maximum Challenge Dice Pool equal to the Points in the Base Attribute of the Incantation cast and added any Pool Points in the Talent Marrow.

A Marrowing Challenge is only considered skilled, if the Talent Marrow is skilled.

Any success of the Challenge gets counted towards the Incantations effect as specified in its description.

Any failure of the Challenge deals Hit Point Damage to you equal to the displayed number.

## Movement

You can move in any way your character is able to. That includes flying, swimming, climbing and walking. If your character has a natural ability to do something else than walk, do check in with your GM on it.

Movement can be hindered by difficult terrain or wounds. The GM may increase the AP costs of Movement Actions in these cases.

It is possible to play a character with disabilities affecting any of their Movement. This should be given opportunities to exist without making the character not playable.

## Movement Action

A Movement Action is any of the following Actions, that can be used interchangeably whenever a Movement Action is mentioned.

<b>Dash</b>	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed.	Costs 2 AP
<b>Move</b>	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed times two.	Costs 6 AP

**Sprint**     Move Steps equal to your points in Speed times three.     Costs 5 AP  
You may only move in a straight line.

## Nonplayer character

A Nonplayer characters (NPC) is any character not played by a player. All Nonplayer characters are usually controlled by the GM.

During Initiative a Nonplayer Character can either be part of the Encounter, or part of the players.

## Off Balance

Off balance (X) reduces your current Poise by X. You regain the Poise when this Statuws Effect gets removed.

## Perception

You can perceive everything you have senses for, and your environment allows for. If you have senses beyond regular seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, do check in with your GM on it.

It is possible to play a character with disabilities affecting any of their senses. This should be given opportunities to exist without making the character not playable.

## Player Character

A Player characters (PC) is any character played by a player.

## Poise

Poise is a representation of the ability of your character or an object to avoid suffering wounds or damage. This can be achieved by being resilient or quick.

You regain all Poise at the start of each scene or initiative.

Poise is reduced by Poise Damage.

## Poise Damage

Poise Damage reduces Poise by a given amount. It is possible to reduce Poise Damage to nothing. Poise can never be less than zero.

If Poise Damage reduces your Poise to 0, you gain the Status Effect Staggered.

## Pool Point

A talent can have up to two Pool Points. If you may apply that talent, you may add dice equal to your pool points to the Challenge Dice Pool.

## Preventive Action

A Preventive Action is a type of Reaction that gets resolved before the triggering Action gets resolved.

## Profession

Your Profession describes what you have experienced and learned in your life before the actual adventure you play through. This may be an actual education or occupation like “Chef” or “Bounty hunter” but may as well be a general description of class or life experience (e.g. “Urchin”, “Elder”).

## Property

A Property is a keyword rule for a Weapon talent. (see Chapter 6? for a list of them)

## Reach

The most common form of Reach is “Arm’s Reach”. This describes anything you can reach with a limb of yours without moving your whole body. As different characters have different sizes and amounts of limbs, it is up to you and the GM to define this on a character-to-character basis. An average arm’s reach is one Step.

Other types of Reach usually refer to an action that needs to be taken to reach a target.

## Reaction

A Reaction is a type of Action of a character or environment that reacts to a triggering Action or Event of another character. At any point you may intercept the current flow of events and announce a Reaction to the current events. As soon as this happens a Reaction Chain gets created and anyone else may react too. After the Reaction Chain is resolved the events proceed.

## Reaction Chain

A Reaction Chain is a collection of Reactions that have a determined order of being resolved. If a Reaction of the chain triggers another Reaction Chain, that Reaction Chain gets resolved first before the next Reaction in the Chain gets resolved.

Any character can only contribute one Reaction or Action to any Reaction Chain, except stated otherwise.

## Reactive Action

A Reactive Action is a type of Reaction that gets resolved after the triggering Action gets resolved.

## Resting

To take a Rest you need to meet the following requirements:

- You need sufficient food for one proper meal for anyone attempting a Rest (the definition of a proper meal depends on the character).
- You need to rest in a secure and reinforced resting site.
- The resting site may not be under threat for eight hours.

If any of these requirements gets interrupted during the eight hours, the rest fails.

If the rest succeeds, everyone participating regains up to half their hit points and one Luck Point.

(see Chapter 8? for further options for Rests)

## Round

In any initiative there are two rounds, one for each party of the initiative. A round always starts with the turns of the opposing party and afterwards resolves the turns of your own party.

The party of the PCs resolves their turns in descending initiative count. When the PCs end their round, the character with the lowest initiative count adds 20 to their initiative count.

At the end of your (own parties) round you lose all Status Effects.

At the start of your round, you regain all AP you spent last round.

## Skilled

If you are Skilled in a Talent, any Challenges using that Talent are considered skilled.

The base Difficulty for a skilled Challenge is **8**.

## Success

Any dice rolled of the challenge Dice Pool that is shows an equal or higher number than the Difficulty of the Challenge is considered a success and adds one to the Success Pool.

A twenty on a die always counts as two successes.

## Success Pool

The Success Pool of a Challenge determines the success of the Challenge. A Success Pool of three results in a successful task of low to average difficulty.

## Suffocation

If suffocating, you stay conscious a number of rounds equal to your points in your Body Base Attribute.

You can hold your breath a number of minutes equal to your points in your Body Base Attribute.

## Supportive Action

A Supportive Action is a type of Reaction that gets resolved at the same time as the triggering Action gets resolved.

## Staggered

While staggered, any of your Movement Action costs double the AP it would usually cost.

## Status Effects

A status effect is a temporary state of a character. Any condition ends at the end of the characters round. The glossary defines these conditions:

Tripped

Downed

Off Balance

Staggered

Weirded

## Steps

A Step is a relative unit of distance. It can be anything your group agrees on, but is usually either equal to one meter or five feet.

## Talebone

Any character may have Talebones. If you are about to die and have an unfractured Talebone left, you instead fracture that Talebone, drop to one HP, regain all Poise and gain a Talebound Epithet.

Immediately you may take Actions with a combined AP-cost equal to the damage that would have killed you. It is not possible to announce Reactions to these Actions, but you are also not able to interact with any other Character during those Actions.

An NPC has a predetermined amount of Talebones.

If a PC is about to die, the player may decide in that moment, if they have another unfractured Talebone or if they die.

## Talebound Epithet

A Talebound Epithet is a byname that you can have, that any other character has heard folktales about. The character knowing the tale, does not have to have a reasonable explanation about how they know the Epithet. Interacting with you, these characters may have preconceived ideas about what you are or what you do.

Talebound Epithets may be introduced at a later point in time. If they are, the world itself gets rewritten, so that the stories about the Epithet always have existed.

## Talent

A Talent is a general area of skill that a Character may have trained or have a natural predisposition for. (see Chapter 3?)

## Target

A target for any Action or Reaction involving a physical aspect must be within Reach.

A target for any Incantation must be perceivable by the character.

## Telegraphed Action

Telegraphed Actions are Actions that do not do anything by themselves but count as any other Action Type (i.e. Movement Action, Attack Action, Draw Action), if concerning Trigger Conditions of Reactions.

As soon as the Reaction Chain of a Telegraphed Action is resolved a second Action follows. Usually, these Actions are very powerful.

## Trigger

The Trigger for a Reaction can be anything happening around the character. The character has to be able to perceive the Trigger and have a Reaction that matches that Trigger to use that Reaction.

## Tripped

While tripped you are unable to move.

## Unarmed Attack

If you do not use a weapon for an attack challenge, generally the attack challenge treats it like a normal attack based on Force and with a weapon dice pool of 0.

## Weapon Dice Pool

During an Attack Challenge, the Challenge Dice Pool is partially determined by the Weapon Dice Pool.

Each Weapon Talent has their own Weapon Dice Pool.

## Weapon Talent

Your Character usually is skilled in two Weapon Talents. If using a Weapon that counts towards one of these Weapon Talents, you use its statistics.

A Weapon Talent is defined by the following:

<b>Name</b>	A general name to describe the Weapon Talent.
<b>AP</b>	The AP-cost of using this Weapon Talent.



<b>(Weapon Dice) Pool</b>	The Weapon Dice Pool added to the Challenge Dice Pool of Attack Challenges.
<b>Base (Attribute)</b>	The Base Attribute the Weapon is based on.
<b>Properties</b>	A collection of keyword rules specific to each Weapon Talent.

## Weapon Mastery

Each Weapon Talent has two Weapon Mastery associated. If you have access to the Weapon Masteries of a Weapon Talent, you may change which Weapon Mastery you are currently using for that Weapon Talent, each time you finish Resting.

## Weapon

A weapon can be anything. To be used as a Weapon, it must be associated with a Weapon Talent of your choice. The form of the Weapon supersedes any intuitive rules of the Weapon Talent (e.g. you use a breadstick as nun chucks, so you can eat them, and can feed ducks with them).

In conversation with your GM your Weapon may have differing Properties to the ones suggested in the Weapon Talent.

## Weirded

While Weirded you cannot announce Reactions.

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