

GRIMWILD

COMMUNITY EDITION

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Grimwild: Community Edition is a refinement of the original game. We wanted to expand the rules text, clarifying and simplifying where we could to make the game easier for newcomers. We've addressed consistent friction points and FAQs that have come up since the game's original release in January 2025. The game is now in the community's hands. Use it, change it, or build off of it, and tell exciting stories!

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CHANGES

GENERAL

Chapters reordered.

Overall clarity and guidance

CHAPTER 1: GAMEPLAY

Risk added as a section.

Impossible decoupled from 3t, though general rolls should still have 0-2 thorns.

Vantage scale replaced with certain/reasonable/doubtful/impossible.

Critical Effect - Secondary Effect: codified as perfect on a different, but related action.

Any pool dropping 0d gains a secondary effect, or the PC can push themselves to drop 1d (not just on a 1d initial pool).

Harm clarified as the standard weight of an impact move, not the default. Additional suggestions added.

Bloodied and Rattled thorns only apply to their respective stats.

Desperate added as harm upon second bloodied or rattled, instead of dropped. Additional harm leaves you dropped.

"Death" options added, such as sacrifice, retirement, and another end.

Treatment does not always carry risk, though often does.

Potency is connected to vantage.

No longer always removes all thorns.

Cantrips have been removed.

Spells without risk are automatically successful and require no resource.

Potent spells (like actions) no longer always remove all thorns.

"What can spells do?" section added.

Arcana overhauled into a new system that puts all arcana of the same tier on the same power level, acting like a spell-in-a-can.

Arcana uses whichever stat makes the most sense, as any other action (or a story roll).

Artifacts are arcana with special limitations, effects, or anything unique.

CHAPTER 2: ADVENTURERS

Backgrounds

Heritage talent suggestions added.

Investigator added as a background.

Background talents added.

Various talent updates to all paths.

CHAPTER 3: GM TOOLKIT

Stakes tied to harm, and split into Low/Regular/High/Dire.

Story Moves cut completely, added as guidance.

Suspense moves cut to resolve, foreshadow, build up, clue in

Impact moves cut to complicate things, hit hard, lock down, counter.

CHAPTER 1 GAMEPLAY

WHAT IS GRIMWILD?

Grimwild is a game of cinematic fantasy adventure. You go on quests, delve into dungeons, navigate cities, and explore the wilderness. It's set in a world of your choosing, or one you create together—the key being it's a world in need of adventurers. Grimwild isn't a setting. That's up to you. This game gives you the rules, monsters, and adventurers to play a campaign in that setting that feels like a fun, ensemble cast TV series, each session a new episode.

Gameplay flows smoothly. The rules resolve actions quickly, favoring the dramatic over the realistic. They provide a strong framework to pace the game, manage tension, and create great scenes. They also give players the ability to add elements to the story beyond their character, letting them influence the world their character lives in, while keeping the narrative moving forward. Common sense is prioritized over detailed tracking, moving the game away from pure simulation.

The story is character-driven. As players, you work together to decide your adventuring party's identity, then make characters that fit well within it. You set your group arcs, then choose your own character arcs, broad themes that give you experience when you bring them into play and help steer the story.

Characters are revealed through play. You start with a clear concept that fits well within your party, but you don't necessarily need all of the details upfront—focus on what sounds fun to bring into play. You can always use the tools the game gives you to add details about your past and connect the dots as they come up, leaving plenty of space to grow together into a cohesive, colorful party.

Things get dramatic. You're rewarded for playing into your traits in ways that complicate the situation, giving good reason to think in-character and sometimes picking the less than optimal path. Inevitably, sparks fly, leading to in-fighting between protagonists, just like any great story with characters driven by their own motivations. This is all cleanly resolved with quarrels—a simple roll to move things forward, encouraging and providing a release valve for this friction!

The story is a maelstrom of dice rolls and fun ideas. From all this pushing and pulling on the narrative, storylines and side plots emerge. In spite of the tension, the choices you make about your party's arcs and the characters growing together over time give compelling reason to stay together and focused. It's a TV show that you're the main characters of, messy and fun and full of surprises.

GETTING STARTED

Grimwild's a tabletop roleplaying game, which this book assumes you're familiar with. The basics aren't covered here, but there are plenty of resources online and you can always join our Discord community to ask questions: <https://discord.gg/bsfFh2dd6r>

Thematically, Grimwild draws heavily on the heroic fantasy of *Dungeons & Dragons*, from the first editions (and the Old-School community which continues those traditions), to the modern, from 3rd edition onward. Inspiration was also taken from *Dungeon World* and its many descendants, like *Unlimited Dungeons*, *Chasing Adventure*, *Homebrew World*, and *Stonetop*.

Mechanically, the Moxie system that Grimwild is built on draws from a variety of character-driven games, with the biggest influences being *Burning Wheel*, *Cortex Prime*, *Blades in the Dark*, and *Fate*.

TO PLAY, YOU NEED:

- ◆ **Players:** You need one person as the game master (GM) and some players, ideally three or four. Guidelines for solo and duet play are in Ch. 9: Extras.
- ◆ **Time:** Sessions work best at 3 hours. For longer sessions, consider using downtime (pg. 27) to break them up and reset per-session rules.
- ◆ **Rules:** All players should know the core rules. It makes play go more smoothly.
- ◆ **Dice:** Each player needs 4-6 d6s, notated as d (e.g., 2d, 4d), and 2-4 d8s, called thorns and notated as t (e.g., 1t, 3t). The GM needs 8 d6s.
- ◆ **Sheets:** To track characters, and story notes. GM sheets for quick reference.
- ◆ **Safety:** To help everyone feel comfortable with the themes within your campaigns, use the TTRPG Safety Toolkit: bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit.

CONVENTIONS IN THIS BOOK

- ◆ **Format:** Emphasis is shown in *italics* or **bold**. System terms are **bold italics** when first shown, or when important. Examples are often after the rule, in a *lighter colored italics*. Additional context and help are throughout in green and purple colored squares.
- ◆ **Pools:** In Grimwild, "pool" always refers to diminishing pools (pg. 15).
- ◆ **Crucibles:** These are tables that provide a few words to use for inspiration. Interpret them literally or figuratively. Re-roll or pick if needed. For d66 tables, roll 2d6: one die for the column, the other for the row—or switch them. Look at the results and choose which one grabs you. Smaller tables may use 1-3/4-6 (two columns), or 1-2/3-4/5-6 (three columns).

PLAY WITH MOXIE

Grimwild is built with the Moxie ruleset and designed for cinematic gameplay. The heart of that is narrative collaboration. It's all about creating a shared imagination space, managing the spotlight, and diving into narration. The rules will get you halfway there—they're all pointing towards keeping the pace flowing quickly and the action dramatic. The other half is in your hands, the players at the table, and the attitude you all approach the game with.

PLAY CINEMATICALLY

Trust in the collaborative process. Everyone at the table adds details into the story. You have to work together and play off of each other or the game, and the story you're telling, will fall flat.

Use the camera, your shared imagination. Each player has two perspectives, from your character and as the audience watching this TV show. Use the camera and vivid description to paint a cool scene in everyone's mind.

Tell us what it looks like, before and after your rolls. Give details about what you do, don't just leave it at broad statements. Zoom in and out. Use the camera to show things outside of your own character as well—pan around, cut to other scenes, and describe NPCs. Invoke cinematic vibes and create great scenes.

PLAY IN GOOD FAITH

Don't be a weasel. Do what your character would do, then let the GM map it back to the rules. Don't overdo it trying to work your way into better rolls. The fun is letting the story flow naturally. When you ask the rules what happens next, follow where it points with enthusiasm.

Separate player and character knowledge. It's more fun when everyone knows what's going on in the game. Don't keep secrets from each other, keep them from characters. As a player, be aware of what your character knows and doesn't know and play towards both.

Know the rules. Everyone can get a copy of the game PDF (it's free!). The rules say a lot about the types of stories to be told with the game, and the less time you spend talking about the rules, the more time you have for roleplaying.

Trust the GM to work with you. They're playing the game as much as anyone else, and want to make a good story. The GM isn't out to punish players for taking entertaining but sub-optimal choices. Take chances and know they will have your back.

PLAY TO TELL A STORY

Think of the game as a series of improv prompts, posed by yourselves and the rules.

When you respond to them, consider the following:

- ◆ What would my character do?
- ◆ What would move the story forward?
- ◆ What would make for a cool scene?
- ◆ What would get others involved?

Don't talk yourself out of fun. The first idea that jumps into your head is often the one you should go with. Don't overthink or rationalize yourself out of it. Like any great TV show character, go where the fun lies. Great stories involve excitement, danger, and hard choices.

Open doors and step through them. The best scenes involve characters playing off of each other, so make chances for others to get involved. When someone invites you into a scene, step through that door—even if it means a bit of mental gymnastics to justify your character's actions. And as long as you step through the door at times, remember that it can be just as interesting to close the door instead.

Work the spotlight. There's no turn order of any kind, but there is screen time. Strive to make sure everyone gets their fair share, including yourself.

- ◆ Grab the spotlight when there's a lull or you have a great idea.
- ◆ Share the spotlight by opening doors or following up on another PC's actions.
- ◆ Pass the spotlight when you've been holding it too long.
- ◆ Point the spotlight to see another PC's response or what they've been up to.
- ◆ Never steal the spotlight. Everyone works hard to set up their moment.

Don't play to win, play to tell stories. Work towards the same goal—to tell a great story where everyone's character has a chance to grow. Failure isn't losing, it's just another opportunity to have a great scene. Of course, your character wants to succeed! However, your goal as a player is keeping the story interesting. Play into the bad luck just as you do the good to help ensure you craft compelling stories.

PLAY CHARACTERS THAT GROW

Leave lots of blank space. Your PC starts with a past and connections to the world, but it's best as latticework. Learn who they are through play. Leave space for the other PCs and story to fit in.

Don't be afraid to change. PCs often go through hell. Any dramatic story has adversity. Let what happens change who they are. Announce what your PC's thinking, especially big shifts. If nobody else at the table knows, it's not really happening in that shared imagination.

Don't be afraid to stay the same. Some aspects of your character might be immutable. That's also part of what makes a great character. There can be those things they will stick to, even to the bitter end. Just make sure it's worth it, and fun. Don't die on small hills—die on entertaining ones.

Make time for smaller moments. Quiet time, a conversation about nothing, introspection, reflection—these make for great scenes to flesh out your characters and the world. Don't just rush from action scene to action scene.

Most importantly, do stuff! Find reasons to get into the spotlight, push story arcs forward, and make fun scenes. When there's no opportunity, add some details to the story to create one.

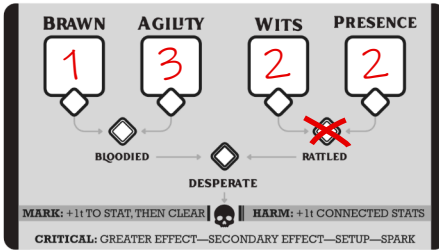


EXAMPLE CHARACTER SHEET

GRIMWILD COMMUNITY EDITION

NAME
Gibbletibble "Tibbs"

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES
shock of brown hair, cane



CONDITIONS +1 RELATED

downted strained unsteady
winded battered confused

4d confused

VEH: FIGHT—FLIGHT—FREEZE—BREAKOUT

BACKGROUNDS & WISES

Gnome of the frostlands
strange snacks, local folklore
arcane theory

Charlatan
trade goods (scrimshaw trinkets!)
spotting marks, social graces

WEAPON STYLE

Hidden
Quick

SPARK (+1d)

TAKE SPARK:

- ◆ roll a disaster (*grim* cut by thorn)
- ◆ introduce a tangle
- ◆ resolve or move on from story arc
- ◆ quarrel with an ally
- ◆ ally changes bond with you

BONDS

Lillylux *lowkey affection*
Gravel Wyrmhide *playful doubts*
Magmorton *deep rivalry*

STORY

SPEND STORY:

Establish a character, setting, or scene detail within your vantage.

Doubtful details may require a story roll.

VANTAGE

CERTAIN *it's on this sheet*

REASONABLE *it's implied*

DOUBTFUL *it's a stretch*

IMPOSSIBLE *too far outside*

The left side of the character sheet (pictured) is the same for all paths, with background information, quick references, stats, and damage. The right side has a core talent for each path, a collection of thematic path talents available to everyone, story arcs, and xp.

CORE RULES

ACTION ROLLS

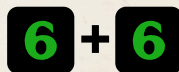
When you attempt to pull off something risky, clearly describe your goal (why you're doing it) and approach (how you're doing it). The GM will pick which stat the action falls under, and you roll that many d6, looking to the highest for your result.

6	5 4	3 2 1
PERFECT	MESSY	GRIM
You succeed , and avoid any trouble.	You succeed , but there's also trouble.	You fail , and there's trouble.
	<i>This prompts an impact move.</i>	

The GM makes an **impact move** (pg. 85) to introduce consequences. Remember: the characters are competent, you're not rolling to see how you do, you're rolling to see how it goes. The consequences may not even directly relate to the action taken.

CRITICALS

A **critical** happens when you roll more than one 6. These ignore **thorns** (difficulty, next page), and let you choose a critical bonus:



Greater Effect: The action is more impactful. If a **task pool** (pg. 15) would be rolled because of the action, remove 1d from it before rolling. *The knife gets plunged between the dragon's scales. | Your quick-witted remark infuriates him.*

Secondary Effect: Gain the effects of another related perfect action. *With a flick, your attack also disarms the pirate. | The baroness is charmed, and she also lets slip a secret.*

Setup: Give a benefit to a follow-up roll, usually as an **assist** without risk (pg. 11). *Your rain of arrows gives your ally a chance to rush through their lines. | You draw the orc's full attention.*

➔ *If nothing comes to mind, take **spark** and keep moving.*

Reader Lens: D&D

There are no rounds, and no initiative. PCs act by making action rolls, and the world reacts through impact moves from the GM, usually prompted by player rolls. This means PCs can take action in whatever order makes sense, even acting more than once, as long as the spotlight is shared between everyone. In Grimwild, the players play a more active role, while the GM reacts.

RISK

What counts as **risky** shifts with the moment and tone of the game. Most often this is when there is an immediate threat or time is of the essence. **Assume the characters are competent and only roll when it pushes the story forward**, when meaningful results come about no matter the outcome. Damage can sometimes make things risky that otherwise wouldn't be. If there's no risk, give the PC the **spotlight** (pg. 80) to narrate their success. If failing to do something isn't an interesting consequence, focus on what it costs for them to get what they want.

The Thief is picking the lock to a warehouse on the dock (no risk), but city patrols are making rounds in the area (now the action is risky).

The Healer needs to administer an antidote to their ally (no risk), but they have to act quickly, and get there from across the city (now the action is risky).

THORNS

When an action would involve one or more significant difficulty factors, the GM can add eight-sided dice, called **thorns** (t), to the player's pool to represent these factors. **Rolling 1–6 on a thorn has no effect, but a 7 or 8 lowers the result one step** (perfect→messy→grim→disaster), called a **cut**. If multiple thorns come up 7 or 8, each one **cuts** the roll, lowering it multiple steps.



Each thorn represents a challenging aspect of the task, either external to the character (*outnumbered, wrong tool for the job, intense winds*), or internal (*no training, you used to be friends, oh no he's hot*) to the character. Usually a GM assigns a total number of thorns to a roll using their gut feel to keep the game flowing. Typical play aims for a range of 0–2 total thorns. There's no cap on the number of thorns that can be added to a roll, but the odds of success start to drop significantly at 3 or more.

DISASTERS

A disaster means you don't get what you want, and things take a sharp turn for the worst. The GM can turn whatever would have happened into the worst case scenario. When a PC rolls a disaster, they take spark.

PERFECT → MESSY → GRIM → DISASTER

Why d8?

They're visibly different than d6s, and only cut on a 7 and 8—both of which make parsing them that much quicker. Four-sided dice could be used as well, but d4s are often annoying to pick up, and don't roll well. Beyond all that, using numbers that would normally contribute to roll results would slow the game down—and that's not the Moxie style.

SPARK

Pure protagonist energy, useful when there's a pivotal task you want to succeed. You can spend **spark** before any type of roll you make to add +1d per spark spent. Characters can have up to 2 spark at a time, and it carries over across sessions. Take **spark** when you introduce your own complication (a **tangle**), roll a **disaster**, resolve a **story arc**, **quarrel** with an ally, or an ally changes their **bond** with you.

VANTAGE

This is the character's frame of reference, and their place in the current fiction. Vantage plays a vital role in deciding what rolls can be made, how difficult they are, and what is impossible. This is something that you're already thinking about intuitively, we're just giving it a name to define how it works with other parts of the game, and to help answer questions like:

- ◆ What **knowledge** could they have?
- ◆ What **actions** could they attempt?
- ◆ What **people** could they know?
- ◆ What **gear** could they be carrying?

To answer these questions, we can build up a picture of the fiction from several layers of details:

First we consider what's directly on their character sheet.

background, talents, conditions, stats, arcana, etc...

Next we add a bit of room for reasonable interpretation. These are things implied by what's on your sheet.

experience in picking locks, knows a few people at the mage's college, etc...

Finally, we layer on the current details of the scene affecting your character. These are the current opportunities, obstacles, and overall situation.

it's only lit by moonlight, the guard hasn't slept in two days, etc...

Together, these create a character's vantage: their frame of reference for what's plausible for them in the current moment. Once you understand the idea of **vantage**, you usually assess it by feeling rather than calculation.

Reader Lens: Forged in the Dark

You'll recognize this as fictional positioning. Grimwild bypasses the position and effect conversation, instead letting GMs decide what is risky, impossible, and how many thorns to add—all based on their gut feeling on the situation.

THE VANTAGE SCALE

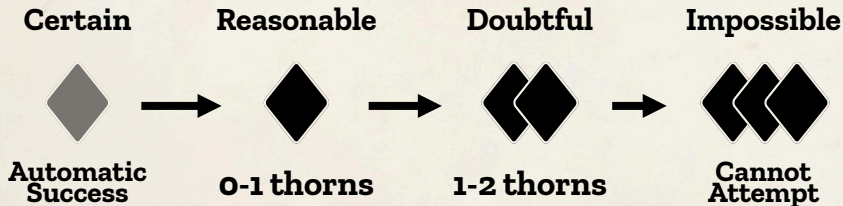
When deciding how plausible something is, use the scale below to guide your judgment. Does this feel *certain*, *reasonable*, *doubtful*, or *impossible*?

Certain. This is directly stated on your character sheet or clearly implied by the fiction. A certain action is an automatic success without a roll. *A doctor suturing a wound in a calm moment. A thief carrying lockpicks.*

Reasonable. This fits your character and the situation, but isn't guaranteed. Actions require a roll—often with no **thorns**, sometimes with one **thorn**—but the character has a solid chance of success. *A scholar knowing obscure history. A ranger finding a safe path.*

Doubtful. This is possible, but unlikely—stretching the bounds of your vantage. Actions are possible, but difficult, adding several **thorns** or higher **stakes** (pg. XX). *A sage lifting a heavy portcullis. A courtier knowing forbidden lore.*

Impossible. This is beyond your current vantage, and very hard to believe. An impossible action can't be attempted—try proposing something simpler. Some actions are just beyond your normal limits (see potency, pg. 21), while others are too absurd to ever be possible. *A farmer recalling lost arcane rituals. A commoner convincing the king to hand over the royal treasure. A child leaping over a house.*



USING VANTAGE

Having proper vantage allows you to add relevant story details (like having gear, knowledge, connections) or make an action more certain. Lacking proper vantage makes an action more doubtful, or even impossible. Action and defense rolls use vantage by adding thorns, or determining a roll is automatically successful, or impossible. Character knowledge is given by the GM or established by the player, though a story roll may be used if there's gray area. Perception is handled by **vigilance** (pg. 92).

As a *player*, it's your job to advocate for your character when you think a part of their vantage might be relevant.

As a *GM*, it's your job to use a character's vantage to determine where their action falls on the vantage scale, then to set an action's thorns, clarifying effect and stakes as needed.

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

You're assumed to have the gear and skills that are a given for your **vantage**. This avoids detailed tracking and ensures PCs are competent where it makes sense.

DETAILS

Use the details on your sheet as creative inspiration—and limitations!—for roleplaying. They are player (not GM) tools. When unsure of your PC's actions or thoughts, play towards or even against a relevant detail. Update details as the story unfolds, announcing the change and giving a vignette to give it weight and clearly convey the change to the other players.

WORKING TOGETHER

ASSIST

Characters can help allies on their rolls, giving them a better chance at success. Describe how you **assist**, then roll 1d when the ally rolls, including your results with theirs for the final outcome. Rolling your assist die separately lets the table see the impact of your help.

When you assist, you share the risk and consequences. The GM makes an impact move for everyone involved, including the original PC and everyone who assisted. The GM can hit everyone with the same impact move, use different moves for each PC, take suspense for each PC, or any combination thereof. *The Paladin assists the Fighter in forcing open a door. The Fighter makes their roll as normal, and the Paladin rolls 1d. The Fighter's highest is a 3, but the Paladin rolls a 4—the end result is a messy. The help paid off, but the GM rolls a timer pool (an impact move) and takes 1 suspense.*

OUTSIDE HELP

Assistance can also come from an element outside the party, such as an NPC or the environment. The GM rolls 1d to represent the help, and includes the result with the character's for the final outcome.

TEAMWORK

When a larger group of characters work together, only one PC rolls for the action while others can assist, as long as it makes narrative sense. The GM decides who rolls—sometimes the most skilled when success more important, and sometimes the least when failure has greater impact. The entire group shares the consequences, but the scale of the action increase as well. *The group works together to lift a boulder (strongest rolls). | Group sneaks around a guard patrol (least sneaky rolls). | Group finds information on criminal local faction (most street savvy rolls).*

SETUP

When a previous action gives you an upper hand in your task, you take +1d. **Setups** handle more impactful, but temporary fiction changes, lasting between a single follow up action, to the rest of the scene depending on the fiction. *The city watch is distracted, the queen is caught off-guard, the wizard is invisible.*

OTHER ROLLS

DEFENSE ROLL

When a character reflexively tries to avoid trouble **not caused by their own action roll**, they make a **defense roll**. Characters don't get defense rolls against impact moves prompted by their own action rolls—avoiding danger is already factored into the roll. Defense rolls usually come into play when the GM spends **suspense** on an impact move. The GM decides which stat should be rolled based on the danger, and the character's likely reaction.

(6) **PERFECT**. You avoid the incoming trouble.

(4-5) **MESSY**. You avoid some of the trouble. The GM lessens the consequences.

(1-3) **GRIM**. You're hit with the trouble, and take the full consequences of it.

Defense is cinematic—a reaction, out of your hands. The GM picks the stat to fit the danger, your PC's likely reaction, vulnerabilities, and what feels right for the moment. This keeps it varied—you can't always use a strong stat. See the examples below:

- Brawn:** Block or absorb a punch. Hold your breath through poison fog.
- Agility:** Dodge a warhammer. Keep your footing on the crumbling wall.
- Wits:** See the archer nock an arrow. Catch the flaw in the courtesan's argument.
- Presence:** Keep your nerve. Push the enchantment from your mind.

With time and warning, spellcasters may use magic to defend themselves, as long as it fits their spellcasting. This is *set dressing*, and doesn't require resources.

Reader Lens: Forged in the Dark

Remember that defense rolls are different from resistance rolls. They are similar, but defense rolls measure how well a character defends themselves in the moment. These are prompted by the GM—and can fail.

MONTAGE ROLL

Not all scenes need to be played out in detail, if you want to zoom out on the fiction and accordion in a few beats while still leaving the outcome up to dice, make a **montage roll**. Each participating player makes a 2d action roll, collaborating on the results. Take the highest result as the final outcome for the scene. Zoom back in to key moments on unlikely or interesting results.

Example Montage

You look up to see the peak of the mountain, snow lightly drifting down onto your faces. It's a six-hour climb to get to the top, where the cultist sanctum is said to hide. We're going to do a montage roll to see how the trek goes.

Ranger: I try to find the safest path, keeping us away from unstable ledges. I got 5, a messy.

Fighter: I use my climbing gear, and see if I can find any shortcuts. Ope, got a grim. 3.

Wizard: I cast a spell to ward away the cold and keep us dry on the way up. Perfect! I rolled a 6!

Overall, you got a perfect, but let's zoom in on Fighter—as you climb, one of your pitons breaks and you're about to fall. Who saves you?

Wizard: Oh! I cast a spell to make him as light as a cloud for a moment, so he drifts safely to the ground.

Fighter: I quickly get up and lie, "I could have handled it!" and walk off in a huff.

Great—The camera looks out over an edge at the top of the mountain. We see the ranger's hand grab the ledge and pull herself up, followed by Wizard and Fighter. You're tired, and a little sore, but ready for a fight.

STORY ROLLS

Some rolls (such as certain magic items and wild surges) can be made to determine the effect of something outside of your PC, but aren't directly related to a stat.

Roll dice based on the odds of a favorable outcome for your character, usually 2d. The GM may drop the roll to 1d for bad odds, or boost it to 3d for good odds.

If the roll is replacing an action roll, usually when the character is personally involved, story rolls can prompt impact moves. *I flip the switch for the old trap, as the goblin runs down the hall toward me. | I poisoned the keg before rejoining the royal dinner.*

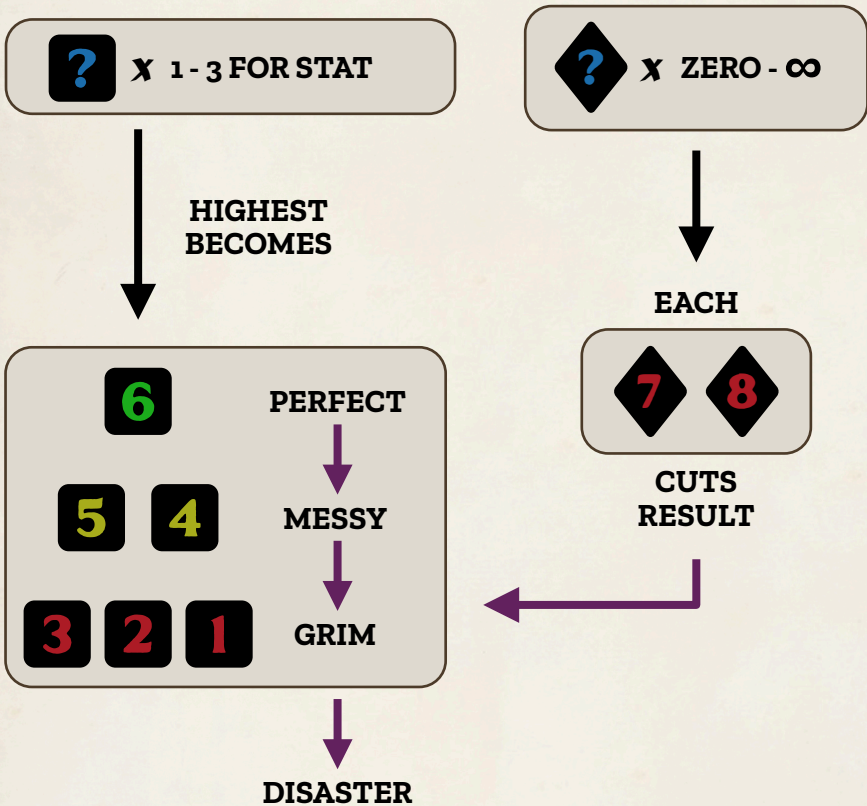
If the roll only tests your luck, it's used to determine the general answer to a question—from positive to negative. *Does my magical Robe of Pockets have anything useful for this? | I look down the hallway, do I see any guards?*

FAIL FORWARD

If a grim threatens to grind the story to a halt, the GM can keep things moving—you get what you want, but in a way that makes things worse, or has an unintended effect. If a roll somehow turns out to have no effect (*the guard was already dead*), you learn new info or **setup** a follow-up.

DICE RULES SUMMARY

Roll a number of d6 equal to your **stat**, adding any extra dice from **spark**, **talents**, and **assists**. Roll a number of **thorns**, d8s, based on the situation. Look at the highest d6 for your result. Each 7 and 8 on thorns **cuts** the roll, lowering it one step.



Reader Lens: "Mixed Success" Games

There are no partial successes in Grimwild. If it helps, think of a perfect as a full success, a grim as a full problem, and a messy as full success with a full problem.

DIMINISHING POOLS

A group of d6s used to track progression towards a narrative event, like completing a task, encountering a threat, depleting a resource, or passing time. When the pool is triggered, roll all dice in the pool and remove those that land with a 1-3 result. Once the pool drops to 0d, its event comes to pass and the pool is discarded.

Pools usually start at 2d/short, 4d/medium, or 8d/long. Make sure to reflect the fiction—if a pool and the fiction don't match up, adjust or scrap the pool.

- ◆ If no dice are dropped from a task pool, pick one:
 - ▶ **push yourself** (take a mark) to drop 1d anyway. This has much greater effect on small pools. *Through gritted teeth, you break the blade lock and leave a fresh cut on his cheek.*
 - ▶ **pivot** to gain a **secondary effect**, the effects of a perfect on a different, but related roll, instead. *You see at the last moment that he's prepared for a cross cut, so instead you go low, and twist the saber from his grasp.*
- ◆ Similarly, if no dice drop from any other pool, the GM can spend suspense (pg. 81) to drop 1d anyway.
- ◆ The greater effect critical bonus, **potency**, and some talents call for dropping 1d before rolling. This stacks, and has a greater mechanical effect on small pools.

Pools can be flexibly applied in many situations, usually by the GM. The types of pools can be found below.

Note: Pools are always notated with the size of the pool in front of it, written in italics.

The Math Behind Pools

Larger pools require slightly more rolls to clear, but there are diminishing returns (2d clear in ~2.7 rolls, 4d clear in ~3.5 rolls, 8d clear in ~4.4 rolls). Adding any dice past 8d doesn't change the average number of rolls needed to drop it to zero by much. To track an event with more complexity, consider linked pools instead. A linked 4d+4d pool is about the same as a 51d pool (~7 rolls).

TASK POOLS

This tracks the effort to overcome complicated tasks.

Roll this pool when action rolls bring the task closer to completion, or it makes sense in the fiction. *4d Barroom Brawl, 6d Tracking Quarry, 8d Escape the Guards.*

PRESSURE POOLS

This tracks imminent threats getting closer.

Roll this pool often as an impact move to show threats getting closer. *6d Lookouts Spot You, 8d Reinforcements Arrive.*

TIMER POOLS

This tracks events unfolding in the background.

Roll this pool as the occasional impact move, for key moments, time passing, or after a few PCs take action. *8d Sunrise, 6d Corruption Grows, 4d Patrol Returns.*

RESOURCE POOLS

This tracks the quantity of something precious and important.

Roll this pool after the resource sees significant usage, or as an occasional impact move, when losing it makes sense. *4d Food Supplies, 8d Manpower Left, 6d Looted Treasures.*

POWER POOLS

This is a special kind of resource pool that tracks an ability which diminishes with use. If the use of this pool isn't **risky**, the action is always successful, but the pool is still rolled to remove dice. If you add bonus dice (such as spark) to a power pool roll, roll and track these separately so they don't join the power pool.

Roll this pool as an action roll in place of a stat: take the highest die as the action's result, then remove dice with a 1–3 result as normal. *8d Blasting Wand, 6d Blessing Rite, 4d Clever Disguise.*

LINKED POOLS

These are a linked sequence of two or more of any kind of pools to extend them with extra "phases". The next pool isn't unlocked until the previous reaches 0d. Pools can be linked linearly in a sequence, or in other creative ways. *8d Magic Shielding + 4d Wizard, 4d Claws + 4d Tail + 4d Body.*

CAMPAIGN POOLS

Covered more extensively in the GM Toolkit Chapter (pg. 75), these are timer pools used to track multi-session and long term events such as faction goals, seasons, and adversarial actions. *8d Bilgewater Leader Assassinated, 6d Bounty Hunters Find Party, 4d Winter Becomes Spring.*

GM Advice

Pools are meant to follow the fiction, but occasionally they can end up leading the fiction instead—especially for task pools. When you make a pool roll and drop far more or fewer dice than expected, consider describing the surprising opportunity or setback that arose in the story. But if a pool is ever leading the fiction in a way that's not dramatic, interesting, or fun for the table, you can always adjust the pool to better align with the fiction, or even clear it completely and move on.

CHARACTER DETAILS

BACKGROUNDS

Your heritage, upbringing, profession—the core of your **vantage**. You choose any two that most influences who you are now. This book contains 18 **backgrounds**, use these to make a character quickly, or mix and match **wises** to create your own. The ragamuffin background means you learned a lot from the streets; without it, your upbringing is just set dressing.

WISES

Each background has a set of three wises, though you can also create your own for a more personalized backstory. These are evocative key phrases that clearly expand your **vantage**. They can cover niche knowledge, key insights you've picked up, or neat tricks you've grown accustomed to using. Wises are most often used when adding details to the story, and determining thorns.

TRAITS AND DESIRES

Traits describe the PC's personality, while Desires describe what drives them. Choose 2 that strongly describe your character, and 1 that doesn't. These are included in your **vantage**, can often be used to introduce **tangles**, complications stemming from your character (pg. 22). *I am brave and rash, but not quiet. I want love and thrills, but not wealth.*

WEAPON STYLE

Your weapon has 2 descriptors, clear ways to differentiate it from others of its kind. A dagger may have *hidden* and *quick*, while a battleaxe has *huge* and *sweeping*. These are a reminder of how the weapon might affect the fiction—make sure to describe making use of these, as your **vantage** impacts difficulty. Shields, bare knuckles, and even capes can be considered weapons. These descriptors can be split between multiple pieces of equipment if that fits the PC's fighting style. Use any of the following, or come up with your own:

*The ogre's strong, especially putting his weight behind that maul, so I dash around him with my **quick** short sword, and aim for his calf (+2t→+1t).*

*They search everyone entering the estate for weapons, but my **concealable** dagger should be easy to hide (+2t→0t).*

Example Weapon Styles

precise	quick	bashing
quiet	sweeping	piercing
vicious	entangling	sapping
disarming	heavy	balanced
dazing	nimble	concealable
ornate	brutal	long

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Detail your 3 most distinctive, outward features that others quickly notice. This may include clothes, hair, markings, or how they hold themselves. Consider other features that some may notice after spending time traveling with you.

TALENTS

Special advantages and abilities that set your PC apart. At character creation, you choose a path (rogue, wizard, fighter, etc), which gives you its **core talent**. The path talents listed below the core align thematically, though any talent from any path may be taken as you level.

The path name is simply a label for organizing talents thematically. On its own, it doesn't expand vantage. However, talents do expand **vantage**. Being a "rogue" doesn't mean you're automatically good at stealth, but the Expertise core talent expands your vantage which could include stealth.

Interrupt

Make an **action roll** to try to stop an **impact move**. This requires a specific talent. If not already involved, you now share the risk. On a messy, the GM keeps (or takes) their suspense instead of finishing the impact move. On a grim, the GM makes the impact move as normal.

Push Yourself

Expend extra effort to activate certain talents that require it. After using the talent, **mark** a related stat (your choice). Talents that require you to **push yourself** can be activated without a mark once per session, unless they state otherwise. When task pools drop Od, you can choose to push yourself to drop 1d instead.

Bonus Dice

Talents that add **bonus dice** will also say if you decide to add the additional dice before rolling, or if you can add them after, potentially raising the result.

Always

If you have the ability to always succeed or receive a benefit, it holds true unless the GM uses the Counter impact move, a strong NPC trait is in play, or other extenuating circumstances arise. In short, "always" means 95% of the time.

Potency

Having **potency**, or pulling off **potent feats** expands your **vantage** to allow you to do something incredible. Full rules can be found on pg. 21.

STATS

Your core capabilities rated 1/poor, 2/average, or 3/great, used for action and defense rolls. These four stats are an abstraction of your baseline ability. Each character starts with 1 in each stat, then assigns 4 more points between them. Brawn and Agility are considered physical stats, while Wits and Presence are mental.

Brawn is your power, menace, and toughness.

Agility is your precision, athletics, and reflexes.

Wits is your smarts, trickery, and ability to read situations.

Presence is your influence, willpower, and ability to read people.

Reader Lens: Other Games

Grimwild only has 4 stats, while other games have many more actions, moves, or skills. The personalization that these provide are handled with vantage in Grimwild. A character with vantage that includes pickpocketing will be able to make rolls with fewer thorns, or may even automatically succeed, while the action might be considered impossible for a character without that vantage.

BONDS

Your dynamic with each PC. Match an intensity (left) and a nature (right) below, or write your own. **Bonds** are your strongest view of the other PC, and not necessarily reciprocal (your tense doubts is their playful rivalry). When first established, use your collective past and details to interpret the bonds in a way that makes sense.

You can change a bond anytime, such as in response to something they've done or something new you've learned about them. When it changes, give a short vignette (better if together!). The other PC takes **spark**.

BONDS

deep	affection
complex	camaraderie
growing	curiosity
lowkey	doubts
playful	respect
tense	rivalry

+

I can't justify what the Rogue is doing, this is too dangerous.

(complex camaraderie → growing doubts + Rogue takes spark)

The Sorcerer stuck up for me in front of the Queen.

(playful rivalry → playful respect + Sorcerer takes spark)

Other Example Natures

ambivalence, annoyance, apprehension, awe, cynicism, devotion, envy, fascination, fear, indifference, kinship, loyalty, obligation, obsession, pity, resentment, reverence, scorn, solidarity, spite, trust.

QUARRELS

Conflicts between PCs—arguments, competitions, or even violence. When two PCs are at odds, the story needs a resolution to keep moving forward. Both players may see their character as being right, and would never back down, but in practice, this grinds the game to a halt. Some players are better at convincing others and being assertive, while others would rather quietly avoid conflict. Quarrels address both of these problems, with the story following what one character (or player) wants, while the other has the last word—setting the tone for how things might play out moving forward.

First, make sure all players agree to the quarrel. Clearly state the stakes for winning and losing, erring on the side of dramatic (bruises, not bloodied; hurt feelings, not vex). Each player rolls 2d and the highest wins (5 beats 4). No talents can be used, it's assumed both characters are doing everything they can to succeed. Others can assist, or they can join at 2d with their own agenda. On a tie, compromise or keep quarreling.

The winner narrates how they won. Then, the loser narrates how they handle it. The results of the quarrel are final—it's okay for the PC that lost to be bitter, but the story moves in the winner's direction. Both PCs take **spark**.

QUARREL EXAMPLE

The party just found out that the Thieves' Guild plans on assassinating the unjust king, but if they keep the secret, they'll be paid for their silence.

The paladin and rogue are on board, one for the justice, and the other for the money. The wizard thinks that even the unjust should have a trial, and should be warned.

The players decide a quarrel will solve the issue. The paladin, assisted by the rogue, will roll against the wizard.

The paladin and rogue roll (1, 4, 5), while the wizard rolls (6)!

The wizard wins the quarrel—their argument is enough to have the party follow their lead. Time to warn the king! I'm sure this will end well...



POTENCY

The ability to pull off jaw-dropping feats. **Potency** is outside what is normally possible for an adventurer, and requires a talent or other source that explicitly grants potency on a specific kind of task (potent spell, a potent feat of...). When you have potency on a task, your **vantage** temporarily expands to allow you to attempt something incredible, such as:

Group action: Something a team of people could accomplish with an action. *Lifting a boulder, a volley of arrows, inciting mutiny.*

Stretching limits: Something just beyond normal human limitations. *Leap a massive gap, endure fire, tell ridiculous lies.*

Mystical: Feats that don't fit in with the above, but have similar narrative impact. *Befriend a wild tiger, use echoes to create a rockslide.*

Potency can move an action one or more steps on the Vantage Scale towards being *certain*, such as making an *impossible* action *doubtful/reasonable*, or making a *doubtful* action *reasonable/certain*.

Compared to a normal action, a potent action can be more intense or broad, create dramatic opportunities, bend the rules, or do anything else that feels incredible—within reason. At its simplest, a potent action can act like a normal action with a critical bonus. Either way, take care that a potent action's effect and risk create an exciting, pivotal moment.

Examples of Potent Actions

A Ranger wishes to track a wild boar through the forest. Normally, this could be *reasonable* (Ot–It), but with a potent action she immediately spots a tusk mark in a nearby tree, making this *certain* (automatic success).

A Barbarian wishes to challenge an ogre to arm wrestling. Normally, her succeeding would be *doubtful* (2t), but with a potent action she manages it more easily (Ot), slamming the ogre's arm down with a crash that also draws cheers from the tavern (secondary effect).

A Monk wishes to evade some guards by running across a pond. Normally this would be *impossible* to attempt, but with a potent action he manages to run across the surface of the pond with *mystical grace* (Ot).

A Cleric wishes to show a band of raucous goblins the glory of his god. The goblins have little concern for religion, so this would normally be *impossible* to attempt. With a potent action, though, the Cleric's impassioned sermon convinces them to see the light (It).

CREATIVE FREEDOM

SET DRESSING

You can add minor, common sense details freely. Make assumptions and add set dressing to scenes to play off of to keep things flowing dynamically. There's no need to check in with the GM—they'll step in if a detail goes beyond set dressing. Anything that's certain within your vantage, like knowing someone or having equipment that makes sense, is set dressing.

TANGLES

These are character-driven complications you introduce into a scene and have to follow-up on. In return, you take **spark**. **Tangles** must stem from your vantage often from story arcs, or traits and desires. These always have an immediate impact, like an action roll, an option closing off, or forcing inaction at an important moment—similar in weight to an **impact move**. Tangles can be things like:

- ◆ Unwise decisions your PC would likely make. *You toss aside your sword to keep things fair.*
- ◆ Personal motivations over group goals. *You poison the allied general's wine, getting your revenge.*
- ◆ Complications from beliefs or backstory. *You forgot to tell everyone you dated the baron, and it was messy. It totally wasn't your fault though, you swear.*

STORY

Pure cinematic momentum. Each session, you have 2 **story**. Spend it to add story details that go beyond set dressing, creating new opportunities or shifting the scene in your favor. Details that are a stretch may also need a **story roll**. Added details must fit your **vantage**, at least as something *doubtful*, or tie to a **story arc**. Example details:

Character: Gear, contacts, backstory. *You had magical training in this city → The wizard was your mentor. You have the herbalism talent → you have the cure for a basic ailment.*

Scene: NPC actions, objects, atmospherics. *You have a wise in 'hidden paths' → There's a secret door. Your story arc is about indulging your gambling vice → your target is in a card game.*

Setting: History, geography, factions. *You've traveled this area before → there's a town over those hills. You've lived here your whole life → the city watch is known to be lazy.*

Added details can't override rolls or contradict the established story. If your detail affects another PC, get permission. Details that are doubtful, or more impactful may require a story roll to see how true or beneficial it is, or there may be nuance added. The GM can also veto details to keep things coherent. There are gray zones between set dressing, story details, and details simply too impactful to add. Set boundaries with your group.

STORY ARCS

Evocative phrases that give your PC and group a thematic direction. Find out where they lead through play—they're a starting direction, not the destination. This is not your ultimate goal, it's the next step in your journey.

Pick a **group arc** together, then a **character arc**. Pick an examples from below, detailing it so it fits your game, or write your own. Keep it short.

Take **spark** by resolving an arc with a meaningful moment, however big or small it is. This could mean achieving your goal, adjusting it for the next step, or moving on from it entirely. PCs should gain spark from story arcs around every 2-3 games. *You shrug your shoulders and let the knight ride off—you have more to worry about than your revenge. You see a wanted poster with your face on it; it's not the kind of fame you wanted, but it'll do...*

AMBITIONS	STRUGGLES	GROWTH
<i>build a reputation</i>	<i>come unraveled</i>	<i>embrace change</i>
<i>explore the world</i>	<i>doubt convictions</i>	<i>escape my past</i>
<i>finish the mission</i>	<i>feed my vices</i>	<i>find belonging</i>
<i>make things right</i>	<i>flirt with betrayal</i>	<i>just enjoy life</i>
<i>satisfy desires</i>	<i>keep a secret</i>	<i>prove myself</i>
<i>uncover the truth</i>	<i>survive the storm</i>	<i>settle debts</i>
<i>spread the word</i>	<i>ignore the problem</i>	<i>make something new</i>
<i>expand power</i>	<i>burn at both ends</i>	<i>take charge</i>

Group arcs unite players around a theme, while character arcs help you express your own story. Most importantly, they give you authorial power—**you can use story or tangles to add story details tied to your arcs to bring them into play!**

Story arcs signal to the GM that you want drama, dilemmas, and opportunities to arise around them. For struggles (flirt with betrayal), get group permission—limiting them to a few sessions and involving everyone makes it more fun.

DAMAGE AND RECOVERY

MARKS

Light damage, a temporary hindrance to a stat (*out of breath, confused*). Take +1t on the next roll with that stat, then clear the **mark**.

If a stat is already marked, you take **harm** (below) instead. As long as a stat is unmarked, even if you have its related harm, you can take a mark to it.

Marks are often combined with another mark or other consequences when inflicted directly (Agility mark + thrown off your horse) as an alternative to harm. You also take a mark when you **push yourself**. If a mark is reduced (such as by a messy defense roll), it becomes set dressing.

HARM

Damage to your mind or body, a lingering hindrance. **Harm** is the standard weight of an impact move—though it's not the default impact move by any means (even in a conflict!). Harm is often split into a couple marks or other consequences.

Bloodied: Pressing physical damage or stacked marks to Brawn or Agility.

Rattled: Pressing mental damage or stacked marks to Wits or Presence.

Desperate: Damage taking you to the edge, only taken as harm upon a second bloodied or rattled. Any harm taken after Desperate leaves you dropped.

Bloodied and rattled inflict +1t on their related stats, while desperate inflicts +1t on all rolls. Harm should be doled out as dramatic events—these are urgent matters in the scene and can lead to being dropped. Damage should also match the tone of the scene—**low stakes** might inflict a mark, while **high stakes** could inflict two harm at once.

Remember, any impact move can make sense, even in in combat. Leaving evidence, alerting guards, losing gear, and running out of arrows can all make combat more dramatic, and less outright deadly.

Deadliness

Deadliness and control over PC death vary from table to table, make sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to the tone of your game. Check out the optional rules (pg. XX) for ideas and alterations to strike the feeling you want.

Example "Damage"

- ◆ Mark + small narrative consequence (*mark Agility + drop your weapon, mark Wits + take vex*)
- ◆ Two marks (*mark Agility + Wits as you're shaken, mark Wits + Presence as you're scarred*)
- ◆ Harm (*take bloodied as they leave a gash, take rattled as you're terrified by what you see*)
- ◆ Condition (*take 3d Blinded as they throw sand in your eyes, take Watched as they're suspicious*)

DROPPED

Taking harm while Desperate leaves you dropped—you're out of the scene. Make a **story roll** (usually 2d): on a perfect, you're merely out until the scene ends. On a messy, things get even worse, like also taking on a temporary **condition** (*4d bleeding, broken leg, trauma*). On a grim, things get far worse, like dying or taking on a permanent condition (*blind, cursed*).

You have the final say on long-term and permanent changes to your character—including death. When your character would face a severe personal consequence, work with the GM to find a good fit for your PC and the situation. If it feels like it's time for your story to end, choose **sacrifice**, **retirement**, or craft **another end** together.

Sacrifice

When you're ready, you take one more action in the scene, then you die. Your action is an automatic success with whatever effect feels appropriate. Work with the GM to describe a dramatic and satisfying ending for your character.

Retirement

You're dropped from the scene, alive but deeply scarred somehow. Work with the GM to find an opportunity in the near future for your character to retire from the adventure. The sooner the better: if you're dropped again, you'll perish.

Another End

Not everyone dies a hero or finds peace. Some reach an ignoble demise, an ambiguous fate, a turn to antagonist, or some other conclusion.

On Pacing

Resolving a dropped character's fate takes time and discussion. One way to keep things moving is to remove a dropped character immediately from the scene, but leave their roll and resolution until the scene's end. This also builds tension! Keep in mind that the player can still decide to resolve their fate at any point in between if it feels appropriate, either with a roll or a decision like sacrifice.

VEX

This is an intense flash of emotion like anger, fear, or confusion. **Vex** is inflicted as a consequence, either on its own or in addition to a mark or harm. Vex prompts an immediate, instinctive response. Choose one of the following, then interpret the response, which usually lasts a beat or two.

Fight: Lash out recklessly at the subject of your fear or hate.

Flight: Run from the subject, taking whatever path nearest.

Freeze: Stop in your tracks, with the emotion taking over your mind.

Freakout: Do something else to put yourself, others, or your surroundings in harm's way.

Your PC is driven by emotion, but you decide how it plays out. Aim to balance what's fun, what fits the story, and what flows from the emotion.

CONDITIONS

These are specific injuries or maladies that impact only relevant situations and are often lasting. They often replace **harm**, making actions more difficult for the afflicted PC, but not bringing them closer to dropped. **Conditions** can be:

◆ **Urgent:** These conditions act as short-term timers for a worse fate.

4d bleeding out → death

4d poisoned → harm

8d losing your mind → madness

6d losing consciousness → out cold

◆ **Short-term:** These often wear off on their own, shortly.

twisted ankle

6d thrown out back

drunk

4d pissed off

◆ **Long-term:** These require treatment or intervention to heal, or last for extended periods of time. Timers are treated as campaign pools.

broken arm

ruined reputation

deep hatred

8d witch's curse

◆ **Permanent:** These conditions won't heal easily, if at all.

gouged-out eye

burn scars

insanity

limp

Take +1t when a condition specifically hinders a roll. Conditions can also reduce your **vantage**, which can prohibit rolls (*you can't jump with a broken leg*).

Conditions clear when it makes sense, like after a scene, with rest, or when a pool tracking them depletes. They may also require treatment or another specific method to clear them. As mentioned earlier, work with the GM to find a good fit when you'd take a lasting condition.

HEALING

Damage can be healed with treatment, which requires *time*, *tools*, and *training*. Treatment is difficult and often carries **risk**. Magic may replace some requirements, though only **potent spells** can heal harm directly.

Marks are too minor to benefit from most healing.

Harm is cleared with treatment.

Conditions can be healed when it makes sense, which might need treatment, or require working towards a task pool or fulfilling specific requirements before it clears.

Any stretch of time between significant action (a night's camp, a week's travel) clears all marks and harm. This natural healing is paced for drama, not realism. Treatment is almost always successful, **impact moves** from treatment bring other problems to the forefront, such as time pressure.

Healing Example

The Berserker is Bloodied—luckily, the Rogue has the healer background, giving them vantage to provide treatment as needed. Guards are after the two, and they decide if they should risk stopping.

Situation 1

The Berserker and Rogue are both back at their hideout, successfully evading the guards. The GM decides treatment isn't risky, so the roll is an automatic success.

Situation 2

The Berserker and Rogue duck into an alley, hoping they have enough time to bandage the wounds. Treatment here carries risk, so the Rogue rolls and gets a Messy. Bloodied is clear, but there's a complication, such as...

- ◆ *The stress starts to get to the Rogue. (mark Wits)*
- ◆ *The wound is worse than it looked, and leaves a scar. (short-term condition)*
- ◆ *The guard patrol happens across the alley, and the two are spotted.*
- ◆ *The Rogue does the best they can, but can't treat it completely. (mark Brawn)*

Downtime

This is an extended break, such as a month or season. All PCs fully heal, including relevant conditions, and reset per-session talents. The GM rolls **faction pools**, then picks one and depletes it completely to move the story forward.

SESSIONS

PRE-SESSION

Before each session (after the first), recall the previous session and share your PC's best moment. Each player takes **spark**, and resets **story** and all per session talents.

When all are finished, the GM takes **suspense** and recaps the main points of the previous session, tying all of these moments together into a proper "Previously on..." and starts the session.

EXPERIENCE

After each session, take 1 XP and fill in its box. You start at level 1 and advance when you fill boxes equal to the next level (Level 4→5 = 5 more boxes). Reaching a new level lets you choose a new **talent**. At certain levels, your **core talent** is upgraded as well.

The GM can award 1 bonus XP for a standout session (about 1 in 4). For a slower pace, slash each XP box before filling it.

Levels

PCs start at level 1 and can go up to level 7. This takes about 6 months of weekly play. For longer play, slow down progression. One-off games with experienced players tend to work best at level 3. This lets you choose a new **talent**.

Reader Lens - D&D

Levels don't translate well between this and d20 fantasy games. Levels in Grimwild would be closer to levels 4-11 in 5th edition D&D, but even then, most growth happens through versatility, not power and more hit points.



SPELLCASTING

Spellcasting is the ability to harness magic, acquired through **talents** or **arcana**. While each style has its quirks, they all follow the same laws of magic. Spells are cast using **touchstones**—key terms like spell names, godly domains, or item descriptions. You interpret these on-the-fly, defining the permissions and limitations of your magic when you cast. Each source clearly defines its touchstones, casting methods, costs, and limitations. Spells cast without **risk** are automatically successful, and don't expend resources, unless **potent**.

Magic has three magnitudes: spells, potent spells, and rituals. Determine the magic's magnitude by comparing the impact of the action to what can be achieved with a non-magic action (or the narrative impact to the story if that's not possible). This is a judgment call set through play, so transparency and consistency are key.

Spells are similar to an action roll, impactful but not dominating a scene. They should feel *useful*.

Potent spells are similar to a group effort, effort over time, or a single potent effort. They bend the rules, and should feel *powerful*.

Rituals are plot-changing, similar to a large team over an extended period, or a massive collective effort. They break the rules, and should feel *miraculous*.

SPELLS

Spells have effects comparable to an action roll, results one person with the right training and tools can achieve while expanding vantage—allowing new possibilities through magic. These always use the stat referenced in the talent granting spellcasting. Spells are the baseline magnitude of spellcasting actions. For most paths, when spells are cast without risk, they are automatically successful and don't expend resources.

Just like sticking an arrow in a bugbear, a spell can call lightning to strike them or enchant their ally to backstab them. [Result: The bugbear is dead.]

Just like picking a lock or smashing it apart, a spell can melt through it with acid or let you phase through the door. [Result: You get past the lock.]

You float harmlessly down from the burning airship in the sky. [New Possibility, similar in impact to an action.]

The **vantage** from spellcasting also allows you to add trivial magical details as set dressing without making an action roll. *A fire touchstone lights a candle. The brooms sweep the room for you. You talk to a flower and it starts to bloom.*

POTENT SPELLS

Potent spells accomplish more than a normal spell—they give **potency** and broaden **vantage**. As with other potent actions (pg. XX), you can attempt jaw-dropping effects that are normally impossible. Compared to potent actions, though, potent spells tend to have more dramatic effects that bend the rules even further, accomplishing tasks that couldn't be performed with a conventional tool. A more impactful effect should be balanced with higher thorns and stakes to keep the moment exciting and pivotal. If you cast a potent spell with an effect on the level of a normal spell, it also bestows another effect, such as:

Critical effect: add greater effect, secondary effect, or a setup.

Lasting effect: keep the spell for the scene or longer.

Broad effect: affect a group or area with the spell.

Examples of Potent Spells

*Picking off these armored goblin raiders one-by-one gives them time to rush you, but a potent spell **Fireball** could take a group out at once! (+1t → +0t, plus a broad effect)*

*This stone wall is too sturdy to knock down, but a potent spell **Thunderous Boom** could do the trick. (impossible → +0t).*

*The hideout is teeming with guards, and a few moments of invisibility won't get you far, but a potent spell **Invisibility** could keep you shrouded until you find the exit. (+0t → +0t, plus a lasting effect)*

*The rogue is bleeding, and fading in and out, but you can't stop for treatment while being chased by hobgoblins. You clutch the symbol of your god and ask for help, using your **Healing Rite** to cast a potent spell to heal them. (impossible → +1t, new possibility)*

*This ice elemental would normally be immune to cold magic, but as the daughter of a great ice dragon, you channel your **Glacial Fury** for a potent spell to show it the true meaning of cold. (impossible → +2t, bypass a trait)*

*The guard is suddenly suspicious, so you decide to use your **False Memory** spell to clear his mind of the last couple seconds, though you know the mind is a delicate thing. (impossible → +2t, new possibility)*

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Gauging the difference between levels may be difficult starting out. Think of normal spells as cantrips, 1st, and 2nd level spells. Potent spells are similar to 3rd-6th level spells, and rituals covering anything more powerful.

RITUALS

Rituals can accomplish magical effects far beyond what can be done with even **potent spells**, equal to the labor of an entire team of people over an extended period, effects that can have significant impact on the world, or push the very limits of implausibility. Casting a ritual consists of 3 parts:

A source of magic, with relevant touchstones. This can be a spellcasting talent or a scroll, potion, or other arcana. It might also be something creative like asking or tricking a monster into helping. Even a PC without magic ability can initiate a ritual as long as they have a source of magic.

Anchors for the ritual, binding the physical and metaphysical realms. These are chosen by the GM and players together. They should feel connected to the ritual's touchstones and intent, and match the intended impact of the ritual. Grander and more powerful rituals should require rarer and more unique anchors. Each ritual should have two or three, usually with at least one tangible and one intangible. Check out the crucibles below for anchor ideas.

The invocation, to finalize its casting. The invocation is the act of casting the ritual, a challenge that must be overcome, made far more difficult or even impossible if any of the anchors are missing. Nearly all rituals carry **risk**, while most require a task pool to complete the casting.

TANGIBLES

<i>dangerous relic</i>	<i>circle of casters</i>	<i>leyline</i>
<i>home cooked meal</i>	<i>new moon</i>	<i>planar essence</i>
<i>exotic ingredients</i>	<i>spilled blood</i>	<i>planet's alignment</i>
<i>unbroken circle</i>	<i>holy grounds</i>	<i>light rain</i>
<i>lost key</i>	<i>gold and jewels</i>	<i>top of a mountain</i>
<i>predator's tooth</i>	<i>piece of art</i>	<i>murder weapon</i>

INTANGIBLES

<i>ancient knowledge</i>	<i>deep chanting</i>	<i>unexpected betrayal</i>
<i>first light</i>	<i>sacred dance</i>	<i>fond memory</i>
<i>A true name</i>	<i>waking dream</i>	<i>child's laughter</i>
<i>divine guidance</i>	<i>true love</i>	<i>binding vow</i>
<i>shared secret</i>	<i>utter silence</i>	<i>fun melody</i>
<i>a place like home</i>	<i>festive holiday</i>	<i>indulged vice</i>

TOUCHSTONES

Spellcasting ability comes with touchstones and all magic effects must logically align with them, making sense and feeling natural. If it feels like a reach, it's beyond the touchstone's bounds.

Flaming can burn or illuminate, but can't calm someone.

Dazzling can blind or distract, but can't mend objects.

Warding can create barriers or protect, but can't attack.

You cast Flaming Claw as a spell at the goblins, aiming for a huge claw to grab one, ignite it, and hurl it into the rest. This fits the touchstones, but your intent—harming multiple goblins at once—might work as a spell on a bunch of mooks, but these are some tough goblins. You'll have to choose to target just one or cast a potent spell to pull off the full effect.

The GM can veto spells that don't align with your touchstones. They can also instead allow it, but inflict a thorn or collateral effects when it's pushing your touchstones, but not completely implausible.

A Slime Wall spell can slow enemies, but has trouble completely blocking them (+1t).

A Dominion spell can command someone to help, but can't cause wounds.

A Wand of Invisibility can make objects disappear, but can't make sounds vanish.

You want to grab a treasure chest and haul it across the chasm and try to cast your Flaming Claw spell to do it. Discussing it with the GM, you both decide that the claw has a physical form, but since it's on fire, it'll scorch anything it touches. The GM says that the chest will be 4d On Fire. This is just a spell, since you could get across the chasm with an action.

TOUCHSTONE LIMITATIONS

When you take a magic talent, have a discussion with the GM about what your magic can and can't do. Clearly defining it in this way makes the magic more fun to play with—creativity thrives within limitations. If a PC's magic feels too broad during the campaign, consider discussing new limitations to keep it balanced and engaging. Most limitations arise naturally from their touchstones or source.

A shadow sorcerer limits their magic so it can't be used in direct sunlight.

A scholarly wizard limits their magic by needing their spellbook in hand to cast spells.

A cleric of the god of thieves limits their magic so it requires a gold piece for their rites.

SPELLCASTING RULINGS

Magic's a freeform system, built on flexibility and creative rulings from the GM, with the understanding that its freedom is meant to preserve the feeling of magic. While this system can be exploited in unfun ways aimed at "winning," it relies on you buying into your magic touchstones and the magnitudes of magic. Don't be a weasel—play in good faith and have fun with the freedom it gives you. With that in mind, here are some common rulings for various situations involving magic:

MAGIC TRAPPINGS

Discuss with the GM how your casting appears, its visual style, movements you make, and tools you use. Casting magic is clear and evident—trying to hide it is, at best, extremely difficult, but usually impossible. Losing implements or being hindered can deny permission to cast or inflict thorns. *A cleric without the symbol of their god may have a harder time casting spells (+1t).*

DETECTING MAGIC

With a relevant touchstone, you can easily recognize magic. Without one, it's harder, though magic ability counts as a factor. Without training, the magic must be very obvious to be noticed.

DISPELLING MAGIC

Anyone aware that something is magic can try to dispel it. This does not require training—you can cast a spell with relevant touchstones that counters it, cause enough of a disturbance to it (*smashing the arcane shield with a battleaxe, shaking someone until they're no longer charmed*), or outsmarting the magic's logic in some way (*throwing water on a fire spell*). Creativity should be rewarded here.

ASSISTING WITH MAGIC

Using magic to assist a roll is just set dressing with no cost—just keep the narration reasonable (the weaker end of a spell). Remember you're assisting. If you're making the action roll on a group level, cast as usual.

MAGIC DURATION

As a rule of thumb, a spell lasts just a moment, maybe two, and a potent spell lasts for a scene. This is judged by the GM based on the intended effect, which you balance against the magnitude of the spell.

MAGIC EFFECT EXAMPLES

Magic acts as the fiction demands, and its effect is weighted against the narrative impact of non-magical actions and potent actions. Even so, it can be difficult to decide the exact mechanical effect in the moment. Consider these guidelines on different types of spells, but don't be afraid to move outside them.

BUFFS & ENEMY DEBUFFS

Beneficial effects that expand vantage, ease tasks, make rolls unnecessary, or provide outside help.

Spells: Apply a critical effect or unique vantage. *Turn invisible for a few moments. Hex a foe to be clumsy.*

Potent: The spell lasts the scene, affects multiple targets, or allows a momentary talent or potent feat. If you give a buff to an ally that persists in your absence, you can assist relevant rolls without risk. *Fly for the scene. Fill an ally with strength.*

Ritual: Give a permanent trait, no more powerful than a talent, to an ally. *Remove an ability from a foe. Cut a wizard off from their most powerful magic. Grow wings on an ally.*

DAMAGE

Spells that directly harm others.

Spells: This is similar to any other action to harm another, using your touchstones and casting stat. *Strike a foe with lightning. Enchant a weapon to animate an attack.*

Potent: The spell applies to an area, has an extra effect, or is otherwise more intense. *Cause a massive explosion of fire. Set a trap that saps the life from a foe. Cut through the scales of an ice dragon to harm it with intense cold.*

Ritual: Harm a foe anywhere in the world. *Cause the wicked king to fall ill.*

DEFENSE

The GM chooses the stat for defense rolls, and can choose to let you use spellcasting to defend yourself (without spending resources). Spells require time—you may not be able to protect more than yourself, depending on the situation. Doing more than making a defense roll costs resources as normal.

Spells: Make a defense roll with your magic, or lessen the effects of an incoming threat. *Weave together magic shield to block the goblin's blade.*

Potent: Setup ally defense rolls with a protective ward. *Create a magical bubble that blocks some of the falling rocks.*

Ritual: Protect yourself and allies from a source of danger for a day. *Ward away the poisonous fog. Protect against the dragon's fire breath.*

HEALING

These spells soothe the mind, body, and emotional states.

Spells: Clear marks, heal minor conditions, or calm a vex response. *Clear a terrified ally's mind. Ignore exhaustion and keep going.*

Potent: Heal harm instantly or cure major conditions, such as a broken bone. *Instantly mend a deep wound.*

Ritual: Regrow limbs, and cure other extreme conditions. Bringing back the dead is possible, but costly, and extremely risky—it may not be worth the price you'll surely have to pay. *Clear the madness from an ally's mind. Regrow a limb.*

INFORMATION

This type of spell unveils secrets, and reveals new knowledge.

Spells: Learn information based on the reason you cast the spell. You should have a specific question in mind, and may only get surface level information in return. *Probe their mind for a vague surface answer.*

Potent: Learn specific information based on the reason you cast the spell, or learn vague unprompted details. *See visions of your foe from a distant place.*

Ritual: Learn the full details of your subject, or see clear unprompted details. *Scry on your foe to learn their secret battle plans. Witness the history and story of a powerful artifact.*

SUMMONING

These spells create items or conjure creatures to the scene. Consider using a 2-3d power pool, or story rolls for newly summoned creatures.

Spells: Create a minor summon or single effect. *Conjure a wolf. Create a dagger from shadow.*

Potent: Conjure a creature that lasts the scene. *Summon a hellhound. Call a warhorse spirit.*

Ritual: Summon large and lasting items or creatures. *Grow a wall around a town. Create a carriage from nothing. Summon a demon.*

TREASURE

Treasure is the currency of an adventurer, useful in trade with the powerful entities in the world to further your own aims. Your skills put you beyond worrying about the expenses of daily life and adventuring gear. You deal in treasures—**minor**, **major**, and **mythic**, anything from a stash of gold to a rare artifact or magical item. While the treasure's label gives some indication of its value and the examples below show what you might get for it in trade, a treasure is only truly as valuable as what someone will give you for it.

Minor: *trained horse, a few jewels, noble clothing, a few mercenaries, minor arcana.*

Major: *an estate, artistic masterpiece, help from a city, major arcana, sailing ship.*

Mythic: *castle, an army, complex ritual, the royal treasury, spirit bound to service.*

Treasures are shared by the party, unless chosen otherwise. With each adventure, it's assumed that you're gaining some coin to spend on your own. Treasures are the things beyond that, valuable resources the party can leverage. Hauling treasure isn't a problem unless the GM specifically makes it one. You can also assume that when a PC needs one of the party's treasures, they happen to have it on them if it makes sense. That is, unless the GM Complicates Things (pg. 85).

FINDING TREASURES

When you gain treasure, the GM can either specify what it is or just give its tier and handwave it. If you want specifics on it later or it becomes important to the story, figure it out then. It's the GM's job to match up treasure and the nature of the adventure and campaign. When unsure about what exactly is found, use a **story roll** and the crucible below to help.

TREASURES CRUCIBLE		
<i>favor</i>	<i>gold</i>	<i>lucrative rumor</i>
<i>jewels</i>	<i>arcana</i>	<i>deed</i>
<i>gear</i>	<i>information</i>	<i>service</i>
<i>vehicle</i>	<i>spell cast</i>	<i>contact</i>
<i>rare reagent</i>	<i>art piece</i>	<i>title or rank</i>
<i>beast</i>	<i>trade goods</i>	<i>blessing</i>

CAROUSING

Any time you're in a settlement, you can carouse by selling off a minor treasure, with each PC spending their leisure time as they like. Make a montage roll and narrate—or suffer—the results. After the scenes finish up, everyone takes **spark** regardless of the roll.

ARCANA

Arcana are rare relics of power, magic imbued in them through ritual or other esoteric forces. They grant **vantage**, letting you do what's otherwise impossible. Arcana have the same tiers as treasure: **minor**, **major**, and **mythic**. Artifacts are unique arcana with their own rules, and can be of any tier.

Each arcana has three touchstones, while its tier reflects the magnitude of magic bound to it. The power imbued into items follows more rigid laws of magic, following this pattern:

Minor arcana: Once per session, it can produce an effect on the same level as a spell using the touchstones.

Major arcana: Acts as minor arcana, but can also be used once per session to produce a potent effect.

Mythic arcana: Acts as major arcana, but counts as a source of magic and all anchors for ritual magic using its touchstones, needing just the ritual invocation to be completed.

Expendable Arcana

Limited use items such as potions and scrolls, have an effect one tier higher, but can only be used once. Scrolls are highly sought-after expendable arcana, used to learn theorems with the wizard's Spellcraft talent (pg. 73).

Trivial arcana is a special tier exclusive to expendable arcana, allowing a single effect on the same level as a spell using the touchstones.

Mythic expendable arcana still only has a single use, allowing the PC to pick between a potent effect in the moment, or a ritual with time and preparation.

Passive Arcana

This covers anything that grants a constant benefit or limitless casting, and has an effect one tier lower. This includes any magical items that are "always on".

Effects with the same impact as a spell, but that would be a potent spell if lasting for the scene (*ethereal wings*, *invisibility*) are considered potent using these rules—meaning they would be of mythic tier.

Minor passive arcana offers a passive effect less than the impact of a single spell, giving set dressing effects.

USING ARCANA

Most arcana produce effects similar to spellcasting. These are specific spells, more narrow than wizard theorems. When arcana is used, the GM will pick whatever stat makes the most sense based on the form and how it's being used. If the stat is not obvious, leave the result to a story roll. Remember, only rolls that are risky are made—without risk, the action (or story roll) counts as an automatic success, if possible at all. *A sword uses Brawn, a robe of pockets uses a story roll.*

The effects of arcana aren't fully defined until the touchstones are interpreted by the player the first time. Once used, note the general effect in the fiction (not the mechanical effect). This cannot be changed or reinterpreted once set, though the mechanical effect can differ. Spellcasting is freeform; not all effects are possible at all tiers. Work with your GM to figure out the arcana's effect, if needed.

OBTAINING ARCANA

The act of binding magic to items, crafting arcana, requires a ritual and a source of magic. Consider using quests or downtime to gather ritual anchors, each representing one of the touchstones.

Buying arcana is much more difficult. Prices depend entirely on the seller's desires, usually something other than coin. Finding one for sale is exceedingly rare, but you might locate someone willing to craft it for you for the right price.

ARTIFACTS

These arcana are more meaningful and unique—the basis of quests and layered with history, or possibly cursed. Consider adding any of the following options, or come up with your own interesting qualities:

Limitation: The item has some inherent drawback for its use.

- ◆ **Activation:** It requires spark, pushing yourself, or some other resource to activate.
- ◆ **Reset:** The arcana's uses don't reset every session, instead requiring an act, event, or resource.
- ◆ **Dangerous:** Using the arcana always carries risk.

Ritual ability: The arcana can produce a ritual level effect after an 8d timer pool. This may be once only, or have special recharge conditions.

Power: It gives outside help when used, perhaps only in certain circumstances.

Sentient: It has its own thoughts, communication, goals, and wishes.

Curse: The item has a secret dark drawback, ranging from making it costly to use, to being an outright trap without benefit. Using this arcana may carry a heavy cost, or it may bestow a condition on the PC when touched or nearby.

DESIGNING ARCANA

Basic arcana are similar to wizard theorems, though somewhat more strict. Start with an idea of the magic item, and pick (or randomly roll) the first two touchstones using the arcana crucible below, or create your own.

To use the crucible, roll 2d for each section (style, essence, form), then assign one die result to the column, and the other to the row (or reverse the two), picking your favorite between them. Once you have one from each section, pick two of the three (*a style + form, essence + form, or style + essence*) as the first two arcana touchstones.

Next, pick a function for the arcana to determine its general use:

Attack: lash out to deal direct harm or destruction.

Create: manifest objects, creatures, or forces themselves.

Defend: protect yourself and others from outside harm or influence.

Enhance: temporarily boost senses, ability, or bestow something new.

Hinder: impede or debilitate others or areas.

Influence: alter thoughts, emotions, or perceptions.

Transform: change the nature or form of the subject.

Traverse: move across space, through barriers, or in a new way.

Decide a form for the item that fits the function, such as a pair of boots (probably traverse, or enhance), dagger (probably attack, defense, or hinder), or necklace (any function).

The effects of the arcana are not set until its first use—leave any effect description blank for the time being. Give the arcana a thematic name, and it's complete!

ARCANA CRUCIBLE

Roll 1 of each, choose 2, then add a function

STYLE	<i>binding</i>	<i>soothing</i>	<i>grasping</i>	<i>shielding</i>	<i>curious</i>	<i>shadowy</i>
	<i>flaming</i>	<i>slow</i>	<i>dire</i>	<i>petrifying</i>	<i>ethereal</i>	<i>majestic</i>
	<i>alluring</i>	<i>silent</i>	<i>dazzling</i>	<i>piercing</i>	<i>sense</i>	<i>frenzied</i>
	<i>cryptic</i>	<i>withering</i>	<i>primal</i>	<i>toxic</i>	<i>thunderous</i>	<i>prismatic</i>
	<i>freezing</i>	<i>shredding</i>	<i>false</i>	<i>harmonic</i>	<i>molten</i>	<i>wild</i>
	<i>mesmerizing</i>	<i>unseen</i>	<i>expanding</i>	<i>swift</i>	<i>phantom</i>	<i>whispering</i>
	ESSENCE	<i>oil</i>	<i>earth</i>	<i>lore</i>	<i>spirit</i>	<i>ash</i>
<i>crystal</i>		<i>air</i>	<i>fire</i>	<i>lightning</i>	<i>acid</i>	<i>memory</i>
<i>slime</i>		<i>spore</i>	<i>shroud</i>	<i>stasis</i>	<i>sound</i>	<i>water</i>
<i>light</i>		<i>star</i>	<i>trick</i>	<i>siphon</i>	<i>thought</i>	<i>rift</i>
<i>gravity</i>		<i>smoke</i>	<i>sight</i>	<i>mist</i>	<i>bloom</i>	<i>poison</i>
<i>echo</i>		<i>death</i>	<i>bone</i>	<i>mirror</i>	<i>emotion</i>	<i>growth</i>
FORM		<i>beacon</i>	<i>servant</i>	<i>vision</i>	<i>sentinel</i>	<i>ray</i>
	<i>ring</i>	<i>crown</i>	<i>bond</i>	<i>shift</i>	<i>guide</i>	<i>embers</i>
	<i>chains</i>	<i>word</i>	<i>step</i>	<i>gate</i>	<i>wall</i>	<i>bolt</i>
	<i>eye</i>	<i>aura</i>	<i>gust</i>	<i>tendrils</i>	<i>wings</i>	<i>wave</i>
	<i>lock</i>	<i>shield</i>	<i>swarm</i>	<i>pillar</i>	<i>claw</i>	<i>dream</i>
	<i>bubble</i>	<i>hand</i>	<i>dance</i>	<i>explosion</i>	<i>anchor</i>	<i>field</i>

EXAMPLE ARCANA

Use the following arcana as a baseline to create your own. Each lists the most common stat it uses. The effect of arcana is established by the player's interpretation the first time it's used—for the sake of the example, these have been established.

Robe of Pockets

(minor arcana)

Touchstones: trinkets, pockets, create

Roll: Story

This patchwork robe produces a random, occasionally useful object from its pockets.

Mask of the Changeling

(minor arcana)

Touchstones: face, thief, transform

Roll: Presence

This mask melds with your face, changing it into the form of the last person you touched.

Healing Potion

(minor expendable arcana)

Touchstones: refresh, heal, enhance

Roll: Story

When you drink this potion, your mind is cleared, your wounds are healed, and you get a second wind.

Emberfang

(major passive arcana)

Touchstones: light, flame, attack

Roll: Brawn

A curved sword sheathes itself in flame when held, able to scald those it touches.

Bag of Teeth

(major artifact)

Touchstones: tooth, connection, influence

Roll: Story

This disturbingly lumpy bag can lead the holder to the owner of any tooth put inside of it.

Rod of Dreams

(mythic arcana)

Touchstones: wonder, prismatic, hinder

Roll: Wits

This beautifully carved, bright wooden rod can put others in a serene trance, as they're pulled into their own dreams.

CHAPTER 2

ADVENTURERS

STARTING A CAMPAIGN

Start each campaign with a session zero, a campaign brainstorming and character creation session where you get everyone on the same page about themes, setting, and the kind of game you want to play. Remember, think about it like a TV series!

- 1. Choose a Theme & Setting:** The GM leads the discussion on what campaign themes and settings sound fun. Choose a setting or build one together.
- 2. Form the Party:** The players form their adventuring party, following the prompts below. The party is made before the characters to ensure they fit well.
- 3. Set Group Arc:** The players choose a group arc, a goal or theme they're interested in playing out as a group. You'll figure out what it means in play. (pg. 23)
- 4. Make Characters:** Follow the character creation flow and make PCs together. Prioritize fitting in with the theme, setting, party, and group arc. (pg. 43)

ADVENTURING PARTY

Your group of adventurers already know each other and have adventured together, at least for some time. Answer the prompts below together to get a sense of your party's concept to ensure that you build characters that fit well within that type of party.

CONCEPTS: Choose 2 that you see your party as and 1 that you definitely aren't.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Avengers | <input type="radio"/> Explorers | <input type="radio"/> Mystics | <input type="radio"/> Scoundrels |
| <input type="radio"/> Conquerors | <input type="radio"/> Heroes | <input type="radio"/> Outsiders | <input type="radio"/> Vassals |
| <input type="radio"/> Disciples | <input type="radio"/> Mercenaries | <input type="radio"/> Renegades | <input type="radio"/> Wardens |

To help whittle down choices, each player and the GM can individually write down one group concept they want to play as and one they won't play as, then reveal them.

ADVENTURER PATHS

Paths are collections of talents grouped by common adventuring themes. Each has a core talent and core growth—your core talent gets stronger as you gain levels. Remember, paths cannot be used to establish story details—backgrounds and talents can. Talents are meant to be re-skinned to fit your concept! Each path is covered in detail later in this chapter.

BARD	<i>Stirring the soul with song or deed.</i>
Spend inspiration to bolster your allies, and influence foes to turn the tide.	
BERSERKER	<i>Blood, mettle, and the sounds of battle.</i>
Fly into a frenzy to wade through foes and lay waste to your enemies.	
CLERIC	<i>Faith is stronger than any blade.</i>
Use your rites pools to call upon your god, wielding their divine magic.	
DRUID	<i>The fury of nature—untamed and relentless.</i>
Use your wild shape pool to take bestial forms and learn their abilities.	
FIGHTER	<i>Resolve honed with every strike.</i>
Spend mastery to fight with unparalleled expertise in your chosen style.	
MONK	<i>Perfection is a journey, not a destination.</i>
Spend flow to act with mystical grace and stop foes in their tracks.	
PALADIN	<i>An Oath taken, a burden willingly carried.</i>
Spend smite to overcome challenges with the power of your conviction.	
RANGER	<i>No escape, no mercy, only the chase.</i>
Tag a foe as your quarry to learn about, track, and slay your chosen enemy.	
ROGUE	<i>A whisper in the dark, then a quiet end.</i>
Use your competence pool to grasp victory from the jaws of defeat.	
SORCERER	<i>Magic flows like blood, powerful and wild.</i>
Use your magic in near infinite ways, but be careful of magical twists .	
WARLOCK	<i>Power always demands a hefty price.</i>
Bestow hexes on your enemies, powered by—and beholden to your patron.	
WIZARD	<i>Arcane knowledge, wielded with precision.</i>
Use the spell theorems you've learned to call precise magic to your hands.	

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Grimwild works off flavor and descriptions in the moment. If you're trying to remake a character in this system, don't get caught on capturing each small mechanical bit. Make the character with broad strokes, and fill in the rest with flavor.

CHARACTER CREATION

Follow the steps below to create your character. This order is often the simplest, but you should begin where your imagination takes you. Character sheets for each path are available wherever you found this.

- 1. Backgrounds:** Choose two backgrounds, each with three wishes, that detail your heritage or professions, covering your tools of the trade and story details. (next page)
- 2. Traits:** Choose 2 you very much are and 1 you definitely aren't: brave, caring, confident, curious, gentle, honest, honorable, persistent, protective, quiet, rash, stubborn.
- 3. Desires:** Choose 2 you truly desire and 1 you definitely don't: belonging, glory, harmony, honor, justice, knowledge, love, power, renown, thrills, wealth, wisdom.
- 4. Features:** Write down three distinctive features, words or short phrases that others soon notice about you, like strong hands, kind eyes, or a gravelly voice.
- 5. Path:** Choose a path, gain its core talent, and pick either another talent from your path's list or a non-core talent from another path. (pg. 51)
- 6. Stats:** Begin with 1 in each stat, then assign 4 more points amongst them as you like, to a max of 3 in any single stat. (pg. 19)
- 7. Weapon Style:** Choose your weapon(s), then split two descriptors between them. (pg. 17)
- 8. Arcs:** Choose one or two character arcs to explore. Don't get too detailed—these will get fleshed out during play and can be changed anytime. (pg. 23)
- 9. Bonds:** Describe your characters in detail. As you listen, choose one bond you have towards each PC, matching together an intensity and a nature of the bond. (pg. 19)
- 10. Review:** Revisit the campaign theme, setting, party identity, and group arcs you set. Make sure everything matches up well and make any adjustments.
- 11. Montage:** Finish off with a montage of the last adventure you went on together. The GM gives a basic overview of the scenario, then you roll a group montage (2d each) to see how the whole adventure went. (pg. 13) Collaborate to narrate your outcomes, working in bonds and other details.

BACKGROUNDS

Backgrounds are the pillars of your backstory, revealing key aspects of who you are. They determine what counts as set dressing—tools of the trade and the story details you can add. Start with a simple word or phrase, leaving room for growth as your backstory is revealed during play. They're just dots to connect later.

Backgrounds include your heritage (pg. 46), social class, or profession. Each background comes with three **wises**—evocative phrases that highlight areas of knowledge, experience, or awareness from that background (wises, pg. 17). They're especially useful for declaring story details, providing prompts and ideas to bring into play. Backgrounds serve as a clear sign of the important aspects of who you are.

You have two backgrounds. You can choose from the list (next page), use the Heritage crucible (pg. 48), or use either of those as guidelines to create your own. Backgrounds and their wises should fit the campaign world and be approved by the GM. A heritage background isn't required if you prefer it as just set dressing. If you need more ideas for wises, check out the Savant's expanded wises! (pg. XX)

You might have grown up poor on the streets, but if you have the Ragamuffin background, you learned a lot from that experience, and it's a core part of who you are.

You might be a dwarf, but having the Dwarf of the Iron Hills background lets you set the scope of what it means to be a person from that heritage.

A fighter with the Warrior and Noble backgrounds feels substantially different than one with the Scoundrel and Eccentric backgrounds.

Each common background has a name, and other "Also known as" names. Personalize this to fit the setting—you're not just a Charlatan, or even a Spy, you're a Scarlet Agent of the Crown.

Charlatan
AKA Spy, Swindler
social graces
spotting marks
timely misdirects

Common backgrounds also come with three wises. Mix and replace these to fit the character. It makes sense for your Scarlet Agent to have social graces and timely misdirects, but maybe luxuries makes more sense than spotting marks.

Scarlet Agent of the Crown
social graces
timely misdirects
luxuries

COMMON BACKGROUNDS

Charlatan

AKA Spy, Swindler

social graces
spotting marks
timely misdirects

Clergy

AKA Cultist, Priest

allegories
signs of sin
faiths of the world

Commoner

AKA Farmer, Villager

local customs
practical wisdom
superstitions

Crafter

AKA Artisan, Smith

crafting quality
trade contracts
wear and tear

Drifter

AKA Explorer, Vagabond

chance meetings
faraway tales
lay of the land

Eccentric

AKA Hermit, Recluse

hard truths
random facts
strange snacks

Entertainer

AKA Storyteller, Minstrel

legends & tales
crowd behaviors
stage presence

Healer

AKA Herbalist, Physicker

comfort foods
signs of ailment
herbal properties

Hunter

AKA Pathfinder, Trapper

survival
tracks
wildlife behavior

Investigator

AKA Guard, Gumshoe

seedy areas
connecting the dots
body language

Mariner

AKA Pirate, Sailor

nautical lore
seafaring
weather patterns

Mystic

AKA Occultist, Seer

ancient prophecies
leylines
symbology

Noble

AKA Aristocrat, Diplomat

diplomacy
influential contacts
luxuries

Ragamuffin

AKA Cutpurse, Urchin

hidden paths
rumors
street smarts

Sage

AKA Lorekeeper, Scholar

ancient histories
peoples of the world
philosophy

Scoundrel

AKA Brigand, Thief

escape routes
signs of weakness
shady connections

Trader

AKA Merchant, Peddler

cultural tastes
people's desires
rare goods

Warrior

AKA Sellsword, Soldier

battle plans
improvised weapons
war stories

Backgrounds can evolve as the story unfolds. Start with a simple name and leave room for growth as your backstory is revealed. Don't corner your character growth before starting. You might start as a Mariner, refine it to Pirate, then expand on it to Blackthorn Reaver or First Mate under Captain Stormclaw as it comes up in the story. Or you can just keep it simple!

HERITAGE

Heritage reflects your culture, ancestry, and homeland. Use the Heritage Crucible below for inspiration: roll three words, pick two, and combine them. You can interpret these words literally or figuratively, or use them as they are.

Once you set your heritage, give it three wisens. The backgrounds (previous page) can serve as inspiration. These wisens reflect traits commonly shared by most people from your heritage. This continues throughout the game as you figure out more about your people through play. In short, you know what the Orcs of the Verdant Boglands are like because you are one!

Heritage Talent

Some heritages have innate capabilities beyond their wisens. You can link the second talent at character creation to your heritage, or work with the GM to create one. This makes it a common trait amongst your people. If something isn't strong enough to warrant a talent, work with the GM to add it in as set dressing—a bit of flavor, but can't be relied upon to impact scenes.

SUGGESTED TALENTS FOR COMMON HERITAGES:

Human: Jack of All Trades (*Bard*)

Genasi: Eldritch Affinity (*Rogue*)

Elf: Keen Senses (*Ranger*)

Goliath: Mighty (*Berserker*)

Dwarf: Dauntless (*Paladin*)

Tortle: Bulwark (*Fighter*)

Halfling: Slippery (*Backgrounds*)

Lizardfolk: Poisoner (*Rogue*)

Gnome: Arcane Training (*Wizard*)

Merfolk: Aquatic (*Backgrounds*)

Orc: Flesh Wounds (*Berserker*)

Kobold: Deadly Trapping (*Artificer*)

Dragonkin: Eldritch Affinity (*Rogue*)

Goblin: Opportunist (*Rogue*)

Tiefling: Eldritch Growth (*Warlock*)

Aarakocra: Flight (*Backgrounds*)

Aasimar: Healing Hands (*Monk*)

Firbolg: Kindred Spirits (*Druid*)

Satyr: Crowd Favorite (*Backgrounds*)

Forged: Artificial Parts (*Artificer*)

BACKGROUND TALENTS

These talents fit more thematically with backgrounds and heritages, but are otherwise available to all paths.

AQUATIC: You can breathe and move freely in water, and have no other issues that aquatic environments bring.

CROWD FAVORITE: When given time and space to entertain a crowd, you and participating allies can **take spark** for the performance. Give a *vignette*, then make a story roll to see how it goes.

THIEVES' CANT: You and those you teach can communicate subtly in company, silently over distances, and through signs and markings. When you get a perfect deceiving others, you also **setup** an ally following your lead.

FLIGHT: You have the ability to fly. Choose two of the following benefits that define this ability: *Agile—Strong—Swift—Tireless*. Be mindful of what you carry; most fliers can't bring much with them.

REGENERATION: When a scene ends while you are **bloodied** or **desperate**, make a 2d story roll as a defense against the harm. On a messy, reduce it to a **mark**. On a perfect, clear it. Choose a weakness that accompanies this power, such as: *fire—iron—sunlight*.

SALT OF THE EARTH: You have the air of someone with humble beginnings. The GM judges an NPC's response, or you can spend story to set it: *disdain—underestimation—kindred—pity*. When you go out of your way to help the common folk, **take spark**.

SLIPPERY: Your small frame has its advantages. When you defend and get a critical, you **take spark** and: *cause an extra secondary effect—roll a related task pool, as you turn it back on them*.

TEAMWORK: Time in a squad or crew taught you to work well with others. When you **assist** a roll and share the risk, your **5s count as 6s, but 4s count as 1s**. When taking part in a group montage roll, your 6 result counts towards a critical success.

TRADEMARK WEAPON: While using the iconic weapon of your society, you can **push yourself** to pull off a **potent feat of prowess** using one of the descriptors. These weapons are often highly coveted outside of your ancestral lands.

HERITAGE CRUCIBLE

Roll 1 of each, choose 2-3, then interpret

FOLK	Vagrants	Birdfolk	Wayfarers	Goblins	Islanders	Fisherfolk
	Riders	Clans	Seafarers	Tribes	Keepers	Settlers
	Gnomes	Pilgrims	Turtlefolk	Citizens	Marauders	Carvers
	Dwarves	Tieflings	Giants	Dragonborn	Tradesfolk	Valleyfolk
	Nomads	Cityfolk	Humans	Halfings	Merchants	Skywatchers
	Elves	Orcs	Forestfolk	Cavefolk	Raiders	Outcasts
	MOOD	Twisted	Steel	Verdant	Golden	Emerald
Lush		Floating	Crimson	Shattered	Haunted	Enchanted
Scorched		Echoing	Misty	Glimmering	Distant	Silent
Rolling		Bountiful	Great	Sunken	Coastal	Gloomy
Abyssal		Desolate	Rocky	Wildswept	Howling	Eternal
Feral		Serene	Whispering	Grim	Prosperous	Restless
LAND		Peaks	Confederacy	Fjords	Coast	Badlands
	Kingdom	Wilds	Marsh	Isles	Thickets	Jungletown
	Desert	Canyons	Highlands	Caverns	Fenlands	Borderlands
	Plains	North	Moors	Ruins	Hollows	Underworld
	Sea	Meadows	Outposts	Cliffs	Boomtown	Riverlands
	Glaciers	Sands	Wastelands	Coalition	Blightlands	Groves



PATHS & TALENTS

The remainder of this chapter details the 12 adventurer paths available in the game. Below, you'll find explanations of common options and terms used throughout the paths. These clarifications help you better understand how to customize your character and make use of talents.

If you would like more ideas, check out the Player Options chapter (pg. XX) for more paths and talents!

Core Growth

Your core talent powers up as you level. Some paths gain bonuses every 2 levels, at 2, 4, and 6, while others gain them every 3 levels, at 3 and 6. Remember, the max level a character can get to is 7.

Poaching Talents

Every path talent is available to every other path. Those under each specific path are collected around their loose theme, but by no means fit every character in that path. You are encouraged to check out all the talents and pick which ones fit your character best.

Re-Skin Talents

To avoid redundancy, similar talents across paths have been avoided. Instead, you're encouraged to "re-skin" talents to fit your character's theme. For example, the Bulwark (armor) talent could be re-flavored by a wizard as a magical shield.



Push Yourself

Some talents require you to push yourself to activate. These talents can be activated once per session for free. After the first use, you must push yourself as normal to activate it again, marking a relevant stat. Choose your moments wisely.

"Given Time"

This phrase, included in several talents means you need time to do what the talent lets you, but how long that is leaves room for interpretation. Go with what makes sense, but at the very least it's a narrative beat, a PC action, or some time unhindered by disruptive forces. Use story rolls or group consensus to decide what counts.

Choices

Italicized words separated by em dashes represent lists of choices, like: *one— two— three*. These represent a limited number of options you must choose from. If instead a talent suggests a type of choice, saying "you can do things **such as** A and B", then you can extrapolate that out into other similar actions.

On a Perfect/Grim

Any talent that allows you to do something on a perfect also triggers on a critical. Those that trigger on a Grim also happen on a Disaster.

Optional Character Building

Some paths include additional character-building features, marked with an [Optional] tag. If they're not relevant to your character, you can pass them up.

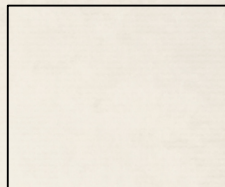
Roleplaying Advice

Some paths include advice on roleplaying that character path, especially on parts that might be somewhat unfamiliar. It's entirely optional, but if they resonate with you, lean into them to make those aspects important in the game.

PATH OF THE BARD

AKA *the orator, warlord, chronicler*

You spin tales and songs that stir emotions, inspire bravery, and turn simple deeds into legends.



INSPIRATION

Core Talent

Each session, you have **3 inspiration** you can use to magically bolster the spirits of those around you, and influence your foes.

You can spend **inspiration** to: *increase an ally's die result by 1 (3→4)—calm or intensify a vex response—clear a **mark** from an ally.*

You can also spend **inspiration** and roll Presence to: *pull off a **potent feat of emotional influence**—interrupt an impact move—clear **rattled** from an ally.*

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, gain +1 inspiration per session.

INSPIRATION METHOD

(Optional)

Where does your power to influence others come from? Choose any 2 from the following that you know, and 1 that you're learning.

- ◆ Violin
- ◆ Oratory
- ◆ Martial Ability
- ◆ Panpipes
- ◆ Flute
- ◆ Cutting Wit
- ◆ Lyre
- ◆ Ocarina
- ◆ Accordion
- ◆ Limericks
- ◆ Proverbs
- ◆ Dance
- ◆ Aesops
- ◆ Lute
- ◆ Style
- ◆ Singing
- ◆ Harmonica
- ◆ Drums

SONG COMPOSITION

(Optional)

Many bards use music to channel their innate power to inspire and influence others. Use the crucible on the right to build the bardic songs you know.

Style: This is how you feel when you're performing the song.

Tune: This is the familiar form that anyone will recognize.

Impact: This is how the song magically influences others.

STYLE	TUNE	OF IMPACT
chaotic	anthem	affection
dire	aria	awe
fiery	ballad	calm
gentle	chant	despair
haunting	ditty	fear
playful	hymn	fury
nostalgic	ode	hope
rousing	requiem	joy
vicious	rhapsody	mockery
whimsical	serenade	wonder

BARD PATH TALENTS

BARDIC LORE: You gain any 3 wises and 1 extra **story** per session. You take +1d on any story rolls pertaining to what you know or story details you add.

DYNAMIC ENTRANCE: You can always appear in a scene exactly where and when you want, limited only by your physical capabilities. Make a 3d story roll to describe your entrance and its effect.

The player sets the scene for their entrance, allowing extra details based on the result, almost as an action—even an interrupt, itself. The GM will step in if something doesn't fit.

FOLK HERO: You can spend **inspiration** and **spark** interchangeably. If your **spark** die comes up as a 6, you regain it. Tales of your heroism are told throughout the area; track their spread with campaign pools.

For every free room and home-cooked meal, you're likely to have a plea for help, swindlers, starry-eyed followers, and those looking to pick a fight. Any of these would make great tangles.

FORKED TONGUE: When given time, you can tell **potent lies**. You can **push yourself** to do it on the spot.

FRIENDLY FACE: In any new town or district of a city you go to, you can always: know someone useful—quickly make a friend—be recognized by a fan. They'll gladly do you a reasonable favor. **Take spark** if you promise to pay them back.

JACK OF ALL TRADES: You take +1d on montage rolls, and gain 1 extra **story** per session. You can spend **story** to gain a wise until the session ends. When the wise is used, describe how you got this experience.

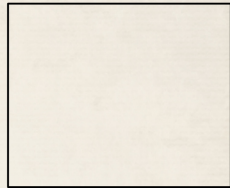
You don't know everything the wise suggests, it's only temporary. When you gain it, it's to show you know something about it, though we won't know what until it comes up narratively.

WORDPLAY: On a perfect defense roll when the situation allows for verbal quips, you make them: *embarrass themselves—let a secret slip—focus on or lose track of you*. Once per session, you can goad the GM into spending **suspense** on conversation.

PATH OF THE **BERSERKER**

AKA *the juggernaut, reaver, warbringer*

You don't just fight—you crush anything and everything in your path until nothing stands before you.



FRENZY

Core Talent

Once per session, or when you get **bloodied** or take **vex**, you can enter a frenzy for a scene. During the frenzy, you can only take aggressive actions. You also:

- ◆ take +1d for each **mark** you have and ignore all thorns from **harm** and **marks**.
- ◆ add **collateral damage**: *send something flying—smash mooks—throw insults—wreck something.*
- ◆ always get a final action when dropped. On a critical, ignore getting dropped.

You can only exit a frenzy when: *no challenger stands before you—get dropped—push yourself.*

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain 1 free activation of frenzy per session.

Collateral damage acts as a narrow secondary effect, as a critical, and shouldn't be underestimated. Treat this as a perfect on a related roll against the environment or mooks.

FRENZY SOURCE

(Optional)

Where does your wild power and ability to withstand pain come from? Choose 2 and smash them together to form the source, and 1 that you have a disdain for.

- ◆ Ritualistic preparation
- ◆ Trained tolerance to pain
- ◆ Long consumption of strange substances
- ◆ Drawing power from ancestral spirits
- ◆ Drawing primal power from the wild
- ◆ Channeling memories you'll never forget
- ◆ Visions of horrific or heroic scenes
- ◆ Deep meditative focus
- ◆ Blood pact with a kindred force
- ◆ Countless battles, countless injuries
- ◆ Binding your spirit to a physical totem
- ◆ You really don't know why you're like this

SCARS

(Optional)

Your ability to ignore pain has led you to take far more damage than most warriors. What scars do you bear that show your reckless nature? Choose 3 that you show off.

- ◆ Crookedly broken nose
- ◆ Wild, ripped hair
- ◆ Torn earlobe or ear tips
- ◆ Web of deep cut scars
- ◆ Muscles knotted like iron
- ◆ Deep, cauterized wound
- ◆ Permanently split knuckles
- ◆ Several missing fingers
- ◆ Cracked jawline
- ◆ Empty eye socket
- ◆ Jagged burn lines
- ◆ Crushed foot
- ◆ Smashed teeth
- ◆ Gouged claw marks
- ◆ Busted in skull
- ◆ Cauliflower ears
- ◆ Runic scarring from magic
- ◆ Not even a scratch on you

BERSERKER PATH TALENTS

FEARSOME: Your presence instills fear in others. The GM judges an NPC's response, or you can spend story to set it: *hostile—nervous—respectful—scared*. You can **push yourself** to pull off a potent feat of intimidation.

What exactly makes you so frightening to be around? This could merely be your appearance, but it could also be the way you talk, hold yourself, dress, reputation, or a combination thereof.

FLESH WOUNDS: When you would take **bloodied** while already **bloodied**, you can instead take: *a condition—vex—rattled*. Each option can only be taken this way once per session.

INTO THE FRAY: When you're the first into an intense situation, **5s count as 6s, but 4s count as 1s** on your first roll. You also **setup** the first person following you regardless of your roll outcome.

JOYFUL WARRIOR: On a critical or when **bloodied** in battle, you **take spark** and can: *clear one mark from each ally—bring a dropped (not dead) ally back into the scene*.

MIGHTY: When given time, you can pull off **potent feats of raw strength**. You can **push yourself** to do it on the spot.

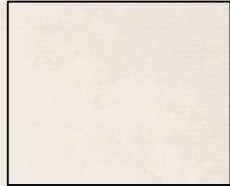
OVERKILL: On a critical when bringing violence, threats, or destruction to bear, you can: *cause an extra secondary effect—roll the related task pool twice*.

WARCRY: Each session, you have **2 inspiration**, as the talent. You can spend one to: *increase an ally's die result by 1 (3→4)—calm or intensify a vex response—clear rattled from an ally*.

PATH OF THE CLERIC

AKA *the priest, zealot, chosen*

You serve as a conduit for the divine, channeling holy power to safeguard the faithful and do your god's bidding.



CHANNEL DIVINITY

Core Talent

You can call upon your deity to channel their magic. You roll a **rite pool** to cast spells, and that pool and your **god's epithet**—their domain serve as touchstones. Your **major rite** is a **6d power pool**, and your two **minor rites** are **4d power pools**. They replenish each session. You can drop 1d and roll to cast a potent spell. Spells without risk require no roll, unless potent.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1d to each rite pool.

CREATE YOUR GOD

Create your god by naming them and giving them a thematic epithet (e.g. *Zerenda, Goddess of Storms*). You are expected to follow their guidance and spread their word. Choose 1 of the following to create their domain, or choose your own.

- | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------|-------------|------------|
| ◆ Storms | ◆ Justice | ◆ Life | ◆ Death | ◆ Magic | ◆ Nature |
| ◆ Mercy | ◆ Trickery | ◆ Radiance | ◆ Travel | ◆ Hunt | ◆ Luck |
| ◆ Revelry | ◆ Sea | ◆ Moon | ◆ War | ◆ Knowledge | ◆ Crafting |

LEARN YOUR RITES

Decide your place in your god's flock. What is your mission, and what rites have you learned to help you achieve your goal? Choose 1 major rite, and 2 minor rites from the following, or make your own.

BLESSING

Magic: Bless a warhammer. Walk on water. Fill the forlorn duke's heart with hope.

DIVINATION

Magic: Find a safe path. Reveal where the thief is hiding. Know tomorrow's weather.

DOMINION

Magic: Convince someone to help. Make someone forget. Calm an angry mob.

HEALING

Magic: Heal a broken bone. Relieve someone of stress. Stop the bleeding.

WARDING

Magic: Shield an ally from harm. Block a doorway. Create sentries.

WRATH

Magic: Shatter a foe's weapon. Blind a traitor. Curse a heretic with misfortune.

CLERIC PATH TALENTS

BLESSED: Once per session, you can re-roll a roll you just made as a greater power attempts to intervene. The re-roll is made without any thorns on it. On a perfect, **take spark**.

DEVOUT: Intelligent creatures recognize you as a person of deep honesty and only your most hated enemies would treat you with a lack of respect or doubt your word. You are never seriously injured or killed by an enemy, unless they have no choice. This aura is upheld by your unwavering commitment—you must **push yourself** to act in bad faith.

*You stick to your principles unwaveringly, and even those acting against you know. How does this impact those around you? This is sure to cause **tangles**, perhaps even quarrels.*

HEALER: You take +1d when you heal someone, with magic or treatment. On a critical, both of you **take spark**. One time only, you can bring back the recently dead. Common sense takes precedent.

IRON WILL: Each session, you have a **2d Iron Will** resource pool. When you get **rattled** or take **vex**, roll the pool to ignore it. If the situation allows for it, you can also lash out at the cause or a bystander and: *instill dread in their heart—sow doubt in their mind*.

RINGS FALSE: You always know when someone is lying, though not necessarily the truth. You take +1d on a follow-up if you reveal you know they're lying.

This could be seen through a darker lens, flavored as having been around criminal types and ne'er-do-wells for far too long.

SERMONS: When given time, you can pull off **potent feats of persuasion** in the name of your beliefs, like *commanding a crowd to bring the duke for judgment* or *showing the goblins the glory of your god*. You can also **push yourself** to do it on the spot. One time only, you can make this a ritual-level effect.

SHEPHERD: When you assist an ally on a defense roll that would leave them **rattled** or with **vex**, you can invoke your bond to take +1d on the roll. On a perfect, you both **take spark**.

PATH OF THE DRUID

AKA the shapeshifter, grovekeeper, wildling

You embrace and embody the untamed power of the natural world, transforming into beasts and channeling the spirit of the wild.



WILD SHAPE

Core Talent

Shift into any familiar beast form by using a **2d Wild Shape** resource pool, replenishing each scene. You take on the form's physical qualities and feral instincts, moving stat points to represent this (min 1, max 3). You lose access to your own physical talents. Drop 1d before rolling for each wild talent (max 2), such as: *aquatic—smaller than a cat—bigger than a bear—flying—a thematic path talent.*

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1d to your Wild Shape pool.

DRUIDIC TELLS

(Optional)

Druids often exhibit tells—sometimes several—that reflect their deep connection with nature, such as animalistic traits or plant-like appearances. Even in a fantasy world, someone so attuned to nature is bound to attract attention, offering potential new vantage, outside assistance, or even opportunities for tangles. Below are some ideas for features:

thorns	blossoming	feathered	bristled	roots	fluffy
moss	bark	earthen	hoofed	vibrant	silken
vines	glowing	translucent	tangled	crystalline	smoky
tusked	velvet	murky	speckled	verdant	willowy
shimmering	antlered	ashen	spiny	gnarled	fragrant
scaly	longtoothed	dewy	breezy	misty	petals

WILD TALENTS

(Examples)

Below are some examples of beasts that have wild talents. Already existing talents are listed with a page number reference. Others are made for that beast.

- ◆ **Chimpanzee:** *Relentless* (Ranger, pg. 66)
- ◆ **Wolf:** *Keen Senses* (Ranger, pg. 66)
- ◆ **Rhino:** *Bulwark* (Fighter, pg. 60)
- ◆ **Octopus:** *Shape & color mimicking*
- ◆ **Cheetah:** *Incredibly fast sprinting*
- ◆ **Bear:** *Mighty* (Berserker, pg. 54)
- ◆ **Eagle:** *Flight*
- ◆ **Snake:** *Poisoner* (Rogue, pg. 68)
- ◆ **Lion:** *Fearsome* (Berserker, pg. 54)
- ◆ **Dolphin:** *Fast Swimming*
- ◆ **Crocodile:** *Swamp camouflage*
- ◆ **Honey Badger:** *Iron Will* (Cleric, pg. 56)

DRUID PATH TALENTS

AUGURY: You can read the world around you and interpret its signs. Before each session, roll 2d and record the results. These are your **Omens**. During the session, you can replace any rolled d6 (by anyone) with an **omen** result, then erase it.

AWAKEN: Once per scene, you may awaken a living natural feature—plants, animals, fungi, or the like—within or nearby the scene. It gains awareness and purpose, forming a **3d power pool** you can direct, guided by its nature. One time only, you can make this a ritual-level effect.

HERBALISM: Before each session, use the crucible below to make two herb names. You have a trivial potion (spell effect) of one, and a minor potion (potent effect) of the other. The name is the touchstone. They lose effect after the session. One time only, you can have 1 major potion (ritual effect), chosen after rolling.

choke	star	sun	dream	mist	zap	cap	lily	thistle	pod	stem	petal
sticky	stone	moon	feather	soot	blast	wort	reed	bell	bud	shoot	bean
wool	dust	devil	wild	freeze	blood	rose	flower	leaf	tongue	bark	tuber
smoke	snake	honey	mirror	sting	ink	bush	root	wood	berry	funnel	vine
shriek	mimic	goat	worm	steel	skunk	shroom	spine	grass	lace	moss	seed
giggle	needle	night	swell	faerie	dragon	sprout	shade	thorn	bane	branch	weed

Herbalism crucible by Juniper Bloom and used with permission.

KINDRED SPIRITS: You can speak with all manner of wild things. When you meet, they know of you. Roll their bond with you or spend **story** to establish it. When you call, those nearby will answer.

PRIMORDIAL BONDS: You have a connection with each primordial element: **Air, Earth, Fire, Water**. You have spellcasting ability, and cast spells with a story roll (usually 2d) using that element as the touchstone. You can strain your connection to cast a potent spell, though it will be less likely to answer next time.

The elements can be fickle, "straining your connection" may mean a lower story roll, or being shunned until you make amends. Do great deeds to deepen your connection, and earn their trust.

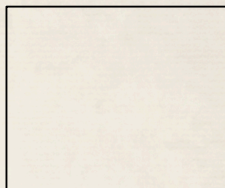
TRUE SHAPE: Choose 1 beast form. If it has no **wild talents**, you can shift into it without using a wild shape pool. If it has **wild talents**, you drop 1d less than normal when you shift into it.

WINDCALLER: Your voice carries on the winds over great distances. You can **push yourself** to summon or dismiss, but not control: *dense fog—diving temperatures—heavy rain—snowfall—strong winds—thunder*. You can perform weather rituals without ritual anchors.

PATH OF THE FIGHTER

AKA *the blademaster, duelist, sergeant*

You become one with your weapon, and through it, you find your real purpose in this life.



WEAPON MASTERY

Core Talent

Choose a fighting style you have mastered: *brawling—dual-wielding— one-handed—ranged—two-handed*. Each scene, you have **2 mastery**. When you fight, defend, or assist in your style, take +1d, and on a messy or perfect, you can spend **mastery** to add a critical effect.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1 mastery per scene.

WEAPON ORIGIN

(Optional)

For many fighters, their weapon is an important part of their past. Give your weapon some character and it will become a character itself in the story. Roll d66 twice on the table below to give your weapon, or each of your weapons, its own small story. You can also choose, or make up your own.

<i>etched with words of loss</i>	<i>stolen from a family member</i>	<i>marked by a secret society</i>
<i>gift from a childhood mentor</i>	<i>covered in burn marks</i>	<i>with a hidden compartment</i>
<i>given to you by your father</i>	<i>carved with friend's initials</i>	<i>inscribed with a quote</i>
<i>taken from a dead body</i>	<i>with a faded family crest</i>	<i>give as a peace offering</i>
<i>marred with blade nicks</i>	<i>taken as spoils of war</i>	<i>belonged to a gambler</i>
<i>made from a rare material</i>	<i>scratched from fierce battle</i>	<i>patched many times</i>

COMBAT MANEUVERS

(Advice)

Action rolls let you flavor combat however you like—don't just swing a sword or jab a spear. Lean into the dramatic flowing nature of combat. Use mastery for **setups** and **secondary effects** to remove thorns or shift the fight. Don't tunnel vision on the kill, either—use your actions to change the battle to end it faster! Of course, anyone can try these, but as a fighter, you should master them.

- ◆ **Blind:** Cloud their vision to leave them vulnerable.
- ◆ **Disarm:** Take their weapon to stop their advance.
- ◆ **Knockdown:** Put them on the ground to gain the upper hand.
- ◆ **Pin down:** Trap them in a position to keep them from acting or escaping.
- ◆ **Pull:** Drag them into danger or out of position.
- ◆ **Push:** Shove them away to protect allies or disrupt their own lines.
- ◆ **Sunder:** Break their gear to limit their options or get around their defenses.
- ◆ **Unnerve:** Leave them shaken and questioning their choices.

FIGHTER PATH TALENTS

ARCANE TRAINING: You have spellcasting as the Spellcraft talent. You can cast 2 spells and 1 potent spell per session. You know **3 spell theorems**, created with the Spell Crucible, and can learn new spells from scrolls.

BULWARK: Each session, you have a **2d Bulwark** resource pool from armor or other defenses. When you take physical harm, you can roll the pool to ignore the damage.

CONTROL: You can **push yourself** to declare a zone that enemies cannot cross without dealing with you. If they attempt to move past you, you can **interrupt** them. On a perfect, **take spark**.

Some foes are too large to control. Even experienced, a warrior with control over an area won't stop a dragon—but they may get a parting shot (roll the poll), or move with them.

GOT YOUR BACK: You can **push yourself** to assist an ally after they roll a grim. The ally can also roll 1d. On a perfect, you both **take spark**.

MEASURED TONES: When you speak in measured tones, people always stop and listen—you can declare **low stakes** if desired. Unless completely surprised, you can **push yourself** to **interrupt** an impact move initiating aggression. If you change their mind, **take spark**.

SWIFT RECOVERY: On a perfect roll with an unmarked stat, clear a **mark** on another stat.

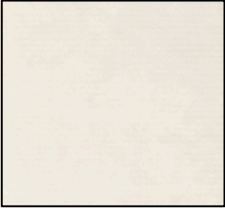
TACTICIAN: During an intense action sequence, you can **push yourself** to tag 3 scene elements right away, and 1 later in the sequence. When an ally interacts with a tagged element, you **assist** without risk on the roll. If no roll is needed, they **take spark**.

Scene elements may come from the GM's description, or they could be things that would logically be there. Establish details if needed, the GM will step it in if it's too far.

PATH OF THE MONK

AKA *the martial artist, mystic, wanderer*

Your body is a vessel through which you channel your discipline into grace, precision, and the never-ending journey towards perfection.



DISCIPLINE

Core Talent

Never face a disadvantage due to a weapon matchup. Once per session, you can **interrupt** with a: *philosophical point*—*quick reaction*—*stunning strike*. Each scene, you have **4 flow**. Spend it to:

- ◆ Ignore thorns from: *being outnumbered*—*a single imposing opponent*.
- ◆ Attempt a fluid maneuver. Before rolling, declare you want to also: *disarm them*—*redirect momentum*—*reposition you, them, or both*. On a perfect or messy, it happens.
- ◆ Pull off a **potent feat of mystical grace**, like *running across water* or *falling harmlessly from a great height*. For 1 more **flow**, extend this to those you're touching.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1 flow per scene and +1 interrupts per session.

MARTIAL ARTS STYLE

(Optional)

It's based on the _____ concept of...

[choose 1 or 2]

Primal	Elemental	Powerful	Idealistic	Philosophical	Stylistic
tiger	fire	thunderstorm	harmony	foundation	ferocity
crane	water	avalanche	destruction	flourishing	deception
snake	air	tsunami	tranquility	refinement	grace
wolf	earth	whirlwind	justice	adaption	brutality
mantis	lightning	earthquake	chaos	endurance	precision
raven	heart	volcano	freedom	transformation	patience

It's features stances and moves like...

[choose 3]

open palm	elbow strike	circular step	high kick	crane stance	mantis grab
spinning kick	aerial leaps	knee strike	tiger claw	side kick	close punch
low stance	breath control	joint lock	heavy strike	swift parry	leaping elbow
finger jabs	redirecting grab	pressure point	dual strikes	rooted stance	snap kick
iron forearm	chop strike	whipping attack	jumps & rolls	soft redirect	wide sweep
flowing step	iron grip	steady gaze	palm heel	backfist strike	crescent kick

It often makes use of _____ weapons like...

[choose 2]

Blunt	Flexible	Edged	Reach	Thrown	Specialized
bo staff	chain whip	sai	monk spade	shuriken	tiger claws
three-part staff	rope dart	kama	spear	throwing spikes	spiked boots
half-staff	sickle & chain	butterfly sword	naginata	chakram	war fan
nunchaku	weight & chain	hook sword	longhandle blade	boomerang	iron knuckles
short sticks	whip blade	straight sword	trident	darts	crescent knives
batons	scarf	curved sword	scythe	throwing axes	backfist rings

MONK PATH TALENTS

ELEGANT MANEUVERS: With fluid fighting and speech, you surprise your foes. On a perfect when you act to only improve your position or **setup** an advantage, you can also: *seize an opening—unnerve your foe, to roll a related task pool.*

FLURRY: You can **push yourself** to attempt two distinct physical actions at once using one stat, and taking your *highest two dice* as the results. You can't prompt more than one impact move from this combined action.

This lets you do two related, but different actions at once, such as: lash out at two nearby enemies, tackle and pin a foe, or grab an enemy and bowl them into another.

HEALING HANDS: You can heal an ally that is **bloodied**. This automatically works, but you must make a Presence defense roll against being **bloodied**—you take their pain onto yourself and must fend it off.

LIGHTNING REFLEXES: You can always act first, unless completely surprised. You also ignore thorns on Agility defense rolls, except for those from damage.

MIND OVER MATTER: When you take a physical **mark**, you can instead choose to take a mental **mark**. When you clear a **mark** by rolling it, **take spark**.

TETHER: Once per session, touch someone to link spirits. You can sense their feelings, speak in their mind, and know where they are. You can **push yourself** to: *assist them without risk—take mental damage for them—teleport to them.*

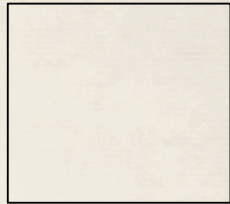
Linking spirits can give you new insight on an ally. Do either of you catch any fleeting memories or thoughts from the other? Consider changing your bond afterward.

THERE IS NO TRY: When putting your life or something you hold equally dear on the line, **5s count as 6s, and 4s count as 1s**. This generally occurs with **high stakes** or after being **bloodied** in battle.

PATH OF THE PALADIN

AKA the crusader, champion, justiciar

You have sworn an oath and your unwavering dedication gives you powerful conviction, which you can wield to shape the world.



OATHSWORN

Core Talent

You draw power from your three tenets. When you add a thorn from **bloodied**, **rattled**, or **desperate** you also take +1d. Each session, you have **3 smite**. When acting with total conviction, spend it 1-for-1 to drop dice from a task pool *after* rolling it.

Affirmation: Before each session, state your tenets and discuss how they came up last session. Give **spark** to one player who joined a scene involving your tenets. Take 1 less **smite** for each tenet in violation.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, gain +1 smite per session.

SWEAR YOUR OATH

At character creation, or over the first few sessions, detail the **Three Tenets** that form the core of your oath. Write your own specific tenets (below), or use the table (next page) to create ones that you can explore through play. To write your own:

- ◆ **Choose a character detail or two**, such as a trait, bond, or background.
- ◆ **Link it to a short, actionable phrase.** It should naturally arise from the fiction occasionally and present you with dilemmas. Work with the GM to ensure this as you write it.

Rank the tenets in order of importance. If they ever conflict, following a higher one avoids violating a lower one. You must **uphold your tenets, or risk violation**. They are absolutes, but they can evolve as it makes sense or best serves the fiction (and game at the table). When you violate a tenet, slash its box. For a second or severe violation, fill in the box—it is in heavy violation.

You break a tenet when you violate it again while in heavy violation (filled box). You can no longer atone for that tenet. Breaking two tenets makes you an Oathbreaker (below). **Atonement** for tenets in violation require great deeds. The deed must outweigh the severity of the violation itself—ask the other players if unsure. Once completed, clear the box.

OATHBREAKER

You lose the Oathsworn talent, but may choose a new non-core talent or the Warlock's Pact core talent in its place. Redemption requires an appropriate ritual or mythic deed. Success restores your core talent while allowing you to keep the talent gained from breaking your oath. **Redemption is possible only once.**

PALADIN PATH TALENTS

AEGIS: You take +1d when making a defense roll to protect yourself from physical harm. On a perfect, you can also: *keep their attention on you—rekindle hope in an ally—inspire action in a bystander.*

AUTHORITY: Your presence fills the air with authority. The GM judges an NPC's response, or you can spend story to set it: *admiration—obedience—respect—defiance.* You can **push yourself** to pull off a **potent feat of righteous command.**

CHALLENGE: **Push yourself** to challenge a foe, taking +1d on all rolls against them, but give them 1 **suspense**. If they do anything besides confront you, you can **interrupt** it. The challenge ends if an ally engages your foe, or your **interrupt** result is less than a perfect.

DAUNTLESS: **Take spark** when your roll is cut. Take +1d on story rolls if dropped. On a perfect, you don't get dropped.

DIVINE BLESSING: You have spellcasting as the Channel Divinity talent. Detail your god and choose 1 **rite**, a **4d power pool** (per session). You can drop 1d and roll the pool to cast a potent spell.

GUARDIAN: Take +1d when you **assist** on a defense roll. You can also make a defense roll for an ally when they would be affected by an impact move, or **push yourself** to defend multiple nearby allies from a single attack, like blocking dragon fire. (no free activation)

When you "make a defense roll for an ally", you're not assisting—the impact move is instead now targeting you, and they're no longer at risk.

REBUKE: When the GM spends **suspense** to prompt an impact move, you take +1d on any follow-up action against the source. On a critical, **take spark.**

TENET BUILDER

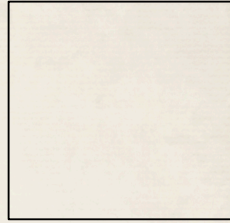
(Roll, then choose an option, rewrite for clarity.)

I SWEAR TO BRING	TO—FOR THE	DESPITE—BECAUSE OF
honor—valor	forgotten—powerless	my desire for...
justice—revenge	redeemable—irredeemable	my trait ...
faith—doubt	reformers—traditionalists	my arc to...
mercy—judgment	devout—faithless	my background of...
strength—compassion	evil—defiled	my bond with...
truth—wisdom	leaders—people	my lack of...

PATH OF THE RANGER

AKA *the beastmaster, pathfinder, trapper*

You stalk relentlessly, moving unseen through the terrain, tracking your prey with deadly precision and striking them when they're weakest.



QUARRY

Core Talent

Twice per session, you can designate a target as your **Quarry**—the focus of your hunt. Until the end of the session, you have a **2d Quarry pool** rolled as bonus dice to act or defend against, research, or locate them by any means. When a **Quarry die** rolls a '6', the roll counts as a critical success overall. If it was already a critical, **take spark**.

Prowler: You take +1d when using stealth, traversal, and traps in familiar terrain.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1 Quarry per session.

FAVORITE TRAPS

(Optional)

Combine and interpret an effect, trigger, and the word "trap" (poisonous bait trap) to make three traps you commonly use while hunting or scouting. These aren't limitations, just options ready to use when you need to lay a trap.

Effect	Trigger
stunning	tripwire
falling	pressure plate
noisy	+ snare loop
poisonous	bait
entangling	hidden
injuring	proximity

TELL-TALE SIGNS OF WEAKNESS

(Advice)

When you tag a powerful quarry, use your resources to find a weakness, figure out how you can exploit it. These are some vulnerabilities you may discover:

- ◆ **Fire Sensitivity:** Flinches near flames, avoids heat, dry or cracked skin.
- ◆ **Bright Light Weakness:** Cloudy eyes, avoids light, panics near flashes.
- ◆ **Vulnerable Anatomy:** Exposed weak points, protects soft areas.
- ◆ **Poison Susceptibility:** Sluggish breathing, avoids carrion, soft or delicate skin.
- ◆ **Tunnel Vision:** Fixates on a target, oblivious to surroundings, struggles to adapt.
- ◆ **Poor Mobility:** Heavy tracks, slow movement, struggles on uneven terrain.
- ◆ **Sound Sensitivity:** Wince at noises, large twitching ears, avoids loud terrain.
- ◆ **Slow-minded:** Delayed reactions, struggles to recognize threats, easily tricked.
- ◆ **Predictable Instincts:** Easily baited or lured, overcommits.

RANGER PATH TALENTS

ANIMAL COMPANION: You're accompanied by a fiercely loyal animal. Each PC adds a reciprocal bond with it. Choose **3 tricks** and **2 flaws**. You roll 3d for its **tricks** and 1d otherwise. It has only two damage boxes, marked (for any **mark**) and hurt (for any **harm**). It can always exit a scene when hurt. If lost, you can bond with a new animal.

TRICKS

distract—fight—guard—perform—rescue—retrieve—scout—search—track—warn

FLAWS

aggressive—clumsy—grumpy—insatiable—jumpy—overprotective—scary—unruly

KEEN SENSES: Your senses are twice as sharp as normal. You can pull off **potent feats of tracking** and can always get a **hint** or **reveal** on **vigilance** against living creatures.

RELENTLESS: You can pull off **potent feats of traversal** and can always move at full speed, unhindered by what's in your way.

SCOUT AHEAD: You gain 1 **story** per session and can spend **story** to flashback to scouting ahead and: *sabotage something—set a trap—survey the area (ask 2 questions)—take out a danger—set up an interrupt*. Make a 3d montage roll. The GM always takes **suspense** in place of an impact move.

SPOT WEAKNESS: You can **push yourself** to declare a weakness in a foe. Describe the vulnerability and tag it with a **2d Weakness** pool. When your allies target the weakness, roll the pool as bonus dice on their roll. **Take spark** if either Weakness die rolls a '6'.

SHARPSHOOTER: When given time, you can pull off **potent feats of ranged precision**. You can **push yourself** to do it on the spot.

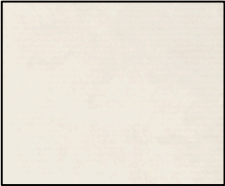
TROPHIES: When you play a key part in slaying a powerful monster, you can take a trophy from it. This acts as a **major expendable arcana**. Use the monster's name, ability, and a function as the touchstones.

Major expendable arcana can instantly produce the effect of a potent spell, or be used as a source of magic and all anchors for a ritual.

PATH OF THE ROGUE

AKA *the assassin, cutpurse, infiltrator*

You live and operate in the margins, striking unseen and disappearing before anyone knows you were there.



EXPERTISE

Core Talent

Choose three skills below as your **skill set**. Take +1d when using a chosen skill. Each session, you have a **4d Competence** pool to represent your focus under pressure. You can roll it as bonus dice after any of these skills.

Above board: *duel—evade—investigate—persuade—track—traverse.*

Below table: *ambush—forgery and disguise—lying—sabotage—sleight of hand—stealth.*

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1d Competence per session and +1 skill.

THIEVES GUILD

(Optional)

Many rogues learned their trade from a thieves' guild, underground network or criminal ring. These are all one form of a guild or another, whether formal or not.

THIEVES GUILD: Choose 2 that describes your guild and 1 that really doesn't.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> like family | <input type="radio"/> turf-obsessed | <input type="radio"/> mystics | <input type="radio"/> just business |
| <input type="radio"/> elite training | <input type="radio"/> heroes | <input type="radio"/> outsiders | <input type="radio"/> in the open |
| <input type="radio"/> cultish | <input type="radio"/> mercenaries | <input type="radio"/> influential | <input type="radio"/> follows code |

CRIMINAL HISTORY

(Optional)

Given their skillset, a rogue either learned their trade by way of crime or possess the skills to make an excellent criminal, for which there's no lack of opportunities. As you start your adventuring career, it's likely you have some lingering criminal history, a past that can come back to haunt you in quite fun, dramatic ways. Create one or more past crimes by setting the **crime** (severity & nature), your **reputation** from it, and your own **reaction** about the crime.

Severity		Nature		Reputation
petty	<i>theft</i>	<i>vandalism</i>	<i>treason</i>	<i>barely remembered</i>
low-level	<i>fraud</i>	<i>gambling</i>	<i>robbery</i>	<i>small bounty</i>
moderate	<i>spying</i>	<i>bribery</i>	<i>assassination</i>	<i>known name</i>
serious	<i>smuggling</i>	<i>extortion</i>	<i>heist</i>	<i>hunted</i>
severe	<i>banditry</i>	<i>arms dealing</i>	<i>impersonation</i>	<i>infamous</i>
legendary	<i>kidnapping</i>	<i>arson</i>	<i>necromancy</i>	<i>most wanted</i>

REACTION: *I did what I had to do—I was set up—It was a misunderstanding—I'll do it again—I completely forgot I did that—I've made peace with it—Never again.*

ROGUE PATH TALENTS

ACCORDING TO PLAN: You gain 1 **story** per session and can spend **story** to flashback, establishing how you planned for the current situation. Make a montage roll, taking +1d if it fell within your expertise. The GM must take **suspense** in place of an impact move.

CUNNING ACTIONS: On a perfect in an intense scene, you can keep the **spotlight**, even if the GM wants to spend **suspense**. The GM must take **suspense** as an impact move on your follow-up. Afterward, move the **spotlight** to an ally.

If you take action and get a perfect, you can choose to take a second action immediately, and the GM must take suspense instead of using an impact move. You then pass the spotlight.

ELDRITCH AFFINITY: You have spellcasting, as the Sorcery talent. You roll Presence to cast and choose 3 from **magic paths** and **techniques**. You can't cast potent spells, nor do you risk a magical twist. [Prohibited: Sorcerer]

LURKER: On a perfect sneaking past or secretly observing sentient creatures, they: *let a secret slip—give you a golden opportunity*. If caught sneaking, you can **push yourself** to stay completely still and avoid detection, but must leave the area immediately after.

OPPORTUNIST: When someone nearby rolls defense, you take +1d on an immediate follow-up. On a critical by a nearby ally, you can **push yourself** to add a critical bonus.

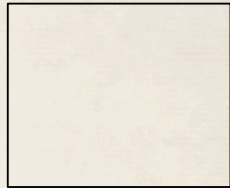
POISONER: Each session, you have a **4d Poisons** resource pool. You have access to the following poisons: *hallucinations—knockout—memory loss—nausea—paralytic—truth serum*. They each take a bit of time to work and are most effective if ingested.

WEASEL: If caught in a lie or red-handed, you can **push yourself** to weasel your way out—for now. Make a story roll to see if they realize their mistake later.

PATH OF THE **SORCERER**

AKA the channeler, elementalist, stormcaller

You are a conduit for ancient and unpredictable forces, shaping spells out of the raw magic that flows through you.



SORCERY

Core Talent

You have spellcasting ability. You roll Presence to cast and your magic paths and techniques serve as touchstones. Your spells always carry **risk** and require a roll. You can **push yourself** to cast a potent spell, but gain no free activation of it. When casting, rolling two or more 1s (thorns included) triggers a **magical twist**. Choose any 4 of **Magic Paths** and **Techniques** (with at least 1 of each) and how your twists manifest below, or talk to the GM to make your own.

Magical twists: wild surge (2d story roll for effect)—take vex—curse (+1 suspense).

Magic paths: blood—decay—flame—frost—lux—shadow—stone—tempest.

Techniques: attack—create—defend—enhance—hinder—influence—transform—traverse.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, gain a new magic path or technique.

WILD SURGE

(Optional)

As your chosen magical twist, or when the GM **Complicates Things** with your magic, you may trigger a wild surge—raw magic spirals out of your control. Make a story roll (usually 2d) to see what happens. Effects should complicate the scene, but usually don't reach the level of a full impact move. They might stem from your touchstones, raw magical essence, or something random. Use the crucible below or ask around your group for ideas.

WILD SURGE CRUCIBLE

Roll 1 on each table, smash them together, and interpret

skin	temperature	icy	smoke	rain	lightning
gust	sparks	rattle	tremor	color	scent
ground	fire	water	light	debris	flicker
creatures	growth	boom	effect	steps	levitation
cloud	invisibility	gloom	distortion	metal	eye
shadow	clock	twist	laughter	breath	hum
birds	whispers	glowing	illusion	rapid	whirlwind
smell	static	hunger	image	emotion	glimmer
lifted	change	phrase	shock	sound	echo
shattering	scatter	feeling	pop	brief	shimmer
shift	size	surface	agitation	apparition	sparkle
notes	vision	voice	mark	glow	dazzle

SORCERER PATH TALENTS

ELDRITCH GROWTH: The maelstrom of magic has twisted your body. You gain a permanent physical feature like metal-rendering claws, venomous fangs, leathery wings, or thrashing tentacles. In addition to its obvious benefits, it now serves as a touchstone.

MAELSTROM: You open yourself fully to the maelstrom of raw magic. When you cast a potent spell, **5s count as 6s, but 4s count as 1s**. When rolling two or more 1s (including these 4s), you trigger a **magical twist**, as Sorcery.

MAGIC SENSE: You can sense strong magic near you, and know a spell when you see it. You always get a **hint** or **reveal** on **vigilance** involving magic. When you avoid or disrupt magic, **take spark**.

METAMAGIC: Twice per session, you can alter your magic as it flows through you, modifying the effect or casting by giving it an extra touchstone: *controlled—distant—intense—lasting—subtle—quick*.

This makes the spell more powerful, but not quite potent. Adding a touchstone should give a clear answer to any question about it. Do you have time to cast a spell? It's quick; yes.

SPELLEATER: Each session, you have a 3d Spelleater pool. When you suffer from magic, roll the pool. If dice remain, ignore the effect and bank essence (max 2). Spend it to increase a spellcasting die result by 1, but it triggers a magical twist.

WISPS: Two small magical motes float around you. Give them 2 traits such as: *annoying—melancholic—mesmerizing—petty—troublesome—whimsical*. You can **sacrifice** one to have it act independently, making a story roll to see how it goes. They return each session.

You can send one to assist an ally, distract a foe, light the way, or even pass a message to someone. The story roll here is about how effective they are, it doesn't prompt an impact move.

WRATH: When a nearby ally takes harm or is dropped, you take +1d and potency on your next spell, if you immediately lash out.

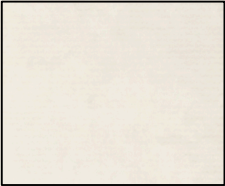
Other Magical Twists

These can be anything, acting similarly to an impact move when triggered. Tie it to your character's story, if possible. Use a timer to build up to a bigger consequence, such as being hunted down, or succumbing to a curse or deadly fate.

PATH OF THE WARLOCK

AKA the magus, occultist, pactmaker

You have made a pact with a greater being—power in exchange for service, a pact that may prove to be a double-edged sword.



PACT

Core Talent

You have magic bestowed by a patron, allowing you to lash out and attack with their power using Presence, and gifting you an **Eldritch Talent**—another path talent manifesting with your patron's trappings.

You also have an **8d Patience** pool, representing service to your fickle patron's desires. When you choose to change your **Eldritch Talents**, or otherwise displease your Patron, roll the pool. At Od, your patron will give you a visit to *clear up the issue*.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1 Eldritch Talent

PATRON CREATION

(Optional)

Roll or choose 2 natures and 2 desires below, then assign a distinct color or visual signature to your patron's influence. Decide how they communicate (visions, messenger, mind-speak) and how many followers they have (many, few, just you). These are their trappings. Give this powerful, otherworldly being a name and describe what you know of them. Establish your patron's bond with you and your bond with them. Work with the GM to create a faction for them and run it together.

PATRON CRUCIBLE

Roll 2 on each table, smash them together, and interpret

NATURE	cogs	abyss	scourge	veil	shadow	hollow
	chimera	serpent	flame	outsider	green	balance
	void	forge	phoenix	trickster	whisper	fiend
	dead god	thorn	depths	tempest	reaper	storm
	eternal	harbinger	tide	leviathan	prism	dragon
	shroud	echo	starborn	light	dreamer	oddity
DESIRES	chaos	beauty	minds	wealth	rarities	destruction
	secrets	fun	control	magic	everything	monuments
	power	victory	judgment	unity	souls	biomass
	worshipers	adoration	fear	fame	revenge	knowledge
	promises	purity	progress	curios	truth	experiences
	influence	life	territory	perfection	order	entropy

WARLOCK PATH TALENTS

AFFLICTION: Once a session, you can place your hands on another to heal your **harm** by transferring the injury. Allies can roll defense to resist this effect. Talk with your GM about transferring other maladies, such as **conditions**.

ELDRITCH WEAPONRY: On a perfect when lashing out with your patron's power, you can **push yourself** to also inflict a spell-level effect with their trappings as the touchstone. This effect can't deal more damage.

KNOWING GAZE: When given time, you can learn: *the price of their loyalty—their biggest fear—their greatest desire—their next move—what they're hiding—whom they serve*. This gaze only works on someone once. You can **push yourself** to do this on the spot.

OTHERWORLDLY FORM: You can turn into a floating, dispersed form, flavored after your patron's trappings. Choose three things you can do in this form: *appear barely visible—fly high in the sky—interact with objects—move swiftly—slip through small gaps—speak*.

RITUALIST: Take +1d on a ritual's invocation and replace any one of its anchors with yourself.

This stacks. Make a coven with your fellow casters!

VISIONS: You can open your mind to seek *forbidden knowledge*. Ask the GM a specific question. The answer may be cryptic or twisted, but it will never be a lie. Make a defense roll against **rattled** after the answer.

WAYFARER: You can **push yourself** to teleport. The further or less familiar, the less precise. Max range is two days' ride away. Make a story roll if you can't see the destination or take allies you touch with you.

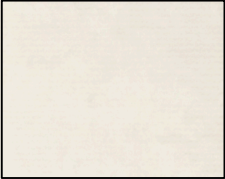
"Your Patron's Trappings"

Characters without a patron can still take these talents—consider your own source of power, and use those touchstones instead.

PATH OF THE WIZARD

AKA the diviner, evoker, abjurer

You wield arcane power through precise knowledge, casting spells from an ever-expanding repertoire, your studies endless.



SPELLCRAFT

Core Talent

You have spellcasting ability. You roll Wits to cast and the **spell theorem** you are casting serves as its touchstone. Each session, you can cast 4 spells and 2 potent spells. You choose which **spell theorem** to use when you cast, interpreting it as you see fit. Spells cast with no **risk** require no roll and don't count against your limited number per session, unless potent.

You can learn new **theorems** from studying and experimenting with scrolls, consuming them.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, gain +1 spell and potent spell per session, +1 theorem

SCHOOLS OF MAGIC

Abjuration: Protects, blocks, dispels, or banishes.

Conjuration: Summons creatures, objects, and teleports.

Divination: Reveals information, predicts the future, and reads minds.

Enchantment: Charms, influences, and curses sentient creatures.

Evocation: Creates and controls elemental and magical forces.

Illusion: Generates false images and sensory deceptions.

Necromancy: Manipulates life, death, and the undead.

Transmutation: Transforms matter and alters physical properties.

THEOREM CRUCIBLE

Roll 1 of each, choose 2, then add a school

STYLE	binding flaming alluring cryptic freezing mesmerizing	soothing slow silent withering shredding unseen	grasping dire dazzling primal false expanding	shielding petrifying piercing toxic harmonic swift	curious ethereal sense thunderous molten phantom	shadowy majestic frenzied prismatic wild whispering
ESSENCE	oil crystal slime light gravity echo	earth air spore star smoke death	lore fire shroud trick sight bone	spirit lightning stasis siphon mist mirror	ash acid sound thought bloom emotion	barb memory water rift poison growth
FORM	beacon ring chains eye lock bubble	servant crown word aura shield hand	vision bond step gust swarm dance	sentinel shift gate tendrils pillar explosion	ray guide wall wings claw anchor	spray embers wall wave dream field

WIZARD PATH TALENTS

ALCHEMIST: Each session, you have a **4d Potions** resource pool. You can have a **trivial potion** (spell effect) by rolling the pool, or drop 1d and roll to make it a **minor potion** (potent spell effect). You know recipes for your **spell theorems**, plus two more. Learn new recipes by sacrificing potions you find.

Trivial potions offer a single use spell effect, while minor potions bestow a single potent spell effect. Re flavor the container as an inscribed rune, carved twig, or even a delicious pastry!

ARCHIVIST: You can use your own spellcasting to cast magic through **arcana**, using their touchstones. You gain **2 minor**, and **1 major arcana** that you've either found or created.

COMPONENT POUCH: Each session, you have a **3d Components** pool to help focus your magic. When you get a messy or grim on spellcasting, you can roll the pool. If dice remain, increase a die result by 1, and explain what reagent helped.

COLLEAGUES: In every city, some towns, and the occasional dungeon, you can find a *powerful, eccentric wizardly colleague* who owes you a favor—or maybe you owe them one. If you go out of your way to meet and catch up, **take spark**, and they may trade **theorem** research with you.

FAMILIAR: You manifest a small magical creature. You can communicate telepathically and send it on simple tasks, making a story roll to see how it goes. By entering a trance, you can use its senses. You can also **push yourself** to cast a spell through it. If your familiar takes damage, it vanishes and reappears at the start of the next session.

MASTERED THEOREM: Choose one of your **spell theorems**. You take +1d when casting it and gain 1 extra potent spell casting of it per session. Your name becomes linked to it, and it begins to spread in popularity throughout wizardry—track it with campaign pools.

SPECIALTY SCHOOL: Choose the arcane school of your focus. All of your **spell theorems** now have it plus another school. When casting, choose which school to use. When you get a critical with this arcane school, **take spark**.

Creating Spell Theorems:

Roll for style, essence, and form, then choose two of the words to form a phrase. Next, assign it a school of magic. You interpret these as the spell's touchstones when you cast.

Roll: *wild + fire + sentinel*. This gives us a some interesting options:

wild fire → This could blast the area with uncontrollable fire (*evocation*).

fire sentinel → This could turn your form to fire (*transmutation*).

wild sentinel → This could summon a bear to fight along side you (*conjuration*).

CHAPTER 3

GM TOOLKIT

GM WITH MOXIE

Map fiction to rules. Encourage players to focus on the fiction and let you handle the rules. The more narratively important something is, the more mechanical weight you should give it.

In a game of courtly intrigue, slaying a dragon might be a montage roll for a knight while an important dinner party is a complex linked challenge full of dire stakes.

Get creative applying the rules, mixing them up in ways not explicitly laid out. Don't be afraid to tinker. Moxie is modular and you're not going to break it. Graft on rules from other systems you like, or hack Moxie and make it your own.

If the rules clash with what makes sense in the fiction, the fiction wins. Engage with the rules quickly, resolve them, and return to the story.

"What does that look like?" or "Give us a quick scene."

Make rulings to fill gaps. The rules are a flexible framework and designed not to cover every detail. When things fall through the cracks, try to interpret the rules' intent and make a ruling that fits the moment. If it's a judgment call, tell the players. If you're unsure of a rule, make a quick call now and check later. When in doubt, everything can collapse down to a single story roll—ask the players what they want to happen, then roll to see if that's how it goes down.

Pace the game cinematically. Keep the game flowing like a well-paced movie. Don't let scenes drag, wrap up scenes to move on to something more interesting. If players don't seem keen on an upcoming situation, suggest a montage. Skip long planning phases by cutting to the action, using a story roll to discover the players' situation if needed. Reward players buying into these techniques by giving them good odds.

Follow the players' lead. Keep tabs on story arcs and present drama, dilemmas, and opportunities related to them. Follow where the characters want to go. Present interesting situations related to it. When players hesitate or hit an impasse, spur them into action with danger timers, **quarrels**, **tangles**, or **Resolve** the situation and move on.

Use the moves, or don't. The GM moves can be explicit rules, merely guidelines, or somewhere in between. Some GMs will call them out by name, while others never bring them up at all. Either way, as long as your GMing aligns with their intent, you're doing it right.

Make moves with impact. Don't pull your punches—impact moves are called that for a reason. They shove the story forward. Players have a lot of tools at their disposal, so give the world teeth. It makes victory even sweeter.

A single impact move is flexible. You can, and often should split it up into a few lesser effects (inflict a mark as you break their sword), hit multiple PCs at once, or have a PC's action affect a totally different PC (giving a defense roll in that case).

When an impact move doesn't naturally flow from what's happening on-screen (common with messy rolls), think off-screen instead and complicate their lives elsewhere or take **suspense** and hit later with better dramatic timing.

Prompt player narration. After a roll, make sure the players narrate how things play out—even, or *especially*, on a grim. Describing failure is a great way to express their character. Collaborate, but keep them narrating their actions.

Encourage them to play off of each other as well, especially with **assists** and montages. Ask for reaction shots as other PCs' scenes play out to gauge how they feel about it, or how their bond affects their reaction.

Most importantly, after the rules come into play, get right back to narration. Make sure that the flow remains **Fiction → Rules → Fiction**.

Be endlessly curious. Ask provocative questions about the PCs and their motivations to give players a chance to expand on their characters. *Why in the world would you do that? Okay, so who'd you steal that sword from? So are you pissed off or cool with it?*

RUNNING GRIMWILD

As the GM, you play the game by a different set of rules, utilizing the tools laid out in this chapter to craft an engaging and dynamic game. You wield GM moves and suspense to drive the narrative forward, challenges to model difficult tasks, the combat kit to create thrilling battles, and story rolls along with the GM crucible for inspiration when the unexpected arises.

Your primary role is mapping fiction to mechanics, keeping the players immersed in the story while you seamlessly weave the rules into the narrative, and know when to instead ditch a rule and just let the narrative take over.

Above all, be creative. Use the mechanics as a springboard to manufacture drama, tension, and memorable moments.

STORY ROLLS

Roll to disclaim decision-making, letting the dice decide story questions when you don't want to, like an NPC's reaction, off-screen action, or how good or bad something that just happened is. You can also collapse any rule back to a story roll when there's no specific mechanic to map it to.

Roll dice based on the odds of a favorable outcome for the chosen perspective. *Are you rolling for the fish or the fisherman?*

1d Bad Odds | 2d Even Odds | 3d Good Odds



- ◆ (6) **PERFECT.** It's the ideal situation.
- ◆ (4-5) **MESSY.** It's okay, but there's a catch.
- ◆ (1-3) **GRIM.** It's not good, and now it's a problem.

How does the weather look as the party reaches the cliffside?

Perfect: *The clouds start to part as the rain stops, and it appears you have a clear day ahead of you.*

Messy: *The light drizzle holds steady. It'll be a little slick moving up the side of the mountain.*

Grim: *The wind begins to blow harder and the rain gets heavier. It's going to be tough to get to the top.*

GM CRUCIBLE

Roll 2, smash them together, and interpret

tough	quiet	precarious	wild	mysterious	rustic
muffled	aged	romantic	menacing	puzzling	eerie
broken	dwindling	distant	perilous	bleak	tense
forgotten	abundant	hidden	withered	chaotic	looming
festive	lost	immense	serene	vibrant	flickering
rugged	splintered	sacred	relentless	tangled	twisted
journey	juncture	rift	scheme	nexus	team
tremor	debris	symbol	scar	archive	chasm
sanctuary	betrayal	trail	wasteland	help	mystery
peak	threshold	boundary	beacon	secret	wall
territory	rumor	standoff	strife	maze	pact
dilemma	tradition	jackpot	omen	deception	illusion

A forge for inspiration, encouraging emergent, low-prep gameplay. Turn to the GM crucible, often along with a story roll, when you want the seed of an idea to expand upon to help answer questions about the story. Roll once on each table. Each roll gives two results (3, 1 = 31: precarious or 13: broken). Let your mind drift towards the most evocative, then drill down on it and interpret what it might mean.

What's inside the temple?

Roll: aged + beacon

Interpret: A forgotten artifact

Roll: perilous + maze

Interpret: A dangerous trial

Why is the village so quiet?

Roll: tense + scheme

Interpret: They're plotting rebellion

Roll: bleak + debris

Interpret: It was ransacked

What caused the havoc?

Roll: flickering + rift

Interpret: Demonic portal opened

Roll: immense + betrayal

Interpret: A coup took place

What is the farmer hiding?

Roll: tough + scar

Interpret: A wartorn past

Roll: lost + jackpot

Interpret: Secret rumored trove

STARTING A CAMPAIGN

When players describe their character, ask follow-up questions. They might have an idea, or might not yet, but thinking about it can help flesh out the character. The same goes for traits and desires.

When players describe their character, ask follow-up questions. They might have an idea, or

might not yet, but thinking about it can help flesh out the character. The same goes for traits and desires. These kinds of questions are open-ended and a bit leading—hitting them with a question that doesn't fit can spur them into giving an answer that does fit. And if they don't really have an answer? Let it go. It's obviously not important to their character concept. As you walk through different characters, keep an eye out for connections—little dots we can use to draw lines between characters

*You want **power**, but not **wealth**. They're usually connected, why is this time different?*

and drill deeper with questions. Maybe two of them both want power, but it's not the same kind of power. Or one avoids wealth, and the other craves it. These differences and similarities can help explain why they're adventuring together—or make you wonder why they would be.

*Why do they have **rough hands**?
How did growing up as the small kid affect them?*

Once everyone has a clear idea of their characters and each other, ask about their bonds. Some might've already written them out, but this is their chance to tweak or rethink them now that they've heard about the other characters in detail. It should be organic—bonds tend to pop up naturally during the conversation. Pick out one bond per player to dig a little bit deeper.

*How long's that **complex rivalry** been going on for?
When did they recently get the better of you?*

SPOTLIGHT

Keep the narrative flowing, the action engaging, and get things moving when they stall out. Player actions drive the story, and putting the **spotlight** on them can nudge them forward, prompting them into action. Using the spotlight helps you direct the action and ensure no one is left out, putting focus where it's needed. While describing scenes, try mixing in cinematic language and using the camera to help frame your group's shared imagination space. Cut back and forth between PCs and scenes to build tension and avoid focusing on a single PC for too long. Definitely moving between characters and set pieces can help pace the story, while bringing in more passive players.

We cut to the rogue, back against the crate as an unaware guard walks past.

The camera pans over to show the mage finishing a chalk circle on the ground. We'll move to the paladin. Your order just denied your plea. What do you do?

When you move the spotlight, try asking a poignant question focused on the character's perspective. This stirs up drama and helps to flesh out the world. The character's inner thoughts can help drive the story, lighten your creative load, and show the kind of story the player is interested in telling.

How do you feel about your ally killing the surrendered bandit? What do you say about the queen as you sit around the fire? As you polish your father's sword, what are you thinking about?

SCENES

These are the continuous periods of action that make up the game, a few linked story beats, and nearly always start with the GM jumping to the engagement at the beginning. Skip detailed planning and cautious lead ups that often drag game play down. Instead, jump straight into the action, an in medias res shot of things already in motion! When you're unsure about the specifics of the current fiction, have the players make a montage roll, with the result setting the opening mood and **stakes** for the scene.

When a scene has served its purpose, grown stale, or feels like a foregone conclusion. Don't waste game time—instead, have the players make a montage roll to wrap it up and move on. Closing these scenes out decisively keeps the narrative tight and focuses on what's next. Keep the game flowing, the action engaging, and get things moving when they stall out.

GM RULES

GM MOVES

A framework for good GMing practices. While they can be called out specifically, they typically sit in the background, left unsaid, aligning naturally with what you do as GM. The players know actions have consequences, and the suspense you've earned can come back to bite them. It shows things aren't arbitrary—the GM is also playing the game, just by different rules.

Suspense moves help the players out in some way or escalate tension, earning or offering a way to take suspense when used. Make these moves with good timing.

Impact moves deal significant consequences, crank up the tension, and make the world feel powerful. Make these moves when prompted.

PROMPT

This is a trigger for you to make an impact move. They can be caused by things like grim or messy action rolls, a relevant depleted pool, an unaddressed **foreshadow** move, or by spending **suspense**.

SUSPENSE

Pure rising tension and cinematic timing. Gain **suspense** by skipping a prompted impact move or making certain suspense moves. Spend it to prompt an impact move at any time.

Skipping an impact move feels like the PCs got off lucky—something should have happened, but didn't. That lingering suspense builds tension, ready to strike later. Use this when no immediate move feels compelling or when you want to shift focus to other scenes.

Reader Lens - Games without GM Moves

The more comfortable you feel with the rules, and the more your table trusts you, the more you can bend, break, or toss out this framework. Most importantly, keep a general idea of your suspense and when you add complications (impact moves), as some talents affect them specifically. As long as everybody at the table is having a good time, you're doing it right.

SUSPENSE MOVE SUMMARY

BUILD UP *Add a brief scene before, or as the intro to the challenge ahead.*

- ◆ Each PC adds a detail to the vignette, and takes spark.
- ◆ The GM introduces a challenge, or takes suspense.

CLUE IN *Cut away, or zoom out to show the forces acting against the PCs.*

- ◆ The players learn new details and see the direction of the story.
- ◆ The GM takes suspense.

FORESHADOW *Telegraph a danger, giving the PCs time to deal with it.*

- ◆ The players have a chance stop or avoid the danger.
- ◆ The GM can take the impact move if it goes unaddressed.

RESOLVE *Solve a problem for the PCs and move the story forward.*

- ◆ The players get a way out of a tough situation.
- ◆ The GM takes suspense.

IMPACT MOVE SUMMARY

COMPLICATE THINGS *Add or develop a threat.*

- ◆ The new aspect adds difficulty or danger for PCs.
- ◆ Choose this move when things are too stable, or too easy.

COUNTER *Stop a PC action, or take away a permission.*

- ◆ Stop a successful action (usually refunding resources).
- ◆ Choose this move to show a threat's resilience. Be careful of overuse.

HIT HARD *Apply direct consequences.*

- ◆ Hit with marks, harm, vex, or conditions.
- ◆ Choose this move when injury is the most dramatic consequence.

LOCK DOWN *Declare a strict choice, or take an option away, permanently.*

- ◆ Take equipment, close opportunities, force them to choose.
- ◆ Choose this move to add cinematic edge.

SUSPENSE MOVES

Use these moves with cinematic timing

Create familiar moments inspired by TV shows, incentivizing you mechanically to take the time to structure the story cinematically. You earn suspense (or introduce a way to prompt an impact move), so they reward you for handling some of the tedium of GMing and remind players to stay engaged. Suspense keeps the world active when things stall. When your supply of suspense runs dry, you can use these to jump start the action again. However, use them carefully—overuse can get frustrating for players, so pick your spots. But timely use makes good, cinematic sense.

BUILD UP

Focus in on scenes with greater narrative importance, and create moments that set the stage for the challenge ahead. This may be a vignette of the PCs before the danger, their reaction to the incoming threat, or a brief scene showing the looming problem. Give players a chance to add depth and feeling to their characters that might get overlooked. Treat this like a cut scene before the action. After the vignette, each PC **takes spark**, and the GM takes **suspense** or introduces the **challenge** (pg. 89).

Use this move to give each PC spark, and take suspense or add a challenge.

Use this move when you want to build up drama before a big scene.

The dragon roars, and rocks tumble from the ceiling. What does it look like when you dodge them? How are you dressed as you enter the masquerade? You sit around a campfire, knowing the battle to come in the morning.

CLUE IN

Give the players details on the bigger picture, like a TV show scene. Cut away to show villains plotting, armies marching, or even positive events. Zoom out to see the details the party doesn't know. When you reveal details with Clue In, take suspense. It's more fun when players know what's happening and they can steer their PCs' actions toward that drama, even if their characters don't explicitly know about it. Consider using this when you want to **strike** (see vigilance, pg. 92). After the reveal, take **suspense**.

Use this move to give the players knowledge, but leave the PCs in the dark, then take suspense.

Use this move when you want to show the direction of the story.

We see the baron through the castle window, draining blood from his latest victim. As you trek through the forest, unaware, we see the glint of feline eyes behind you.

FORESHADOW

Signal upcoming threats and give the players a chance to react. This is a great way to introduce adversity when you don't have or want to spend **suspense**, and can be used to telegraph danger even in combat. Drop a detail for the PCs while describing a scene, or give a specific hint to one character. If they fail to deal with it or ignore the danger, it prompts an impact move, and the pace of the story picks up. **Vigilance** makes use of this move to give characters a chance to address the danger based on vantage, allowing a **hint** or **reveal**.

Use this move to telegraph an incoming danger, using the impact move if ignored.

Use this move when you want to introduce adversity without spending suspense.

You hear hoofbeats coming, a 4d timer. The dragon takes a deep breath. You see thick spider webs on the ceiling. One of the tiles ahead of you is slightly raised and discolored.

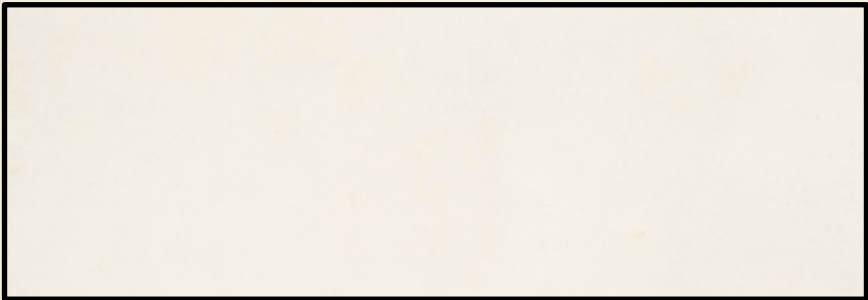
RESOLVE

Fix a problem to provide a quick out and move the story forward. This can be used to connect dots with exposition or immediately de-escalate a situation. Normally, it would feel like an unearned freebie, but you earn one **suspense** to make it a fair trade. Never use it when players are engaged—save it for when it's needed.

Use this move to help the characters, and get suspense in return.

Use this move when the players are stuck or cornered.

You hear from above, "Need some help down there?" The minotaur seems satisfied that it won and turns to walk away.



IMPACT MOVES

Use these moves when prompted

Deliver hard-hitting consequences that challenge PCs and push the action forward. They require prompting, so when you use them, they're sure to be justified and fair, codified into the rules. They've had fair warning and should have an idea of the risks. So when you make a move, make sure it has **impact** to ensure the choices leading to them matter and the world feels powerful.

When not prompted by their own roll, impact moves directly against a PC give them a defense roll. Some talents also give the ability to **interrupt** impact moves, possibly negating them. If the roll to interrupt is a messy, you take **suspense** or keep it if you spent it to prompt the move.

COMPLICATE THINGS

Add a new obstacle, twist, or threat to a scene, or develop an existing one. When used, introduce a new aspect to the scene working against the characters, or make one worse. Mechanically, this may be an aspect that adds thorns to some rolls (more difficulty), or raises the **stakes** (more danger).

Use this move to raise the stakes or add thorns to relevant rolls.

Use this move when things are too easy or stable.

A huge storm rolls in. The guard catches sight of you and rings the alarm bell. The ruffians in the tavern all draw their weapons. The fire spreads to the furniture.

COUNTER

Stop the PCs in their tracks, and show that the world won't just roll over. This can stop anything a character does, including successful action rolls and permissions they normally have. If they use a talent that costs them resources, they generally don't have to expend that resource (your call) but can't quickly use it again. However, this can never be used to stop defense rolls and criticals—don't steal their thunder. Be careful, this can get frustrating if used too much. Keep this move reserved for powerful enemies and serious trouble, and even then, it should be rare.

Use this move to counter a PC's action or permissions.

Use this move when you want to showcase the resilience of a major threat.

The lich casts a quick protective spell, slowing your strike. The queen raises a hand, silencing everyone. Your punch lands square on his jaw, and he slowly grins.

HIT HARD

Inflict direct consequences to underscore the seriousness of the situation. It's a heavy reminder that the world pushes back against their actions. When you use it, you should be hitting them just as hard as they're trying to hit the world.

Use this move to inflict marks, harm, vex, or conditions on someone.

Use this move when physical or mental injury is the most dramatic consequence.

The ceiling collapses, raining rocks down on you. She smirks wickedly at you—take vex, you're pissed. The bandit's arrow whistles through the air, embedding itself in your shoulder.

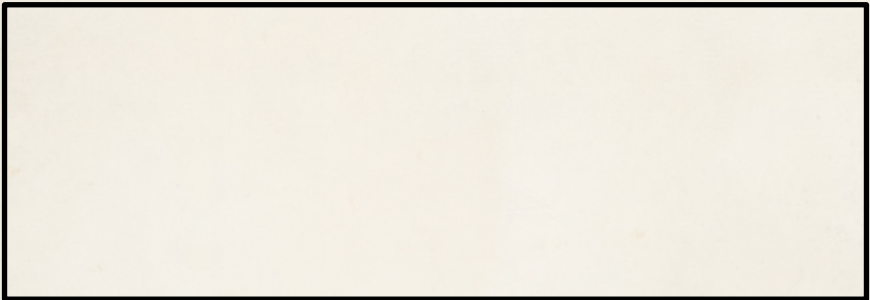
LOCK DOWN

Definitively bring consequences onto the characters by taking away options. Present stark decisions that they can't wiggle their way out of. Break or take something from them. Let the villain get away. When you use this, make sure to follow through without softening the impact—once done, it's done.

Use this move to declare an unavoidable event to take chances, options, equipment, and allies away.

Use this move when you want to add cinematic edge, reflecting the dire consequences protagonists face.

The thief gets away, nowhere to be seen. The bridge behind you collapses. No going back. Your gold pouch and sword slide towards the lava, which do you go for?



CONSEQUENCES

What happens when things go wrong—from failed rolls, timers, or impact moves. They should feel hard but fair, reflecting the stakes and severity of the situation. Every roll carries risk; otherwise, it shouldn't be rolled.

Damage is a solid baseline: in a fight, injuries could leave you hurt, such as with bloodied or marked. Other consequences, even narrative ones, should sting just as much. You can also split consequences by breaking a big one into smaller ones. Multiple effects can be just as effective and make more sense in the situation. You might break up **bloodied** into a few **marks**, or **rattled** becoming **vex** or rolling a pool instead. You can also spread out consequences, hitting multiple PCs, nearby NPCs, or even a PC who didn't prompt the move. Consequences can be identical, vary in severity, or differ entirely. If a PC other than the one prompting it is hit, they get a defense roll. Spreads make the impact feel broader and pull more people into a dynamic scene.

Split and spread consequences to increase the tension, and give the PCs **harm** during big moments to give the world teeth. If there's a roll, it's because something can go wrong.

THINKING OFFSCREEN

Fallout can happen beyond the immediate action. Not all consequences need to occur in the **spotlight**. Hitting elsewhere builds tension, hastens incoming trouble, or creates missed opportunities. These unseen events make the world feel alive, adding depth beyond the present moment.

The lich's ritual gets one step closer to completion. An innocent is blamed for something the PCs did. The caravan begins to run low on food supplies.

USING POOLS

Building pressure with danger or timer pools. Start or roll a pressure or timer pool as another outlet for consequences, often offscreen. These create looming threats and situations the PCs want to avoid or mitigate. They build pressure and offer a strong alternative to skipping the move and banking suspense.

The goblin blows a warhorn before you skewer him (start 6d goblins arrive). The rushing waters break one of the bridge supports (roll 4d bridge destroyed).

STAKES

Stakes frame the danger of a scene, telling the table about the severity of trouble they should expect. This can be implied with storytelling cues as you set the scene, or stated explicitly using the categories of stakes below. The greater the stakes, the clearer this communication should be. Unless clearly otherwise, the scene has regular stakes.

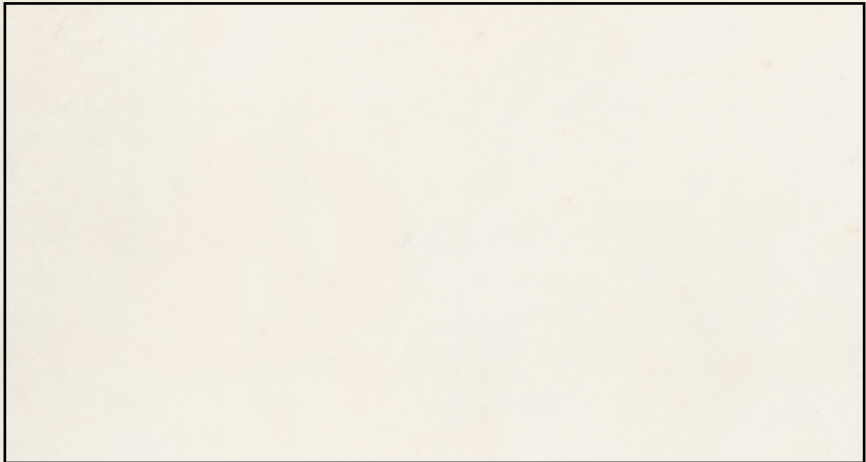
LOW STAKES. Lighter territory. Impact moves have the weight of 1 mark, or softer consequences. *A barfight breaks out. Questioned by a friendly guard.*

REGULAR STAKES. Typical play and the assumed default. Impact moves have the weight of 1 harm. *Sneaking through a guarded warehouse. Tense negotiation.*

HIGH STAKES. Things are escalated. Impact moves give desperate harm. *Cornered by an angry ogre. Explaining your actions to the queen.*

DIRE STAKES. Death looms. Impact moves can instantly drop you. *Pushed off a cliff. Looking into the eyes of an elder horror.*

The above scale uses weights of harm as a reference, but you can always use any type of impact move (*setbacks, conditions, etc.*), or split up trouble into smaller consequences as you see fit.



TAKING SUSPENSE

You can skip the impact move, and instead take **suspense**. This can be spent to make an impact move against the players anytime later, or spent right away to affect a different character or group (giving a defense roll against it).

CHALLENGES

A framework to represent tasks, obstacles, enemies, and scenarios that have greater tenacity and complexity than a single action can accomplish. Challenges allow you to track progress towards them, but also proactively oppose the PCs. These are introduced with the **Build Up** suspense move, giving each player a **spark**, while giving the GM 2 bonus **suspense** to be spent on moves relating to it. Each challenge has a task pool to represent its complexity or resilience. They can also have:

* **Traits:** Qualities they have with strong narrative impact, inflicting thorns, denying permissions, or changing vantage.

● **Moves:** Suggested impact moves they might make. These are examples, not limitations.

✗ **Fail State:** A trigger that signals the challenge failed, like a competing timer pool or a specific event. Fail states can be triggered with a **Lock Down** impact move, cutting off any chance of success for the PCs when it feels appropriate.

Note: Challenges don't always have all three.

8d | NAVIGATE CHANNEL ●●

- * shark-infested waters
- * treacherous currents

- GRAZE REEF
- VIOLENT WINDS
- DENSE FOG

✗ 6d Storm blows in

6d | ESCAPING THIEF ●●

- BLEND INTO CROWD
- NARROW ALLEYS
- STREET MUSICIANS

6d | STOP THE RITUAL ●●

✗ 4d Ritual completed

Interpret these short, evocative phrases to fit the situation. Keep your own created challenges similarly brief and flexible. Some uses:

Create a dangerous enemy or exceptionally tough task. *Navigate a mountain pass. Fight the rogue wizard. Make the mayor pay up.*

Zoom in on pivotal moments. *Disable a complex trap. Complete the ritual. Court the prince.*

Zoom out to collapse related tasks into one objective. *Evade castle guards. Track down the criminals. Organize a mutiny.*

Turn a broad concept into an actionable objective. *Restore the desecrated temple. Secure enough alliances. Atone for your sins.*

BUILDING CHALLENGES

1. Assign a task pool (2d - 8d) for its tenacity.
2. Add traits (1 or 2) that shape the situation. Skip the obvious (storm is windy) and highlight what matters (strong winds are blinding). Keep them brief and evocative.
3. List short, punchy moves (2 or 3) with flexible interpretations. These are examples, not limits. You can spend bonus **suspense** on other moves, or trigger these when an impact move is prompted by something else.
4. Define a fail state, a specific trigger that prevents that challenge from being accomplished. Avoid obvious outcomes (dying in a fight) and focus on what creates tension (breaking a code of honor). Players should know the fail state unless mystery is part of the fun—and even then, make it clear one is in play.

BATTLEGROUND

This is a special kind of combat **challenge**, where the location is important. Identify the environmental elements that play a proactive part of the scene. These can be broken down into:

Features: Elements likely to impact, usually complicating, the ongoing action. They have a strong effect on vantage and difficulty. *Strong winds, cluttered warehouse, angry onlookers.*

Threats: Hazards that present extra dangers. They either get 2 **suspense** of their own, or repeat on a timer. They have a strong proactive presence in the scene, able to prompt impact moves unless dealt with somehow. *4d heavy waves, ○○ aggressive spirits, 6d guard patrol.*

<p>Enemies in the scene, as well as their tier and role (pg. 94)</p>	<p>LAIR OF THE MAGMA SERPENT</p> <p>FEATURES lava pools, unstable ground THREATS 4d lava eruptions</p> <p>5 fire elementals (tough blasters) 8d magma serpent (boss predator)</p>	<p>←</p> <p>Traits * for the scene, affecting advantage.</p>
	<p>BOARDING A PIRATE SHIP</p> <p>FEATURES stormy waters, cramped decks THREATS 4d waves crashing ○○ kraken tentacles</p> <p>4d deckhands (mook brutes) 4d rigging archers (mook marksmen) 3 Swashbucklers (tough marauders) 4d pirate captain (elite overseer)</p>	<p>←</p> <p>External trouble, triggering when the timer expires, or when you spend the free suspense.</p>

Note: Enemies gathered into a single task pool are listed with dice in front (4d archers). Creatures acting as their own challenge (with suspense) are shown with a | after the pool. (8d | dragon).

USING CHALLENGES

Challenges are for moments of narrative importance. They make whatever you assign them to a proactive element in the story. Use them to **spotlight** what's happening—not because it's harder, but because it deserves proper screen time and presence. Use **Build Up** to introduce a **challenge** (or linked challenge). They're pivotal scenes worthy of demanding attention from the characters, and will be a major focus of the session. *The sleeping dragon wakes up. You hear drumming from the deep. Arrows whiz by, it's an ambush!*

LINKED CHALLENGES

Linked challenges are greater, more complex interactions, like epicly powerful enemies or unbelievably tense social situations. Each part of the whole has its own proactive presence in the scene. Give them traits that prompt impact moves, triggered by the fiction for dynamic interactions. *The dragon has 'protects the body' on its claws. If a PC attempts to strike the body, it will prompt a claw impact move!*

NEGOTIATING PEACE IN A CIVIL WAR

8d | DUCHESS LYSANDRA

* lineal heir

● SHOW STRENGTH

✗ 4d leaves the table

4d | BARON REYNARD

* war weary

● CHALLENGE HONOR

✗ 4d leaves the table

6d | COUNT LUCIAN

* diplomatic

● REVEAL SECRET

✗ 4d leaves the table

Following the death of the Ember Queen, the realm descended into chaos sparking a long and bloody civil war. The PCs have managed to bring all three sides to the negotiating table, but the road to peace is rocky. They need each to sign off on splitting the realm.

THE GREAT RED DRAGON

6d | CLAWS

* protect the body

● SNATCH

● SCRATCH

6d | WINGS

● WIND BUFFET

8d | BODY

* frightful presence

* impenetrable scales

● BREATHE FIRE

● CHOMP DOWN

● ROAR

✗ fly away

6d | TAIL

* protect the body

● TAIL SWEEP

● CRUSH

4d | KOBOLD MINIONS

● DIE FOR MASTER!

The Great Red Dragon descends, lured into the PCs' trap by the goats as bait. They ready the barbed ballista, knowing they must prevent the beast from escaping into the sky. The dragon's kobold minions scurry down from its back, swarming the clearing. The battle commences.

The Fiction of Linked Challenges

In many challenges (especially combat), beating one link doesn't necessarily mean it's destroyed—it just means it's defeated in the greater linked challenge. It may be hindered, weakened, or overcome some other way, but that doesn't mean it's gone completely.

VIGILANCE

The assumed alertness of the PCs, avoiding overly cautious gameplay to keep the focus on the action.

PCs are always considered to be as vigilant as their **vantage** allows when dealing with hidden dangers like traps, lies, or secret doors. However, this doesn't mean they are always aware of hidden threats. Instead, the GM **spotlights** the most relevant PC and uses a gut feeling to decide how much they perceive based on their vantage and the type of tension the GM wants to build.

Each of the three levels of vigilance creates a different dynamic in the scene, a different view of PC competence and the danger of the world. These three levels are: **reveal**, **hint**, and **strike**.

Against a prowling panther, it's most likely that a farmer gets a hint, a hunter gets a reveal, and a scholar takes a strike. Against a duke lying about their lineage, a priest gets a hint, another noble gets a reveal, and a commoner takes a strike.

REVEAL

(Tests their skill)

Foreshadow with an obvious unveiling of an imminent threat. The PC that becomes aware has a chance to react before the danger strikes. Character competence guides the story forward.

Spotting the assassin in hiding. A whirling of gears betraying the swinging scythe trap about to spring.

HINT

(Tests their intuition)

Foreshadow with a subtle clue about a hidden element. The player gets a single chance to interpret the situation. They're limited to just one to highlight the natural response of the PC and to keep things flowing. Intuition guides the story forward. A correct response leads to a **reveal** or possibly bypasses the situation entirely.

That funny feeling of being watched. A blood trail down a hallway. Unnatural quiet.

STRIKE

(Tests their defenses)

Make an impact move as the danger immediately strikes them. The GM assumes the PCs were not vigilant enough. The dangerous world guides the story forward. This costs **suspense** as any other impact move, though you can consider using **Clue In** to gain suspense and let the players in on the secret.

The servant slips poison into your glass. A trapdoor opens beneath you.

VIGILANCE EXAMPLES

DANGER	REVEAL	HINT	STRIKE
<i>poisoned dart trap</i>	<i>dartgun spotted in wall</i>	<i>floor creaks unnaturally</i>	<i>darts fly from the walls</i>
<i>flammable gas trap</i>	<i>bit of gas ignites</i>	<i>faint smell lingers</i>	<i>area engulfed in flames</i>
<i>political intrigue</i>	<i>wax seal is clearly fake</i>	<i>inconsistencies in letter</i>	<i>forgery leads to crisis</i>
<i>hidden malice</i>	<i>threatens a PC</i>	<i>suspicious glances</i>	<i>calls the guards</i>
<i>fractured resolve</i>	<i>express doubts or fears</i>	<i>hesitates when speaking</i>	<i>act against plans</i>
<i>concealing illusion</i>	<i>reveals true form</i>	<i>shimmering distortion</i>	<i>causes a wrong move</i>
<i>shattered trust</i>	<i>lets intentions slip</i>	<i>avoids eye contact</i>	<i>betrays the party</i>
<i>crumbling ceiling</i>	<i>cracks spread visibly</i>	<i>dust falls lightly</i>	<i>debris crashes down</i>
<i>swarming insects</i>	<i>cloud of insects in sky</i>	<i>animals running away</i>	<i>swarm descends viciously</i>
<i>cursed relic</i>	<i>it speaks your name</i>	<i>air growing cold</i>	<i>it curses the handler</i>
<i>creeping spiders</i>	<i>see skittering</i>	<i>large webs above</i>	<i>descends from the sky</i>
<i>bandit ambush</i>	<i>form ducked in cover</i>	<i>crossbow behind tree</i>	<i>bandits threaten party</i>



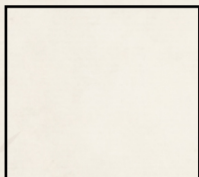
OPTIONAL RULE - ACTIVE VIGILANCE

If you want PC vigilance to be dependent on a roll of the dice, consider using the active vigilance option rule on page XX.

COMBAT KIT

GM tools to create dynamic antagonists and combat scenarios quickly. Tier is an opponent's threat level. Role is a keyword used to guide its behavior in battle to vary its tactics. Use these together (Tier + Role) to inform how these combatants act in the heat of battle.

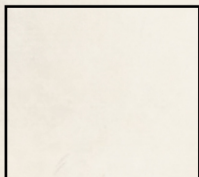
TIERS



MOOK

These are mostly just set dressing, especially if encountered alone. One action roll can take out several at once, though a large group can be treated as a task pool.

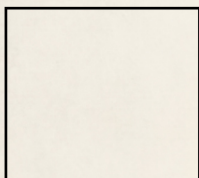
drunken patrons (a few), 4d goblins (a bunch), annoying imp (one)



TOUGH

A typical, fairly dangerous enemy. One action roll can take one of them out of the scene, while a small group can be treated as a task pool.

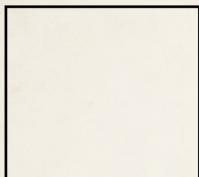
lizardfolk warrior (one), 4d bandits (a few), 8d zombies (a lot)



ELITE

A dangerous foe with strong scene presence, often leading a group of lesser enemies. These are typically a challenge themselves.

6d minotaur (one), 4d treant (one), 6d pirate captain (one)



BOSS

These are grand foes that command the scene. They're powerful, often acting as a large or linked challenge alone.

8d+4d lich (one), 4d+4d+6d+8d dragon (one), 6d+6d high devil (one)

Roles on the next page →

ROLES

Make sure each enemy role brings a unique dynamic to combat. To help, you can use the templates below as a simple basis for traits and moves, or even assign them alongside a monster entry (Chapter 4). The traits below contain two strengths and a weakness, while the moves have one offensive, one defensive, and one utility. Additionally, each role has a small table for ideas on how to spend **suspense** in response to common worst-case scenarios that role encounters.

MOOK—TOUGH—ELITE—BOSS + ROLE

BLASTER

Ranged foes who unleash overwhelming power from afar, raining chaos on the battlefield. They crumble when the fight gets too close.

- * devastating power ● **BARRAGE**
- * wide impact ● **SHOCKWAVE**
- * fragile under fire ● **SHOCK AND AWE**

AS A LAST DITCH DEFENSE, IT...

- unleashes a sudden shockwave to clear space.*
- scrambles to higher ground.*
- detonates an explosives burst in all directions.*
- drags their enemy into mutual destruction.*
- goes all in with their full power in a final strike.*
- fires wildly to distract and disorient.*

LURKER

Stealthy stalkers who strike from concealment, waiting patiently for the perfect moment. They falter when exposed or when in prolonged fights.

- * perfectly silent ● **AMBUSH**
- * watchful ● **VANISH**
- * fragile when revealed ● **MISDIRECT**

WHEN THEIR COVER IS BLOWN, IT...

- strikes quickly to silence the nearest threat.*
- flees into the shadows, looking for new cover.*
- throws debris or objects to create a distraction.*
- slinks behind an ally or stronger creature.*
- unleashes a flurry of wild attacks.*
- abandons the fight entirely, escaping to safety.*

MARAUDER

Brutal raiders who thrive in chaos, striking with sudden overwhelming strength. Each strike shakes the ground, leaving few standing.

- * unstoppable force ● **WILD SMASH**
- * towering resilience ● **MAD DASH**
- * impulsive ● **WREAK HAVOC**

WHEN CHALLENGED OR TAUNTED, IT...

- charges forward recklessly, ignoring safety.*
- lashes out at the closest enemy in frustration.*
- circles their foes, looking for a weak spot.*
- smashes the environment to create new chaos.*
- rallies allies with a furious roar.*
- hurls something with crushing force.*

MARKSMAN

Sharpshooters who excel at picking off targets from a distance. They are vulnerable when caught in melee, or forced to move quickly.

- * lethal precision ● **PIERCING SHOT**
- * exceptional range ● **TAKE COVER**
- * panics close up ● **SPOT WEAKNESS**

WHEN UNDER PRESSURE, IT...

- focuses on the closest threat for a critical shot.*
- dives into cover to avoid incoming attacks.*
- signals allies to draw enemy attention.*
- shifts to higher ground for a better vantage point.*
- takes a rapid, less accurate shot to disrupt foes.*
- retreats to reposition for the next attack.*

PREDATOR

Persistent hunters who stalk their prey, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. They falter if their prey is tenacious.

- * relentless pursuit ● **AMBUSH**
- * overwhelming strike ● **EVASIVE LEAP**
- * overcommits ● **TRACK DOWN**

WHEN PREY SLIPS AWAY, IT...

maneuvers to cut off the target's escape.
refuses to give up no matter what.
roars, forcing a mistake.
circles, creating a trap to regain control.
strikes wildly in frustration, hitting all around.
vanishes, retreating to wait for another chance.

SKIRMISHER

Agile combatants who excel at hit-and-run tactics, harassing foes and striking from unexpected angles. They falter when pinned down.

- * great mobility ● **STRIKE & MOVE**
- * quick reflexes ● **DODGING ROLL**
- * fragile ● **FORCE BACK**

WHEN IT LOSES THE ADVANTAGE, IT...

retreats quickly to regroup and reassess.
strikes recklessly, hoping to create an opening.
dodges wildly to avoid being hit.
circles, searching for a weak point to exploit.
taunts, trying to bait enemies into a mistake.
disengages, vanishing into the fray.

TACTICIAN

Clever strategists who manipulate the battlefield, exploiting every weakness they find. They struggle when their plans fall apart.

- * always prepared ● **FLANKING STRIKE**
- * good under pressure ● **TACTICAL RALLY**
- * relies on allies ● **CREATE WEAKNESS**

WHEN ITS PLAN FAILS, IT...

redirects allies to regroup and recover.
focuses on a single target to salvage the situation.
orders a retreat to reevaluate the fight.
shifts their attention to a new opportunity.
sacrifices weaker assets to regain momentum.
lashes out in frustration, acting recklessly.

PROTECTOR

Unyielding guardians who shield allies and endure attacks meant for others. They struggle when separated from those they protect.

- * grand resilience ● **SETUP ALLY**
- * exceptional tactics ● **INTERPOSE**
- * limited offense ● **RALLY CRY**

WHEN AN ALLY IS IN DANGER, IT...

steps in to block an incoming attack.
draws enemy attention with a loud challenge.
shoves the ally out of harm's way.
counters with a heavy blow to create space.
raises a protective barrier to buy time.
sacrifices their position to shield an ally.

SWARMER

Relentless attackers who overwhelm enemies with sheer numbers, striking from all sides to wear them down. They falter when isolated.

- * never ending attacks ● **SWARM, SWARM!**
- * overwhelming ● **SCATTER!**
- * weak individually ● **SURROUND 'EM!**

WHEN THEIR NUMBERS THIN, THEY...

press harder, with reckless desperation.
retreat momentarily to regroup.
call for reinforcement with frantic signals.
regroup, pulling forces into a defensive cluster.
scatter, trying to avoid further losses.
break, abandoning the fight entirely.

TRICKSTER

Cunning deceivers who thrive on confusion, turning the tide of battle with guile. They crumble when their tricks are exposed or fail.

- * master of deception ● **DECEPTIVE STRIKE**
- * unpredictable ● **BAIT AND SWITCH**
- * fragile ● **SNATCH WEAPON**

WHEN ITS TRICKS FAIL, IT...

feigns weakness, to lure enemies closer.
dodges frantically, hoping to regain control.
mocks enemies to draw attention away.
escapes, leaving a decoy in its place.
reverses their position, to surprise opponents.
lashes out in desperation, to cover failure.

RUNNING COMBAT

There's no turn order. The GM describes the impending danger in the current situation and asks how the PCs respond, or the PCs take action on their own. The **spotlight** is often on the PCs, and the world's actions flow from what they do. You make enemies more proactive by **Foreshadowing** events and following up after, or spending **suspense** to make impact moves. This results in a cinematic ebb and flow to combat.

Battles occur in the theater of the mind, using the group's shared imagination to keep track of each participant's fictional positioning to map fiction to rules. However, using battlemaps or sketching maps with minis or markers to track locations during a fight works well, too. This helps organize the chaotic situation, makes sure everyone gets time to shine, and keeps everyone's imagination aligned. Don't get caught up in detailed tracking—update the map with big changes.

COMBAT RULINGS

You map the fiction to the rules just like any scene, making rulings to fill in gaps. However, in combat you'll often see the same scenarios come up, so for the sake of consistency, some common rulings:

Movement: Moving usually accompanies another action—the goal isn't just to get somewhere, but to get there and do something. If an interesting obstacle blocks the way, it needs an action roll.

Melee: Compare the weapons in play and use common sense to resolve any issues. Most weapons are evenly matched, but the roll might shift based on approach and goal. Most melee weapons use Brawn, while light, and fast weapons use Agility. Dirty tricks call for Wits, but rarely work more than once.

Ranged: Precision attacks roll Agility, while thrown weapons use Brawn or Agility based on weight and range. Charging an enemy with ranged weapons is reckless, adding +1t or requiring a separate action to close the gap.

Impact moves against ranged characters can be more difficult. Losing or breaking weapons, running out of ammo, getting charged by the enemy can always turn up the tension. Remember, you can also take **suspense** and use it to target their allies as well.

Ranged and Casters in Melee: Spellcasting and precise ranged attacks demand focus, which is tough with nearby threats. Inflict thorns or call these rolls impossible depending on the immediate danger.

Defense Rolls: The GM selects the stat to test. Melee attacks can be dodged with Agility, blocked with Brawn, or anticipated with Wits. Resisting mental and magical attacks is usually Wits, while defending your stance and reputation, and keeping your nerve is Presence. With warning and time to react, spellcasting can allow a defense roll with the connected stat (this counts as set dressing).

Armor: Heavy armor and shields can be represented by talents like Bulwark (pg. 60). Other armors remain as vantage and set dressing—impacting rolls and thorns. A breastplate may let a barbarian make a defense roll with one less thorn, but it may also add +1t when in a chase.

OPTIONAL RULE - ARMOR

If you want armor choice to stand out a bit more, consider using the armor option rule on page XX.

Vulnerabilities: Exploiting a vulnerability can lower thorns, drop 1d before rolling a pool (as if with greater effect on a critical), or even bypass the need for a roll. In some cases, finding a vulnerability is required to attack, as all other rolls are deemed impossible.

Enemy Magic: Enemy magic doesn't follow the same rules as PC magic. It manifests through GM moves and is constrained only by the fiction.

FACTIONS

Track off-screen developments of major forces, creating a feeling of a living world beyond the PCs. They have:

Resources that show their power and influence, like assets, traits, and relationships.

Goals that show their ambitions. Track them with a timer called a faction pool, rolled between sessions or when triggered by events in the story.

When a faction pool depletes, the goal is either accomplished or they make their move against another faction, with a story roll in their favor determining how it plays out. Keep 4-6 active factions, balancing major and minor ones, with competing goals. Replace factions that are no longer relevant to the story.

CAMPAIGN POOLS

Timers that pace long-term events across sessions (*lunar eclipse, wyvern migration*). They work like faction pools but don't require faction details. Use them to signal upcoming events or remind you to reintroduce plotlines (*betrayed NPC seeking revenge*).

VILLAGE OF ELLIT

elders (*wise, cautious*)
fine archers

4d ask baron for help
8d build a wall

TWISTED FOREST

growing eldritch roots
ancient spirits

4d ask baron for help
8d build a wall

WAR IN THE EAST

4d war refugees arrive
8d baron dies

PEMTOWN POWDERKEG

BARON OF PEMTOWN

tax collectors (*corrupt*)
paying off Shaz

4d squander treasury
6d discipline troops

BARON'S UNPAID TROOPS

veterans of goblin war
Captain Morris (*charismatic*)

4d abandon posts
6d depose the baron

DRUIDS OF OLDGROVE

sworn to non-interference
magical wards

6d quiet the horrors
8d parley with Shaz

GOBLIN HORDE

nomadic forest dwellers
heavily trapped territory

4d crown the goblin king
6d march on Pemptown

SHAZ, ORC WARLORD

small, elite warband
secret Pemptown tribute

6d subjugate the goblins
8d subjugate the druids

WOODLAND HORRORS

goblin war remnants
ominous whispers

4d troops disappear
8d night of terror

The air in Pemptown hums with tension. Baron Prog's coffers run dry, his troops grow restless, and whispers of rebellion stir in the ranks. Meanwhile, deep in the forest, alliances shift as Shaz's warband, the goblin horde, and the druids of the Oldgrove edge closer to explosive confrontation.

EXAMPLES OF PLAY

THE MINOTAUR KING

The cleric charges the Minotaur King. This minotaur is a powerful foe and the **thorns** it inflicts when fighting it must reflect that, so you make it +2t and call for a Brawn roll (2, 3, 5, and 7, 8 on thorns). The initial outcome is a messy, which drops to a grim for the first cut, then to a disaster for the second. You hadn't declared **dire stakes** on this roll, but you know that a **disaster** can cut past the need. You check in with the cleric, "You okay losing a limb here?" Leaning into the awfulness of the situation, they laugh it off and nod. You decide the Minotaur King **rips off their arm!** You toss the narration back to the player to let them describe how it all went down.

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OUTNUMBERED BY BANDITS

The fighter stands off alone against 10 bandits. This one's borderline, but the bandits all have combat experience and there's an overwhelming number of them, so you make this **impossible**.

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The fighter thinks on it, then they take off running. They want to split the group up for better odds. You know this bunch is disorganized, so you decide a trick is relatively easy—no thorns, and you call for a Wits roll (4, 3). Messy! You let them know they pulled it off, but the impact move means they're still facing three bandits—fightable, but still +t. You also give them a **mark** to Agility as they stumble and twist their ankle. The fighter grabs the narration and works in that the stumble is how the bandits ended up catching up to them. Then they introduce a **tangle**—they'll start off on the ground, in a terrible position, if they can have spark. You give the thumbs up!

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GNOLLS AT THE GATE

The **8d | Gnoll Marauders** begin their assault on the walled town. You spend suspense to make a move and hit the town gate with the battering ram. You roll the **6d Walls Breached** pool: (3, 4, 5, 1, 1, 6) 6d→3d. If the gate falls, chaos will reign. The Cleric casts a warding rite spell and gets a perfect! Without a specific rule, you make a quick ruling and add 2d to the Breached pool (3d→5d). The wizard steps up and launches a Frenzied Embers spell at the gnolls—a critical! You roll the marauders' pool, getting (3, 5, 4, 3, 6, 2, 1, 6) 8d→4d. For the critical, the wizard takes a **secondary effect**—they want that battering ram to catch fire. You think it'll probably take a while to burn, so you start a 4d Ram Burning pool and roll it: (2, 3, 3, 1) 4d→0d! Nevermind, it's engulfed in flames!

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RED DRAGON CHALLENGE

By @zach.labounty on Discord, adapted for Community Edition and used with permission.

THE GREAT RED DRAGON		
6d CLAWS	8d BODY	6d TAIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* protect the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* frightful presence* impenetrable scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* protect the body
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● SNATCH● SCRATCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● BREATHE FIRE● CHOMP DOWN● ROAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● TAIL SWEEP● CRUSH
6d WINGS		4d KOBOLD MINIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● WIND BUFFET	<ul style="list-style-type: none">X fly away	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● DIE FOR MASTER!

The party is The Bard, Fighter, Rogue, and Cleric.

The GM sets the scene and narrates the sound of wings flapping and the giant, red head popping up over the trees of the forest nearby town.

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The GM uses the **Build Up move to introduce the challenge**, and give the PCs spark.

The Bard says he's posted up high on a parapet with a ballista aimed and ready.

The Fighter narrates their stoicism as they stand at the town gate prepared to defend everyone with their life.

The Rogue says he's waiting at the edge of the treeline to come in from behind and try to mount the thing.

The Cleric says they've safely put everyone in town in a stone building with a fire trench built around it and they're going to protect the townsfolk and back everyone up.

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The dragon flies over the town once and as they do, the GM **spends one suspense** from the Body. It uses its breath weapon to ravage the town. GM decides that the Cleric and Bard are subject to the breath and need

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to make **defense rolls** with no thorns because the dragon is still a bit high up. They both succeed, but now the town is ablaze.

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The dragon does another fly over and as it does, the Bard shoots it with the ballista (they say they're aiming for the wings to down it). They get a messy and **the GM rolls the Wings pool** (6d → 3d), but they get an impact move in result. The GM decides to take suspense. The dragon descends a bit and a rain of kobolds fall from its back and begin causing mayhem in the city.

RED DRAGON CHALLENGE, CONTINUED

The GM spends suspense from Kobold Minions and has them attempt to overwhelm the Cleric. Another defense roll and this time it's a Grim! The Cleric is caught off guard and takes **bloodied**.

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The dragon fully descends outside town face to face with the fighter and the fighter is the first to react! They go straight for its eye with a sick jumping strike. Messy! The GM rolls the Body pool (8d →6d), not very effective.

Now the GM gets their response and decides to go all out because the claws AND tail have the **Protect the Body traits**.

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The GM uses the impact move from the Messy to have the dragon roar and attempt to **vex** the entire party. The fighter normally wouldn't get a defense roll, but because the GM is aiming for more than a light consequence, the fighter gets to roll too. Some quick defense rolls and two perfects say the fighter and rogue are in it to win it. The bard gets a messy and takes a mark to Presence. The Cleric gets a Grim again and takes vex, opting for Flight as they narrate their character running away from the town's shelter and leaving it free to be attacked by the kobold minions, despite their desire to protect the townsfolk.

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The GM then spends one suspense from Claws and has another suspense from Tail as the dragon makes two quick strikes at the fighter who just landed back on the ground. The fighter makes two defense rolls and gets a Grim on both! The first leaves him rattled as the claws come inches away from his head, and then he takes the full force of the tail, and gets bloodied as well!

The Rogue comes in with a sneak attack, runs up the tail, and attempts to use his **precise** dagger to stab it in the neck under some scales. They succeed! Perfect! The GM decides to roll the Body pool (6d→2d), it's pretty effective! But, it's time for all that Suspense to get spent again. The GM uses a suspense from Wings to have the dragon fly high into the air with the Rogue on its back, but just in time the bard uses an Inspiration to **interrupt** the impact move. They roll and get a Perfect, narrating a vicious, mocking taunt that keeps the dragon from running away. The GM spends another suspense from Tail to have it swing up and try to get the Rogue off its back. The Rogue gets a messy, and gets knocked off the dragon's back, but is otherwise okay.

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The party is in a pretty bad situation! Three PCs left, the fighter on his last leg, and lots of suspense!

UNDEAD HORDES

The PCs have made a grave mistake, and the entire cemetery surrounding them is starting to come to unlife. You (the GM) tell them there are skeletons and zombies everywhere. They have a choice—they could run, and it would be an 8d | Escape challenge, but the town would be gone for sure. Or you can stay and fight, just wave after wave of undead. You remind the rogue of their **definitely not honorable trait**. The rest seem dead set on staying, but the rogue wavers. They **quarrel**, and finally the other three win out—they stay, and fight like the heroes most of them are.

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You think on what waves of zombies might look like. Each undead is weak individually, but the entire horde is epic. You set it up as waves, three linked **4d-6d-8d | Undead Horde challenges**.

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You then call for a **Build Up** move to introduce the challenge. Each player describes their character getting ready as the horde starts to claw its way out of the ground. They take spark from the quarrel earlier, and spark from the Build Up.

KOBOLD TRIALS

The Wizard's brought before the kobold elders for her **4d | Trial by Ordeal**. The first trial is to lift a boulder, and she gets a perfect! You roll for progress (4d→4d), but none is made. The elders, unimpressed, call for a larger boulder, but the Wizard **pivots for a secondary effect**, and wins the chieftain over. With a wave of their hand, he silences them. She moves to the next trial, no progress, but in the chieftain's good graces.

page 7

Next, the Wizard must walk across a very narrow balance beam (+1t). She rolls (2, 6, thorn 7). Her perfect gets **cut** to a messy. As she makes it to the end, she stumbles off and smacks her head. You decide that Wits gets marked but the elders laugh and seem pleased (4d→1d). The final ordeal is a ridiculous riddle (+2t)—and ends up rolling a another messy. You decide the kobolds begin to argue over the correct answer, even as the chieftain declares the Wizard has passed (1d→0d). A fight breaks out, but the Wizard has earned the trust of the leader, so he unlocks the chains.

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TREACHEROUS CHANNEL

The Fighter takes the helm as they 8d | Navigate Channel. They roll Wits, but the thorn from the **treacherous currents** cuts their perfect to a messy.

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You roll for their progress navigating (8d→4d), then make an **impact move—Graze Reef**. The rogue up in the lookout makes a Wits defense roll but gets a grim. They don't see it and the boat slams against the reef.

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You start a 6d Taking on Water pool, then roll it (6d→4d) alongside the **6d Storm Blows In pool** (6d→2d). Things are getting bad!

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At the edge of catastrophe, the Fighter tries to right the course. They spend spark and the Rogue and Wizard jump in to **assist**. Before they roll, you make another impact move—the Violent Winds give the roll **dire stakes**. If this fails, the pools are rolled and one or more of the PCs is going overboard into shark-infested waters. Everyone grabs their dice.

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You (GM): "Your ship rams the pirate ship! You see the Pirate Captain pull out a horn, look terrified, and then blow it. Amidst the high waves surrounding both ships, the **Kraken's Tentacles** burst forth from the water. There are about 20 deckhands below and a group of 10 archers above, each a 4d **mook** pool. There are a few swashbucklers too, and the Captain's an **elite**."

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You put out some tokens representing all of this on the battlemap.

You: "Go ahead and put your tokens where they make the most sense. What do you do?"

Fighter: "I have my bow out and start launching arrows at the archers."

They roll Agility and get a grim. You give a mark to Brawn and Presence as an arrow slices their arm. You follow up by spending suspense. You have the Pirate Captain swing onto their boat and attack the fighter, who rolls a messy on their Brawn defense roll because of the mark. They mark Agility, then clear the **mark** on Brawn because it was rolled.

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8d | NAVIGATE CHANNEL

* shark-infested waters

* treacherous currents

● GRAZE REEF

● VIOLENT WINDS

● DENSE FOG

× 6d Storm blows in

BOARDING A PIRATE SHIP

FEATURES stormy waters, cramped decks

THREATS 4d waves crashing

●● kraken tentacles

4d deckhands (mook brutes)

4d rigging archers (mook marksmen)

3 Swashbucklers (tough marauders)

4d | pirate captain (elite overseer)

WHAT TO EXPECT FOR THE FULL RELEASE

Chapters 4-9 will include the originals (monsters, exploration, story kits extras), as well as two others. Character Options will include a few more paths, legacy talents (those that were replaced from the original edition) and additional ideas, while Game Options will have optional rules and flavors of fantasy. A full glossary/index, and bookmarks will be included.

This will be a free digital product available at Moxietoolkit.com, itch.io, and an at-cost priced print on demand book.

HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK

The easiest method is on our Discord (<https://discord.gg/bsfFh2dd6r>). We also have a small subreddit (<https://www.reddit.com/r/GrimwildRPG/>). You can reach me personally @astrogroov on Discord or astrogroov@gmail.com.

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