

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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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 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. 30) 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 player characters (PCs), 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. 18).
- ◆ **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. Two-column tables use 1-3 and 4-6, and three-column tables use 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6 results to refer to each column respectively.

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 half-way 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 (Non-Player Characters). 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

NAME
Gibbletibble "Tibbs"

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES
shock of brown hair, cane

BRAWN
1

AGILITY
3

WITS
2

PRESENCE
2

BLOODIED

DESPERATE

RATTLED

MARK: +1 to STAT, THEN CLEAR
HARM: +1 CONNECTED STATS

CRITICAL: GREATER EFFECT—SECONDARY EFFECT—SETUP—SPARK

CONDITIONS +1 RELATED

daunted
winded

strained
battered

unsteady
confused

4d confused

VEX: 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 (grimcut 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*

THREAD

SPEND THREAD:
Establish a character, setting, or scene details within your vantage.
Doubtful details may require a story roll.

VANTAGE

CERTAIN it defines who you are
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:

- ① Basic stats (pg. 22)
- ② Damage (pg. 27)
- ③ Weapon Styles (pg. 20)
- ④ Backgrounds (pg. 20)
- ⑤ Meta-currencies (pg. 12, 25)
- ⑥ Ally bonds (pg. 22)

The right side has a core talent for each path, a collection of thematic path talents available to everyone, as well as your current 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.



PERFECT

You **succeed**,
and avoid any trouble.



MESSY

You **succeed**,
but there's also trouble.



GRIM

You **fail**,
and there's trouble.

This prompts an **impact move**.

The GM makes an **impact move** (pg. 100) 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. 18) 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. 14). *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. 95) 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 a roll 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. Criticals can't be cut by thorns.



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**, pg. 25), roll a **disaster**, resolve a **story arc** (pg. 26), **quarrel** with an ally (pg. 23), or an ally's **bond** with you changes (pg. 22).

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 the character's core identity. The path name is simply a label for organizing talents thematically. On its own, it doesn't expand vantage.

background, core and selected 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. The core of your character; these ideas are 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 usually 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. 103). *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. 24), 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** (pg. 16) may be used if there's gray area. Perception is handled by **vigilance** (pg. 107).

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.

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.



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 is 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, increase your vantage and take +1d. **Setups** handle more impactful but temporary fiction changes, lasting between a single follow up action, and the rest of the scene depending on the fiction. *The city watch is distracted. | The queen is caught off-guard. | The wizard is invisible.*

Protecting Others

When an ally is targeted by an impact move from their own action roll, you can choose to put yourself in harm's way to protect them. **Make a 1d defense roll and share the risk.** With a perfect you both avoid the trouble. On a grim, you both get hit with it. On a messy, the GM can lighten the consequences for you both, or hit only you with the impact move.

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. As a player, you can pitch what stat you think makes the most sense. 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 and touchstones (pg. 35).

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 ROLLS

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.

Montage Example

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'll add a little set dressing. I use magic 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, wild surges, and doubtful story details) can be made to determine the effect of something outside of your PC, but aren't directly related to a stat. These are handled with **story rolls**.

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. Though rare, thorns can be added story rolls, just as any other.

If the roll is replacing an action roll, usually when the character is directly involved, story rolls can prompt impact moves. *I flip the switch for the old trap, as the goblin runs down the hall toward me. | How many drank from the poisoned keg I left in the kitchen?*

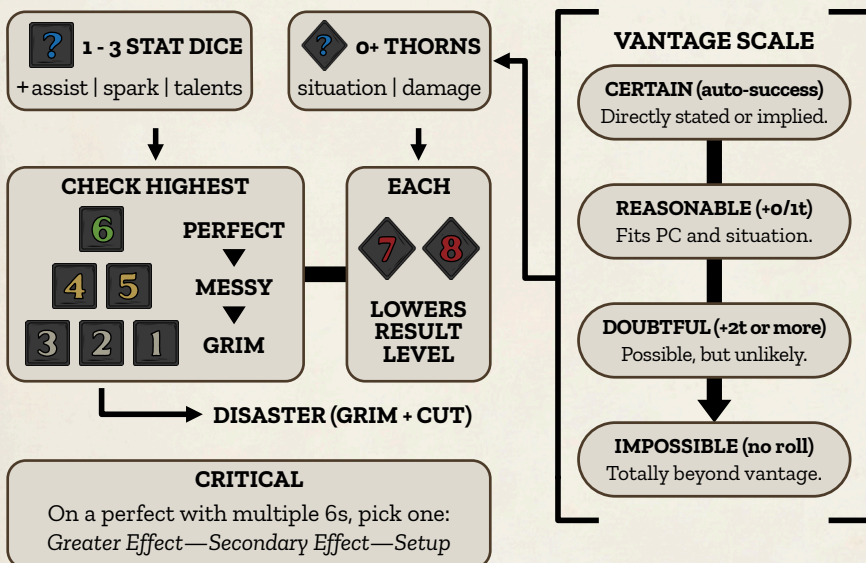
If the roll only tests your luck, it's used to determine the general answer to a question—from positive to negative. *Does my magical Robe of Pockets have anything useful for this? | I look down the hallway, do I see any guards?*

FORWARD MOMENTUM

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.



RESULTS

ACTION ROLLS

Perfect: Success, and you avoid trouble.

Messy: Success, with an impact move.

Grim: Failure, with an impact move.

Disaster: Failure, with a worse impact move. The player takes **spark**.

DEFENSE ROLLS

Perfect: Avoid the impact move.

Messy: Reduce the impact move.

Grim: Take the full impact move.

Disaster: Take a worse impact move, then take **spark**.

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, you can either **push** or **pivot**:

push yourself (take a mark) to drop 1d anyway. This has a 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. *He's prepared for a cross cut, so instead you switch it up and twist the saber from his grasp.*

- ◆ Similarly, if no dice drop from any other pool, the GM can spend suspense (pg. 96) 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 are always notated with the size of the pool in front of it, written in italics. They can be flexibly applied in many situations, usually by the GM. Keep in mind that larger pools only require slightly more rolls to clear—there are diminishing returns when it comes to the size (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. The types of pools can be found below.

THE TYPES OF POOLS

Task Pools

This tracks the effort to overcome complicated tasks. In combat, this is used to track the progress towards defeating enemies, with larger pools used for higher tier monsters (pg. 109). **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 | 6d Wind Elemental.*

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 | 8d Magical Wings.*

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. You must be able to roll the pool to use it; once it drops to 0d, the resource has now run out and can't be used again. Talents such as the Druid's Wild Shape use this type of pool. *4d Food Supplies | 8d Manpower Left | 6d Looted Treasures | 2d Bulwark.*

Power Pools

This pool 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 extra dice (such as **spark**) to a power pool, track them separately—they don't affect dropped dice and don't add to the pool. **Bonus dice polls** (pg. 53) are special power pools that are added in addition to the original roll. **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 Healing Rite | 4d Clever Disguise.*

Linked Pools

These are a linked sequence of 2 or more of any kind of pools to extend them with extra "phases". The next pool isn't unlocked until the previous reaches 0d. Linked pools handle complexity and larger challenges much better than just adding more dice to one pool. A linked 4d+4d pool is about the same as a 51d pool—taking around 7 rolls for it to drop to 0d. Pools can be linked linearly in a sequence, or in other creative ways, and tend to be more predictable trackers, since only one can drop at a time. *8d Magic Shielding + 2d Wizard | 4d Claws + 4d Tail + 4d Body.*

Campaign Pools

Covered more extensively in the GM Toolkit Chapter (pg. 90), these are timer pools used to track multi-session and long term events such as faction goals, seasons, and adversarial actions. **Roll this pool** during downtime. *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. 25). *I am brave and rash, but not quiet. I want love and thrills, but not wealth.*

WEAPON STYLES

Your weapon has 2 descriptors—its **weapon styles**, 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. Your styles don't define your weapon, they only show what aspects are most important to you in the narrative. 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 (Impossible→1t).*

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. Check out the character crucibles on page 51 if you need inspiration.

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.

Remember, Paths on their own don't expand vantage, but talents (and especially the core talent) do. 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, and resolving any related rolls, then **mark** a stat (your choice). Choose your moments wisely.

Potency

Having **potency**, or pulling off **potent feats** expands your **vantage** to allow you to do something incredible. Full rules can be found on page 24.

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. This should be used sparingly to emphasize the impact of an exceptional adversary. As a general rule, GMs should do it no more than 5% of the time.

Reader Lens - Original Grimwild

Every talent that was dependent on a pool having dice after being rolled (*wild shape*, *bulwark*) has been changed to a resource pool—meaning it will always work, but can't be triggered at Od.



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, athleticism, 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). 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. All participating 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 [2, 6]!

The wizard wins the quarrel—their argument is enough to have the party follow their lead. The paladin decides they'll see the unjust king themselves before making a judgment. The rogue bites her tongue about it, but may just take the king's life herself if things get dicey—it's good to have a backup plan. Time to warn the king!

*Everyone who participated takes **spark**. Good thing, because it sounds like they're going to run afoul of the Thieves' Guild. 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. Look to potent spells (pg. 33) for magical examples.

Potent Action Examples

A Ranger wishes to track a wild boar through the forest. Normally, this could be reasonable, but with a potent action she immediately spots a tusk mark in a nearby tree, making this certain (0t → automatic success).

A Barbarian wishes to challenge an ogre to arm wrestling. Normally, her succeeding would be doubtful, but with a successful potent action she manages it more easily, slamming the ogre's arm down with a crash that also draws cheers from the tavern (2t → 1t, secondary effect).

A Monk wishes to evade some guards by running across a pond. Normally this would be impossible to attempt, but with a successful potent action he manages to run across the surface of the pond with mystical grace (impossible → 0t, new possibility).

A Rogue wishes to sneak into the counting house. Security is tight with private mercenaries patrolling the grounds, making the task very difficult. With a successful potent action, the rogue can see weaknesses in security others would miss, finding a shortcut directly to the vaults. (2t → 1t, with greater effect).

CREATIVE FREEDOM

SET DRESSING

Any less important details—things that only impact how you describe a detail (*a torch vs. a glowing alchemical bottle*) are **set dressing**. You can also add minor, common sense details freely. Make assumptions and add details to scenes to play off of to keep things flowing dynamically. Anything that's **certain** in your vantage, like knowing someone or having equipment that makes sense, can be established freely.

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 general's wine, getting your revenge.

Complications from beliefs or backstory.

You forgot to tell everyone you dated the baron.

THREAD

Pure cinematic momentum. Each session, you have 2 **thread**. 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.

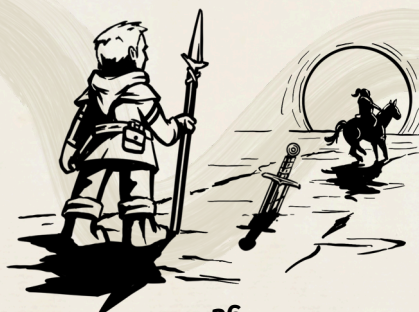
Pick a **group arc** together, then a **character arc**. Pick from the example below, detailing it so it fits your game, or write your own. Keep it short.

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

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 thread 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, and 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. Harm that would leave you desperate a second time drops you instead.

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 combat. Leaving evidence, alerting guards, losing gear, and running out of arrows can all make combat more dramatic. Overly relying on harm will make the game much more deadly.

Deadline

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 setting dials (pg. 172) 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 confused)

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, such as taking on a permanent condition (*blind, cursed*), or ending their story and taking an option below.

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. 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 poisoned → harm
6d losing consciousness → out cold
4d bleeding out → death
8d losing your mind → madness

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

twisted ankle (clears after scene)
drunk (tipsy after scene)
8d thrown out back
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
8d witch's curse

Permanent: These conditions often stay forever. They might need a ritual or daring acts to clear, if they can be healed at all.

gouged-out eye
insanity
burn scars

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 can be difficult and healing certain injuries may always carry **risk**. Magic may replace some requirements, though only **potent spells** can heal harm directly. Treatment is almost always successful, **impact moves** from treatment bring other problems to the forefront, such as time pressure.

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.

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)*

Resting

Any significant stretch of time between action (a night's camp, a week's travel) clears all marks and harm. This natural healing is paced for drama, not realism.

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 **thread** 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.

Per Session Talents

Many talents have a set number of uses per session, these are reset when before beginning a new session. These are balanced around 3 hours of play. If you run longer games, the GM can choose to have talents refresh in the middle of a session, when it makes thematic sense. **If you prefer talents to reset while resting, use the Rest Resets optional rule on page 174.**

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).

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. Reaching a new level lets you choose a new **talent**. At certain levels, your **core talent** is upgraded as well.

One-off games with experienced players tend to work best at level 3.

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 as an action (specified in the talent or arcana) using **touchstones**—key terms like spell names, or godly domains. 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, or in the case of Clerics and some arcana—power pools. Spells are the baseline magnitude of spellcasting actions. For most paths, when spells are cast without **risk**, they are automatically successful (as all actions) 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. 24), 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.

Potent Spells Examples

*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 → +1t).*

*The hideout is teeming with guards, and a few moments of invisibility won't get you far, but a potent **Invisibility** spell 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)*

Reader Lens - D&D

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. Check out the crucibles below for anchor ideas.

TANGIBLE ANCHOR EXAMPLES

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

INTANGIBLE ANCHOR EXAMPLES

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

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. All rituals take time, while most carry **risk**, using a task pool to complete the casting. *The wizard meticulously draws symbols of chalk on the ground while the party protects him. | The Sorcerer strains themselves, trying to hold the intense magical fire together. | The cleansing ritual pulls the corruption out and gives it form—and it's about as friendly as you would expect.*

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:

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.

Detecting

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

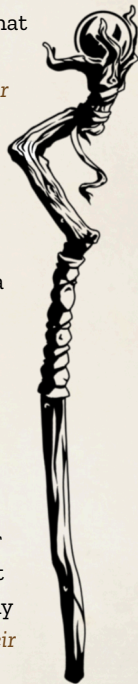
Anyone aware that something is magic can try to dispel it. This does not require training—you can cast a spell with relevant touchstones that counters it, cause enough of a disturbance to it (*smashing the arcane shield with a battleaxe, shaking someone until they're no longer charmed*), or outsmarting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

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.

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).*



Bufs & Enemy Debuffs Spells

Beneficial effects to allies, or detrimental effects on enemies that expand PC vantage, likely affecting thorns, providing a lasting **setup**, or bestowing a new ability—often as a 2-4d timer, power pool, or shared pool of bonus dice. Potent spells often target a group, or allow the change to last for the scene. Rituals can add permanency or affect massive areas. *Breathe underwater, a 2d timer. (spell)* | *Fill an ally with strength, a 3d bonus dice pool. (potent)* | *Banish a demon back to their home plane. (ritual)*

Damage Spells

Spells that directly harm others. Consider how touchstones might affect vantage here. Potent spells often affect an area, or provide a critical bonus (greater effect, secondary effect, setup). Rituals give extra permissions, such as permanent magical traps, and affecting massive areas or someone miles away. *Shoot a bolt of acid. (spell)* | *Cause a massive explosion of fire. (potent)* | *Afflict a town with an illness. (ritual)*

Defense Spells

Spells that protect you and your allies *in the moment*. The GM chooses the stat for defense rolls, and can choose to let you use spellcasting to defend yourself, if you have time and warning (relevant touchstones may help these). Spells allow you to use your casting stat, while a potent spell can extend to allies or lessen the incoming threat. *Create a quick shield. (spell)* | *Hold falling rocks in the air while allies escape. (potent)*

Healing Spells

These spells soothe the mind, body, and emotional states. Spells can clear marks, vex, and other minor conditions. Potent spells can cure harm and more serious conditions. Resurrection and healing extreme conditions is possible through rituals, though they are often costly, risky, and may not ultimately be worth the price. *Calm an ally frozen in fear. (spell)* | *Mend a broken bone. (potent)* | *Regrow a limb. (ritual)*

Information Spells

This type of spell unveils secrets, and reveals new knowledge. Spells allow you to seek a specific answer, or glean surface level information. Potent spells give more detail, or don't require probing for a specific answer. Rituals let you scry and learn clear and detailed information. *Read a stranger's surface thoughts. (spell)* | *Replay the recent past of a weapon you hold. (potent)* | *Spy on a foe from miles away. (ritual)*

Summoning Spells

These spells create items or conjure creatures to the scene. Spells call forth tools and equipment for the scene, or allies using a 2d power pool. Potent spells conjure creatures that use a story roll or 4d power pool. Rituals can be permanent, on a massive scale, or bind powerful creatures with an 8d power pool. *Summon a silver dagger. (spell)* | *Call a dire wolf to your side. (potent)* | *Conjure a wall around a city. (ritual)*



SPELLCASTING TALENTS

Many paths grant **spellcasting ability** with their core talent, while some path talents feature a lesser version also granting the ability. The magic from each of these sources is unique, using specific touchstones, limitations, and ways to make spells potent. See below for a general overview of each.

Cleric

Holy casters that use power pools to track their magic. They cast spells by performing general rites, channeling magic through the lens of their god. Cleric spellcasting can be taken by other paths with the *Divine Blessing* talent (pg. 69).

Druids

These naturalists don't have spellcasting on their own, however those wishing to control the elements can take the *Primordial Bonds* path talent (pg. 63).

Psion

Mentalists that can unleash potent magic at the cost of coming unraveled, making future spells more difficult. They use bastions, areas of psychic expertise, as their touchstones.

Sorcerer

Wielders of raw, unbridled, and unlimited magic, that can push beyond normal limits for potent spells. Their dangerous power combines a magic path (the source of power) with a technique (its use) as touchstones. Sorcerer spellcasting can be taken by other paths with the *Eldritch Affinity* talent (pg. 75).

Warlock

Pact makers with no true magic of their own. They instead wield their patron's magic as a weapon, and ask for potent spells—weary of angering their fickle master. The nature of their patron and pact acts as their touchstones.

Witch

Wonders of magic take time for these mysterious casters. They use words of power, the universal language of magic, to cast spells, combining two as the touchstones. With enough time, they can make them potent, or even rituals.

Wizard

Methodical and scholarly, wizards use specific magic formula, spell theorems, to cast spells. They hold an ever growing arsenal, with a limited amount of magic per session. Wizard spellcasting can be taken by other paths with the *Arcane Training* talent (pg. 65).



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. 100).

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.

favor	gold	lucrative rumor
jewels	arcana	deed
gear	information	service
vehicle	spell cast	contact
rare reagent	art piece	title or rank
companion	trade goods	blessing

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. Major and mythic treasures may be sold as well, if a buyer can be found.

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. These items have specific functionalities, but can be used in creative ways as long as their use fits within their unique logic. Each arcana is defined by four parts:

The description, which defines its intended use and core ability. It explains what happens in the fiction, though not necessarily the rules mechanics.

The touchstones, which help to adjudicate its use. When using arcana outside of its description, its name and all touchstones (including the function) must be applied. This keeps magic and usage tied thematically to the item.

The limitations, which give a cost or limit the arcana's use to certain situations. These may lower the final tier, and aren't present on all magical items.

The tier, which informs the magnitude of the item's magic. They have the same tiers as treasure: **minor**, **major**, and **mythic**. Limitations may lower the final tier. See below for the breakdown:

Minor arcana: Limited effects based on the touchstones, such as:

- ◆ Set dressing vantage
- ◆ Once per session effect
- ◆ 2d Power Pool for an effect
- ◆ Using a different stat for actions

Major arcana: Useful effects based on their touchstones, such as:

- ◆ Expanded vantage
- ◆ Once per session potent effect
- ◆ 4d Power Pool for an effect
- ◆ **Outside help** or **secondary effect**

Mythic arcana: Powerful effects based on their touchstones. These greatly expand vantage, can be used for ritual magic, and may have any number of extra potent abilities.

Expendable Arcana

Limited use items such as potions and scrolls can only be used once, and because of that limitation, have an effect *one tier higher*. Scrolls are highly sought-after arcana, used to learn theorems with the wizard's Spellcraft talent (pg. 86).

Trivial arcana is a special tier exclusive to expendable arcana, allowing a single minor effect. Vantage and other passive effects last for the scene.

Minor expendable arcana bestows a single potent effect, while **Major** allows the PC to produce the effects of a ritual. **Mythic expendable arcana** are plot devices only, changing the world as the GM sees fit.

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, use Wits or 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 flaming sword uses Brawn, a robe of pockets uses a story roll.*

OBTAINING ARCANA

The act of binding magic to items, crafting arcana, requires a ritual and a source of magic. PCs may need to find ritual anchors and hire enchanting experts to create their own arcana.

Finding and buying arcana for sale is much more difficult. Prices depend entirely on the seller's desires, usually something other than coin.

MYTHIC ARCANA

These artifacts are more meaningful and unique—the basis of quests and layered with history, or possibly cursed. These strange relics expand vantage in powerful ways, bestowing large narrative permissions. Those with power pools refresh every session unless otherwise noted, and allow for potent effects by dropping 1d before rolling. In addition to this, they also:

- ◆ count as having **all functions**, in addition to having any 3 or more touchstones. When used outside of their description, use any two touchstones and the arcana's name for the effect.
- ◆ count as having **all anchors** for ritual magic using their touchstones.
- ◆ are more likely to have **extra qualities and limitations**, such as those below.

Optional Additions

Heavy Cost: The item's magic has an upfront cost to use, such as **pushing yourself**, taking **harm**, **vex**, or a temporary condition.

Unique Reset: The power pool doesn't reset every session, instead requiring an act, event, in-game resources, or meta-currency (such as **spark** or **thread**).

Ritual ability: Given time, or with an 8d timer pool the arcana can produce a ritual-level effect. This may be once only, or have special recharge conditions.

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

Curse: The item has a secret drawback, ranging from making it very costly to use, to twisting the user towards its own dark desires. Using its magic could bestow a condition, give the GM **suspense**, or subvert the user's wishes.



DESIGNING ARCANA

1. **Start with an idea of the magic item.** Where does it come from, and what themes should go along with it?
2. **Pick a function from the list below.** This describes the general effect, and acts as a touchstone.

Attack: lash out to deal direct harm or destruction.

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

Hinder: impede or debilitate others or areas.

Influence: alter thoughts, emotions, or perceptions.

Protect: defend yourself and others from outside harm or influence.

Restore: heal wounds, cleanse maladies, and mend materials.

Reveal: sense and reveal the hidden, and uncover new information.

Summon: manifest objects, creatures, or forces themselves.

Transform: change the nature or form of the subject.

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

3. **Decide on the two remaining touchstones.** These should be thematic and focused, evoking the magic ability of the arcana. Use the crucibles on the next page for inspiration, or to randomize touchstones.
4. **Decide the tier, based on the magical impact.** Remember that the effect is one tier higher if it's expendable, and one lower for unlimited use arcana.
5. **Pick a fitting form for the item.** Consider the magic and function, and pick items that make thematic sense, such as a pair of boots using *traverse*, or a dagger using *attack*. It's okay to subvert expectations, too!
6. **Write the description,** giving an idea as to how the magic manifests and what it does in the fiction. Keep this focused on the fiction, the mechanics may change depending on the situation and use.

Open Ended Arcana Creation

These rules are a baseline to get started creating items. Experienced players and GMs should treat this as guidance. Use your vision of the arcana to create it as you see fit, judging the tier based on the item's general abilities and limitations afterward.

ARCANA CRUCIBLES

Use the following crucibles for touchstone inspiration, or pick 1 or 2 tables and roll randomly to generate two touchstones of a specific theme, then assign a function.

ARCANE

adapt	curiosity	unstable	mind	water	rune
plane	memory	bubble	ethereal	phase	emotion
force	scribe	blink	focus	hand	explosion
flame	echo	rift	acid	word	float
identity	lore	attune	dazzle	thought	sight
phantom	vortex	vanish	air	gate	color

DIVINE

soothe	melody	eternal	plague	justice	heal
life	bind	sun	shield	vigor	halo
luck	truth	sentinel	rainbow	moon	spirit
virtue	sacrifice	wrath	purify	pierce	dead
blood	stars	light	blind	reflect	fate
beauty	ward	bravery	sorrow	renew	radiant

ELDRITCH

shred	lock	warp	scream	tendrill	mask
charm	shift	skull	trick	figment	darkness
bind	false	cold	void	enthrall	chain
impulse	curse	shadow	steal	whisper	drain
dream	sick	confuse	desire	eye	shroud
face	grasp	flesh	silence	madness	lurk

PRIMAL

lush	claw	grow	breeze	shell	ember
storm	stone	rot	stone	thorn	blight
river	fragrant	frenzy	howl	freeze	beast
thunder	horn	flight	tail	lightning	spore
poison	swarm	root	bloom	earth	death
wither	rain	bone	sting	tree	gust

TECHNOLOGY

fuse	disk	creativity	song	oil	stasis
crystal	cog	keen	smoke	mirror	servant
ornate	stitch	slime	pressure	quick	gravity
gold	shrapnel	wall	spark	bind	message
haven	duty	clock	command	glass	greed
dance	ring	guide	shatter	plasma	beacon



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. 26)
- 4. Make Characters:** Follow the character creation flow and make PCs together. Prioritize fitting in with the theme, setting, party, and group arc. (pg. 46)

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.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ☐ Conquerors | ☐ Heroes | ☐ Mystics | ☐ Scholars |
| ☐ Disciples | ☐ Mercenaries | ☐ Outsiders | ☐ Scoundrels |
| ☐ Explorers | ☐ Merchants | ☐ Renegades | ☐ 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. Each path is covered in detail later in this chapter.

Core Paths

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>
Bargain with your patron for Eldritch Talents , but beware their fickle nature.	
WIZARD	<i>Arcane knowledge, wielded with precision.</i>
Use the spell theorems you've learned to call precise magic to your hands.	

Extra Options

Also included are the **ARTIFICER**, **PSION**, **SUMMONER**, **SWASHBUCKLER**, and **WITCH**. These alternatives were not a part of the original free version of Grimwild. Legacy options—those from the original version of the game—are also included on page 178, alongside path talents cut from previous versions of the Community Edition.



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.
- 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. 22)
- 7. Weapon Styles:** Choose your weapon(s), then split two descriptors between them as your styles. (pg. 20)
- 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. 26)
- 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. 22)
- 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. 16) 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, 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. 20). 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. 49), or use either of those as guidelines to create your own. Backgrounds and their wisest 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 wisest, check out the expanded wisest crucible! (pg. 49)

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...

Charlatan
AKA Spy, Swindler
social graces
spotting marks
timely misdirects

Scarlet Agent of the Crown.

Scarlet Agent of the Crown
social graces
timely misdirects
luxuries

Common backgrounds also come with three wisest. 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.

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!

EXPANDED WISES

Civil	Social	Historical	Natural	Mystical	Practical
laws of the land	gambling	notable figures	cartography	arcane theory	cooking
bureaucracy	banter	lost relics	natural danger	pacts & binding	smuggling
the press	leadership	ceremonial rites	pests & plague	cosmology	clockwork
business	showmanship	festivities	overland travel	local spirits	jury-rigging
taboo	blending in	architecture	unnatural beasts	divine order	makeshift gear
politics	networking	theater & arts	seeds & harvest	esoterica	humors

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 wisers. Use those from common backgrounds (previous page), the expanded wisers crucible (above), or make up your own. These wisers 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 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	Halflings	Merchants	Skywatchers
	Elves	Orcs	Forestfolk	Cavefolk	Raiders	Outcasts
MOOD	Twisted	Steel	Verdant	Golden	Emerald	Burning
	Lush	Floating	Crimson	Shattered	Haunted	Enchanted
	Scorched	Echoing	Misty	Glimmering	Distant	Silent
	Rolling	Bountiful	Great	Sunken	Coastal	Gloomy
	Abyssal	Desolate	Rocky	Windswept	Howling	Eternal
	Feral	Serene	Whispering	Grim	Prosperous	Restless
LAND	Peaks	Confederacy	Fjords	Coast	Badlands	Boglands
	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

GROUP-BUILDING QUESTIONS

During session zero, after you've introduced your characters, or at interesting moments in a campaign, ask one of the following questions to the person on your right and left. Keep the questions leading and juicy, to give something interesting for you both to latch onto. You can also use these questions to delve into details about their character that you're interested in hearing more about.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SHARED HISTORY

- What **secret** did I tell you that you've never dared to share with anyone else?
- When we first met, what **mistake** did I make that still embarrasses me?
- What did we **steal** together, and how did it bring us closer?
- When did I **save** you from something, and what did it cost me?
- What moment made you decide you could **trust** me, even if you didn't want to?

QUESTIONS ABOUT FEELINGS AND IMPRESSIONS

- What's something about me that **annoys** you, but you'd miss if I were gone?
- What's a time I **surprised** you by being braver or softer than you expected?
- What's a **rumor about me** you half believe, but you're too afraid to ask if it's true?
- When have I **pushed you away**, and how did it hurt?
- What do you **envy** about me, even if you'd never admit it out loud?

QUESTIONS ABOUT TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES

- What's a **lie** I told you that you're still pretending to believe?
- What's a **promise** I broke that you haven't forgiven me for?
- When have I **let you down**, and how did you learn to work around me?
- What's something **dangerous** you think I'm hiding from the group?
- What about me makes you feel like you're **walking on thin ice**?

QUESTIONS ABOUT SHARED FUTURES

- What's a **dream** I have that you think is foolish, but still want to help me achieve?
- What do you **hope** I'll never find out about your plans?
- What do you think our **journey** will turn me into, and does that scare you?
- When this is all over, where do you **imagine** us going together?
- What's something you think we'll **regret**, but we'll do it anyway?

Note: Try swapping "you" and "I" in these questions—flip it around if it's more interesting!

CHARACTER CRUCIBLES

Choosing 2-3 distinctive features helps cement your character not only in your mind, but also in the shared imagination space at the table. You can come back to your features again and again during scenes to add them in to paint the scene. Be open to change over time as well.

PERSONALITY

blunt	mellow	astute	fierce	humble	bold
curious	formal	pious	stoic	meticulous	severe
charming	aloof	jovial	mean	vibrant	careless
kind	ambitious	reserved	naive	crafty	timid
earnest	solemn	cagey	mysterious	stubborn	sour
shrewd	pragmatic	arrogant	lazy	pleasant	cynical

CLOTHING

ill-fitting	pristine	tight	finely-tailored	frayed	ceremonial
loose-fitting	dirty	flowing	threadbare	coarse	fancy
outrageous	comfortable	stained	patched	fashionable	exotic
faded	patchwork	austere	well-worn	grass-stained	strange
plain	flamboyant	mottled	weathered	dusty	practical
elaborate	crumpled	out-of-place	rugged	billowing	secondhand

VOICE

lilting	clear	gravelly	pleasant	commanding	piercing
melodious	resonant	hearty	sharp	raspy	murmuring
soft	rumbling	measured	well-spoken	soothing	shrill
crackling	calm	barking	confident	nasally	velvety
whispering	booming	growling	earnest	pompous	monotone
roaring	carries	sing-song	quiet	breathy	hoarse

BODY

curvy	scrawny	sturdy	sober	old-timer	sage
young	slender	lean	grizzled	beautiful	wrinkled
rail-thin	thick	athletic	upstart	over the hill	fresh faced
solid	hulking	bony	in their prime	distinguished	hale & hearty
lithe	ripped	petite	old & leathery	doddering	venerable
gangly	compact	sharp	wizened	spry	distinguished

EYES

tormented	joyous	hard	glowing	stern	calculating
haunted	kind	dead	animal	piercing	brooding
questioning	sharp	eager	shifty	gentle	lifeless
shrouded	sad	smoldering	cunning	hollow	weary
knowing	wise	warm	wild	sparkling	bright
fiery	haunting	searing	soulful	glassy	unreadable



PATHS & TALENTS

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.

Not every path is available in every game. Some only fit certain settings and themes—make sure to ask your GM ahead of time what is available.

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. If you choose to keep playing, consider switching out talents at milestones in the story to keep the character fresh.

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 reflavored by a wizard as a magical shield.



Reader Lens - D&D

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.

Bonus Dice Pools

These special pools are given by Talents, and are added before rolling, unless otherwise specified. If added after, they can potentially raise the result. Because they are treated as a pool, keep them separate, so other dice don't get added or affect dice dropping.

"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.

"Thematic Path Talent"

Some core talents allow you to select a temporary or changeable path talent to go along with with, such as those granted by the **warlock's pact**, or to the **summoner's vassal**. The trappings for these talents should fit with the character and their source. Because of the fleeting nature of these talents, PCs (and vassals) can't use "One time only..." features. Work with your GM to see what talents fit.

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

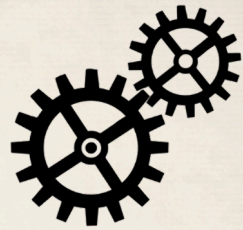
Some paths include advice on roleplaying that character path, especially on parts that might be somewhat unfamiliar. It's entirely optional, but if they resonate with you, lean into them to make those aspects important in the game.



PATH OF THE ARTIFICER

AKA the enchanter, tinkerer, inventor

You shape the world with your creations, blending ingenuity, craftsmanship, and magic to forge and enchant wonders.



INFUSION

Core Talent

You harness the power of creativity. You know 6 **touchstones** from the arcana crucibles (and all functions), and have created 2 **major arcana** using them. Anyone can use them with the most relevant stat (as arcana), though it always carries **risk** for those other than you. Given time, you can: *rebuild them using any other touchstones you know—pull off a **potent feat of mechanical ingenuity***. You can **push yourself** to do it on the spot.

Engineer: Take +1d at creating, repairing, or destroying mechanisms and arcana. You can also **deconstruct** arcana to learn their touchstones, destroying them in the process.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, you can create +1 major arcana, and learn 2 touchstones.

EVERYTHING ARCANA

(Optional)

You can re flavor any of your path talents to actually be the effects of magical gizmos you've created. Toss in some magitech buzzwords that *almost* make sense, and use them to sound like you know what you're talking about—perfect for baffling the less inventive. You can teach others to use them, though doing so always carries **risk**. If any of these gizmos is ever lost, you can recreate them with some effort during any downtime.

MAGITECHNOBABBLE

smash together, and ramble on.

alche- fizzi- clank- spro- mag- whizz-	tink- glim- cogg- flib- quib- griz-	zapp- boond- whim- chym- wob- scran-	blun- gogg- phliz- zind- bogg- quirk-	fum- sput- miz- cran- jig- wiz-	dab- splin- bung- rat- quab- jang-
-nic -tor -al -con -fuse -matic	-crank -mage -flux -bolt -meter -ator	-nar -gram -plex -lock -gear -cog	-tome -phage -tron -spark -lume -craft	-nox -press -scope -spire -turn -drum	-lash -hinge -ring -shift -stone -knob

ARTIFICER PATH TALENTS

ANIMATE OBJECTS: Given time, you can bestow a semblance of life into objects, giving them a **2d Animated** power pool, and controlling them with simple one-word commands. They can roll 1d of their power pool to **assist** you. You can reliably command up to three of these at a time, with others following their nature.

"Following their nature" means they mindlessly do what they were created to do. Brooms sweep, wrenches crank bolts, daggers attack—all without direction from you.

ARTIFICIAL PARTS: You have enhanced replacement body parts. Choose 3 benefits for them: *built-in weapon—detachable—independent—keen sense—storage—strong*. Each perk can be activated once per session to take +1d on a related roll. They also have a drawback: *noisy—horrifying—unreliable—power source*.

GRENADES: Each session, you have a **3d Grenades** resource pool. You have access to the following bombs: *entangle—force—fiery—gravity—obscuring—stun*. These grenades affect multiple targets or an area.

MAGNUM OPUS: You're in the process of creating a **mythic arcana**. It has a 6d power pool as normal, but before each session, roll 3 random touchstones. Each time, you can choose 1 touchstone to lock in, never rolling for it again.

MISCHIEF MAKER: You can overload arcana to create a potent effect with it. Make a 2d story roll as the magic goes haywire. Add +1t to the story roll each time you use this after the first, clearing them each session.

TRAP MAKING: Given time, you can set potent traps, with an effect based on the style: *blade—collapse—entangle—fire—poison—alarm*. **Push yourself** to deploy a trap on the spot. On a perfect when triggered, **take spark**.

WANDSLINGER: You have a specialized wand and can use it to fire the following bolts of magic using Wits: *acid burst—force blast—ice shard—inferno bolt—static charge—stun beam*. Once per session, you can cause a **secondary effect** (as a critical) related to the type.

Constructs and Homunculi

Looking for a magical companion you found or created? Use the *Animal Companion* talent from the ranger path (pg. 73), and pick from the tricks and flaws below.

TRICKS: *distract—fight—guard—rescue—rideable—scout—search—talk—trace—signal*

FLAWS: *clumsy—defiant—dimwitted—noisy—overprotective—powered—scary—unreliable*



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 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
- ◆ Lyre
- ◆ Aesops
- ◆ Oratory
- ◆ Ocarina
- ◆ Lute
- ◆ Martial Ability
- ◆ Accordion
- ◆ Style
- ◆ Panpipes
- ◆ Limericks
- ◆ Singing
- ◆ Flute
- ◆ Proverbs
- ◆ Harmonica
- ◆ Cutting Wit
- ◆ Dance
- ◆ 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 wisdes and 1 extra **thread** 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.

Note: this doesn't grant the inspiration core talent to non-bards.

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**, such as telling the king you're their bastard or a prophecy foretelling the fall of the capital. 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 have a **3d power pool** to represent the smattering of knowledge from your travels.

When you get surprising results from this pool, make it meaningful. What past experienced helped you here? Do you still remember the story?

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**.
- ◆ always 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 you: *see no other challenger—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, though this won't always be a good thing.

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 | ◆ Visions of horrific or heroic scenes |
| ◆ Trained tolerance to pain | ◆ Deep meditative focus |
| ◆ Long consumption of strange substances | ◆ Blood pact with a kindred force |
| ◆ Drawing power from ancestral spirits | ◆ Your abilities are a strange mystery |
| ◆ Drawing primal power from the wild | ◆ Binding your spirit to a physical totem |
| ◆ Channeling memories you'll never forget | ◆ A suppressed entity overtakes you |

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 **thread** to set it: *hostile—nervous—respectful—scared*. You can **push yourself** to pull off a **potent feat of intimidation**, such as staring down a dragon or demanding to see the king.

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 get bloodied, you can instead take a **Flesh Wound**, a **condition** that inflicts +1t on all rolls, and is cleared when the scene ends. On a disaster, you take the harm as normal.

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: Twice per session, you can bolster your allies or strike fear in your foes with an inspiring battle cry, letting you: *increase an ally's die result by 1 (3 → 4)—calm or intensify a vex response—clear a mark from an ally.* [Prohibited: Bard]



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 have spellcasting ability, calling upon your deity to channel their magic. You roll a **rite pool** to cast spells, and that pool and your **god's title** serve as touchstones. Your **major rite** is a **6d power pool**, and your 2 **minor rites** are **4d power pools**. They replenish each session. You can drop 1d and roll to cast a potent spell. Spells without **risk** are automatically successful, 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 title—their epithet (e.g. Zerenda, Goddess of Storms). Write down 3 tenets, the guidance from your god that you are expected to follow while spreading their word, then choose 1 of the following to create their domain of influence, or make 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 your god 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. Any creature with speech will always hear you out. 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 **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**.

Cleric Spellcasting

Your spellcasting ability comes in the form of power pools, meaning you roll the pool as an action in place of a stat. Read the highest as the result, then drop each die that lands on 1-3. If you add extra dice to the roll (such as from **spark**), keep them separate from the pool—they don't affect dice dropping, and aren't added to the power pool.



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**, 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	petsals

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. If a wild talent feels more like set dressing in the current scene, just include it as flavor, instead.

- ◆ **Chimpanzee:** Relentless (Ranger, pg. 73)
- ◆ **Wolf:** Keen Senses (Ranger, pg. 73)
- ◆ **Spider:** Wall climbing
- ◆ **Turtle:** Bulwark (Fighter, pg. 65)
- ◆ **Octopus:** Shape & color mimicking
- ◆ **Cheetah:** Incredibly fast sprinting
- ◆ **Bear:** Flesh Wounds (Berserker, pg. 59)
- ◆ **Eagle:** Flight (Background, pg. 89)
- ◆ **Snake:** Poisoner (Rogue, pg. 75)
- ◆ **Lion:** Fearsome (Berserker, pg. 59)
- ◆ **Rabbit:** Lucky (Swashbuckler, pg. 81)
- ◆ **Fox:** Lurker (Rogue, pg. 75)
- ◆ **Shark:** Aquatic (Background, pg. 89)
- ◆ **Ape:** Mighty (Berserker, pg. 59)
- ◆ **Honey Badger:** Iron Will (Cleric, pg. 61)
- ◆ **Rhino:** Bigger than a bear

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.

KINDRED SPIRITS: You can speak with all manner of wild things—animals, plants, and spirits. When you meet, they know of you. Roll their bond with you or spend **thread** to establish it. When you call, those nearby will answer. You always sense the presence of hidden dangers in places teeming with wildlife.

Not everything communicates as we do—plants may only impart feelings, spirits might need an offering to even appear. Change it up and make the world feel alive.

PRIMAL GROWTH: You can move through any natural terrain quickly and without issue. Once per session you can grow, wither, or shape: crops—dense foliage—entangling vines—fungi—poisonous spores. You can **push yourself** to do it again. You can perform plant or harvest rituals without anchors.

PRIMORDIAL BONDS: You have spellcasting ability, using raw elemental power (**Fire, Earth, Air, or Water**) as the touchstone, and casting spells with Presence. On a critical using an element, charge it. Spend it to cast a potent spell with that element.

If the elements are spirits in your setting, consider adding bonds for them. You may find alternative ways to charge an element, such as through great deeds or ritual.

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. Once per session, you can summon or dismiss, but not control: dense fog—extreme temperatures—heavy rain—snowfall—storms—strong winds. You can **push yourself** to do it again. You can perform weather rituals without 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*. When you fight, defend, or assist in your style, take +1d. Each scene, you have **2 mastery** to spend when using this style 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 3 spells and 1 potent spell per session. You know **3 spell theorems**, created with the Spell Crucible, and can learn new spells from scrolls. [Prohibited: Wizard]

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: Once per session, you can 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**. You can **push yourself** to do it again.

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 pool), or move with them.

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

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: Once per session during an intense action sequence, you 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**. You can **push yourself** to do it again.

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 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

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**.

REDIRECT: On a perfect defense against physical attack, you can **push yourself** to turn it back on your foe.

Keep vantage in mind when redirecting attacks. If you're quick, you could very well deflect arrows and bolts. If you're also strong, you could catch and return spears and larger weapons.

RESONANCE: When you would drop a foe, you can instead keep their lifeforce. They know you hold their fate. In the near future, you can decide to let go, and: **drop them instantly—take spark** and release them. One time only on a perfect, you can immediately drop a foe you strike.

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. If they get dropped, so do you.

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 **thread** to set it: *admiration—obedience—respect—defiance.* You can **push yourself** to pull off a **potent feat of righteous command**, such as *ordering a demon to kneel or silencing a riot with a word.*

CHALLENGE: Once per session you can 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. You can **push yourself** to do it again.

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. [Prohibited: Cleric]

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.

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 PSION

AKA the mentalist, seer, telepath

You unlock the limitless power of the mind, bending thought, will, and reality through focus and discipline.



AWAKENED MIND

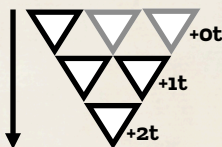
Core Talent

You have spellcasting ability. Choose two bastions below which act as the touchstone for your psionic magic. You can cast spells using Wits, and can make them potent by adding instability, eventually adding increasing thorns to your future spellcasting rolls. You can't cast potent spells once adding +2t from instability. Thorns from instability can't be ignored and reset at the beginning of each session. You gain more slots that don't add instability with growth.

GROWTH: At levels 3, and 6, you gain +1 instability slot at Ot, and +1 bastion.

INSTABILITY

Each potent spell pulls at the threads in your mind, making your magic harder to control. You add thorns to all psionic spellcasting based on your instability, tracked by looking at the thorns on the lowest line you have marked. Consider what this progressive unraveling of your psyche looks like.



BASTIONS

Within your mind lie bastions of psionic power. As you grow stronger, you break down their walls, unlocking your true potential. These powers take shape as visions, psychic phenomena, and even physical manifestations in the form of **ectoplasm**—pure essence of creation.

BIODYNAMICS • Altering and enhancing your own body.

Power: Heal your broken arm. Hold your breath for hours. Run faster than a horse.

CLAIRSENTIENCE • Gaining knowledge from the collective unconscious.

Power: Sense a hidden truth. See into someone's dreams. Find the way home.

METACREATION • Creating objects from ectoplasm, pure mental energy.

Power: Forge a glowing sword. Build a bridge of thought. Shape armor from pure will.

PSYCHOKINESIS • Manipulating energy and force.

Power: Shatter a boulder. Push an enemy back. Lift a heavy object with your mind.

TELEPATHY • Mind-to-mind communication, manipulation, and control.

Power: Read someone's thoughts. Calm an angry mob. Implant a fleeting suggestion.

TRANSPOSITION • Movement and manipulation of space.

Power: Teleport across a room. Switch places with an ally. Freeze someone in place.

PSION PATH TALENTS

ECHO: Once per session, you can create a duplicate as a **3d power pool**. It is a second version of you, acting as you with shared knowledge, ability, and resources. You can drop 1d of its pool to have it: *assist you—trade places with you*.

This isn't an interrupt, if you're targeted by an impact move, it's too late to switch.

FORESIGHT: You can catch small glimpses of the future. Once per session, you can describe a brief course of action while in a calm situation, and the GM will tell you the result. If there's **risk**, make a montage roll to see how it would play out. Afterward, you can decide whether to take the action.

MIND BLAST: On a critical on a bastion roll, you don't add instability, instead clearing one. This causes mental collateral damage around you: *confusion—hallucinations—headaches—panic*. One time only, you can make this a ritual-level effect, affecting all within miles.

PSYCHIC WARRIOR: You're able to turn your psychic volatility against others. You can freely create weapons made from pure willpower, using them with Wits. You take +1d to follow up with them when you: *take vex—increase your instability*.

This talent can be poached by any spellcaster. Flavor the weapons with your magical trappings.

READER: You gain 1 **thread** per session and can spend **thread** when you first meet someone to know their **foremost surface thought**—they are like an open book to you. If you follow-up on it, it counts as a **setup**.

SHIFT FORM: Each session, you have a **2d Shifter** resource pool. You can roll the pool to alter your features and form, though you keep the same basic shape.

This allows you to change your basic physical features and appearance. You might disguise yourself to infiltrate or blend in, but you're still clearly humanoid, and have the same capabilities.

TUMULTUOUS MIND: Your fractured mind bleeds into the consciousness of others. The GM judges an NPC's response, or you can spend **thread** to set it: *agitated—confused—paranoid—forgetful*. Once per session, when you would take **vex**, a nearby creature must take it instead.



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 research or locate them, and when *anyone* attacks or defends against them. When a **Quarry die** rolls a '6', that PC **takes spark**.

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

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

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—noisy—overprotective—scary—unruly

KEEN SENSES: Your senses are twice as sharp as normal. You can pull off **potent feats of tracking** and you always notice the presence of living creatures near you, though details are unclear.

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 **thread** per session and can spend **thread** 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.

SEASONED HUNTER: You can **push yourself** to tell your allies to *Look Out!* and **goad** the GM into spending suspense on a move you declare to attack your party. Anyone involved takes +1d on a defense roll and follow-up action rolls.

SHARPSHOOTER: When given time, you can pull off **potent feats of ranged precision**, such as shooting just *beyond maximum range or into near complete cover*. 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. You also gain 1 major expendable arcana—detail it.

Major expendable arcana allows you to produce the effects of 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 the chosen skills.

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

Below table: ambush—forgery & 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.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ like family | ☐ turf-obsessed | ☐ mystics | ☐ just business |
| ☐ elite training | ☐ heroes | ☐ outsiders | ☐ in the open |
| ☐ cultish | ☐ mercenaries | ☐ influential | ☐ follows code |

CRIMINAL HISTORY

(Optional)

Given their skill set, 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	theft	vandalism	treason	barely remembered
low-level	fraud	gambling	robbery	small bounty
moderate	spying	bribery	assassination	known name
serious	smuggling	extortion	heist	hunted
severe	banditry	arms dealing	impersonation	infamous
legendary	kidnapping	arson	necromancy	most wanted

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 **thread** per session and can spend **thread** 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.

This can cover any kinds of planning. Consider your other talents and abilities as well, for example: if you have spellcasting, perhaps you prepared by using magic ahead of time.

DISTRACTION: On a perfect, you can **setup** an ally and pass them the **spotlight**, even if the GM wants to spend suspense.

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]

This can be used to give psionics, instead, should it fit your setting. Pick a single bastion (pg. 70), and use Wits to cast spells. You can't cast potent spells.

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: Once per session, if caught in a lie or red-handed, you can weasel your way out—for now. Make a story roll to see if they realize their mistake later. You can **push yourself** to do it again.



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. 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: Intense magic has twisted your body. You gain a permanent physical feature like *metal-rendering claws*, *fiery breath*, or *venomous fangs*.

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 always notice magical effects near you, and take +1d when you disrupt them. Given time, you can *discern their details* (ask 2 questions).

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 **2d Spelleater** resource pool. When you suffer from magic, you can roll the pool to ignore the effect. When the pool drops to 0d, your next action is potent.

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 if needed. They return each session.

You could 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 a lesser 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 SUMMONER

AKA the caller, binder, planeswalker

You can create creatures from the essence of other planes to protect yourself and bring ruin to your enemies.



VASSAL

Core Talent

You have a connection with a creature from another plane, and are able to call upon and direct it with a **4d power pool**. The pool returns to its max once at Od, or when you **push yourself**. It has **1 aspect**, a strange trait defining it such as: *big enough to ride—telepathic—a thematic path talent*.

It can take **1 mark** and **1 harm**, with any more breaking the anchors holding it here. Make a 2d story roll to see the fallout before it disappears. You can resummon it every scene.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, you gain +1 aspect.

ASPECTS

(Examples)

Below are some examples of planar creatures and their aspects. Existing talents are listed with a page number reference. Others are made for that beast. If the idea of your summoned eidolon has more aspects than those available, ask your GM about "donating" the PC's own, adding them to the vassal instead.

- ◆ **Dragon:** Eldritch Growth (Sorcerer, pg. 77)
- ◆ **Ghost:** Otherworldly Form (Warlock, pg. 83)
- ◆ **Demon:** Knowing Gaze (Warlock, pg. 83)
- ◆ **Pixie:** Arcane Training (Fighter, pg. 65)
- ◆ **Air Elemental:** Windcaller (Druid, pg. 63)
- ◆ **Oozeling:** Shift Form (Psion, pg. 71)
- ◆ **Unicorn:** Healing Hands (Monk, pg. 67)
- ◆ **Shadow:** Lurker (Rogue, pg. 75)
- ◆ **Zombie Swarm:** Bulwark (Fighter, pg. 65)
- ◆ **Warrior Spirit:** Guardian (Paladin, pg. 69)
- ◆ **Treant:** Primal Growth (Druid, pg. 63)
- ◆ **Tentacles:** Fearsome (Berserker, pg. 59)

BUILD-A-VASSAL

(Optional)

Your summons are from a different plane—a different reality, and their form shifts and shapes to conform to the material plane. Use the crucible below to discover the basic form of your vassal.

It's a ____ -like creature that I send ____ ing toward my enemies.

squat	tall	frog	chicken	prowl	glide
gangly	angular	bull	snake	slither	dash
robust	bulky	turtle	insect	leap	skitter
lithe	rounded	squid	jellyfish	crawl	lumber
sleek	hunched	cat	ape	bound	charge
imposing	gaunt	spider	blob	gallop	float

SUMMONER PATH TALENTS

BINDING WORD: Add contracts as a wise. If you're present for an agreement, you can make it binding. Both parties know if it's broken, with the defaulting party afflicted by a potent spell, using the contract details as touchstones. One time only, you can make this a ritual-level effect.

FIERCE PROTECTOR: Once per session, a creature you control can **interrupt** an impact move against you. On a grim, they take the impact move instead. Either way, you take +1d on your follow-up against the attacker.

This isn't limited to your vassal. Animal companions, and familiars can protect you just as well.

LEY MAGIC: Once per session, you can temporarily alter the leylines in the area to: draw or repel certain creatures—enhance or dampen magic. When you alter a place like this, you know when others enter the area. You can **push yourself** to do it again.

MONSTER MENAGERIE: You have a bond with 3 different creatures, all with their own aspects. When you summon a vassal, you can choose which answers the call.

POCKET PLANE: Given time, you can open a hole to a small pocket dimension about the size of a room. You can **push yourself** to open it on the spot. If dropped, make a story roll to see what happens inside as the plane collapses. You don't need anchors for planar travel rituals.

PORTAL NETWORK: Given time, you can: establish a waypoint in your network—open a portal from one waypoint to another. You can **push yourself** to make a temporary link in the moment, but doing so carries **risk**. Those around you can use the portal as well. Define how you travel, such as by: shadows—trees—doorways—dreams.

SHARED SOUL: You can merge with your vassal, sharing path talents, aspects, and incoming harm. You can choose to use the power pool or your own stats, and when your anchors break, take +1d on the story roll.

This can open up a lot of character concepts. You could be a werewolf, have the ghost of a family member possessing you, or know the alchemical secret to turn yourself into a mutated monster!



PATH OF THE SWASHBUCKLER

AKA the fencer, duelist, buccaneer

You fight with swagger, skill, and a smile, turning every desperate clash into a daring performance with luck ever by your side.



PANACHE

Core Talent

You wield the spotlight as well as any blade, allowing great feats of charm and skill. Each scene, you have **2 panache** to fuel your derring-do. Before making a roll, you can spend **panache**, removing that many thorns. If you remove all thorns, they become **panache dice** instead, increasing the final result level on a 7 or 8. When one of your rolls is **cut** by a thorn, you gain 1 panache (ignoring your max).

Quick Wit: Once per session, you can **interrupt** an impact move with a: humorous quip—quick flourish—timely distraction.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, you gain +1 panache per scene.

PAST ENTANGLEMENTS

(Optional)

A Swashbuckler is known by their past. Whose life is intertwined with the story of your deeds? Choose 2 people important in your tales by picking 1 from each side and smashing them together, and 1 more vital to your story that you don't know yet.

spurned	lifelong	patron	partner
obsessed	bitter	investigator	rival
vengeful	adoring	paramour	fan
treacherous	innocent	mentor	friend
jealous	ambitious	faction	muse
mysterious	secret	relative	protégé

CREED

(Optional)

Many thrilling duelists have a code, a rule they never break, a line they will never cross, or a proverb they live their life by. How devoted to it are you? Choose up to 2 below, or create your own.

- ◆ all's fair in love and war
- ◆ honor is only for the dead
- ◆ wield the sword of justice
- ◆ a good story beats any reward
- ◆ accept every challenge
- ◆ never kill the helpless
- ◆ coin is meant to be spent
- ◆ death before dishonor
- ◆ infamous is still famous
- ◆ the best plan is no plan at all
- ◆ gentleman even in dire times
- ◆ only a fair fight measures skill

SWASHBUCKLER PATH TALENTS

AUDACITY: When you act with pure reckless abandon, **5s count as 6s, but 4s count as 1s**. Regardless of the outcome, those around you are briefly struck by: awe—bewilderment—panic—excitement.

These aren't your garden variety bad ideas, these are the kinds of ideas that leave bystanders frozen in place trying to figure out what just happened, and often a part of tangles.

FANCY FOOTWORK: On a perfect when you fight to **setup** an advantage or otherwise improve your positioning, you can roll a related task pool by: seizing an opening—unnerving your foe.

IMPROVISE: You can **push yourself** and describe your creative use of your surroundings to take +1d. These improvised weapons and tools often stretch the bounds of reality with their use.

LUCKY: Each session you have a **1d Luck** pool. You can roll it as a bonus die after any roll you make and story rolls related to you. On a grim, **take spark**.

NATURAL MOXIE: Choose two skills from the Expertise talent (pg. 74). Take +1d when using these skills. [Prohibited: Rogue]

PROVOKE: Once per session, through insult, boast, or challenge, you can goad the GM into spending **suspense** on an impact move targeting only you. You take +1d on the defense roll, and on a perfect, your foe: is compelled to keep lashing out—leaves an opening—is utterly embarrassed.

THE LEGEND OF...: Many recognize you as a hero, others as a cad and ne'er-do-well. Track tales of your exploits with campaign pools. **Take spark** when you play into it by: leaving a calling card—saying your catchphrase in a dramatic moment—indulging a fan. Use the crucible below to discover what people have taken to calling you.

Playful	Witty	Mysterious	Abstract	Animal	Trade
smiling	gallant	steel	phantom	robin	baron
red	artful	crimson	marvel	hawk	wanderer
infallible	sly	gray	one	butterfly	knight
dashing	silver	silent	justice	fox	rake
fantastic	azure	midnight	enigma	phoenix	thief
wondrous	gilded	masked	mirage	viper	avenger



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 make a story roll (usually 3d) to wield their magic as a weapon, or ask to channel a potent magical effect using their nature as the touchstone. They gift you an **Eldritch Talent**—a changeable path talent manifesting with your patron's trappings. Given time to commune, you can change an Eldritch Talent.

You also have an **8d Patience** pool, representing service to your fickle patron's desires. Roll the pool when you ask for a potent magical effect, change an **Eldritch Talent**, or otherwise displease them. At 0d, your patron will give you a visit to *clear up the issue*, then the pool resets.

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

ELDRITCH MAGIC

You channel your patron's power; your magic and gifted **Eldritch Talents** (and their options) must align with their nature. The trappings on both act as *set dressing*. Remember, your 3d story roll may be lowered if you fail your expectations...

PATRON CREATION

Roll or choose 2 natures and 2 desires below, then assign a distinct color or visual signature to your patron's influence that act as their trappings. Decide how they communicate (*telepathy, signs, projection*), and how many followers (*many, few, one*) they have. Give this powerful, otherworldly being a name, describe what you know of them, and establish the bond between you.

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	odddy
DESIRES	chaos	beauty	minds	wealth	rarities	destruction
	secrets	fun	control	magic	everything	monuments
	power	victory	judgment	unity	souls	biomass
	worshippers	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 a **harm** by transferring the injury. Allies can roll defense to resist this effect. Talk with your GM about transferring other maladies, such as **conditions**.

BLOOD RITUALS: Take +1d on a ritual's invocation and replace any one of its anchors with yourself. When you complete a ritual in this way, **take spark**.

This stacks. Make a coven with your fellow casters!

KNOWING GAZE: When given time, you can stare into someone's eyes and 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.

MAGUS: You weave blade and magic together. You can use your weapon as a touchstone, and add a magical weapon style, such as: *flaming—returning—seeking*. On a perfect with this weapon, you can **push yourself** to add a **secondary effect** based on the magical style. Given time, you can change the style.

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*.

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.

"Clear up the Issue"

The patience pool dropping to 0d should be bad—don't be afraid to hit the Warlock hard with interesting consequences from their patron. Consider *bestowing conditions, changing their appearance, or even straining the warlock's bonds with others*. If the PC is on their good side, maybe the patron gives them *more responsibility, or a thoughtful but misguided gift*. Many patrons are antagonistic, but that doesn't describe all of them. Just ensure the trouble that comes from the patron matches their nature.



PATH OF THE WITCH

AKA the sibyl, oracle, shaman

You are blessed with the knowledge of old magic, wielding the ability to speak the language of the universe.



HIDDEN MAGIC

Core Talent

You understand the ancient magic inherent in the world. You have spellcasting ability, rolling Presence to cast using any 2 **words of power** as the touchstones. When you use a word, **burn it**—you can't use it again until the next session. Given time, you can make this spell potent. You begin with 6 words of power from the crucible. Spells without **risk** are automatically successful and don't burn words, unless potent.

Ritualist: Take +1d when completing ritual invocations, and you can use relevant words of power as anchors.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, you gain +2 words of power.

AFFLICTIONS

(Optional)

Witches are odd and mysterious spellcasters, some with strange maladies. This affliction is something you've grown accustomed to, and while it can inflict thorns and introduce **tangles**, it shouldn't be debilitating. What is your strange afflictions and how did you get it? Choose 1 or make up your own.

- ◆ plagued by your own shadow
- ◆ empty eye sockets
- ◆ skeletal body wasting away
- ◆ special diet, such as only raw meat
- ◆ haunted by ancestral ghosts
- ◆ putrid smell that follows everywhere

THE LANGUAGE

The language of the universe is more than words as we know them. Feelings, thoughts, and reagents also form the syllables. Use the crucible below or come up with your own Words of Power to fit your witch.

WORDS OF POWER

spirit wall absorb ward might blood	<i>grace</i> sleep pain luck vigor grave	wither fire adapt shape vex time	<i>path</i> gate break reduce open move	<i>star</i> storm dream compel obscure ask	<i>color</i> wind sun silence cloud ice
read reveal secret message memory light	<i>puzzle</i> guide stone fable know truth	call shackle trick speak aid rebuke	lost bind voice kindred sanctum blend	plant sea growth weather food bird	life hunt travel beast instinct poison

WITCH PATH TALENTS

BAILIWICK: You are known to other witches by a title and the power inherent in your magical domain—your Bailiwick. Choose 1 **word of power**. You can burn any other word to use it, and on a critical, you regain the use of all words.

This isn't just a specialty. You're not just a witch that knows the word for Star, you're The Witch of Sacred Stars. This means you have the responsibility of upholding it, as well.

EVIL EYE: You can roll Presence to hex someone with: *dread—clumsiness—confusion—forgetfulness—misfortune—sleepiness*. Decide when it takes effect: *now—soon—much later—specific trigger*. This magic only works on someone once.

FAMILIAR: You manifest a small magical creature. You can communicate telepathically, use its senses, and send it on simple tasks, making a story roll to see how it goes. 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 scene.

HERBALISM: Before each session, use the herbalism crucible to make two herb names. Each session, you have 1 **trivial** and 1 **minor potion**, chosen when they're used. The name is the touchstone. One time only, you can have 1 **major potion**.

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.

HOMELY HOVEL: Given time, you can bless a homestead to overflow with power. You get **outside help** on all rolls while on its grounds. Choose two **wondrous traits** to give it such as: *traveling—ritual anchor—healing—caretaker*. You can only have one homestead like this at a time.

charming	castle
mysterious	cottage
rickety	glade
unsettling	manner
vibrant	shack
whimsical	temple

SOOTHSAYER: Once per session, you can tag a spirit in the local area. They offer a **3d Spirit** pool rolled as bonus dice when you or an ally invokes their domain. They may ask for aid in return. Spirit domains include things such as: *rivers—the night sky—art—furry critters*.

WONDER MAGNET: You can cause **wild surges** when spellcasting, as the magical twist in Sorcery. When it triggers, make a 3d story roll for the results. On a perfect, **take spark**. When strange things happen, they happen to you.

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. You know 4 spell theorems inscribed in your spellbook, created using the Spell Crucible (below). 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 portals.

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.

SPELL 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 bolt 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 magic effect, while minor potions bestow a single potent effect. Reflavor the container as an inscribed rune, carved twig, or even a delicious pastry!

ARCHIVIST: You gain **2 minor**, and **1 major arcana** that you've either found or created. When you roll an arcana's power pool, you drop 1 fewer die unless it's the last.

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.

COMPONENT POUCH: Each session, you have a **2d Components** resource pool to help focus your magic. When you get a messy or grim on spellcasting, you can roll the pool to increase a die result by 1 (3→4). Describe what reagent helped.

COUNTERMAGIC: Each session, you have a **2d power pool** you can use to **interrupt** hostile magic. On a perfect, you can turn the magic back on the source.

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

Use the spell crucible to randomly determine a **style**, **essence**, and **form**, by rolling 2d on each section. Assign 1d to the column and 1d to the row (or reverse the two) to find two touchstone words, then choose your favorite. Pick two out of these three (**style+essence**, **style+form**, **essence+form**) for the spell name, or **theorem**.

Pick a magic school for the theorem to determine its general function. The mechanical effect is decided in the moment, and can change with each casting.

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

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

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

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



BACKGROUND TALENTS

Some heritages have innate capabilities beyond their wises. You can link the second talent at character creation to your heritage, or work with the GM to create one. 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.

See the next page for talents that fit more thematically with backgrounds and heritages, but are otherwise available to all paths.

SUGGESTED TALENTS FOR COMMON HERITAGES

Human: <i>Jack of All Trades</i> (pg. 57)	Elemental: <i>Otherworldly Form</i> (pg. 83)
Elf: <i>Keen Senses</i> (pg. 73)	Giant: <i>Mighty</i> (pg. 59)
Dwarf: <i>Dauntless</i> (pg. 69)	Turtlefolk: <i>Bulwark</i> (pg. 65)
Halfling: <i>Lucky</i> (pg. 81)	Lizardfolk: <i>Poisoner</i> (pg. 75)
Gnome: <i>Arcane Training</i> (pg. 65)	Merfolk: <i>Aquatic</i> (pg. 89)
Orc: <i>Flesh Wounds</i> (pg. 59)	Kobold: <i>Trap Making</i> (pg. 55)
Dragonkin: <i>Eldritch Growth</i> (pg. 77)	Goblin: <i>Opportunist</i> (pg. 75)
Fiend: <i>Eldritch Affinity</i> (pg. 75)	Birdfolk: <i>Flight</i> (pg. 89)
Celestial: <i>Healing Hands</i> (pg. 67)	Firbolg: <i>Kindred Spirits</i> (pg. 63)
Satyr: <i>Crowd Favorite</i> (pg. 89)	Forged: <i>Artificial Parts</i> (pg. 55)

While these are suggested, there are many talents that could be reflavored to match any heritage. Use these as a starting point, and think about your character's place in the society they grew up in. Do they fit in, representing their culture well, or were they the outcast?



AQUATIC: You can breathe and move quickly through water, and suffer no other issues that aquatic environments bring.

CLOUT: Your name or wealth carries weight in the right circles. Each session, you have a **3d Favor** resource pool. You can ask as for a reasonable favor from those in power and roll the pool to have it granted. If it drops to 0d, you've asked too much. You can get what you want anyway by *burning that bridge*.

CROWD FAVORITE: 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.

CULTURAL 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 styles. These weapons are often highly coveted outside of your ancestral lands.

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.

PINT-SIZED: Your slight frame has its advantages. Given time, you can pull off a **potent feat of stealth or escape**. You can **push yourself** to do it on the spot.

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 1 harm 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 **thread** to set it: *disdain—under-estimation—kindred—pity*. When you go out of your way to help the common folk, **take spark**.

SIMPLE DEDUCTION: Once per session when trying to solve a question or puzzle to give a specific guess. The GM will tell you: *something right about it—something wrong about it—a detail you missed*. Use a story roll if the answer is unclear.

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**. When taking part in a group montage roll, your 6 result counts towards a critical success.

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.



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).

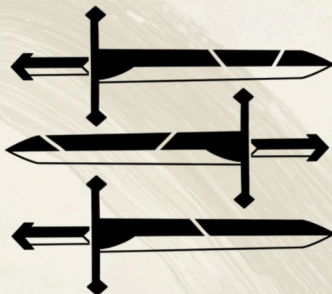
When an impact move doesn't naturally flow from what's happening on-screen (common with messy rolls), think off-screen instead and complicate their lives elsewhere or take **suspense** and hit later with better dramatic timing.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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

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

can use to draw lines between characters 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.

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. Definitively 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 story 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**. Don't get hung up on making sure an impact move is prompted—if the fiction demands its use, use it. *The berserker jumps off a cliff | the curious rogue drinks a bottle labeled 'poison'.*

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.

MOVE SUMMARY

Here are all eight of the GM Moves in *Grimwild* for quick reference on when to use them and what they do. Remember, these are the scaffolding of the game—guardrails to help you run cinematic games. Use them as much or as little as needed.

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 takes suspense, often before introducing a challenge.

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 PCs 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 PCs get a way out of a tough situation, by resolving it for them. 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 or permission (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.*

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 move the story forward and introduce ways to prompt impact moves, 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**, often before introducing a **challenge** (pg. 104).

Use this move to give each PC spark, and take suspense.

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 and engage? | 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. 107). 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.



You watch the **goblin warband** in the distance. They'll be here by morning. What is the mood around the camp? (Build Up)

We move to the next town over. **We see flames** and dancing goblins, as they make plans to come to Humblefalls next. (Clue In)

Before walking up to the wrecked caravan, you notice **small humanoid tracks** around it. Everything seems too quiet. (Foreshadow)

Seeing what happened to Guzrak, the remaining goblins **drop their weapons and surrender**. (Resolve)



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 mess, 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 mage 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.

You see skeletal hands burst from the ground as

The Lich summons more undead!

(Complicate Things)

With a flash of necrotic power, The Lich **dispels**
your magic, making it dissipate into the aether.

(Counter)

His boney hand grabs your wrist. **You take**
bloodied as the life force is sapped from you.

(Hit Hard)

A magic barrier forms in front of the door. It
seems **the only way out** now is to defeat this
grand evil once and for all. (Lock Down)



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. Many Challenges (pg. 104) list a *fail state*, an example *lock down* ending and failing it for the players. In this case, consider pairing the move with *foreshadow* for story continuity and to give them a chance to stop it. When used, 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 lizardfolk blows a warhorn before you skewer him (start 6d reinforcements 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. You may roll for things you'd normally skip or don't see as **risky**. Impact moves have the weight of 1 mark, or softer consequences (*set dressing, vex, raise stakes*). This is a tool for tone, moving between intense and light play. *Fisticuffs in a barfight. | Keep your nerve while questioned by a friendly guard. | Help a cat that's stuck in a tree.*

Regular Stakes

Typical play and the assumed default. Impact moves have the weight of 1 harm, or other standard consequences (2 marks, condition, roll a pressure pool, complicate things). *Sneak through a guarded warehouse. | Handle a tense negotiation. | Fight a gnoll, 1-on-1.*

High Stakes

Things are escalated. Impact moves have the weight of desperate harm, twice that of a standard consequence. A disaster can drop PCs immediately, with most incoming trouble putting them at death's door. *Defend yourself while cornered by an angry ogre. | Explaining your actions to the queen. | Bluff a trained and suspicious guard.*

Dire Stakes

Death looms. Keep players in the loop and let them know that PC death is on the table. Any prompted impact move will instantly drop the PC. *Pushed off a cliff. | Looking into the eyes of an elder horror.*

Varied Consequences

The above scale uses weights of harm as a reference, but you can always use any type of impact move (*setbacks, strained bonds, collateral damage, conditions, etc.*), or split up trouble into smaller consequences as you see fit. Keeping consequences varied helps give the world teeth, while pushing a cinematic feel.

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 (each giving a defense roll against the move).



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 can be introduced as the GM sees fit, but often alongside the **Build Up** suspense move. Each challenge gives the GM 2 bonus **suspense** to be spent on moves relating to it, and use 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 also be triggered with a **Lock Down** impact move, cutting off any chance of success for the PCs when it feels appropriate. Consider **Foreshadowing** the move to give the PCs a chance to intervene and keep the action coherent.

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.*

Enemies in the scene, as well as their tier and role (pg. 110)

LAIR OF THE MAGMA SERPENT

FEATURES lava pools, unstable ground

THREATS 4d lava eruptions

5 fire elementals (tough blasters)

8d | magma serpent (boss predator)

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 brutes)

4d | pirate captain (elite overseer)



Traits * for the scene, affecting vantage.



External trouble, triggering when the timer expires, or when you spend the free suspense.

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. 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 most 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, potentially side-stepping the threat even without an action. 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**, letting the character take the initiative before danger strikes, or possibly bypass 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 to see the threat beforehand. 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.

You realize the servant slipped poison into your glass. | A trapdoor opens beneath you.



VIGILANCE EXAMPLES

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

Play Example

The sorcerer, fighter, and rogue are creeping through an ancient dwarven city on the hunt for lost treasures. Up ahead, they see an area lit by a single torch. As they get close, they notice the stone statue of a dwarf holding a ruby.

The GM, knowing it's a trap, **spotlights** one of the characters:

The sorcerer...

a noble, has nothing in their vantage about traps, or dwarven architecture. They go for the ruby and take a **Strike**. Flames erupt from the statue and catch their robes on fire!

The rogue...

a weary dungeon delver, knows there's danger around every corner. As he walks up, he gets a **Hint**—flame scarring on the ground beneath the statue.

The fighter...

a dwarf herself, identifies the statue as the god of greed and cruelty. She gets a **Reveal** and spots that the strange stonework is hiding a flame trap!



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 pg. 177.

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. See below for each enemy tier:



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), 8d 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 5). 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.

BRUTE

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, exploit every weakness they find, and command those around them. They struggled when their plan fails.

- * 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 weapon styles, 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 to come up with. 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 (giving them a defense roll).



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.

Armor

Heavy armor and shields can be represented by talents like Bulwark (pg. 65). Other armors remain as vantage and set dressing—impacting rolls and thorns. A heavy 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 pg. 175.

Attacking Multiple

PCs with the vantage to do so, can target multiple dangerous foes with their weapons at once, though this often depends on the foe's tier (pg. 109) and comes with great risk adding thorns or higher stakes with the attempt. Vantage often comes from *sweeping* weapons, time on the battlefield, or incredible martial skill.

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, spells can allow a defense roll with the connected stat.

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 Pemtown

SHAZ, ORC WARLORD

small, elite warband
secret Pemtown 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 Pemtown 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

GNOLLS AT THE GATE

The 8d | Groll 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

Had they chosen greater effect, you would have dropped 1d from the pool before rolling it. If they had went with setup, they could have rolled an assist without risk with whoever came at the gnolls next. Imagine a berserker flying off the wall, greataxe in hand, cutting through the exploding fireball at some surprised gnolls!

Mastering setting up and rolling pools is another key GM skill. Here, it's rolled right as it's set because it makes sense.

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→od!** Nevermind, it's engulfed in flames!

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**.

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 **+1t**. 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!

As GM, you have to be really on point and consistent with thorns. There are no hard rules, but it's easy to forget how tough enemy numbers can be. Even a great fighter will struggle against ten all coming at them.

When considering whether to add a thorn, err on the side of adding it! It makes rolls more interesting with higher stakes, but also makes players not just try the first thing that comes to mind.

Finally, splitting up consequences like this is a good way to keep scenes moving without hammering a PC as things get started.

Give them a fighting chance to make for a cool scene. A perfect probably would have had them facing 2 bandits.



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 chops off their arm! You toss the narration back to the player to let them describe how it all went down.

Horrifying enemies need horrifying consequences. If you hit hard, especially when the dice tell you to, players will understand—the world is dangerous. That's why what they're doing is heroic.

Still, it's good to check in. You can't give a permanent condition like losing a limb to a player without their say so. Had they wanted to avoid that, you could have dropped them instead and risked death or found something equally fitting.

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.

Unfortunately, the rogue here got stuck with losing out on a spark—but it all happened so quickly that as the GM, you should give them a pass and let them have three (tangle, quarrel, Build up) just this once.

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**.

You then call for a **Build Up** move and 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.**

Setting up challenges on the fly is one of the most important parts of being a GM. With time, it becomes second nature and lets you set up dynamic scenarios quickly.

Giving PCs opportunities to get spark like that as well incentivizes them using it. In these cases, usually one or two PCs will have spark still on their sheet and miss out on getting that second one as theirs is full.

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. 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. 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!

This kind of pressure creates teamwork and teamwork is what an adventuring party should be all about. If you find your players struggling against challenges, make sure to point out mechanics like assists that they might be missing out on.

And don't be afraid to Lock Down if they don't do it. The story will just move on in a different direction!

Fail states provide an important check against neverending rolls to whittle down pools. Setting up a proper one, here the Storm Blowing In and even later a second one with Taking on Water, means there's urgency and care in what they do. They'll work hard together to make sure those pools don't get rolled.

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.

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 swash-bucklers too, and the Captain's an elite."

You put out some tokens representing all of this on the battlemat. "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.**

Clearing marks after other marks are applied makes sure you don't end up in weird situations where you take a mark, roll it, clear it, take another, roll it, clear it, and so on. It's better to change the fiction up and have it move to a different stat.



TREACHEROUS CHANNEL, CONTINUED

If you know a situation could cut straight to a dropped on a grim without being desperate first, you need to let them know that it's dire stakes. Players buying into a roll that could leave their PC dropped makes them way more okay with it if it happens, or even laughing it off when it does.

However, if you drop them out of nowhere and they roll a grim on the story roll, it's likely to fall pretty flat.

Rogue: "I want to trick the Kraken into trying to hit me! I'll slice at a tentacle, then jump over towards the deckhands, like right into the middle of them."

You double check their intent, to make the kraken hit the deckhands, and then have him roll Wits (+2t), warning that this is **dire stakes—this could get them dropped**. Hearing that, the cleric uses their crossbow to assist with some cover fire at the deckhands. The rogue agrees and they roll a messy, but it works! You think on it and make a ruling prioritizing the fiction here. That tentacle is enough to wipe out those deckhands without a roll. However, the rogue is definitely dropped, out

of the scene in some way.

You get ready to make a story roll for the dropped rogue, but the cleric jumps in to **assist** again! They roll 1d on a defense roll since the rogue didn't get one and get a perfect! They run across and tackle the rogue out of the way just as the tentacle sweeps the deck hands off into the sea.

You check in that the battlemat has the tokens in roughly the right spots. You also feel it's good timing for the threat pool and roll 4d Waves (4d→0d). Waves wash over the boats and you have everyone make Brawn defense rolls. They all get a perfect except the cleric, who rolled a grim—they're washed overboard!

Wizard: "Can I try to save the cleric just before he goes over? Or like right as he goes over? I want to cast *Flaming Claw* to grab him."

You let her know she can't undo something that happened, but there's enough gray area to try this. You remind her that *Flaming Claw* scorches whatever it touches, so the cleric's Agility will get marked no matter what here. She makes the roll and gets a messy. The cleric is scorched a bit, but safe as the claw drags him back up the side of the boat. Not wanting to further complicate this beat, you decide to take **suspense** instead of making an impact move, a nice soft reset on the action. You point the Spotlight back at the PCs.

Remind your players a few times when you first start playing that they can assist on action rolls that prompt impact moves. They only get to roll 1d and open themselves up to the risk, but it's a chance! They can also spend spark on the roll.

Suspense is a great fallback on a messy when you want to wrap up a beat and move on. Sometimes a perfect or a grim both make sense, but the middle zone doesn't—let the PCs have their easy victory for now, then hit them out of nowhere with suspense later.

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 brutes)

4d | pirate captain (elite overseer)

BANDIT SHOWDOWN

The rogue spots the ambush and sneaks into the trees, up behind the 4 Bandit Rabble. He strikes, rolling Agility and gets a perfect. **You let him know these are just mooks and this takes out all of them**, so he takes the creative liberty to narrate a sequence of him dispatching the bandits quietly, one by one.

The player knows there's also a Bandit Leader here, but the rogue character doesn't—he introduces a tangle. They recently changed their trait from definitely not honorable to definitely not quiet, so he wants to say his character doesn't know about the bandit and walks out loudly bragging. That makes sense and seems in-character, so you okay it and he takes spark.

A single good roll can take out a couple of mooks or one tough. With a good enough pool roll, it can even take out one elite.

When in doubt about what an enemy would do, look to their role and go from there.

The player expected the leader to run away, but you check his role—**brute**. A smart enemy might flee, but not a brute. You make a 1d (unlikely) story roll for the rogue to see if the bandit runs and get a grim. Looks like it's a fight. You declare dire stakes, then make a move that was prompted by

the story roll—Hit 'Em Hard.

The Bandit Leader charges from the bushes. The rogue rolls a grim and gets blind-sided. You skip marked and go straight to bloodied.

The rogue describes the attack, blood flying from a blow to the head. **You use a Buildup move and you both narrate a moment, the bandit looking to finish this, the rogue having a chance to stand up. They face off.** The rogue takes spark, you take suspense. Now it's a fight.

Cinema like this is why we play the game. Imagine all this through the camera lens, your shared imagination space. When the mechanics flow like this, the system sings.



THE RED DRAGON

By @zach.labounty on Discord, adapted for Community Edition and used with permission.

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.

The GM uses the Build Up move before they 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 tree-line 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.

Suspense can be spent to target multiple PCs. In this case, the town is also caught in the fire. Consider lessening the consequences or thorns; falling from a group attack isn't as dynamic as other impact moves.

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 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.

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.

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**.

Instead of giving bloodied, another option would be to target the townsfolk—striking directly at the Cleric's goal.

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 jumping strike. Messy! The GM rolls the Body pool (8d → 6d), not very effective.

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.

THE RED DRAGON, CONTINUED

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 Cleric isn't out of the scene just yet. Given a few moments to collect themselves they may return, but they'll certainly have to explain themselves to their allies and the town—assuming there's one left to come back to!

the town's shelter and leaving it free to be attacked by the kobold minions, despite their desire to protect the townsfolk.

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.

If it ever makes sense in the narrative for the dragon to flee, the GM could use Lock Down, using the 'fly away' fail state. The party should work towards cutting this off in some way before too long.

The party is in a pretty bad situation! Three PCs left, the fighter on his last leg, and lots of suspense!

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

X fly away

6d | TAIL

* protect the body

● TAIL SWEEP

● CRUSH

4d | KOBOLD MINIONS

● DIE FOR MASTER!

GM TOOLKIT

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And here's where it all comes together, the mix of setting up challenges, rolling pools, reacting within the fiction to how those pools progress, and hitting with appropriate impact moves while giving out thorns.

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.

Next, the Wizard must walk across a very narrow balance beam (+1t). She rolls [2, 6, - 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.

Throughout all of this, there's of course a lot more narration, but this is the ideal flow of a challenge. Each roll is giving great prompts for narration and it progresses smoothly towards its horrible ending.

DISTRACTED GUARD

You call the guard over to distract him with chit-chat, rolling Presence and get [3, 6] perfect! This gives your rogue friend a chance to pick the lock. They spent thread to have found some wire they could finagle into a makeshift lockpick, but using it on the lock is still +2t.

They roll Agility, getting [3, 4, 2 - 7, 8] disaster! The messy (4) is cut by the thorns twice (7, 8) from a messy to a grim, then to a disaster. The lock opens, but the GM makes two impact moves here. The guard runs over, kicks the door, bloodies the rogue, and slams it shut, locking it.

Without spending thread, the rogue wouldn't have even been able to pick the lock. Had the guard been watching, the difficulty (+3t) would have made it incredibly difficult. These are the kinds of factors players and GMs must consider when judging rolls, and how thorns can affect the outcomes.

At the end, the GM's second impact move comes from the disaster. In this case, the GM could have given the rogue desperate harm if it had made sense.



BAR BRAWL

You tell the GM you want to punch the guy in the face, so he calls for a Brawn roll. Confused, you rewind a bit and explain that you're sucker punching him, and it's mostly just to get him to back down. Seeing the situation more clearly now, **the GM calls for Agility.**

This is why the how & why is important. Without it, the GM can't get the stat right.

With an Agility of 2, you roll 2d and get [3, 5] messy.

You're going to do it, but the GM makes an impact move. That guy will be back with some friends. The GM starts a 4d Hooligans timer.

HORSE NEGOTIATION

The fighter grabs the orc by the shirt and threatens him, but the orc's not budging. The GM makes his impact move—the price for the horses just doubled, and you all have nowhere near enough treasure.

You step up and try a softer approach, negotiating with Presence at +1t from the price doubling. You roll 3d1t and get [4, 6, 6 - 7] a **critical!** In spite of the price, your critical ignores the cut. You get the horses for the cost of the treasure and choose a **secondary effect**—you want to make sure this orc remains friendly permanently. The GM okays it and you're now friends with the best horse trader this side of the Ironback Mountains.

For the critical, you could have chosen something else.

Greater effect would have gotten you the horses for a nominal price. Setup doesn't make much sense in the situation, though if you were looking to rob the orc later, it might apply.

CLIFF ESCAPE

You're already bloodied and want to climb up this cliff to get away from the goblins shooting arrows at you. The GM has you roll Agility and adds a thorn to represent the goblins. You roll a [5 - 7, 1]. Your messy gets cut by the 7 and turns into a grim. The GM lets you know you're getting an arrow in your back and falling back down the wall, ending up desperate. You start gleefully narrating how horribly it goes.

You decide to make one last attempt. This time, you spend spark and now have another thorn from desperate. You roll 2d3t and get [6, 3 - 7, 2, 6] messy. The messy means you did it, so the GM thinks on the consequences and makes you **rattled**. That was one scary as hell climb. Once again, you get to narrating your near-demise.

It's possible to roll again for the same thing, as long as the situation's changed. If nothing has changed, it shouldn't need a roll in the first place.

One very important point is that messy is successful, it's just not pretty. Here the GM faces a bit of a dilemma—you're being shot at with arrows. If you took bloodied again, you could have died. But you did make it to the top of the cliff. They went with rattled due to how terrifying it was, but bloodied could have worked as well. It's just that you would have been dropped at the top.



ROGUE HEALING

You want to cast a healing spell to remove an arrow from the rogue. The wizard and fighter **assist**. The GM decides it's risky, so you make the action roll which ends up being a 2, 4, 1. The fighter rolls a 1 and the wizard a 6. The end result is [2, 4, 1, 1, 6] perfect!

You start narrating. You describe your healing spell going awry and things getting real bloody. The rogue starts fighting it and the fighter says they can't quite hold the squirrely rogue down. The wizard steps in with their enchantment magic and soothes the rogue, letting you finish your work.

TUNNEL COLLAPSE

As the session winds to a close, the GM calls for a **montage** roll to escape the collapsing dungeon. You're bloodied, so you have a thorn and roll [1, 1 - 7] a disaster. The wizard in your group rolls [2, 2] grim.

Had the overall result here been a grim, it may have been a good idea to zoom in on a tough scene as they get caught fleeing the dungeon. The GM could have inflicted those marks, dropped your character even, then started the scene off.

desperate, so you're instead **dropped**. You make a 2d roll and get a messy, completely knocked out.

The wizard describes getting everyone lost in the tunnels. You narrate collapsing from your wounds, telling the group to leave you behind. The fighter refuses, hoists you over their shoulder, and heads in a single direction—and somehow finds their way to the surface!

Outside, the rogue stands waiting and cheekily asks what took you so long. They were elsewhere and got a perfect on their montage.

When you roll assists, all of the results are combined towards one outcome, but each person rolls their own dice.

In this case, the healer is most important so they're leading the roll. If nobody had medical knowledge, the leader might have been the fighter—holding down the rogue now becomes vitally important.

Post roll, be sure to narrate together!

After a long adventuring session is the perfect timing for a montage. Everyone has grown a bit tired of that location and want to move on to bigger things.

The fighter rolls a [4, 2] messy! The best outcome is a messy, so the overall outcome is a **messy**. You manage to get out, but the impact move leaves you each with Agility and Presence marked. You collaborate on the narration.

You already have **marks** on Brawn and Agility, so it goes to **bloodied**. Unfortunately, you were also bloodied and

This is a good look at how damage escalates. If Brawn wasn't marked, you could have gotten away with just a mark even if you were already desperate. Unfortunately, the adventure had taken a toll and just that last small hit was the straw that broke the camel's back.

A 2d roll on dropped is a good default. That last hit was from a mark, so unlikely to have killed you. Even 3d would have been okay.

ASSASSIN ATTACK

You're walking through the library at night when an assassin strikes from above. This could be Wits to see it coming, but **the GM thinks it's more of a physical reaction, Agility.** The GM makes it clear this is dire stakes—a grim means you're dropped, maybe dead!

You take +1t since the assassin has the drop on you. You get [6, 1 - 8] messy! The knife misses and you don't end up bloodied, but Brawn gets marked as the assassin crashes into you, knocking the wind out of you. You're both sprawled out on the ground, the knife now between you. What do you do?

The GM has a lot of flexibility in choosing the defense they want to test—and testing the stats is the best way of thinking about what's happening. The player has no choice in the stat, besides a soft veto on things that are very out of character.

The GM could have made this Brawn if the assassin had tried to garrote them, or Wits if they didn't want to assume the assassin went unspotted. Presence is pretty hard to make sense of in this scenario, though.

BLESSED INCENSE

You have a special pack of blessed incense you brought from your home temple. It's a **4d resource pool**. Each time you use it, it triggers a roll to see how much is remaining. The first time you use it, you roll 4d and get [6, 2, 6, 4]. The 2 result drops the pool by 1, 4d→3d. The next time you use it, you roll 3d and get 4 5 5. Nothing is dropped from the pool! While you did use it, the pool's an abstract measurement of how much is remaining and doesn't change this time. The final time, though, you roll 3d again and get [2 1 2], 3d→0d. You use it, but then the pool depletes and you're out of incense!

*This is a really straightforward example of how pools work. If you were working against a task pool or trying to affect a timer with an action roll and it dropped 0d from the pool, remember that you can **push** or **pivot**. Taking a mark to drop 1d, or taking a secondary effect instead.*

UPHOLDING HONOR

You look to your desire for **belonging** and, feeling found at last, replace it with a new one—**honor**. You introduce a tangle, deciding to stay on the bridge. "Go," you tell your friends, turning to hold off the horde on the bridge while they escape.

While traits and desires don't give spark directly, they do give you vantage to add tangles. When they change, you should also let your group see it play out.



CHIEFTAIN'S TEMPER

You and the cleric, as honored prisoners, are hauled out to join the chieftain at the head table. The GM has made it clear that the chieftain angers easily, so they start a 4d Temper pool. You find a chance during the meal to try to persuade the chieftain to let you go, but roll a grim.

Annoyed with your badgering, they bash the table and gesture for the guards to haul you back to your tent. This triggers the Temper pool and the GM rolls 1, 3, 1, 6 :: **4d→1d**. With just 1d left, the GM makes sure to describe the chieftain being on the edge of losing it. The cleric decides to keep their mouth shut.

Pools can be very swingy, which is by design. Here we see things almost instantly move towards an incredibly tense situation.

You might also end up with a much longer leash than you imagined if the pool doesn't drop much at all. Either way, it's clear that they had best tread lightly. Even when not rolled, pools have a great passive effect on scenes like this.

Here we see the player introducing story details via a tangle instead of using thread, which is completely fine.

NEMESIS TANGLE

The heir must survive as the battle turns into a rout. Just then, you introduce a **tangle**—you spot your nemesis, Mortica, across the battlefield. By choosing the tangle, you risk the mission to protect the heir, but your vengeance is more important. You take spark.

The GM decides to make a 2d story roll and lets you know first what might happen. On a **perfect**, you spot her first. On a grim, she spots you first. On a messy, you both spot each other.

On a perfect, you might also consider another tangle—to wait until Mortica sees her to engage honorably. Mortica, however, would definitely blindside you with an impact move on that grim.

DWARF VS. CAVE TROLL

Fleeing from a massive cave troll, you spend **thread** and invoke your Dwarf of the Deepmoot heritage's underground navigation wise. You say you spot a tight side tunnel to lead the troll in to fight it. The GM decides the cave troll can't maneuver well and +2t becomes +1t.

A cave troll is massively dangerous, +2t, but if it can't maneuver well, it's only kind of dangerous. Thread can definitely be used to gain mechanical advantage like this.

STORY ARCS

You start the game with the character arcs **Enjoy Life** and **Keep a Secret**, which makes sense since you're the runaway heir to the Orchard Kingdom. Your job is to find ways to express these arcs through play, especially growth arcs like *Enjoying Life*. The GM's job is to challenge them and offer opportunity, especially a crisis arc like *Keeping a Secret*. It's clear that you don't want to live a life of responsibility, but that life will come calling whether you like it or not.

The game will hum along just fine without story arcs. They're a player tool that expands vantage and lets you push the story towards what you want to be doing. They tell the GM, and other players, that you are interested in these themes.

If they fit your play style well, lean into them.

SETTLING DEBTS

As you enter the small city, you remember your *Settle Debts* story arc and want to explore it. You spend **thread** and declare that the father you never knew is here and you've carried this chip on your shoulder a long time—now's the time to confront him.

Here, you don't use a tangle, instead opting to spend thread. Tangles are always bad, while story just makes things happen.

Through play, you learn that your father has become a benevolent guild leader in the city, looked up to by all. Not very interested in bringing down someone helpful to the community, **you bury the feelings and move on**. You take spark for finishing the arc.

Arcs aren't prescriptive. They don't have any ending in mind. Whether you accomplish it, end it through failing at it, or just give up on it, you take spark as your character finds something new to drive them.

ARCHMAGE SECRETS

Your party meets with the archmage, who reveals a dark secret about your past. The GM targets your Presence to keep it together, adding a thorn—the secret is especially damning. You roll [4, 1, 5 - 7] grim. You're overwhelmed by memories, and take **vex**!

Now you have a choice. You could **fight** and attack the archmage in a rage, someone your party sees as an ally. You could take **flight** away from the group, back outside the tower. You could **freeze**, dropping the potion you intended to give the archmage. You could **freakout**, lashing out at your allies' shocked, judgemental stares.

Vex gives a chance to really double down on who your character is or go in the exact opposite direction with something surprising. Either way, it's a big open door to roleplaying.



CHAPTER 4

EXPLORATION

EXPLORING THE GRIMWILD

Exploration is an adventure, and this pointcrawl system captures that spirit. It's about venturing into the unknown, both as your characters and as players, uncovering what lies ahead. As you explore, connections form naturally, and a narrative begins to emerge—one built from your experiences and the discoveries you yourselves have added to the region. It's discovery as PCs, but also as players, figuring out and creating a region together on the fly and finding the wonder and drama that lies within it. This chapter includes rules for the Grimwild setting, exploring, and downtime, all entirely optional—use any if they fit your style of game.

WHAT IS THE GRIMWILD?

The Grimwild is a completely optional campaign setting or exploration system you can bolt onto your own setting. It's a chaotic wildland, a once sparsely populated borderland that was shattered by a cataclysm half a century ago. Within, three realities have collided—the original small towns and keeps, the ruins of a long-fallen empire, and a savage wilderness teeming with monsters. The Remnants, the Wilds, and the Ruins have fused into a surreal region that defies logic and strict canon, the three bleeding into each other across the Grimwild's expanse. Old settlements have either adapted or vanished, and survivors live in a tenuously strange existence where a dragon might nest beneath a town or farmers inhabit an ancient wizard's tower.

It's a long corridor spanning harsh terrain, a week's ride east to west and twice that north to south— if the way were clear. Such territory is rare in the Grimwild. Sheer cliffs line the stormy eastern coast, jagged mountains rise to the west, and dense forests and swamps choke the north and south. Surrounding the borders is the fog, impossibly dense.

To enter the fog and leave the Grimwild is to risk becoming lost forever, never knowing which of the three realities you will emerge into. Expeditions into and out of the region rarely returned. The borderland was written off as a cursed wasteland by those outside. Those inside have learned their present situation is better than the horrors of the other realms. The Grimwild is isolated, left to its own fate.

The Grimwild is a canon-less sandbox where you have the freedom to explore, discover, and make it all up as you go. Logical connections don't matter here, giving you the freedom to add whatever sounds fun to your party and let a storyline emerge through play. It is a land of discovery, one even its own inhabitants don't understand well.

THE THREE REALITIES

Below are some basic truths about the three realities that make up the Grimwild, a set of pillars for you to start building within and around. You can hang your own fiction off of them, or topple them over and create something totally different. The point is to make a sandbox that's easy to play in.

THE REMNANTS, *Forgotten People of the Borderlands*

Fiercely Independent: Long before the cataclysm, the borderlands thrived as a melting pot of cultures, blending traditions into something uniquely their own.

Scattered Settlements: Villages, homesteads, and the occasional keep dot the harsh landscape, home to survivors who endure isolation.

Simple Monsters: Orcs, goblins, and a few larger beasts lurk, but they're nothing compared to the horrors of the Ruins and Wilds.

Blended Heritage: A patchwork of languages, customs, and traditions born from centuries of border nations mingling.

THE WILDS, *Untamed and Unforgiving Wilderness*

Tribal Nomads: Scattered tribes thrive where others perish. Each tribe has its own customs, some steeped in ancient magic, while others forge brutal pacts with the Wilds' predators.

Raw Magic: The land itself pulses with ancient, untamed power, twisting flora, fauna, and even the air into something alive and unpredictable.

Deadly Terrain: Shifting rivers, jagged cliffs, and choking forests make navigation a perilous gamble for outsiders.

Primal Beasts: Terrible creatures stalk the Wilds, from towering apex predators to grotesque hybrids warped by magic.

THE RUINS, *A Fallen Empire*

Shattered Greatness: Once a realm of truly unmatched knowledge and power, now reduced to crumbling relics of its glory.

Forgotten Relics: Ancient artifacts of magic and technology linger, broken or lost, yet still brimming with untapped potential.

Corrupted Wasteland: Overgrown cities and desolate ruins seethe with decay, haunted by strange energies and whispers of the past.

Eldritch Horrors: Nightmarish creatures lurk in the shadows—aberrations, cursed beings, and the tortured echoes of those consumed by the empire's collapse.



EXPLORATION SYSTEM

Exploration is played out with a token-based system that lets players and the GM work together to create and draw out the world. You gain exploration tokens, then spend them to add things to the map, giving each player equal opportunity to have an impact, while the spending of a resource adds weight to the contributions.

You're creating a pointcrawl to map out the meaningful locations (points) and the connections (paths) between them, focusing on what really matters. Everything outside those paths? Either it's tough to get through, or there's nothing worth finding there. This approach keeps the spotlight on the places and journeys that drive the story, cutting out the tedium and keeping exploration sharp, deliberate, and packed with interesting things to experience.

EARNING TOKENS

Expand the Map: When the GM chooses to **expand the map** all players and the GM gain 3 exploration tokens.

Significant Discoveries: You can earn 1-3 tokens by discovering something meaningful when you actively explore or uncover key details of an area.

Spend Thread: You can also spend a thread as an exploration token, as long as it is connected to a wise or story arc. After, explain how you knew about what you spent it on in-character.

SPENDING TOKENS

Exploration tokens can be spent to add points and paths to the map. Points are locations of interest, with a few key words to describe them. Paths are drawn to connect points or lead off into unexplored territory. The token cost depends on the map type (region, settlement, site), covered in the next few pages.

EXPAND THE MAP

When the GM wants to encourage and make time for exploration and mapping, they can call to **expand the map**. This can be done at any time, but must be used when:

- ◆ The adventuring party reaches the edge of the known map and cannot proceed without expanding it.
- ◆ There's a natural narrative progression requiring new points or paths to open up.
- ◆ Everyone's just excited to add more to the map, like at the start or end of a session.

When the GM calls to expand the map, everyone (GM included) takes **3 exploration tokens**. The map is pulled out, and everyone at the table goes around, in any order, adding points to the map until all tokens are spent. Tokens disappear once finished.

THE JOY OF EXPLORATION

Take **spark** when you engage with the wonder of exploration as such:

Pause and take in the world around you. Let your roleplaying bring out a moment of beauty— what does your character notice, and how do they feel about it? Take spark when it creates a meaningful scene.

Ask a question about the world that nobody knows the answer to, sparking curiosity in yourself and others. Encourage wonder. Take spark when the table embraces it.

Travel somewhere far off, simply to see what's there. Everyone on the journey takes spark.

Highlight the unique nature of a place, even a seemingly mundane one. Make the scene about the location itself—exploration is at its heart. Take spark when you realize you'll never forget that place.



REGION MAPS

The Grimwild region map begins with squares along each border: the west is nearly impassible mountains, the east a long, cliffside coastline. The north is a heavy forest, and the south a dire swamp. And throughout each of these is the fog, which you dare not exit—entering the fog will take you to one of the three realities, with no way to know which one.

This creates a limited, but completely unknown sandbox to begin exploring. You enter on one side of this sandbox, drawing a path into it. From there, you begin your exploration. Here's what you can spend tokens on, and how much they cost:

POINTS OF INTEREST

1-2 TOKENS

You can place minor (1 token) or major (2 tokens) points of any of the following. Major points are larger and have a greater impact on the world around them.

Settlement: Places people live—towns, tribes, or villages.

Site: Places that hold rewards—dungeons, ruins, unique natural features.

Danger: Hostile monsters, hazardous nature, or enemies.

PATHS

0-2 TOKENS

There are three different types of paths, for varying costs. When you place a path, you can add **Passes** such as bridges or tunnels for free along it, allowing it to travel over or through the terrain. **Waypoints** are added to the path by the GM. Each represents 1 day of travel on horseback.

Major Path (2 tokens): Well-maintained roadways or trade routes. Travel is quicker, less dangerous, and waypoints are more spread out.

Minor Path (1 token): Lesser trails—footpaths, forest tracks, game trails.

Rough Path (free): Difficult and dangerous terrain—overgrown paths, rocky trails, dry creek beds. These may not have waypoints, if travel time is unclear.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

3 TOKENS

These locations can be placed by anyone for 3 tokens, though the GM can add them for free to spice up the map, or as the story requires.

Curiosity: Unclear but intriguing signs or information waiting to be explored.

Barrier: Obstacles to travel—rivers, mountains, cliffs. Only crossable via dangerous rough paths or passes.

Area: Large, usually natural, spaces with a single theme—lakes, swamps, deserts.

MAKING THE MAP

To start off mapping a region, begin on one border and **expand the map**. The GM draws a rough path into the region, then go through one or two rounds, until the map feels just detailed enough to venture into.

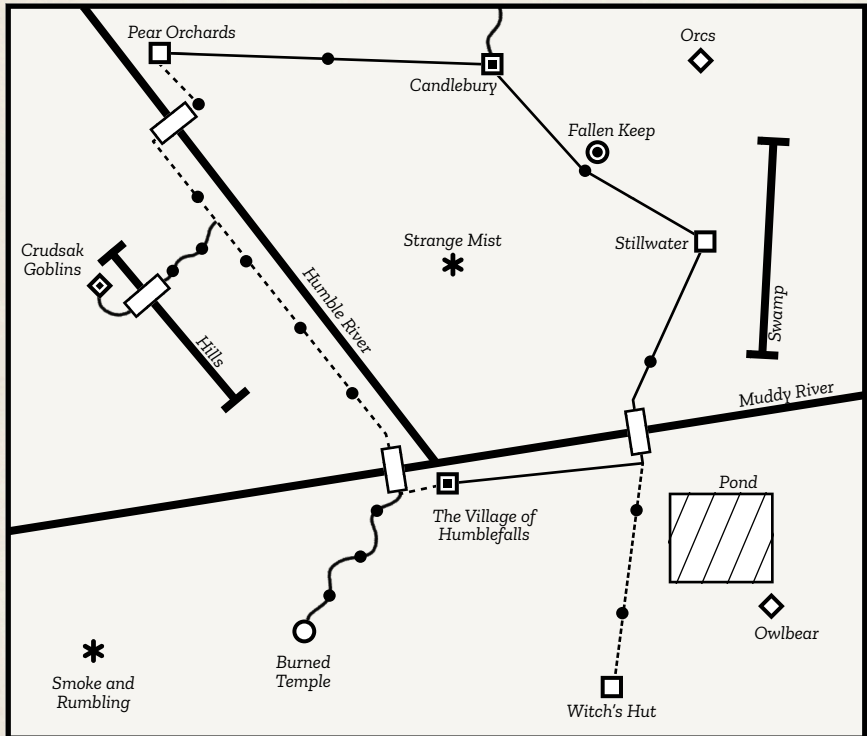
When you place something on the map, you always label it. This can be a simple evocative label of just a few keywords or even a name. If you aren't sure, you can consult the crucibles on pg. 138 for ideas! You can also label it [Remnants] [Wilds] [Ruins], if you want to specify which reality it is mostly from.

You can add factions to the map and campaign as needed. There's a factions crucible on pg. 139 to help.

Key

	MINOR	MAJOR						
settlement			curiosity		rough path		pass	
site			barrier		minor path		waypoint	
danger			area		major path		(A DAY'S RIDE)	

Example Region



SETTLEMENT MAPS

Settlement maps are built with Expand the Map, but with a different drawing style. The GM begins by drawing the town's outline, either as a vague border (a line, like a path) or as a wall (a barrier). You add roads and notable buildings following the rules below, and barriers, areas, curiosities, and passes as normal.

ROAD

1 TOKEN

Draw a straight line between any two other lines on the map. These act as the main roads used throughout the settlement. Passes can be added to roads for free when placed, allowing them to cross **areas** and **barriers** as needed.

BUILDINGS

2-3 TOKENS

Draw a notable building within an empty space between roads on the map, generally in small areas you've created. Detail it or use the crucible on the next page. Created buildings can be minor or major, the difference being the narrative impact.

Minor Building (2 tokens): When you add a minor building, write it on the map in lower case letters.

Major Building (3 tokens): Adding a these buildings tells the GM that you want the location to be more important in the setting or story. When you add a major building, write it on the map in capital letters.

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

3 TOKENS

These locations can be added by the GM for free to spice up the map, or as the story requires.

Curiosity: Rumors or interesting locations and happenings that can be explored.

Barrier: Obstacles such as rivers, changes in elevation, and walls that prevent easy travel. These are only crossable via passes.

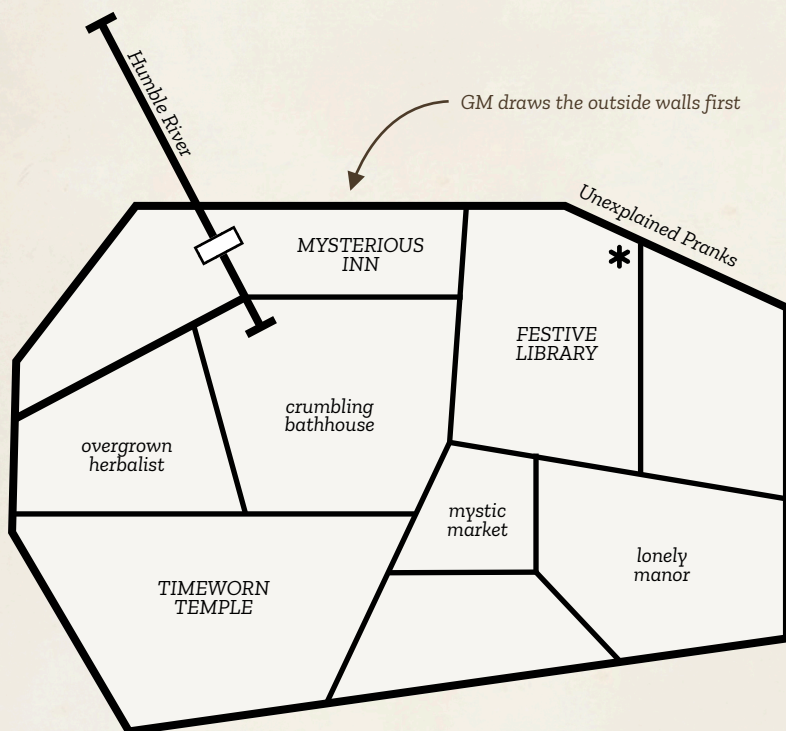
Area: Large spaces that are thematically distinct from the larger settlement. Natural areas could include lakes or indoor caverns, while artificial areas might include city districts.

BUILDING CRUCIBLE

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

ancient	haunted	sacred	shadowy	festive	seedy
crumbling	verdant	sprawling	overgrown	gloomy	opulent
ornate	forgotten	mysterious	arcane	immaculate	lonely
weathered	sturdy	thriving	bustling	crude	grimy
enchanted	humble	dilapidated	secluded	battered	timeworn
gilded	hidden	majestic	somber	towering	bleak
alchemist	shrine	temple	watchtower	gemcutter	observatory
docks	barracks	armory	guild hall	scribe	graveyard
orphanage	stable	tower	market	library	brewery
baker	blacksmith	arena	keep	jail	teahouse
herbalist	tavern	inn	fletcher	manor	bathhouse
carpenter	fortune teller	weaver	glassblower	warehouse	clocktower

Example Settlement



The Village of Humblefalls



SITE MAPS

The 5-Point Site technique, inspired by the 5-Room Dungeon concept, is used for mapping adventure locations. These can cover sites from warehouses and abandoned city districts, to temples and sunken ruins.

The GM begins by adding the Reward point on the map first, then everybody gains their 3 exploration tokens from **expand the map**, spending them on rooms, paths, and special locations. When you place one of the points, describe it with a two-word phrase—or use the settlements, sites, or dangers crucibles on pg. 138. Stop when you have all 5 points and the map is just detailed enough to enter. The GM decides the path, and what monsters, dangers, and challenges await within the site. Here are the points and paths that can be added:

ROOMS

1-2 TOKENS

Minor rooms cost 1 token, while major rooms play a more impactful role, costing 2.

Entrance: The entrance to the site has a challenge that blocks the way—it may be trapped, hidden, require a key (word, ceremony, object), or has a guardian to overcome. *This point sets the tone and tests the adventurers' mettle.*

Puzzle: An encounter that requires clever thinking, roleplaying, or teamwork. Creativity should always be rewarded, as there should never be just one resolution to the challenge. *This is usually a non-combat encounter, adding variety to the narrative.*

Hitch: Something unexpected catches the party off-guard. This may be a betrayal, illusion, trap, dilemma, or hidden threat. If the site calls for it, this may be another puzzle or unique combat. *This point keeps everyone engaged and on edge.*

Showdown: The dungeon's central conflict—usually a big combat or intense encounter with high stakes. Incorporate the theme, location, and terrain to make this memory. *This point brings resolution and key rewards.*

Reward: The loot, or knowledge the party sought, sometimes with a twist or hook for future adventures. *This point ends with a memorable moment.*

SPECIAL LOCATIONS

3 TOKENS

Curiosity: These are vague signs of something more to be explored. They might lead to new information, trouble, or both. *This point adds more context or a new hook.*

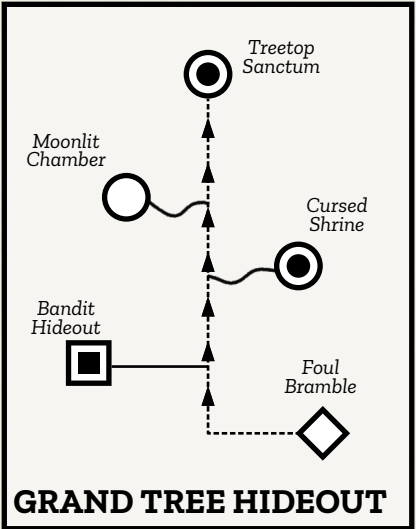
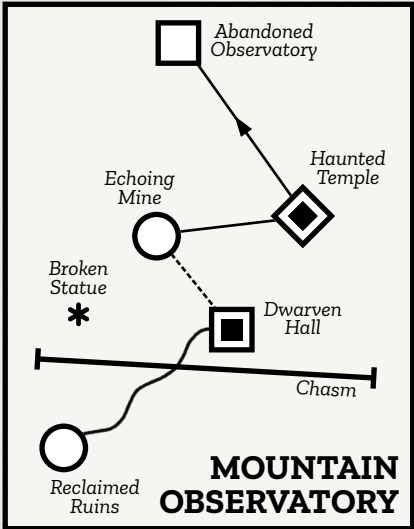
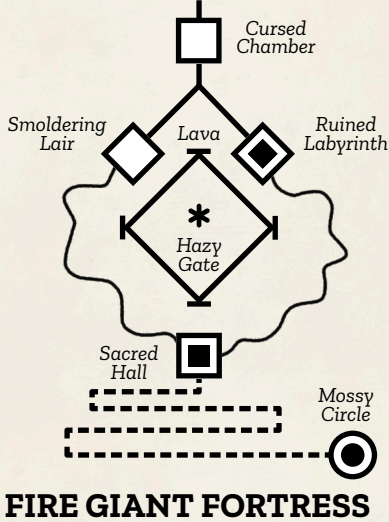
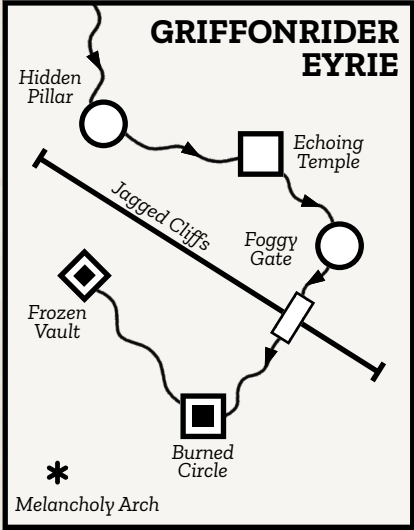
Barrier: Obstacles that make getting around the site more difficult, such as chasms, and flowing lava. *This point offers texture and the occasional challenge.*

Area: Spaces, usually natural, that cover some part or all of the site, such as a lake, or ruined debris. *This part of the map gives a backdrop, and ties it to the outside world.*

Key

structure		MINOR		MAJOR	curiosity		rough path		pass	
nature					barrier		minor path		elevation change	
hazard					area		major path			

Example Sites



EXPLORATION CRUCIBLES

SETTLEMENT

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

bustling	prosperous	ancient	secluded	snowy	dusty
quiet	deserted	trade	forgotten	shady	windy
walled	fortified	haunted	peaceful	remote	coastal
hidden	overgrown	foggy	hilly	barren	flooded
sacred	thriving	nomadic	sunlit	rocky	mountainous
isolated	ruined	abandoned	forested	sprawling	reclaimed
village	camp	port	base	oasis	watch
outpost	settlement	market	stronghold	manor	hideout
town	colony	watchtower	ranch	harbor	den
encampment	fortress	crossroads	grove	cliffside	homestead
trading post	hamlet	sanctuary	plaza	peak	monastery
citadel	refuge	commune	farmstead	cavern	bastion

SITES

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

ancient	abandoned	cursed	frozen	charred	silent
forgotten	lost	enchanted	mossy	clear	secluded
sacred	mystic	weird	moonlit	foggy	collapsed
haunted	sunken	buried	ruined	sulfurous	smoldering
crumbling	shattered	burned	underground	blessed	windblown
hidden	overgrown	desolate	echoing	forgotten	shaded
altar	circle	well	chamber	labyrinth	archway
monument	sanctuary	tower	obelisk	fountain	sanctum
temple	catacombs	crypt	cairn	portal	hall
grove	shrine	spring	pillar	grotto	mine
ruins	cavern	mausoleum	pit	cemetery	lair
tomb	statue	gate	throne	dungeon	vault

DANGERS

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

savage	foul	vile	twisted	wailing	writhing
cursed	haunted	corrupted	reckless	hungry	shrieking
raging	chaotic	maddening	brutal	rampaging	vicious
hidden	shadowed	darkened	lurking	restless	silent
venomous	forbidden	bloodthirsty	forgotten	seething	stalking
relentless	feral	ancient	ensnaring	malevolent	violent
beasts	monsters	brigands	shadows	specters	demons
spirits	bog	cults	crypt	forest	cliffs
caverns	abyss	behemoth	fiends	serpents	warriors
ruins	wraiths	crevice	wilds	graveyard	shades
storm	marsh	gorge	tangle	depths	pathways
woods	swarm	mire	mists	crag	fog

CURIOSITIES

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

lingering	mysterious	dancing	curious	singing	low
strange	distant	soft	melancholy	absurd	twinkling
faint	haunting	glowing	humming	pale	hazy
echoing	hidden	fading	shadowy	colorful	glittering
flickering	pulsing	whispering	radiant	resonant	rumbling
shimmering	ethereal	drifting	moving	enveloping	floating
smoke	glow	tree line	stone face	monolith	cloud
obelisk	spire	ray	silhouette	reflection	canopy
tower	waterfall	statue	bridge	bend	wall
bonfire	arch	tombstone	gate	light	ravine
pillar	ruin	monument	lights	canyon	crater
mist	campfire	cliff	spire	cave	hilltop

BARRIER

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

jagged	deep	craggy	shadowy	barren	thick
steep	narrow	thorny	frozen	marshy	howling
muddy	overgrown	dark	misty	choked	sinking
twisting	slippery	broken	winding	tangled	rough
dense	windy	snow-covered	treacherous	raging	icy
rocky	uneven	swampy	shifting	stony	rolling
ravine	forest	hills	swamp	undergrowth	scree
cliffs	ridge	valley	crevasse	crag	mire
trail	pass	canyon	path	peaks	desert
thicket	marsh	river	shale	glacier	brush
bog	caves	brambles	mud flats	shoals	ice sheet
slopes	scrub	lava	trees	tundra	underbrush

FACTIONS

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

fierce	noble	hidden	seeking	sacred	ragtag
warlike	shadowed	cunning	relentless	untamed	radiant
hostile	zealous	forbidden	guarded	loyal	defiant
peaceful	ruthless	honorable	wise	vengeful	forgotten
curious	ancient	silent	lost	eternal	secretive
mystic	wandering	restless	merciless	patient	unseen
blades	brotherhood	coven	seekers	cult	envoys
order	legion	sentinels	council	guardians	shapers
clan	syndicate	alliance	hunters	cadre	misfits
keepers	knights	scouts	pilgrims	raiders	brigade
guild	society	heralds	companions	guard	cabal
circle	band	tribe	wanderers	wardens	watchers



THE PASSAGE OF TIME

The GM can declare that **time passes**, which moves the game forward, usually to the next month or season. Try creating custom months to add a fantastic touch to your world. Stick to a four-season cycle with three months per season, rolled on the tables below. Include three simple details like atmospherics, weather, or flora—don't forget to mix in fantastic elements! When you reach another month, add three more for it. If you want to keep it simple, you can track time passing with a 4d campaign timer.

SPRING → SUMMER → FALL → WINTER

green bloom
petal wind
moss + wave
eager + dawn
fresh shine
well hope

ash storm
flood haze
sear + flare
lazy + glow
gold breeze
buzz surge

husk mist
wilt moon
amber + dew
rust + chill
bitter flow
turn smoke

storm tide
bleak gale
quiet + sheen
howl + hush
frost freeze
drift morn

If tracking specific months isn't appealing, try just using parts of the season:

"The beginning of...", "The height of...", and "The end of..."

Example Atmospherics

frost melts
rivers swell
buds bloom
emerald fields
luminous spores
humming bees
light rainfalls
velvet moss
flower fields
calm winds
glowing fungi
clear skies

endless downpours
roaring rivers
lightning skies
heavy stillness
rising heat
warm winds
rippling fields
golden shimmer
insect swarms
pollen bursts
blooming thistles
dying fungi

drifting embers
ashen haze
harvested fields
pale fog
rustling stalks
crumbling leaves
silver light
creeping chill
frosty mornings
sharp scents
stinging dew drops
pollen fires

whispering winds
iced branches
long nights
dark ice
frozen rivers
pale starlight
raging blizzards
splintering ice
howling skies
eerie auroras
endless drifts
frozen silence



EXPANDED DOWNTIME

When the GM declares that **time passes**, the PCs can decide how their downtime is spent, be it drinking merrily, making plans, or striking out on their own. Carousing by selling off treasure, and extended rest healing has been replaced with downtime actions.

DOWNTIME ACTIONS

When **time passes**, pick one of the following to show how you spent your time. If you sell off treasure, you can pick two different actions.

Rest

Heal all **marks**, **harm**, and all non-permanent **conditions**. The GM may decide certain long-term conditions persist through normal rest. *The Bard's 8d Broken Arm heals. The Berserker, after taking on a fierce dragon, makes a full recovery.*

Plan Ahead

You prepare for a future adventure, giving you a special kind of **thread**. Write a few words describing the general preparation you make, but save the details for later. This thread doesn't count towards your maximum, and can only be used to add story details based on the preparation. The thread is lost when **time passes** again. *The Warlock does a favor for the local nobility, earning goodwill. The Rogue borrows a few horses for a quick getaway.*

Pursue a Goal

You take action to work on a side goal. Each endeavor is tracked by a task pool. Roll the pool each time you take this downtime action, and describe the result. Your goal can cover anything from crafting arcana, creating a new spell theorem, or even retraining a talent or wise. Work with your GM to determine the goal and starting pool size. *The Druid cleanses the nearby forest (6d pool). The Cleric learns about esoteric magic (retrain a wise, 4d pool).*

Unwind

You spend time enjoying yourself. While this is often carousing with drink and friends, it could just as easily be tending to a forgotten shrine, or partaking in the arts and theater. Give a vignette and **take spark**. *The Fighter gets a new drink named after her. The Monk meditates on top of a lonely hill.*

Venture

You keep moving, doing odd jobs or adventuring on your own. Make a story roll to see how it goes. The GM may reward you with a minor treasure, rumor, or new ally. On a messy or less, it's complicated. *The Wizard joins an expedition for the University. The Paladin defends a nearby town from a groll attack.*



COMMUNITIES

Between delving into forgotten dungeons and monster lairs, adventurers need a place to rest. Not only do **Communities** represent a place of respite in a dangerous world, they can be homes, guilds, and even their own factions. By pooling resources as a party, the players can fund their own homestead, building them from the ground up, and shaping them as they wish.

STOCKPILE

This special resource pool represents the amount of building materials, manpower, and gold—everything needed to begin construction. This pool increases with PC contribution, usually by trading in treasure, though the GM may bestow stockpile directly as they see fit. When **time passes**, the party can roll their stockpile pool, adding all dropped dice towards completing their next asset. Once the total cost of the asset is paid, it's complete! Extra dropped dice can be added to the next.

When trading in treasure, increase your stockpile based on the tier: **minor** treasures net 2 stockpile, **major** increases it by 4, and **mythic** adds 8.

Stockpile



TWIN-SAILS TAVERN

Vella Mouser, Barkeep (gruff, nosey)

- * rough and tumble sailor bar
- * lots of interesting rumors

2d drop from the pool and are added to the asset, until the full cost is paid!



ASSETS

Newly built structures, hosted events, and trained underlings are all assets. These expand vantage when finished, often opening new opportunities for the PCs, or perhaps even producing stockpile on their own.

Each has a tier that determines its stockpile cost and impact. **Minor assets** cost 4 and have a modest impact, usually just giving vantage. **Major assets** cost 8 and have a greater impact, expanding vantage and having another bonus. Work with the GM to determine where your next project falls.

When finished, the party decides on an NPC representative of it and adds a few traits to describe them. This might be a barkeep for a new tavern, or a leader for a gang of knuckleheads. This helps to bring your community to life, making it truly feel lived in—and making the stakes personal should something threaten it. See the next page for example assets.

Asset Examples

BARRACKS

□□□□

Captain Kaelen (arrogant, experienced)

- * Mercenary recruits
- * Good natured brawls and gambling

GRAND FEAST

□□□□

Chef Marceline (intense, theatrical)

- * High-society gathering
- * Strange and exotic foods

IRONGRIP LUMBER MILL

□□□□□□□□

Brenna Irongrip (stoic, superstitious)

- * Edge of village
- * Possibly haunted

Each downtime, the PC stronghold gains +1 stockpile.

HOST KING GARAMOND

□□□□□□□□

King Garamond the Stern (distrustful)

- * Annoying right hand
- * Fancy royal party

Afterward, upgrade roads connecting the two regions.

MARKET SQUARE

□□□□

Silas Silverthorn (jovial, shameless haggler)

- * Growing black market
- * Stalls change every day

SPY NETWORK

□□□□

Lysandra (polite, pragmatic, ruthless)

- * Plants in nearby towns
- * Loyal to the party

ALLGOODS ALCHEMIST

□□□□□□□□

Elarah Vine (meticulous, easily distracted)

- * Street smells of lavender and mint
- * Converted house, different styled add-ons

Each downtime, the PCs get a random minor potion.

FIGHTER'S GUILD

□□□□□□□□

Master Thorin (stern, caring)

- * Cherry picked contracts
- * All are welcome

Each downtime, an armored PC gains a 1d Bulwark resource pool, as talent.

THREATS

Threats are everywhere in the Grimwild, and there will always be rival factions, destructive beasts, and fool-hardy raiders willing to test your defenses. When danger threatens your PC's community, play it out—but as the GM, don't take away player achievements. Damage to assets is often only superficial, or at worst has a cost of 1 or 2 stockpile to rebuild.

ADVANCED COMMUNITIES

If you want to make communities a core focus, try splitting the stockpile pool into various resources such as lumber, ore, foodstores, and coin with separate pools. The GM can split the cost between these, rolling each applicable pool when time passes.

Adapted from @Studious' Stronghold Rules on Discord, and used with permission.

CHAPTER 5

MONSTERS

PAINTING MONSTROUS SCENES

This chapter features nearly 100 monster blocks designed to help you, the GM, create vivid and engaging encounters. Each block emphasizes color, sensory details, instincts, motivations, and adventure hooks over mechanical difficulty—in fact, there are no mechanics at all besides example traits and moves. As with all things in *Grimwild*, monsters map back to the core resolution mechanics. Monsters should be more than just something to carve through—they should feel integral to the story.

The bestiary offers advice, not rules: a collection of tropes and ideas for inspiration. It's not meant to be a comprehensive guide to these monsters, but instead a tool for quick reference and thinking outside the box with classic fantasy monsters. Some familiarity with them is assumed.

The monsters presented here blend tropes, personal twists, and efforts to make them more engaging than just "something that wants to eat you." However, keep in mind that nothing here is canon—every idea is flexible, ready to be replaced, reimagined, or repurposed. These are just one interpretation of what these monsters might be. Change whatever you like; it won't break a thing.

MONSTER BLOCK BREAKDOWN

Role: The most common role of this creature when encountered.

Palette: Colors associated with the creature or its surroundings.

Details: A short description of the monster and its lore.

*** Traits:** These are certain aspects of the monster that can help the GM determine vantage, or unique abilities such as flying or speech.

● Moves: Suggest what a creature might do, especially in conflict, but are flexible and meant to inspire, even outside combat. Not all monsters are challenges.

Goals: A creature's drives, offering direction and ways for PCs to interact. Share them, especially with experienced PCs.

Sensories: A list of, sights, sounds, and smells encountered near the creature—sometimes describing the creature, other times the area or signs of its presence.

Tables: Inspire variants, introduce quest hooks, or define a purpose, adding depth to each.

NOTES ON MONSTER BLOCKS

Lack of Humanoids: Common humanoid monsters like kobolds, orcs, and goblins are not listed. These can be added to your game with only a tier and role.

Categories: Blocks for demons, devils, dire animals, elementals, fey, hags, giants, and undead are grouped together.

Expanded Entries: Some monsters, like balors and vampires, have double-sized entries featuring quests, linked challenges, or extra tables. These provide ready-to-use scenarios and examples for building and expanding your own.

Immunities & Weaknesses: Few specific resistances or vulnerabilities are listed. Basic logic applies—like skeletons resisting weapons that pierce or cut—and you can tweak for difficulty by adding your own. These entries are starting points meant to inspire creative customization.

Monster Block Use Example

You push through the tall grass, and the air seems thick with the **smell of jasmine and lavender (sensory)**. You hear **giggling** and catch a glimpse of something small, **petal pink (palette)** in color. The grass abruptly stops, and you realize you've walked into the middle of a small **circle of faintly glowing mushrooms (table)**.

Suddenly, the air shimmers and a **dozen tiny figures manifest out of thin air (traits)**. One zips by above you, glittering motes of pastel light falling on your head. Your vision gets blurry, and you have the **inexplicable urge to dance (impact move from FAIRY DUST)**.

You swish your **iron shortsword (player roll, messy)** at them as your wits begin to leave you, and the melodic singing around you turns to **high-pitched screams as they suddenly flee (goals)**. You look down, and **see you're holding a venomous snake (impact move from MINOR ILLUSIONS)**!

FEY, FAERY		TRICKSTER
PETAL PINK	SOFT LAVENDER	PALE BLUE
Tiny, winged creatures with a mischievous nature. They flit through meadows, casting illusions and playing tricks on wanderers for their own amusement.		
* Swarm together	● FAIRY DUST	
* Invisibility at-will	● DAZZLING LIGHTS	
* Speech	● MINOR ILLUSIONS	
Wants to play mostly harmless tricks on mortals. Doesn't want to be anywhere near iron.		
☞ glittering trails, darting figures, fleeting glimpses		
♪ airy giggling, fluttering of tiny wings, melodic chimes		
🍯 delicate nectar, lavender and jasmine, sugary aroma		
FAIRY CIRCLES		
1 Mushrooms glowing faintly in the dusk.		
2 Ring of sunflowers in a grassy field.		
3 Fallen leaves after a rain.		
4 Precarious pebble towers, defying gravity.		
5 Dancing fireflies in a glowing spiral.		
6 Ring of acorns around a sapling.		



BASILISK

LURKER

SCALY GREEN MOSSY BROWN ROCKY GRAY

Spiny, eight-legged reptiles that lurk in forgotten, shadowy places. They patiently lay in wait to ambush prey, then feast on the petrified remains.

- * Sluggish stealth
- * Spiny hide
- * Keen sense of smell
- PETRIFYING GAZE
- BITE & THRASH
- SLINK AWAY

Wants to munch on a delicious statue, later.

Doesn't want light revealing its hiding place.

- 👁️ gleam of scales, slithering trails through dust
- 👂 silence, rasping hiss, crunching of chewed stone
- 👃 chalky scent of ground stone, desiccated air

HIDING SPOTS

- 1 Beneath a crumbling, but still-used **bridge**.
- 2 Within the **rotting carcass** of a fallen dragon.
- 3 On the fifth floor of a **derelict watchtower**.
- 4 In a field full of half-eaten **bear statues**.
- 5 Within a maze of rusted, echoing **pipes**.
- 6 Among the **twisted roots** of a giant tree.

CARCASS CRAWLER

BRUTE

ROTTEN BROWN DULL OLIVE VILE GREEN

Massive, slimy worms with dozens of grasping tentacles, lurking underground to feast on dead or paralyzed prey. They're drawn to the scent of death.

- * Paralytic touch
- * Cling to walls
- TENTACLE SLAPS
- SPEW BILE
- BRIEF SCUTTLE

Wants more flesh, always more flesh.

Doesn't want to suffer the sheer panic of hunger.

- 👁️ pristine bones, writhing tentacles, clouds of flies
- 👂 wet slithering, grotesque squelching, bone snaps
- 👃 rancid stench, sickly-sweet venom, mold and rot

FEEDING GROUNDS

- 1 The remnants of a **horrific battle**.
- 2 The result of a successful **death cult**.
- 3 A recently thawed **graveyard**.
- 4 A **plague** that killed herds of farm animals.
- 5 A **fleet** of invasion ships dashed against rocks.
- 6 Mass **sacrifices** to it, worshiped as a god.

BEHIR

PREDATOR

SCALY GRAY STORMY GRAY AZURE BLUE

Massive, solitary serpentine creatures with a dozen legs and brilliant azure scales. They live in dark, decaying places and rarely tolerate intruders.

- * Cling to walls
- * Serpentine flexibility
- * Speech
- ELECTRIC BREATH
- BITE & CONSTRICT
- SWALLOW WHOLE

Wants to expand its hunting grounds, to savor meals.

Doesn't want rival predators challenging its territory.

- 👁️ deep claw marks, static sparks, lightning strike marks
- 👂 sizzling electric snaps, sudden boom, shuffling legs
- 👃 metallic tang, faint acrid smell, scorched hide

UNEARTHED BY...

- 1 **Landslide** during a massive thunderstorm.
- 2 **Generational flood** wiping out whole villages.
- 3 **Earthquake** toppling castle walls.
- 4 Collapse of a **silver mine**, forcing it to flee.
- 5 Lich's minions **dig** too deep.
- 6 Adventurers left an **almost** empty dungeon.

CHIMERA

BRUTE

DARK BROWN BURNT UMBER FIERY RED

Violent, chaotic monstrous hybrids of a lion, goat, and dragon. They rarely stay in one place long, suffering relentless wanderlust.

- * Multi-headed
- * Unpredictable
- * Understands language
- FIRE BREATH
- FLYING POUNCE
- CLAW, BITE, HORNS

Wants to keep wandering.

Doesn't want to face choices that its heads disagree on.

- 👁️ streaks of scorched earth, smoke from its nostrils
- 👂 growls, roars, and hisses, sudden whoosh and crackle
- 👃 acrid scent of sulfur and ash, musky wet fur

HYBRID HEADS (Roll 3 times)

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 wolverine | 1 rhino | 1 vampire bat |
| 2 dingo | 2 baboon | 2 sloth |
| 3 anteater | 3 mantis | 3 jackal |
| 4 condor | 4 alligator | 4 gila monster |
| 5 rattlesnake | 5 ostrich | 5 pangolin |
| 6 platypus | 6 mongoose | 6 cobra |

CHUUL		PREDATOR
CRUSTACEAN BROWN	DEEP YELLOW	SWAMP GREEN
Enormous, lobster-like aberrations with a mouthful of tentacles. They are drawn to magic and hoard the relics they find in their cluttered lairs.		
* Hardened shell	● STUNNING TENTACLE	
* Sense nearby magic	● CLAW LOCK	
* Speech	● DRAG UNDER	
Wants to hoard sources of magic, instinctually. Doesn't want to venture from the moistness of the swamp.		
🌀 roiling water, slick tendrils 🌀 bubbling groan of water, wet slap of tentacles 🌀 cloying tang of magic, pungent crustacean odor		
ELDRITCH MUTATIONS CRUCIBLE		
1 acidic	1 shell	
2 spiked	2 eyestalks	
3 reflective	3 wings	
4 extendable	4 antennae	
5 glowing	5 tail	
6 magic-sensing	6 claws	

COUATL		PROTECTOR
BRONZE GOLD	IRIDESCENT BLUE	EMERALD GREEN
Celestial serpents with rainbow feathers that act as wise protectors and guardians of sacred places. They seek to preserve balance and impart wisdom.		
* Truthbound	● READ MINDS	
* Shapechanger	● CONSTRICT	
* Telepathy	● RADIANT MAGIC	
Wants to ensure sacred sites stay hidden. Doesn't want its wisdom being ignored.		
🌀 iridescent scales, vivid feathers, trail of light 🌀 otherworldly hum, gentle rustling, whispering winds 🌀 clean fresh breeze, soothing incense, hopeful magic		
SACRED TASK		
1 Retrieve a sacred artifact, your sword.		
2 Protect a chosen one, your enemy.		
3 Find ancient knowledge, your secret.		
4 Teach you a forgotten language.		
5 Stop you from destroying the world.		
6 Tricked by a devil into destroying you.		

COCKATRICE		SWARMER
RUST ORANGE	FEATHERED BROWN	DUSKY GOLD
Small, chicken-like creatures with reptilian features. They roam in flocks and their peck turns flesh to stone, which they use to mark their territory.		
* Flocking instinct	● PETRIFYING PECKS	
* Ferocious swarming	● WINGED RETREAT	
	● FLAPPY DISTRACTION	
Wants to mark its territory with petrified victims. Doesn't want to have its flock's authority challenged.		
🌀 small petrified animals, mass of scattered feathers 🌀 flurry of wings, chorus of shrill squawks, beak snaps 🌀 mismatched smell of feathers and scales		
MIGRATIONS		
1 Onto an island , home to a monastery.		
2 Into a small hamlet , everyone stuck indoors.		
3 Into a valley , an important trade crossroad.		
4 Throughout a city , absolute chaos ensuing.		
5 Down into mines , trapping miners inside.		
6 Aboard a large ship anchored in the bay.		

CYCLOPS		BRUTE
WEATHERED BEIGE	EYEBALL WHITE	STONE BROWN
Solitary, towering figures that value their personal territory above all else. They gather boulders and stones, treating them as symbols of power.		
* Singular, intense focus	● BOULDER TOSS	
* Immensely strong	● GROUND SLAM	
* Understands language	● FEARSOME BELLOW	
Wants boulder caches, a symbol of territory and power. Doesn't want to get distracted or feel like it's being tricked.		
🌀 piles of boulders, massive cave entrance 🌀 guttural rumbling, whoosh of a boulder flying 🌀 unwashed skin, earthy cave, sharp stone dust		
CYCLOPEAN CURSES		
1 It can only see at night .		
2 It can only venture outside in the rain .		
3 Its every footstep causes a tremor .		
4 It's terrified of small mammals .		
5 It can never stop walking .		
6 It's lonely , the last of its kind.		



DEMON, BALOR

TACTICIAN

INFERNO RED

SMOKY BLACK

EMBER ORANGE

Towering embodiments of pure evil, with massive bat-like wings. They rule with chaos and destruction, and have an insatiable hunger for more power.

- * Pierces deceptions
- * Fiery aura
- * Speech, telepathy
- **BURNING WHIP**
- **CRACKLING SWORD**
- **BOOMING TELEPORT**

Wants to bask in its own greatness.

Doesn't want its absolute control to waver, even for a second.

- ☞ chaotic dancing flames, large smoking footprints
- ☞ whip cracks, crackling lightning, guttural chanting
- ☞ overwhelming brimstone, smothering ash

DEATH THROES (Roll 2)

- 1 Devastating **explosion**, reducing all to ash.
- 2 Brilliant **flash**, blinding all that witness it.
- 3 **Lava geysers** erupt from the ground.
- 4 **Hellfire meteors** bombard the area.
- 5 **Blazing cyclone** and **molten rain** wreak havoc.
- 6 A **portal** to the abyss opens, compelling entrance.

DEMON, GLABREZU

TRICKSTER

BLOOD RED

DEMONIC PURPLE

DEEP GRAY

Hulking fiends with four arms, two of which are claws. They tempt ambitious mortals, granting wishes and delighting as it all backfires.

- * Devious schemer
- * Magic resistance
- * Speech, telepathy
- **CREATE DARKNESS**
- **KNOW DESIRES**
- **GRANT WISH**

Wants to know what would make you happy.

Doesn't want for its offers to be turned down.

- ☞ stone gouged away, hulking silhouette, eerie glow
- ☞ faint whispers of magic, clicking claws, alluring voice
- ☞ bitter burnt incense, unknown sickly-sweet aromas

WISHES GRANTED (with ruin soon to follow)

- 1 **Love**, leading to the death of their beloved.
- 2 **Wealth**, leading to never-satiated greed.
- 3 **Wisdom**, leading to a descent into madness.
- 4 **Victory**, leading to guilt on how it was won.
- 5 **Beauty**, leading to horror as it fades even a little.
- 6 **Fame**, leading to jealousy from those close.

HELL TO PAY

The balor emerges from the shattered summoning circle as the cathedral erupts in flames around it. Those who disturbed it lie dead and now the capital will feel its fury.

8d | HEAD

- * well-defended

- **HORRIFIC TAUNTS**
- **CRUEL**

8d | DEMONIC MAGIC

- * ward the balor

- **SUMMON DEMONS**
- **CREATE FIRESTORM**

4d | BURNING WHIP

- * protects the head

- **WHIPCRACK**
- **DRAG IN CLOSE**

4d | CRACKLING SWORD

- * protects the head

- **BEHEAD**
- **ARCING STRIKE**

8d + 8d | BODY

- * impenetrable hide
- * immensely strong

DEMON, VROCK

BRUTE

FEATHERED GRAY

SICKLY GREEN

BONE WHITE

A vulture-like fiend that is drawn to the mayhem of battlefields. They spread poisonous spores with each wingbeat, reveling in the chaos it brings below.

- * Terrifying flight
- * Disgusting plumage
- * Understands language
- **DEAFENING SCREECH**
- **SPORE CLOUD**
- **SUMMON FLOCK**

Wants to keep the battle going as long as possible.

Doesn't want to be drawn directly into the conflict itself.

- ☞ cloud of spores, dark shadow, ichor-covered feathers
- ☞ wet slapping of wings, rustle of diseased feathers
- ☞ rancid decay, spores clogging nostrils

SPORE EFFECTS

- 1 **Betrayal**, poisoning trust between allies.
- 2 **Terror**, causing reckless desperation.
- 3 **Visions**, twisting allies into horrors.
- 4 **Rage**, swelling into extreme bloodlust.
- 5 **Envy**, breeding treacherous ambition.
- 6 **Heroism**, turning into self-sacrificial madness.

DEVIL, BARBED		LURKER
SOOT BLACK	EMBER RED	DARK GREEN
Horrific fiends covered in jagged barbs. They savor fear and torment, often stretching out the suffering as long as possible before delivering the final blow.		
* Hooked barbs	● BARBED EMBRACE	
* Horrifying presence	● THROW HELLFIRE	
* Speech, telepathy	● SLOW TAUNTING	
Wants to slowly savor the agony and pleas of mercy. Doesn't want for the pain it inflicts to be endured.		
☞ shadows writhing unnaturally, barbs twitching ☞ scratching of barbs along walls, tearing sound of flesh ☞ coppery fresh blood and agony		
SUMMONED INTO...		
1 Royal wedding , meant to seal a fragile peace.		
2 Public execution , meant to crush rebellion.		
3 Temple consecration , meant to ward off evil.		
4 Feast marking the end of a great famine.		
5 Trial of a beloved noble, accused of treason.		
6 Coronation of a hesitant ruler, full of doubt.		

DEVIL, HORNED		BRUTE
FIERY RED	BURNT ORANGE	DEEP BLACK
Fearsome, powerful fiends with towering horns, a spiked tail, and massive wings. They wield a flaming fork and rule with terror and cruelty.		
* Impenetrable hide	● FLAMING FORK	
* Speech, telepathy	● HELLFIRE BOLT	
	● FESTERING WOUND	
Wants to be both revered and feared. Doesn't want to be forced into any compromise.		
☞ stretching horn shadows, gleaming fork, stab wounds ☞ resonant telepathic voice, malevolent chuckles ☞ acrid sulfur, suffocating smoke, brimstone		
BROKEN SUMMONING CIRCLES		
1 In a temple by a priest who lost their faith.		
2 In a farmhouse by a grief-stricken mother.		
3 In a tower by a wizard consumed with jealousy.		
4 In the study of a hero haunted by failure.		
5 In a tavern by a minstrel obsessed with fame.		
6 In a cobbler's cellar , by a long-held prisoner.		

DEVIL, CHAIN		TACTICIAN
IRON GRAY	STEEL BLUE	CRIMSON
Sadistic fiends that manipulate chains like serpents to ensnare and flay their victims. They relish in the terror and struggle of their confined captives.		
* Animated chains aura	● SUMMON CHAINS	
* Serrated links	● CHAIN LASH	
* Speech, telepathy	● REEL IN	
Wants its victims to resist before breaking. Doesn't want to find itself confined by others.		
☞ glinting metal, slow chain shadows, slow laughter ☞ clinking and rattling, tightening snaps, clangs ☞ rusty, reeking metal, pungent sweat and fear		
IMPRISONED WITHIN...		
1 Labyrinthine halls of the mad queen.		
2 Cursed portrait in a lavish hall.		
3 Steamy, opulent bathhouse in the capital.		
4 Reliquary of a respected temple.		
5 Trade guild vault , sealed with powerful runes.		
6 Winding forest pathways surrounding town.		

DEVIL, IMP		TRICKSTER
WICKED RED	TARNISHED GOLD	SMOKY GRAY
Tiny, winged fiends driven by trickery and chaos. They delight in sowing mischief and confusion, stinging with mind-warping venoms before vanishing.		
* Compulsive mischief	● VENOMOUS STING	
* Invisibility at-will	● VERMIN FORM	
* Speech, telepathy	● ENCHANT ITEM	
Wants to sew subtle seeds of chaos. Doesn't want to be confronted directly, ruining the surprise.		
☞ quick flash of movement, clawed footprints ☞ buzz of wings, eerie silence, lingering snickering ☞ faint whiffs of venom and sulfur		
IMPISH SNARES		
1 Spoon that makes food taste slightly rotten.		
2 Quill that weaves insults into messages.		
3 Candle that goes out at the worst time.		
4 Map that shifts landmarks and roads.		
5 Compass that always points towards fun.		
6 Doll that moves to a new spot each night.		



DIRE BEAR

BRUTE

DEEP BROWN

FURRY BLACK

GRIZZLY BROWN

Fiercely territorial, colossal animals with thick fur and enormous claws. It responds viciously to any intrusion into its territory.

* Dense fur

● TESTING CHARGE

* Surprising speed

● BELLOWING ROAR

● MAULING GRAPPLE

Wants to foster the next generation of rulers.

Doesn't want for its boundaries to be broken.

👁 snapped trees, breath steaming in the cold air

👂 deafening roar echoing, pounding footsteps

👃 crisp pine, overturned earth, wet fur

TERRITORY WOES

1 It has **far too many** cubs.

2 **Grand hunt** has been called for it.

3 Another **dire apex predator** has arrived.

4 **Civilization** encroaches on its borders.

5 **Totemic wards** restrict its roaming grounds.

6 Goblins **wage war** against orcs on its lands.

DIRE CRAB

BRUTE

SHELL RED

CORAL PINK

FLESHY ORANGE

Towering crustaceans with enormous crushing claws, only vulnerable when they molt. They scuttle along coastal shallows, devouring anything in their path.

* Impenetrable shell

● CLICK, CLACK

* Voracious appetites

● SNIP, SNAP

● RIP IN HALF

Wants its offspring to overrun the beaches.

Doesn't want for anything to get under it.

👁 boulders clipped in half, odd holes in the sand

👂 creak of its shell grinding, clicking of legs

👃 wet sand, seaweed, and decaying marine life

DIRE HERMIT CRAB SHELLS

1 Sunken **pirate ship**, now haunted.

2 Fallen **castle turret**, filled with explosives.

3 **Giant's skull**, with a gleaming gold tooth.

4 **Whale ribcage**, covered in barnacles.

5 **Gnomish submarine**, still water-tight.

6 **Iron cauldron** once used by a giant.

DIRE CENTIPEDE

SKIRMISHER

BURNT SIENNA

EARTHLY BROWN

CHITIN BLACK

Gigantic, armored insects with venomous pincers and countless legs. They skitter through dark tunnels, creating a labyrinthine network of hunting grounds.

* Cling to walls

● WARNING HISS

* Terrifying speed

● DROP DOWN

● SNIP OFF LIMBS

Wants to expand its labyrinth of tunnels.

Doesn't want bright light or loud noises.

👁 endlessly writhing legs, shining chitin, twitching pincers

👂 rhythmic clicking, sharp hiss, unsettling rustling

👃 nutty insect aroma, sour rotting wood

HOME TUNNELS

1 Tunnels filled with **towering mushrooms**.

2 The ruins of a lavish **underground palace**.

3 Enormous cavern full of **bioluminescence**.

4 Through the **bones** of a buried giant.

5 **Flooded sea caves**, where it hunts for sharks.

6 Through **twisting roots** of colossal trees.

DIRE CROCODILE

LURKER

SWAMP GREEN

MUDDY BROWN

SCALY BLACK

Enormous reptiles with iron-like scales and jagged maws. They lurk in wait in murky waters, virtually imperceptible until they move.

* Swampy camouflage

● SNAPPING LUNGE

● DEATH ROLL

● DROWN PREY

Wants to eat anything that comes close.

Doesn't want to move when unnecessary.

👁 massive eyes above the waterline, still waters

👂 scraping of belly on ground, thrashing water

👃 mud and algae, stagnant swamp water

WORSHIPERS (The croc's totally unaware)

1 **Local fishers**, who see it as the god of floods.

2 **Cultists**, who offer sacrifices.

3 **Water elementals**, believing it guards the river.

4 **Merfolk**, who live alongside it.

5 **Hill giants**, envious of its eternal hunger.

6 **Swamp hags**, believing it gives them magic.

DIRE EAGLE		PREDATOR
FEATHERY WHITE	EARTHY BROWN	STORMY GRAY
Vast raptors with massive wingspans and razor-sharp talons. They soar from high cliffs and dive with deadly precision and perfect timing to bring down prey.		
* Keen eyesight	🦅 PLUNGING STRIKE	
* Extremely swift	🦅 SWOOPING SNATCH	
	🦅 PIERCING CRY	
Wants other predators to see and fear it. Doesn't want anything coming near its nest.		
🦅 huge falling feather, talon gouges in the earth 🦅 whoosh of massive wings, rustling of feathers 🦅 crisp high-altitude air, faint carrion scent		
UNIQUE EYRIES		
1 Spire of a still-occupied wizard's tower.		
2 Atop a giant redwood tree, the tallest in the world.		
3 Rocky outcrop above a foggy elephant graveyard.		
4 Desolate mesatop, bones surrounding the nest.		
5 Between the stone arches of an ancient bridge.		
6 In the hand of an enormous carved statue.		

DIRE SPIDER		TACTICIAN
VENOM GREEN	MIDNIGHT BLACK	DARK CRIMSON
Monstrously huge arachnids with legs like tree trunks and venomous fangs. They spin vast webs coating entire areas or drop from enormous heights on prey.		
* Vibration sense	🕸️ SURPRISE DROP	
* Complex webbing	🕸️ VENOMOUS BITE	
	🕸️ WRAP PREY	
Wants to always have enough food for later. Doesn't want to be anywhere near fire.		
🕸️ thick silk strands, barely visible in shadow, thick hairs		
🕸️ unsettling skitter, eerie silence, soft thud, slurping		
🕸️ sickly-sweet venom, putrid wrapped bodies		
DIRE SPIDER VARIETIES		
1 Netcaster, trapping from far away.		
2 Jumping, catching prey off-guard with a leap.		
3 Longlegs, moving quickly through foliage.		
4 Pitdweller, striking from well-hidden holes.		
5 Waterglider, skimming across marshes.		
6 Divingbell, living completely underwater.		

DIRE SHARK		PREDATOR
OCEAN GRAY	BONE WHITE	DEEP BLUE
Massive beasts of the ocean's depth, with rows of serrated teeth and a sleek, powerful body. They prowl the seas, always in search of sizable prey.		
* Blends into the depths	● FROM THE DEPTHS	
* Knows no fear	● FRENZIED THRASH	
	● BITE OFF A CHUNK	
Wants to instill deep fear long before it strikes. Doesn't want for ships to operate in its waters.		
🦈 patch of red-stained ocean, ominous dorsal fin 🦈 heavy thud hitting the ship, eerie silence 🦈 briny saltwater, upturned seawater		
DESTROYED SHIPS		
1 Royal flagship , crown jewels still aboard.		
2 War galleon , with the spoils of war.		
3 Passenger liner , still barely floating.		
4 Submarine , the survivors in a deep sea cave.		
5 Ghost ship , having cursed the waters for decades.		
6 Orcish warship , fused to its back by dark magic.		

DIRE WOLF		TACTICIAN
ASHEN GRAY	LIGHT BROWN	FROSTY GRAY
Hulking wolf with bristling fur and dagger-like fangs. They hunt with a pack of lesser wolves, using fearsome coordination to trap and bring down prey.		
* Relentless pursuer	⦿ CALL PACK	
* Pack coordination	⦿ TACKLE PREY	
	⦿ PACK ATTACK	
Wants to protect its pack.		
Doesn't want anything that prevents it from roaming free.		
🐺 silhouette at edge of clearing, tracks in the mud		
🐺 haunting howl, guttural growl, heavy breathing		
🐺 fur mixed with fresh earth, sweat, mountain air		
LUNAR BEHAVIORS		
1 New moon, restless border patrols .		
2 Crescent, young grow unruly .		
3 Full moon, deafening howls .		
4 Gibbous, pack dominance shifts.		
5 Blood moon, rampage outside their borders.		
6 Blue moon, dire wolf litter is born.		



DISLOCATION BEAST

TRICKSTER

SHADOW BLACK MIDNIGHT BLUE MYSTIC PURPLE

Elusive, panther-like creatures with six legs and barbed tentacles. They warp reality to disorient and confuse, blending into their surroundings.

- * Phantom forms
- * Ethereal agility
- **TENTACLE SWIPES**
- **DISORIENTING BLURS**
- **SUDDEN POUNCE**

Wants to swiftly harness the chaos it creates.

Doesn't want to ever put itself in danger.

- ☞ shifting blurs, disrupted reality, phantom images
- ☞ distorted growl, strange echoes, swish of movement
- ☞ spicy musk, sharply cut aromas, caustic undertone

BIZARRE PHENOMENA

- 1 **Mundane sounds**, completely out of place.
- 2 **Fleeting reflections** from alternate worlds.
- 3 **Shadows** elongate unnaturally and linger.
- 4 **Echoes** ricochet unpredictably.
- 5 **Colors bleed** into neighboring hues.
- 6 **Invisible ripples** that distort vision.

DOPPELGANGER

TRICKSTER

NEUTRAL GRAY

Shapeshifting figures with gray, featureless skin. They can perfectly mimic any humanoid, infiltrating societies to achieve their own mysterious goals.

- * Shapechanger
- * Mindreader
- * Speech, telepathy
- **SHIFT APPEARANCE**
- **MENTAL PROBE**
- **PSYCHIC SCREAM**

Wants to experience new lives.

Doesn't want its true form to be seen.

- ☞ shifting facial features, subtle posture changes
- ☞ disconcerting silence, soft self-reprimanding
- ☞ a smell fully unexpected of that person

IDENTITIES YOU KNOW

- 1 Noble's trusted **adviser**, met last winter.
- 2 The **second-to-last** person the PCs met.
- 3 Old **flame** of a PC, thought long dead.
- 4 Wandering **monk**, seen only days ago.
- 5 **Previous PC**, from this campaign or another.
- 6 Executed **thief**, now walking free.

DRAGON

BLASTER

SCALE EMERALD

CRIMSON FLAME

GOLD ACCENT

Massive, scaled beasts with wings and elemental breath attacks. They hoard treasures and instill deep, instinctual fears as a top apex predator.

- * Frightful presence
- * Ancient memories
- * Speech
- **ELEMENTAL BREATH**
- **WING BUFFET**
- **CHOMP DOWN**

Wants to assert its supremacy over all.

Doesn't want to be humbled in any way.

- ☞ massive features, self-important posture
- ☞ thunderous roar, wings beating, intake of breath
- ☞ faint scent of gold and ancient relics

HOARDING INSTINCTS (besides gold)

- 1 **Scrolls** filled with lost languages.
- 2 **Crown jewels** of forgotten kingdoms.
- 3 **Gravestones** of great heroes.
- 4 **Maps** of the world.
- 5 **Weapons** forged in time of great need.
- 6 **Holy symbols** of fallen gods.

DRAGON BREATH WEAPONS

A dragon's elemental breath is a potent weapon, as well as a versatile tool. Give elder dragons an extra 2 suspense that they can use on these breath weapon utility moves.

ACID

- **CAUSTIC POOLS**
- **CORRODE ARMOR**
- **EAT AWAY STONE**

COLD

- **ICE WALL**
- **FREEZE IN PLACE**
- **SLOW MOVEMENT**

FIRE

- **BURN BARRIERS**
- **MELT WEAPONS**
- **SMOKE SCREEN**

LIGHTNING

- **CHAINED STUN**
- **DISABLE MACHINE**
- **THUNDER ROAR**

POISON

- **CONFUSION**
- **FORCE WRETCHING**
- **LINGERING CLOUD**

NECROSIS

- **DEATHLY FEAR**
- **LIFE DRAIN**
- **WITHER PLANTS**

Also, reference the dragon linked challenge on pg. .

ELEMENTAL, AIR		TRICKSTER
CLOUD WHITE	SKY BLUE	WHISPER GRAY
Swirling masses of wind and cloud that can change shape. They represent the raw power of storms and wind, mercurial and unpredictable.		
* Cyclonic form	● GALE FORCE	
* Untouchable	● WHIRLWIND	
* Speech	● SUFFOCATE	
Wants to flow ever free. Doesn't want to be ignored.		
☞ leaves and debris swirling, dust and sand kicked up ☞ howling wind, rush of air, whistling gusts ☞ high-altitude winds, rain and freshly turned earth		
FORM & PERSONALITY		
1 Swirling cyclone , erratic and wild.		
2 Floating cloud , serene and evasive.		
3 Tornado , furious and unstoppable.		
4 Dust devil , sneaky and persistent.		
5 Gusty winds , playful and mischievous.		
6 Zephyr , kind but undependable.		

ELEMENTAL, FIRE		BRUTE
BLAZING RED	BURNT GOLD	MOLTEN ORANGE
Constantly shifting infernos that consume everything in their path. They blaze with insatiable hunger, leaving behind smoldering ash and molten ruin.		
* Blazing aura	● FLAME LASH	
* Insatiable hunger	● MELT METALS	
* Speech	● SUMMON FIRELINGS	
Wants to consume and move on. Doesn't want to let embers die out.		
☞ roiling mass, flickering edges, glowing embers ☞ crackle and pop, roaring, hum of molten metals ☞ sulfur, brimstone, smoke, char, tang of metals		
IGNITION & PERSONALITY		
1 Lightning strike , violent and ephemeral.		
2 Ritual flame , sacred and commanding.		
3 Forge fire , controlled and powerful.		
4 Coal embers , patient and smoldering.		
5 Wildfire , ravenous and unrestrained.		
6 Funeral pyre , solemn and determined.		

ELEMENTAL, EARTH		BRUTE
MOSSY GREEN	ROCKY BROWN	STONE GRAY
Massive, rock-like creatures embodying the raw strength of the earth. They're slow but nearly unstoppable, lumbering through anything in their way.		
* Rock-solid	● EARTHQUAKE	
* Tremor sense	● STONE SPIRES	
* Speech	● BOULDER TOSS	
Wants to endure beyond time. Doesn't want for its form to be chipped away.		
☞ ground trembling, boulders rolling, spikes of stone ☞ rumbling groans, deafening crack of rocks, thumps ☞ loamy disturbed soil, moss, wet stone, mineral tang		
BIOME & PERSONALITY		
1 Forest , rooted and protective.		
2 Badlands , harsh and unforgiving.		
3 Mountains , proud and resilient.		
4 Caves , brooding and watchful.		
5 Mudflats , slow but determined.		
6 Grasslands , patient and enduring.		

ELEMENTAL, WATER		BLASTER
OCEAN BLUE	WAVECREST WHITE	SEAFOAM GREEN
Fluid, amorphous entities resembling a wave or torrent. They represent the relentless and ever-changing nature of water, adaptable and hard to contain.		
* Turbulent shape	● UNDERTOW	
* Rushing flow	● SURGE	
* Speech	● WHIRPOOL	
Wants to flow along channels towards growth. Doesn't want to lose touch with the ground.		
☞ crashing waters, churning currents, glistening tendrils ☞ roar of waves, splashing, sloshing, bubbling, gurgling ☞ briny ocean, soaked soil, sharp freshwater		
WATER SOURCE & PERSONALITY		
1 Tidal pool , playful and fickle.		
2 Raging rapids , relentless and reckless.		
3 Murky swamp , deceptive and suffocating.		
4 Rain , gentle and melancholic.		
5 Geyser , frustrated and volatile.		
6 Oasis , welcoming and mysterious.		



ETTIN

BRUTE

FLESHY GRAY

DARK LEATHER

ASHEN WHITE

Towering, two-headed figure with mismatched weapons. They lumber through the wilderness, both heads bickering endlessly about trivial matters.

- * Constantly bickering
- * Clumsy stride
- * Speech
- **SWING WEAPONS**
- **HEADBUTTS**
- **DUAL SHOUTING**

Wants simple pleasures both heads can agree on.

Doesn't want to do anything that requires precision.

- ☞ chaotic movements, dragging feet, frustrated glaring
- ☞ constant bickering, clumsy thuds, mismatched words
- ☞ sweaty musk, animal hides, unkempt hair

UNLIKELY PROTECTOR OF...

- 1 **Three old witches**, who use it as a bodyguard.
- 2 **Ragtag group of orphans** that saved it.
- 3 **Goblins**, because they worship it as a god.
- 4 **Hamlet** of farmers, who feed it.
- 5 **Wandering circus**, using it as a bouncer.
- 6 **Hermit**, friends with both heads.

TWO HEADS ARE WORSE THAN ONE

To pass an ettin without a fight, you'll need to persuade both heads. Remember, they're dim and don't get along.

4d | STONEVOICE

- * calm, rational
- * seeks a good chat
- * reacts to wordplay

6d | GOREBARK

- * aggressive, loud
- * seeks violence
- * reacts to weakness

6d | RUNEJAW

- * cryptic, curious
- * seeks to prophesize
- * reacts to symbolism

6d | GOLDMAW

- * sharp, greedy
- * seeks material gain
- * reacts to rare goods

4d | HOOTFANG

- * flamboyant, selfish
- * seeks real praise
- * reacts to boredom

8d | FOULHORN

- * quiet, manipulative
- * seeks to swindle
- * reacts to confusion

ETTERCAP

TACTICIAN

SPIDER GRAY

VENOM PURPLE

FOREST GREEN

Hunched, two-legged spider-like creature with web-spinning claws. They lurk within a maze of webbed traps and often control huge spider colonies.

- * Clever silk traps
- * Clings to walls
- * Speech (rarely)
- **SLING WEBBING**
- **VENOMOUS BITE**
- **WEB SKITTER**

Wants to never face danger directly.

Doesn't want for its hard work webbing to be destroyed.

- ☞ webs between trees, struggling victims, shiny fangs
- ☞ faint skitter of legs, whirr of web-spinning
- ☞ rotting wood, wet earth, decaying bodies

WEBBED DOMAINS

- 1 **Bramble patch**, every inch covered in webs.
- 2 Long, narrow, winding **canyons**.
- 3 Massive, abandoned **library** in the capital.
- 4 **Granaries** abandoned during the famine.
- 5 Derelict **shipwreck**, sails webbed over.
- 6 Sunken **pitfall** in the middle of the woods.

MASTERS OF THEIR WEBBED DOMAIN

The ettercap has enmeshed its lair in silken traps and shepherds a vast colony of monstrous spiders. It can detect even the faintest disturbance across the webbed expanse.

4d | ALARM STRANDS

- * nearly invisible

● STARTLED SPIDER

● ANOTHER VICTIM

4d | DEADLY TRAPS

- * serrated webbing

● NECK SLICE

● CONSTRICTING WEB

8d | SPIDER NEST

- * rabbit-sized spiders

● SPLIT UP PREY

● BITING FRENZY

4d | HOLDING TRAPS

- * incredibly sticky

● ENSNARING PULL

● TANGLING WEBS

4d | COCOONS

- * wriggling victims

● DESPERATE PLEAS

● HORRIFIC FEASTING

6d | ETTERCAP

- * can appear anytime

● LETHAL BITE

● FLEE TO SAFETY

FEY, DRYAD		PROTECTOR
MOSSY GREEN	BARK BROWN	FOREST GREEN
Mystical tree spirits that embody the essence of a specific tree, guarding it and the surrounding grove. They are fiercely protective of their home.		
* Melds with trees	● ENTANGLING ROOTS	
* One with nature	● CHARM PERSON	
* Speech	● BLOSSOMING BURST	
Wants to welcome those with good intentions. Doesn't want any form of unnatural change.		
☞ twisting vines, blooming flowers, swirling leaves ♫ soft rustling, melodic birdsong, crackle of twigs 🌿 earthy scent, woody aroma, crisp fresh leaves		
ARBOREAL LINEAGE		
1 Weeping willow , shy but playful.		
2 Oak , stern and steadfast.		
3 Maple , sweet and protective.		
4 Ash , resilient and wise.		
5 Elm , mournful but warm-hearted.		
6 Yew , resilient and vengeful.		

FEY, REDCAP		SKIRMISHER
BLOOD RED	AGED LEATHER	THICKEST GREEN
Malicious, bloodthirsty creatures with a blood-red cap, driven by violence and a love for carnage. They often manifest near murder sites.		
* Bloodlust	● SCYTHE SLASH	
* Grim cackling	● BLOOD FRENZY	
* Speech	● MAKE SKIN CRAWL	
Wants its hat to never fully dry. Doesn't want to be shown its own weaknesses.		
☞ bloodshot eyes, malevolent grin, shiny scythe ♫ sharp shing of a scythe, cackling laughter 🌿 thick coppery scent of fresh blood like a fog		
WARBAND BOSSES		
1 Goretooth , feared even by its kin.		
2 Bloodsoak , who bathes in blood.		
3 Rotfoot , who would rule the fey.		
4 Nocap , the hatless one.		
5 Redeyes , born of a murder most foul.		
6 Feybane , who is called betrayer.		

FEY, FAERY		TRICKSTER
PETAL PINK	SOFT LAVENDER	PALE BLUE
Tiny, winged creatures with a mischievous nature. They flit through meadows, casting illusions and playing tricks on wanderers for their own amusement.		
* Swarm together	● FAIRY DUST	
* Invisibility at-will	● DAZZLING LIGHTS	
* Speech	● MINOR ILLUSIONS	
Wants to play mostly harmless tricks on mortals. Doesn't want to be anywhere near iron.		
☞ glittering trails, darting figures, fleeting glimpses ♫ airy giggling, fluttering of tiny wings, melodic chimes 🌿 delicate nectar, lavender and jasmine, sugary aroma		
FAIRY CIRCLES		
1 Mushrooms glowing faintly in the dusk.		
2 Ring of sunflowers in a grassy field.		
3 Fallen leaves after a rain.		
4 Precarious pebble towers, defying gravity.		
5 Dancing fireflies in a glowing spiral.		
6 Ring of acorns around a sapling.		

FEY, SATYR		BRUTE
EARTHY BROWN	AUTUMN TAWNY	GRASSY GREEN
Merry, goat-legged tricksters with a love for wine, music, and revelry. They invite wanderers into their revelry, at times with a sense of maliciousness.		
* Revelrous spirit	● PAN PIPES	
* Enchanting tunes	● HEADBUTT	
* Speech	● JEERING CALLS	
Wants to loosen mortal ties. Doesn't want mortals to try to resist its invitations.		
☞ travelers into the woods, playfully malicious grin ♫ hypnotic melody of panpipes, dancing and revelry 🌿 rich scent of wine, wild berries, lingering sweetness		
CONTESTS & REWARDS		
1 singing	1 rare liquor	
2 dance-off	2 gold key to nothing	
3 eating pies	3 deed to an inn	
4 duel of wits	4 curse to give someone	
5 tug-of-war	5 black eye	
6 archery	6 half a treasure map	



GARGOYLE

PROTECTOR

STONE GRAY

ASH BLACK

MOSSY GREEN

Winged stone-like creatures that masquerade as part of buildings, serving as guardians. They can remain motionless for years until intruders approach.

- * Stone camouflage
- * Eternal vigilance
- * Speech
- JUMP SCARE
- SNATCH AND FLY
- STONE TALONS

Wants to let intruders go past the point of no return.
Doesn't want to outlive its duty.

- 👁 nothing of interest, wings unfurling, eyes opening
- 👂 slow scrape of stone, soft whoosh of wings, heavy thud
- 👃 dusty earth, ancient stone, tang of rainwater

ODD WARDS

- 1 **Door** that must remain opened.
- 2 **Throne** meant for a fallen king.
- 3 **Gate** that seemingly leads nowhere.
- 4 **Altar** long without its god.
- 5 **Bell tower**, never once chimed.
- 6 **Empty stepwell**, its community now dust.

GENIE

BLASTER

BURNISHED GOLD

SAPPHIRE BLUE

MYSTIC PURPLE

Powerful elemental spirits that command the forces of nature. They grant wishes, but often twist them to serve mysterious and unpredictable ends.

- * Elemental mastery
- * Regal confidence
- * Speech
- TWISTED WISH
- COMMAND ELEMENT
- WHIRLWIND

Wants its wishes to teach mortals a lesson.
Doesn't want to be bound or controlled.

- 👁 flowing robes, runes and symbols etched in the air
- 👂 ethereal hum, whoosh of wind, crackle of magic
- 👃 crisp air, lingering jasmine and lotus, alluring spice

GENIE TWISTS

- 1 Tries to **destroy itself** with the wish.
- 2 Tries too hard to **improve** the wish.
- 3 Makes the wish somehow achieve the **opposite**.
- 4 **Mishears**, changing one letter in the wish.
- 5 **Splits** the wish around unevenly.
- 6 **Can't** actually grant wishes, but will not admit it.

GELATINOUS CUBE

BRUTE

ACIDIC GREEN

TRANSLUCENT BLUE

PALE LIME

Transparent, jelly-like masses big enough to fill the dungeon halls they slide through. They engulf anything they touch and dissolve it with acidic digestion.

- * Nearly invisible
- * Very slow
- ABSORB PREY
- CORROSIVE SPLASH
- QUICK DISSOLVE

Wants to keep moving forward.
Doesn't want tenacious objects lingering inside it.

- 👁 faint shimmer, half-dissolved items suspended in air
- 👂 wet sloshing, soft acidic hiss, unsettling gurgling
- 👃 sour odor of acid, stinging scent of corroded metal

ABERRATIONS

- 1 Hollow center filled with **flaming, sloshing gel**.
- 2 Charged with **crackling** electric arcs.
- 3 Constantly shifting in **prismatic** colors.
- 4 Packed with **razor-sharp** hunks of metal.
- 5 **Swarm** of dice-sized cubes.
- 6 Impossibly dense, slow, and **indestructible**.

GIANTS FOUND ON PAGE 159.

GIBBERING MOUTHER

BRUTE

PALE FLESH

MEATY RED

FLESHY PINK

Writhing masses of eyes and mouths, constantly babbling incoherently. They confuse and madden foes with the chaotic sounds and frenzied mayhem.

- * Maddening babble
- * Chaotic form
- BLINDING SPITTLE
- MIND HAZE
- SWALLOW WHOLE

Wants to add more eyes and mouths to itself.
Doesn't want for its gibberish to be understood.

- 👁 droplets of saliva, bits of meat, bubbling flesh
- 👂 slurping, high-pitched screeches, moans, laughter
- 👃 sour odor of bile and rot, viscera, rancid meat

VOICES IN THE CHAOS

- 1 **Familiar voices** calling your name.
- 2 **Fragments** of broken promises.
- 3 **Pleas** for help and forgiveness.
- 4 **Mocking tones** from an old enemy.
- 5 **Chants** from forgotten rituals.
- 6 **Your own voice**, screaming your thoughts.

GOLEM		BRUTE
CLAY BROWN	IRON RUST	STONE GRAY
Magically animated constructs forged from various materials. They fulfill their creator's commands with unwavering obedience.		
* Unyielding	● SMASHING FISTS	
* Immune to magic	● BOOMING STOMPS	
	● MINDLESS CHARGE	
Wants to obey its creator's commands to the exact letter. Doesn't want to be uncertain of what to do.		
🌀 lumbering form, carved runes, glowing cracks 🌀 grinding joints, hollow thuds, faint buzz of magic 🌀 overwhelming scent of the material it was made of		
GOLEM CONSTRUCTION		
1 Clay , with a malleable form.		
2 Iron , with a strong magnetic pull.		
3 Crystal , refracting light into dazzling shards.		
4 Jade , with a mind and will of its own.		
5 Flesh , forming tiny flesh or blood golems if cut.		
6 Wood , regrowing damaged parts quickly.		

GRICK		LURKER
SLATE GRAY	MAUVE GRAY	DARK OLIVE
Slithering, worm-like creatures with hooked tentacles and a beak. They hide in dark caverns, taking great care to ambush prey with precise strikes.		
* Rocky camouflage	● TENTACLE SWIPE	
* Extended reach	● BEAK SNAP	
	● HASTY RETREAT	
Wants to leave no trace of its hunt. Doesn't want to miss a chance at a meal.		
🌀 squirming tentacles, intense gaze, faint movement 🌀 soft slithering, faint clicking, sudden snapping 🌀 musty earth, damp rock, faintly fishy scent		
SIDE EFFECTS OF MAGICAL EXPERIMENTATION		
1 Cloaks the whole area in darkness .		
2 Bursts into blinding light when it strikes.		
3 Releases a cloud of sleep gas when struck.		
4 Lets out shrill, echoing whistles .		
5 Absorbs all sound into utter silence .		
6 Tentacles stretch three times normal length.		

GORGON		BRUTE
METALLIC GRAY	BRONZE HIGHLIGHTS	GASEOUS GREEN
Metal-plated bulls that snort out a cloud of petrifying gas. They charge through it and shatter the stone victim into a thousand pieces.		
* Thick metallic hide	● PETRIFYING BREATH	
	● BULL RUSH	
	● HORN TOSS	
Wants to charge anything that dares confront it. Doesn't want flashy distractions.		
🌀 serpentine eyes, gas tendrils seeping from nostrils 🌀 sliding metal plates, mechanical snorts, hiss of steam 🌀 heavy metallic odor, slight staleness in the air		
METALLIC VARIATION		
1 Titanium , light and incredibly fast.		
2 Lead , slow but nearly indestructible.		
3 Steel , covered in sharp spikes.		
4 Silver , blindingly reflecting light.		
5 Brass , emitting an unsettling hum.		
6 Bronze , resisting all magic.		

GRIFFON		PREDATOR
LION GOLD	FEATHERY WHITE	STORMY BLUE
Majestic creatures with the body of a lion and the wings of an eagle. They're fierce predators and highly territorial, often nesting on high mountain peaks.		
* Keen watch	● WARNING WHOOSH	
* Wild majesty	● BEAK SNAP	
	● RESONANT SCREECH	
Wants for its screeches to warn intruders away. Doesn't want any threat at all to its kin.		
🌀 majestic soaring, flash of golden fur, knowing eyes 🌀 beak snap, flutter of feathers, scratching the ground 🌀 crisp mountain air, faint scent of wild prey		
PEOPLE IT TERRORIZES		
1 Satyr s, drawn by their celebrations.		
2 Hags , which it hunts for sport.		
3 Shepherds , raiding their flocks.		
4 Merchant caravans , curious about their carts.		
5 Hunters , in revenge for killing kin.		
6 Bandits , scaring them out of its lands.		



GIANT, FIRE

LURKER

BURNT EMBER

FIERY RED

COAL BLACK

Ironclad tyrants of flame and forge, valuing order and dominance above all. They shape kingdoms through fire, steel, and unyielding will.

* Magma-blooded

● **FLAMING HAMMER**

* Blazing aura

● **HURL MAGMA**

● **BLAZE WAVE**

Wants to haul plunder back to its volcanic fortress.

Doesn't want to cross bodies of water.

👁 huge swathes of scorched earth, trails of magma

👂 roaring crackle, whoosh of fire, rumble of lava

👃 stifling smoky odor, charred earth, scorched stone

SEAT OF POWER

1 charred stone bastion 1 island in a lava river

2 grand obsidian spire 2 sheer volcanic cliffside

3 ash-choked estate 3 billowing caldera rim

4 steamy sulfur baths 4 center of a vast plain

5 basalt cathedral 5 beneath magma-falls

6 clanging forgeworks 6 sulfuric cave system

DOUSE THE FLAMES OF WAR

You've reached the volcanic lair of the fire giant, bent on unleashing fire and war with its devil allies.

8d | HEAD & MAGIC

● **COLLAPSE TUNNELS**

● **OFFER ALLIANCE**

● **SUMMON DEVILS**

8d | BODY & PROWESS

* thick armor

* fiery spear

● **SPEAR SWEEP**

● **FOOT STOMP**

● **GRAB & THROW**

VOLCANIC LAIR

FEATURES lava pits, choking sulfuric clouds

THREATS 6d Spew Magma

6d Firelings (mook blasters)

3 Hellhounds (tough brutes)

4d | Fire Elemental (elite blaster)

GIANT, FROST

LURKER

ICY BLUE

FROSTY GRAY

STONE GRAY

Brutal lords of ice and stone, honoring strength and tradition above all. They seek to prove themselves worthy of the harsh, unforgiving frozen wastes.

* Icy footsteps

● **FROST BREATH**

* Slowness aura

● **SUMMON BLIZZARD**

* Speech

● **FROZEN HAMMER**

Wants to rule the sweeping vistas of the tundra.

Doesn't want to feel the cold seep from its bones.

👁 massive hanging icicles, clouds of snowflakes

👂 crack of freezing, howling icy winds, crunch of frost

👃 biting cold, frigid air, pine trees, fresh snow

UNEXPECTED LOCATIONS

1 Entire tower built around it, keeping it frozen.

2 Steps through a portal and onto a sandy beach.

3 Riding on a floating iceberg towards a port city.

4 In a grand wizard's laboratory.

5 Emerging from a bizarre mid-spring blizzard.

6 Tied down in the middle of a vast desert.

BREAK THE EVERFROST CURSE

You see the palace ahead, but the ice starts cracking beneath you and you hear crystals shattering overhead.

OUTER COURTYARD

FEATURES cracked ice pillars and statues

4d Iceling (mook swarmer)

8d | Remorhaz (elite predator)

ICY HALLS

FEATURES labyrinthine halls

THREATS 4d Terrifying Howling

6d Winter Wolves (tough predators)

6d | Dire Winter Wolf (elite tactician)

FROZEN THRONE ROOM

FEATURES intensely cold

THREATS 4d Falling Icicles

3 Ice Trolls (tough brutes)

6d Air Elementals (elite blasters)

8d + 8d | Frost Giant (boss blaster)

HAG, NIGHT

TRICKSTER

MIDNIGHT BLUE SHADOW BLACK DEEP PURPLE

Sinister figures that embody nightmares, manipulating dreams to terrorize mortals. They're devious and deal in dark bargains.

- * Was in your dreams ● NIGHTMARES
- * Shadowy teleport ● PHANTASMAL FORM
- * Speech ● EERIE WHISPER

Wants to explore the true depths of your fears.

Doesn't want to have its own fears exposed.

- 👁️ shrouded in shadows, trail of purple mist
- 👂 eerie whispers, fluttering cloak, creak of unseen steps
- 👃 cool night air, hint of aged leather

NIGHT SPELL CRUCIBLE (Make 3 spells)

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1 shrouded | 1 gloom |
| 2 shivering | 2 touch |
| 3 whispering | 3 glimmer |
| 4 muted | 4 aura |
| 5 bleak | 5 breath |
| 6 eerie | 6 moan |

HAG, SEA

TACTICIAN

SEAWEEED GREEN DARK DRIFTWOOD SEA BLUE

Grotesque sea-dwellers whose gaze inspires terror. They lurk in coastal caves, cursing sailors and reveling in the fearful cries of the drowning.

- * Knows your sins ● HIDEOUS GAZE
- * Watery teleport ● DROWNING CURSE
- * Speech ● CALL CREATURES

Wants to collect souls lost to the depths of the seas.

Doesn't want someone to make their fortune on the seas.

- 👁️ slimy skin, kelp entangled hair, glassy eyes
- 👂 waves crashing, soft gurgles, echoing calls
- 👃 saltwater, fish rot, briny scent of seaweed

SEA SPELL CRUCIBLE (Make 3 spells)

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| 1 swelling | 1 shanty |
| 2 rippling | 2 groan |
| 3 gurgling | 3 grip |
| 4 foamy | 4 ebb |
| 5 surging | 5 wave |
| 6 salty | 6 current |

HAG, STORM

BLASTER

ELECTRIC BLUE RAINY TEAL STORMY GRAY

Fierce figures that roam coastal cliffs, summoning winds and lightning. They unleash their wrath on settlements, making sure none grow too comfortable.

- * Always stormy ● CONJURE TEMPESTS
- * Windrider ● LIGHTNING STRIKE
- * Speech ● THUNDER BOOM

Wants to wreak havoc where stability prevails.

Doesn't want the calm center of its own fury revealed.

- 👁️ dark clouds swirling, crackling electricity
- 👂 howling winds, crackle of lightning, roaring thunder
- 👃 rain-soaked air, faint scent of wet earth

STORM SPELL CRUCIBLE (Make 3 spells)

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1 tattered | 1 torrent |
| 2 crackling | 2 clap |
| 3 biting | 3 arc |
| 4 howling | 4 boom |
| 5 thunderous | 5 flash |
| 6 surging | 6 chant |

HAG, SWAMP

TRICKSTER

BOG GREEN DANK MOSS PEAT BROWN

Wicked figures lurking in fetid bogs, weaving illusions to torment travelers. They spread decay and poison with sadistic glee.

- * Swampy camouflage ● ILLUSIONS
- * Decaying touch ● TOXIC CLOUD
- * Speech ● ENSNARING VINES

Wants to let the creatures of the swamp do all the work.

Doesn't want its swamp becoming someone's shortcut.

- 👁️ gnarled branches, hanging moss, buzzing flies
- 👂 creaking of trees, croak of swamp creatures, cackling
- 👃 decaying leaves, putrid water, mud

SWAMP SPELL CRUCIBLE (Make 3 spells)

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1 squelching | 1 mire |
| 2 oozing | 2 leech |
| 3 reeking | 3 smother |
| 4 rotting | 4 swallow |
| 5 sinking | 5 pull |
| 6 writhing | 6 cloud |

HELL HOUND			PREDATOR
EMBER RED	COAL BLACK	CHARCOAL GRAY	
Fiery, vicious hounds with glowing eyes and smelling of brimstone. They hunt in packs and track down souls marked for damnation.			
* Pack hunter	● FLAME BREATH		
* Fiery tracks	● HOWLING CALL		
* Understands language	● WARNING GROWL		
Wants to make the guilty pay. Doesn't want being forced out into the stinging rains.			
☞ smoking nostrils, singed grass, bed of ashes ♫ deep growls, crackling flames, claws scraping stone 🌫 sulfur and brimstone, charred flesh			
CALL TO HUNT			
1 Pursuing souls marked by broken oaths .			
2 Stalking souls escaped from the underworld.			
3 Hunting traitors who betrayed their own kin.			
4 Tracking those who spilled innocent blood .			
5 Hounding those who flee from justice .			
6 Wrongly on the trail of the completely innocent .			

HIPPOGRIFF			PROTECTOR
CHESTNUT BROWN	SOFT IVORY	GOLDEN TAWNY	
Noble creatures with the body of a horse and wings of an eagle. They soar over plains and mountains, loyal and protective to those who earn their trust.			
* Noble presence	● TALON STRIKE		
* Elegant speed	● BEAK SNAP		
	● TAKE FLIGHT		
Wants for its young to grow strong and wild. Doesn't want those who confront others with aggression.			
☞ majestic wings, sharp beak, talons gripping the earth ♫ rush of wind, shrill cries, gallop of hooves 🌫 earthy scent of open fields, fresh mountain air			
CHOSEN RIDERS			
1 Legendary thief who helped it escape.			
2 Outcast noble seeking redemption.			
3 Ranger who patrols distant borders.			
4 Wicked hag that it thinks is a hero.			
5 Normal farmer that it was raised by.			
6 Gnoll that nursed it back to health.			

HYDRA			BRUTE
MARSH GREEN	DUSKY BLUE	RUSTY RED	
Massive, reptilian beasts with multiple heads that can regrow when severed, making them almost impossible to kill. They lurk in swamps and dark waters.			
* Incredibly vigilant	● PULL ARMS & LEGS		
* Regenerating heads	● FRENZIED BITING		
	● REGROW HEAD NOW		
Wants to keep threats in front of it. Doesn't want anything ever touching its body.			
☞ wide-open jaws, glistening scales ♫ hissing, splash of water, snapping of giant jaws 🌫 rotting vegetation, stagnant muck water			
UNIQUE HEAD REGROWTHS			
1 Sludge head , which spews a poisonous fog.			
2 Only the skull , filled with necrotic energy.			
3 Eyeless head , which can read minds.			
4 Beautiful head with a hypnotic singsong.			
5 Horned head that can ram with force.			
6 The cut head rolls away to form a new hydra .			

SEVERANCE PAY

A wizard's offering good coin for the heads of a hydra, each the size of a big soup pot. He swears he can brew the perfect regeneration potion—with some trial and error.

2d | FIRST HEAD ●●

- * protects the body
- * 3d Regrow Head

2d | SECOND HEAD ●●

- * protects the body
- * 3d Regrow Head

2d | THIRD HEAD ●●

- * protects the body
- * 3d Regrow Head

2d | FOURTH HEAD ●●

- * protects the body
- * 3d Regrow Head

8d | BODY ●●

- * mostly submerged

2d | FIFTH HEAD ●●

- * watches behind
- * 3d Regrow Head



KRAKEN

TACTICIAN

ABYSSAL INDIGO

BIOLUMINESCENT CYAN

MOTTLED INK BLACK

It's a being older than language, stirring in deep slumber. Immense, alien, and beyond comprehension, it uses its vast intelligence to bend the world to its will.

- * Ancient intelligence
- * Endless tentacles
- * Telepathic speech
- DRAG UNDER
- TENTACLE SLAP
- PSYCHIC SCREAM

Wants to observe, then steer the course of fate.

Doesn't want the chaos of small folk in its domain.

- 👁 bioluminescent shapes, trembling water
- 👂 silence where there should be sound, deep pressure
- 👃 old brine, ancient ink and salt

HOW IT WANTS TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

- 1 **Send dreams** to coastal villagers to found a cult.
- 2 **Spread a plague** to turn people into deep-sea thralls.
- 3 Create a **new volcano** to house its fiery lair.
- 4 **Steal memories** from sailors to gain their knowledge.
- 5 **Manipulate pirates** to awaken its mate.
- 6 **Sink an island** of people who no longer worship it.

LAMIA

TRICKSTER

DARK JADE

DESERT BROWN

SANDY GOLD

Decadent, lion-bodied enchantresses that lure victims with charm and illusion, seeking to corrupt and control them. They're driven by hedonistic desires.

- * Graceful agility
- * Illusory person form
- * Speech
- CURSED TOUCH
- ILLUSIONS
- ENCHANTMENT

Wants to gather secrets and amusement from its victims.

Doesn't want to think about the nature of its existence.

- 👁 golden adornments, graceful silhouette, soft ripples
- 👂 seductive laughter, sand rustling, chants on the wind
- 👃 desert breeze, faint jasmine, spicy myrrh

FALSE RENOWN

- 1 **Whispers** that prophecies fall from their lips.
- 2 **Claimed** to show past secrets through dreams.
- 3 **Rumored** to bind with honeyed promises.
- 4 **Fabled** to recall lost souls from death's grasp.
- 5 **Promised** to reveal one's deepest purpose.
- 6 **Songs** tell of dreams woven into reality.

AWAKENED FROM THE DEEP

A deep rumbling comes from beneath the ship as the water around you begins to tremble. It knows why you're here.

4d | LONG TENTACLES

* protects the body

- FORCEFUL FLING
- SQUEEZE

4d | LONG TENTACLES

* protects the body

- WRAP AROUND
- PULL ASUNDER

4d | BODY

- * slick hide
- * dark knowledge

- WHISPER SECRETS
- CONSUME

AQUATIC LAIR

FEATURES rocky crevasses, ink clouds

THREATS 6d Steam Jet

6d Jellyfish (mook swarmers)

3 Dire Sharks (tough brutes)

4d | Naga Priest (elite tactician)

LAND SHARK

LURKER

SLATE GRAY

DUSTY OCHRE

OLD BONE

A hulking beast of plated muscle and burrowing claws. It bursts from the earth to hunt anything foolish enough to walk above its domain.

- * impenetrable hide
- * vibration sense
- * swift ambushes
- BURROW IN EARTH
- CRUSHING BITE
- DRAG DOWN HOLE

Wants to claim a territory of its own.

Doesn't want to be stuck on hard surfaces.

- 👁 layered plates on hide, hump gliding through soil
- 👂 rumbling earth, sudden silence, deep growl
- 👃 damp stone, churned dirt, dust in the air

WHERE THE TUNNEL ENDS

- 1 **A forgotten city**, from an unknown civilization.
- 2 **A vast cavern**, illuminated by pulsing light.
- 3 **A maze of roots**, below a truly ancient tree.
- 4 **An abandoned mine**, that met a disastrous end.
- 5 **A hidden homestead**, clearly still used by someone.
- 6 **A fungal network**, illuminated by its mushrooms.

MANTICORE		MARKSMAN
BURN'T BROWN	DESERT OCHRE	DUSTY DAWN
Fierce beasts with a feline body and spiked tail. They prowl deserts and plains, driving prey into flight then pelting them with volleys of deadly tail spikes.		
* Barbed hide	● CRUEL WORDS	
* Cautious	● SPIKE VOLLEY	
* Speech (crude)	● TERRIFYING ROAR	
Wants to scare its prey into fleeing for an easy kill. Doesn't want to let fleeing prey get away.		
☞ spikes in trees, dust clouds, long blood trails ☞ guttural roars, sharp cracking of spikes landing ☞ dry fur, acrid dust, musky feline scent		
SYMBIOTIC PAIRINGS		
1 Wyvern , hunts down injured prey.		
2 Hill giant , makes for a comfortable bed.		
3 Basilisk , waits to petrify escaping targets.		
4 Minotaur , lets it lair in the labyrinth.		
5 Chimera , a tense hunting pact.		
6 Underscourage , follows along from below.		

MEPHIT		BLASTER
THE COLOR OF THEIR ELEMENT		
Impish elementals born of chaos and frayed planes. They wildly spread their element, and are often summoned by careless mages.		
* elemental origin	● ENERGY BELCH	
* mischievous & petty	● DISTRACTING FLITTER	
* explodes when it dies	● SUMMON MEPHIT	
Wants to spread its native elemental type, quickly. Doesn't want to suffer the smallest of inconveniences.		
☞ nasty wings, trailing smoke or sludge ☞ snickering, bubbling laughter, hissing steam ☞ acrid smoke, damp rot, scorched greenery		
TYPES OF MEPHIT		
1 magma	1 steam	1 mud
2 lightning	2 ooze	2 ore
3 plant	3 ash	3 water
4 ice	4 dust	4 smoke
5 earth	5 wood	5 wind
6 salt	6 fire	6 mist

MEDUSA		TRICKSTER
VIPER GREEN	BRONZE GOLD	ANCIENT STONE
Cursed figures with serpentine hair and a gaze that turns onlookers into stone. They hide in ancient ruins, haunted by past sorrow and bitterness.		
* Vigilant serpent hair	● PETRIFYING GAZE	
* Unnatural beauty	● SNAKE HAIR STRIKE	
* Speech	● HYPNOTIC CHARM	
Wants for you to just go away. Doesn't want to be reminded of its past.		
☞ writhing serpent hair, statues of victims, angry eyes ☞ soft hissing, vengeful muttering, sudden snap of scales ☞ ancient rot, moss-covered stone, stagnant air		
CURSE ORIGINS		
1 Vanity , punished by a mirror that never reflects.		
2 Lies , broke a promise made in desperation		
3 Greed , forced to forever protect the relic it stole.		
4 Paranoia , having been betrayed countless times.		
5 Jealousy , spawned from unfulfilled longing.		
6 Hubris , having believed itself above the gods.		

MIMIC		LURKER
CORRUPTED PURPLE	IRON BLACK	AGED OAK
Shapeshifting creature that disguises itself as objects to lure prey. They stretch to devour victims in one gulp, springing to life when a meal is assured.		
* Shapeshifter	● RAISE CURIOSITY	
* Adhesive touch	● DEFLECT SUSPICION	
* Understands language	● SWALLOW WHOLE	
Wants to be carried to places with tastier meals. Doesn't want to turn into the same thing twice.		
☞ shifting surfaces like melting wax, texture rippling ☞ sticky slurps, sudden snaps, creaking of pressure ☞ sour decay of old adhesive, whiffs of trapped air		
OBJECT FORMS		
1 Simple , like a barrel, rug, or bookshelf.		
2 Tricky , like a door, book, or cupboard.		
3 Inviting , like a plush chair, bed, or vanity table.		
4 Horrific , like a doll, mask, or coffin.		
5 Nostalgic , like a children's toy, old hat, or lute.		
6 Necessary , like a toilet, staircase, or well.		



MINOTAUR

BRUTE

DARK LEATHER BULL BROWN BESTIAL RED

Towering, bull-headed figures that guard labyrinths. They relentlessly stalk its passages, charging with savage force at the first sign of intruders.

- * Thick hide ● MAZE AMBUSH
- * Labyrinth sense ● BULL SNORTS
- * Speech ● HORN TOSS

Wants victims to enter its maze, to satisfy its bloodlust.
Doesn't want to feel the sting of solitude yet again.

- 👁 bulging muscles, hooves kicking up dust
- 👂 angry snorts, thud of cloven hooves on stone
- 👃 earthy musk, old blood and sweat

LABYRINTH LAYOUTS

- 1 Intricate sewer system of the ancient capital.
- 2 Thorn-choked paths hiding **mischievous** Fey.
- 3 Tunnels of a sea cave, **half-filled** with water.
- 4 Stone paths lined with **fragile mirrors**.
- 5 Deep **stepwell** with various paths cut off.
- 6 Enchanted woods with **shifting pathways**.

NAGA

BLASTER

SCALED GREEN REPTILIAN BLUE AGED GOLD

Malevolent serpentine figures, guarding ancient wisdom. They defend sacred groves and lost ruins with potent magic against any who dare trespass.

- * Serpentine grace ● VENOMOUS FANGS
- * Ancient wisdom ● CONSTRICT
- * Speech ● HEX MAGIC

Wants to keep its secrets for itself, no matter the cost.
Doesn't want to be insulted with offers, as if it can be bought.

- 👁 iridescent scales, gleaming eyes
- 👂 hiss of scales sliding across stone, whispering
- 👃 exotic incense, floral notes mixed with musk

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE (Roll 3 & interpret)

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 secret | 1 scrolls of | 1 immortality |
| 2 twisted | 2 visions of | 2 soulbinding |
| 3 false | 3 rites of | 3 necromancy |
| 4 true | 4 pacts of | 4 teleportation |
| 5 blasphemous | 5 elixirs of | 5 polymorphing |
| 6 shattered | 6 ciphers of | 6 godhood |

NIGHTMARE

BRUTE

HELLFIRE RED SHADOW BLACK EMBER GRAY

Flame-wreathed steeds that emerge from the underworld, galloping through the night. Their hooves leave scorched trails across the land.

- * Flame-wreathed ● HELLFIRE BREATH
- * Slips between planes ● SHADOWY TELEPORT
- * Understands language ● REAR UP & NEIGH

Wants to carry those who seek vengeance.
Doesn't want to witness acts of mercy or kindness.

- 👁 charred hoofprints, trail of smoke, glowing red eyes
- 👂 crackle of flames, pounding of hooves, eerie neighs
- 👃 burnt sulfur, smoldering ashes

WRATHFUL RIDERS

- 1 Exiled knight, who did nothing wrong.
- 2 Betrayed queen, who deserved what she got.
- 3 Hanged poet, whose words rang too true.
- 4 Wayward prince, who will never go home.
- 5 Desperate rebel, the last one alive.
- 6 Bitter seer, whose warnings were ignored.

OCHRE JELLY

BRUTE

OCHRE SICKLY YELLOW MURKY BROWN

Pulsing, acidic oozes that dissolve anything they touch as they silently slither through dungeons. They split into smaller versions when struck.

- * Extremely sticky ● SLURP FORWARD
- * Divides when struck ● ABSORB
- SLINK AWAY

Wants to grow into the greatest of all jellies.
Doesn't want to split into new rivals.

- 👁 unsettling motion, remnants of absorbed creatures
- 👂 wet sloshing, faint bubbling, the quiet pull of suction
- 👃 sour decay, moldy dampness

NEWLY SPLIT JELLIES (It's not sticky)

- 1 Azure jelly, with a freezing touch.
- 2 Crimson jelly, shrieks and bleeds when it's struck.
- 3 Verdant jelly, spreads carnivorous plant life.
- 4 Mercury jelly, perfectly reflects its surroundings.
- 5 Spectral jelly, shimmers like a mirage.
- 6 Onyx jelly, leaves a trail of thick, bubbling tar.

OGRE		BRUTE
RUSTIC TAN	DIRTY BROWN	FOREST GREEN
Towering, brutish creatures with thick skin and crude weapons. They roam forests and caves, smashing anything in its path to keep itself amused.		
* Overwhelming power	● GRAB & CRUSH	
* Slow & stubborn	● RAGING ROAR	
* Speech	● BODY SLAM	
Wants to wander and destroy—a good life. Doesn't want to be outwitted by smaller creatures.		
🗨️ towering silhouette in the trees, gnarled club 🗣️ heavy footfalls, low growls 🗑️ stale sweat, dirt, lingering scent of raw meat		
CHOSEN LEADER OF THE...		
1 Trolls , after marrying their chieftain.		
2 Hill goblins , fearing its wrath.		
3 Swamp spirits , bound to its will.		
4 Wild fey , attracted by its savagery.		
5 Hill giants , who think it's a genius.		
6 Other ogres , a small army of them.		

OWLBEAR		BRUTE
TAWNY FEATHER	FURRY BROWN	TALON SLATE
Fiercely territorial, hulking beasts with the body of a bear and head of an owl. They hunt in forests, using their keen senses and raw power.		
* Nocturnal hunter	● TERRITORIAL ROAR	
* Lumbering speed	● CRUSHING BEAK	
	● PIERCING SCREECH	
Wants to protect its territory. Doesn't want any threat to its nesting cave.		
🗨️ clawed tree bark, deep gouges in the ground 🗣️ rasping hoots, heavy thuds, trees shaking 🗑️ rank musk, trampled leaves, tang of blood		
VICTIMS, STILL FRESH		
1 Scholar , face down, drawings strewn about.		
2 Cultist , dead in a tree without a scratch on them.		
3 Messenger , half-eaten scroll in hand.		
4 Farmer , holding a wilted bouquet.		
5 Smuggler , clutching a vial of purple poison.		
6 Performer , in full costume, mask still on.		

OTYUGH		BRUTE
PUTRID BROWN	SEWER GREEN	ROTTEN FLESH
Grotesque, tentacled scavengers lurking in sewers and refuse heaps. They devour rotting carcasses and overwhelm any disturbance with diseased filth.		
* Diseased touch	● SPRAY FILTH	
* Reeking stench	● PUTRID GULP	
* Understands, telepathy	● SLUDGE TENTACLE	
Wants to strike simple truces for territory. Doesn't want for its accumulated filth to be washed clean.		
🗨️ slimy tentacles, rotting filth, scattered bones 🗣️ squishy movements, wet gurgles, buzzing flies 🗑️ putrid rot, decay, stagnant swamp water		
FILTHY ACCOMPLICES		
1 Spewing animated fungus swarms .		
2 Driven forward by a cult of ruin .		
3 Controlled by city sanitation workers .		
4 Followed by a horde of plague-ridden rats .		
5 Ridden by a foul goblin shaman .		
6 Possessed by a fallen druid's spirit .		

PEGASUS		PROTECTOR
SILVERY GRAY	SKY BLUE	CLOUD WHITE
Majestic, winged horses with a noble spirit. They soar through the skies, drawn to those with courage and kindness, appearing in moments of dire need.		
* Graceful flier	● WINGED CHARGE	
* Pure-hearted	● WING BUFFET	
* Understands language	● CELESTIAL WHINNY	
Wants to come to aid in dire moments. Doesn't want to be ridden.		
🗨️ shimmering feathers, graceful gait 🗣️ powerful wing beats, soft neighing, wind rushing 🗑️ fresh air, faint scent of wildflowers		
CARRIED MESSAGES		
1 Royal summons , sealed with enchanted wax.		
2 Love letter filled with terrible poetry.		
3 Battle plan hastily scrawled.		
4 Desperate plea from a sworn enemy.		
5 Ransom note tied with black string.		
6 Official declaration of invasion .		



PHOENIX

BLASTER

INFERNO GOLD FLAMING ORANGE ASH GRAY

Mythical birds of fire, emerging to bring both destruction and new beginnings. As they blaze across the sky, their embers spread cleansing infernos.

- * Radiates intense heat ● **FLAME BURST**
- * Reborn upon death ● **EMBER TRAIL**
- * Speech ● **CALL FIRESTORM**

Wants to only come when they're needed most.
Doesn't want to face the pain and horror of its rebirth.

- 👁️ fiery wings, glowing ember trails, vibrant plumage
- 👂 crackling flames, occasional soft cooing
- 👃 warm ash, hints of sulfur, sweet smokiness

ALCHEMICAL POWERS (Roll 2 per part secured)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Immunity to fire | 1 Flaming touch |
| 2 Cure any disease | 2 Slip between realities |
| 3 Massive, fiery wings | 3 Fiery rebuke aura |
| 4 Resurrection | 4 Cinder trail |
| 5 Telepathy | 5 Flame divination |
| 6 Summon firelings | 6 Blazing speed |

RAKSHASA

TRICKSTER

SILKEN GOLD REGAL PURPLE TIGER ORANGE

Cunning, tiger-headed fiends with reversed hands that revel in wealth and opulence. They manipulate mortals with illusions and lies, gaining great power.

- * Illusion magic ● **ENCHANT PERSON**
- * Elegant manipulator ● **ILLUSIONS**
- * Speech ● **PERFECT LIES**

Wants to surround itself in luxury.
Doesn't want for crude company to sully its refined tastes.

- 👁️ ornate clothing, well-groomed fur
- 👂 smooth voice, rustle of silk, faintly echoing footsteps
- 👃 incense, hints of expensive perfumes

INFLUENCE NETWORKS

- 1 **Thieves guild.** Fits in perfectly.
- 2 **Merchant coalition.** Sold their soul for it.
- 3 **Pirate fleet.** Won it in a duel.
- 4 **Noble house.** Happily married into it.
- 5 **Mercenary band.** Controls it from afar.
- 6 **Spy ring.** Works for four different sides.

REMORHAZ

PREDATOR

SERPENTINE BLUE

MOLTEN RED

CHITIN GRAY

Massive, heat-radiating worms with red-hot spines along their back. They burrow through frozen tundra, devouring all in their path with searing jaws.

- * Radiates intense heat ● **EMERGING STRIKE**
- * Swift burrower ● **HEAT WAVE**
- * Powerful mandibles ● **DEVOUR**

Wants to find hot springs or lava flows to lay its eggs.
Doesn't want to feel the cold seep under its carapace.

- 👁️ glowing red-hot spines, icy blue eyes, sharp ridges
- 👂 hissing steam, grinding mandibles, cracking ice
- 👃 burnt metal, scorched earth, sulfur

WORMS OF DARK PROPHECY

- 1 **ROUSE** THE SLUMBERING GODS ENTOMBED
- 2 **SEVER** THE SACRED BONDS OF BLOOD AND ROOT
- 3 **DEVOUR** THE HEART OF THE HERO FORETOLD
- 4 **UNSEAL** THE CRYPT OF THE NAMELESS KING
- 5 **TORCH** THE ROOTS OF THE WORLD TREE
- 6 **SILENCE** THE BELLS OF THE ETERNAL CITY

WORM WRANGLING

You grab its tail as it barrels past, chasing prey through icy canyons. The rope to sling around its neck will bewitch it, but you gotta get up there before it sees you and burrows.

8d | TAIL

- * erratic, flicking tail
- * few handholds

- **FLYING ICE SHARDS**
- **TAIL HITS WALL**

✗ **8d It notices you**
(shared across next challenge)

4d | FLARED HOOD

- * wide plates
- * loose scales

- **SWIFT HEAD TURN**
- **SWALLOW PREY**

ICE CANYON THREATS

- 4d Gusting Winds
- 6d Collapsing Walls

4d | MIDSECTION

- * red hot spines
- * few cool spots

- **SHIMMERING HAZE**
- **SUDDEN TURN**

✗ **8d It notices you**

You haven't planned this far. Now, how exactly do you get the rope around this thing's neck?

ROC		BRUTE
FEATHERED SAND	DUSTY BROWN	STORMY BLUE
Colossal birds with wings that block out the sun. They appear in times of stagnation to bring change by carrying away that which no longer belongs.		
* Blocks out the sun	● GALE FORCE WINDS	
* Impervious to damage	● TALON GRASP	
	● SWALLOW WHOLE	
Wants to return to its nest. Doesn't want to be distracted from what it must do.		
☞ as big as the clouds, vast silhouette on the horizon ♫ resonating wingbeats, massive gusts of wind 🌿 overwhelming earthy musk, dry feathers		
POTENTIAL EGG BUYERS		
1 Dying empress , who will feed on it to live.		
2 Dragon , who will use it to barter for its life.		
3 Ancient lich , who will create its greatest minion.		
4 Storm giant , who will raise it as a mount.		
5 Infamous pirate , who sees it as a future skyship.		
6 Druidic order , who will unleash it on the world.		

RUSTMAW		SKIRMISHER
METAL DECAY	CORRODED UMBER	OXIDE RED
Chitinous creatures that feed on metal, rusting weapons and armor with a touch. Their twitching antennae guide them straight to their next metallic meal.		
* Rusts metal it touches	● SKITTER AND HIDE	
* Hard carapace	● EAT WEAPON	
	● TWITCH ANTENNAE	
Wants to consume every last trace of metal. Doesn't want to accidentally munch on wood or glass.		
☞ twitching antennae, scattered rust crumbs ♫ scraping mandibles, rustling movement 🌿 sharp metallic tang, faint odor of decay		
RESIDUAL EFFECTS OF EATING ARCANA		
1 Glow s in the dark.		
2 Leaves a trail of sparks behind it.		
3 Floats slightly above the ground.		
4 Speaks in very basic terms.		
5 Vibrates like a tuning fork when struck.		
6 Is completely invisible .		

ROPER		LURKER
CAVE EARTH	ROCKY GRAY	SLATE BROWN
Lurking predators in caverns, blending with stalagmites to ambush prey. Their tendrils drag victims in for a deadly bite, leaving escape nearly impossible.		
* Cave camouflage	● SURVIVE SCRUTINY	
* Extended tendrils	● REEL IN	
* Speech	● CAUSE PARANOIA	
Wants to strike lone targets. Doesn't want to be scrutinized and revealed.		
☞ tendril shadows, unremarkable stalagmites ♫ low rumbling growl, rocky slithering 🌿 earthy stone, dank moss, faint rotting flesh		
HOW IT SURVIVES SCRUTINY		
1 Mimics dripping water, distant echoes.		
2 Moves incredibly quickly when not watched.		
3 Makes you feel like you are being watched .		
4 Absorbs light , creating longer shadows.		
5 Stays deathly still , even under attack.		
6 Leaves no trace of its previous meals.		

SHAMBLING MOUND		BRUTE
VINE GREEN	MUCK BROWN	ROTTING GREEN
Hulking masses of vines and swamp muck lumbering through marshes. They engulf prey and grow larger with each and every victim.		
* Absorbs and grows	● REGROWTH	
* Swampy camouflage	● VINE LASH	
	● ENGULF	
Wants to find and consume prosperity. Doesn't want to consume desiccated creatures.		
☞ mass of tangled vines, streaks in the muck ♫ wet sloshing, cracking branches, earthy groan 🌿 rotting vegetation, swamp muck, wet earth		
BURIED WITHIN		
1 Grand druid , sleeping within a cocoon.		
2 Ancient coffin , sealing away a cursed vampire.		
3 Nearly endless amount of animated skeletons .		
4 Mask of twisted vines that whispers riddles.		
5 Fey gateway , pulsing with otherworldly energy.		
6 Warbanner of the true queen .		



SPHINX

TACTICIAN

ANCIENT GOLD

DUSKY BLUE

DESERT SAND

Majestic creatures with the body of a lion and head of a human. They guard secrets and grant wishes, testing people with riddles to prove their worth.

- * Master of riddles ● **WING BUFFET**
- * Unfooled by deception ● **DIVINATION SPELL**
- * Speech ● **TELEPORT**

Wants to allow the truly worthy to pass by.

Doesn't want to face trickery or deception of any kind.

☞ golden fur, regal posture, watchful eyes

☞ resonant voice, wind sweeping by, distant roars

☞ warm sand, ancient incense, faint floral scents

WISH CHOICES

- 1 Ask any **yes or no** question.
- 2 Ask for any **one item** and it is yours.
- 3 Ask to be any **age** you would like—forever?
- 4 Ask for any one being to **cease to be**.
- 5 Ask for any one being to be **brought back**.
- 6 Ask for a chance to correct a **single regret**.

RIDDLE (Roll 3, choose 1 or 2, pose it as a riddle)

- 1 It flows but has no shape.
 - 2 It grows taller, then vanishes.
 - 3 It travels far but takes no steps.
 - 4 It burns but leaves no ashes.
 - 5 It counts the moments but has no hands.
 - 6 It falls but makes no sound.
- 1 It's cold but not frozen.
 - 2 It's bright but not hot.
 - 3 It hums when the world is still.
 - 4 It's full but never complete.
 - 5 It's fleeting but always returns.
 - 6 It's hidden in plain sight.
- 1 It grows when light dims.
 - 2 It follows you on sunny days.
 - 3 It stares back from still waters.
 - 4 It's buried but not dead.
 - 5 It's a silent companion.
 - 6 It's a path without end.

IF RELATIVELY CLOSE, ACCEPT THE ANSWER.

TROLL

BRUTE

EARTHY BROWN

GRANITE GRAY

MUDDY GREEN

Regenerating creatures that lair in overlooked places, hoarding strange trophies. They make simple demands and usually negotiate before cracking skulls.

- * Regenerates ● **CONVINCING OFFER**
- * Weak vs. fire, acid ● **HURLE ENEMY**
- * Speech (grunts, gestures) ● **TOPPLE TREES**

Wants its lair to be filled with bones and trophies.

Doesn't want to let on that it's more cunning than it looks.

☞ an oddly shaped mound, glint of sharp claws

☞ low grumbling, crunch of bones, wet chewing

☞ stale swamp water, wet fur, strong musk of mold

OVERLOOKED LAIRS

- 1 **Abandoned mill**, half-sunk in the swamp.
- 2 **Ruined bathhouse**, flooded with muck.
- 3 **Crumbling fort** lost in dense woods.
- 4 **Hollowed-out tree** astride a grain field.
- 5 **Ruined chapel** overtaken by brambles.
- 6 **Rocky cave** behind a waterfall.

UNDERSCOURGE

TACTICIAN

CHITIN BRONZE

EARTHEN OCHRE

STONE OCHRE

Burrowing creatures with chitin armor and hypnotic eyes. They strike from below, collapsing the ground to trap victims.

- * Burrows effortlessly ● **HYPNOTIC GAZE**
- * Tough chitin ● **RAPID BURROWING**
- * Speech ● **COLLAPSE GROUND**

Wants to feast on surface creatures.

Doesn't want to venture into the sunlight.

☞ large burrow holes, cracked earth, glistening chitin

☞ distant rumbling, shifting soil, clicking mandibles

☞ fresh-turned earth, mineral-rich tang, earthy musk

COLLAPSES...

- 1 **Farmer's pasture**, full of cows.
- 2 **Town square** during a festival.
- 3 **Noble's garden**, during a feast.
- 4 **Bustling mine**, just as they struck the motherlode.
- 5 **General's tent**, after a glorious victory.
- 6 **Royal cemetery**, as the king is laid to rest.

UNDEAD, GHAST			BRUTE
WEATHERED FLESH	DECAYED GREEN	BLOODSTAIN RED	
Rotting corpses driven by an ancient plague that wishes to spread once more. They're full of hunger and rage, and leave victims messily scattered about.			
* Rotting Stench	● PUTRID EXHALE		
* Plague carrier	● FESTERING CLAWS		
* Speech (archaic)	● NUMBING GRASP		
Wants to feed, inadvertently spreading the plague. Doesn't want to give up on a fleshy meal.			
☞ pallid skin, jagged teeth, bloated and yellowed ☞ guttural snarls, heavy breathing, slap of bare feet ☞ decayed flesh, sour stench, mold			
BYGONE PLAGUES			
1 The Weeping Rot, turning flesh to black ooze.			
2 The Crimson Blight, causing veins to burst.			
3 The Ashen Grip, hardening limbs into stone.			
4 The Vile Verdancy, growing plants from wounds.			
5 The Choking Miasma, filling lungs with sludge.			
6 The Thorned Decay, sprouting barbs from skin.			

UNDEAD, LICH		TACTICIAN																
ANCIENT PURPLE	ROTTEN GREEN	BONE WHITE																
Immortal magicians driven by a singular, dark purpose. They control hordes of undead from a well-defended lair, executing schemes with cold calculation.																		
* 8 Wizard spells (pg. 86)	● CAST SPELL	LICH SPELLBOOK A lich knows 8 wizard spells. Choose a spellbook below, or make one. They gain 1 bonus suspense for each spell. <table><tr><td>Slow Worm Transmutation</td><td>Mind Guide Divination</td></tr><tr><td>Pain Cascade Necromancy</td><td>Flesh Cascaon Transmutation</td></tr><tr><td>Screaming Aura Enchantment</td><td>Oil Shield Abjuration</td></tr><tr><td>Mesmerising Mask Illusion</td><td>Bone Wall Conjuration</td></tr><tr><td>Expanding Flesh Transmutation</td><td>Slow Chains Transmutation</td></tr><tr><td>Hungry Wings Conjuration</td><td>Binding Word Enchantment</td></tr><tr><td>Dazzling Vine Illusion</td><td>Prismatic Smoke Evocation</td></tr><tr><td>Terrible Lore Divination</td><td>Hungry Terror Necromancy</td></tr></table>	Slow Worm Transmutation	Mind Guide Divination	Pain Cascade Necromancy	Flesh Cascaon Transmutation	Screaming Aura Enchantment	Oil Shield Abjuration	Mesmerising Mask Illusion	Bone Wall Conjuration	Expanding Flesh Transmutation	Slow Chains Transmutation	Hungry Wings Conjuration	Binding Word Enchantment	Dazzling Vine Illusion	Prismatic Smoke Evocation	Terrible Lore Divination	Hungry Terror Necromancy
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Terrible Lore Divination	Hungry Terror Necromancy																	
* Two steps ahead	● RAISE UNDEAD																	
* Speech	● SOUL LEECH																	
Wants to obtain the power it needs for its grand scheme.																		
Doesn't want anything near its phylactery.																		
☞ tattered robes, skeletal hands, piercing eyes																		
☞ hoarse incantations, eerie silence between words																		
☞ ancient dust, burnt incense, sharp cloying decay																		
OVERLY GRANDIOSE DARK RITUALS																		
1 Enslave every soul in the realm to its will.																		
2 Steal the life essence of the royal bloodline.																		
3 Summon the Bonegrinder, eater of legends.																		
4 Sing the song that will end the world.																		
5 Raise a necropolis from which to rule.																		
6 Twist the vast forests into a maze of undead trees.																		

UNDEAD, GHOST		BLASTER
SPIRIT SILVER	PALE MIST	MISTY BLUE
Spectral entities bound to the mortal realm, haunting familiar places and reliving past moments. Their presence terrifies all who witness their sorrow.		
* Ethereal form	◎ SHARED MEMORIES	
* Anchored spirit	◎ WAIL OF SORROW	
* Speech	◎ SPIRIT SIPHON	
Wants to do something, if only it could remember what. Doesn't want for its presence to go unnoticed.		
☞ fading in and out, subtly shifting, drifting figure		
☞ faint sobs, echoing footsteps, an occasional scream		
☞ old books, lavender, childhood memories		
UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Roll 3, interpret)		
1 heirloom	1 confession	1 vendetta
2 estate	2 vow	2 guilt
3 portrait	3 denial	3 betrayal
4 key	4 hidden	4 murder
5 diary	5 whisper	5 burden
6 relic	6 promise	6 obsession

LICH SPELLBOOK
 A lich knows 8 wizard spells. Choose a spellbook below, or make one. They gain 1 bonus suspense for each spell.

Slow Worm Transmutation	Mind Guide Divination
Pain Cascade Necromancy	Flesh Beacon Transmutation
Screaming Aura Enchantment	Oil Shield Abjuration
Mesmerising Mask Illusion	Bone Wall Conjuration

Expanding Flesh Transmutation	Slow Chains Transmutation
Hungry Wings Conjuration	Binding Word Enchantment
Dazzling Vine Illusion	Prismatic Smoke Evocation
Terrible Lore Divination	Hungry Terror Necromancy

UNDEAD, VAMPIRE

SKIRMISHER

DEEP CRIMSON

MIDNIGHT BLACK

MOONLIT IVORY

Elegant, nocturnal hunters driven by a thirst for blood. They seamlessly integrate into society, all while avoiding daylight at all costs.

- * Unnatural allure ● **BLOOD DRAIN**
- * Supernatural strength ● **REGENERATION**
- * Speech ● **REVEAL TEETH**

Wants to pursue its desires, with no end-goal in mind.
Doesn't want to be reminded of when it was mortal.

- 👁 flickering candlelight, blood-stained velvet
- 👂 soft whispers, the rustle of fabric
- 👃 old blood, faint rose perfume

SIRING INTENTIONS

- 1 Punish them for **betraying your trust**.
- 2 Offer them a **twisted redemption**.
- 3 Teach them the **vanity** of mortal life.
- 4 Preserve their **forbidden love**.
- 5 Trap them in **unending regret**.
- 6 Use them to **control** those they once loved.

FROM HERO TO VAMPIRE

Roll 2d6 (pick 1) for path/core. Roll 1d8 and count on their talent list (on 8, roll 2d8). Adapt as traits and moves. For every 50 years of unlife, roll a new power and weakness.

PATH

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| 1 Bard | 1 Paladin |
| 2 Berserker | 2 Ranger |
| 3 Cleric | 3 Rogue |
| 4 Druid | 4 Sorcerer |
| 5 Fighter | 5 Warlock |
| 6 Monk | 6 Wizard |

POWER

- 1 Bat, mist, or wolf form
- 2 Mesmerising Gaze
- 3 Cling to walls
- 4 Preternatural speed
- 5 Lifesense
- 6 Call vermin

WEAKNESS

- 1 Holy symbols
- 2 Garlic
- 3 Running water
- 4 Lacking reflection
- 5 Invitation only
- 6 Extreme thirst

UNDEAD, WIGHT

BRUTE

VOID BLACK

GHOSTLY WHITE

DEATHLY GRAY

Risen corpses consumed by hatred, wielding cursed weapons to drain life from their foes. They defend their domains with unrelenting malice.

- * Regenerative strikes ● **DESTROY BONDS**
- * Victims become wights ● **RAISE UNDEAD**
- * Speech (wheezes, gasps) ● **SENSE LIFE**

Wants to forever defend its final resting place.
Doesn't want to face that which caused its undying hatred.

- 👁 glowing red eyes, corroded armor
- 👂 groaning breaths, rusty clinking of ancient weapons
- 👃 damp earth, rot, stale air

CURSED ARMAMENTS

- 1 **Heartstealer**, a blade that drains courage.
- 2 **Mindpiercer**, a spear that devours memories.
- 3 **Blackhelm**, a helm that compels obedience.
- 4 **Soulcrusher**, a mace that fills with dread.
- 5 **Rise**, a sword that raises new wights.
- 6 **Wailer**, a spiked chain that binds spirits to it.

UNDEAD, WRAITH

BRUTE

SHADOWY PURPLE

FOGGY GRAY

GHASTLY BLUE

Shadowy, spectral figures formed of pure volatile lament. They glide silently through the darkness, draining warmth from everything they touch.

- * Incorporeal form ● **DRAINING TOUCH**
- * Deathly cold aura ● **SHADOW MELD**
- * Speech ● **WAIL OF DESPAIR**

Wants for others to feel the emotions that formed it.
Doesn't want for true joy to cut through its malice.

- 👁 swirling mist, flickering blue light
- 👂 eerie wails, distant rustle of air, faint whispers
- 👃 frigid air, damp stone, metallic tang of fear

HORRIFIC ORIGINS

- 1 Untold number of **dead from the war**.
- 2 Royal court and family massacred during a **coup**.
- 3 **Serial killer's** decades long reign of terror.
- 4 Massacre of innocent "**monstrous**" village.
- 5 **Plague** spread by one person jumping ship.
- 6 Community's **noble sacrifice** going unnoticed.

UNICORN		PROTECTOR
DUSKY LAVENDER	PALE ROSE	VERDANT MINT
Graceful, magical horses with a single spiraling horn. They roam ancient forests, bestowing healing, light, and blessings to those with pure hearts.		
* Pure spirit	● HEALING TOUCH	
* Protected by nature	● BLESSING	
* Understands, telepathy	● LUMINOUS HORN	
Wants to keep the few true purities in the world unspoiled. Doesn't want to sense malevolence in a creature's heart.		
☞ calming glow, pristine fur, faint sparkles ♫ soft clip-clop, soft whinny, soothing hum of magic 🌿 whiff of lavender, morning dew, ancient woods		
BLESSINGS		
1 Five more healthy years of old age.		
2 Sixth sense for when you're being deceived.		
3 Immunity to poisons and diseases.		
4 You can understand any language.		
5 Cleanse any water you touch of impurities.		
6 Always know the direction to home.		

WYVERN		PREDATOR
DARK SLATE	BRONZED EMBER	SAVAGE GREEN
Fierce, winged reptiles with a venomous, barbed tail. They swoop from unseen heights, securing their prey with swift, brutal strikes.		
* Relentless pursuer	● VENOMOUS STING	
* Hardened scales	● DIVING STRIKE	
	● SNATCH AND FLY	
Wants to teach its young the thrill of the hunt. Doesn't want to feel a bond with a creature outside its kin.		
☞ darting between clouds, animals scurrying for cover ♫ screech from impossibly high, whoosh of its dive 🌿 smell of their far off nesting location		
WYVERN MASTERS		
1 Gorrak , infamous sky pirate.		
2 Laraen , rogue mage bent on vengeance.		
3 Zurak , black-market smuggler of wyvern eggs.		
4 Tylara , a druid wielding the power of storms.		
5 Drazul , assassin for the highest bidder.		
6 Serdruk , mercenary lord of the skies.		

WILL-O'-WISP		TRICKSTER
HAUNTED GREEN	PHANTOM VIOLENT	SPECTRAL BLUE
Glowing, flickering orbs that haunt swamps and bogs, luring travelers with eerie lights. They guide them to reveal secrets that only they understand.		
* Ethereal form	● LURING LIGHT	
* Swift & elusive	● FLICKER VANISH	
* Understands language	● BEWILDER	
Wants to find out how far your curiosity will take you. Doesn't want for followers to actually reach its destination.		
☞ faint flickering, eerie shadows, shifting colors ♫ faint whispers, low hum, far off footstep echoes 🌿 fleeting yet familiar and nostalgic smells		
SECRETS TO REVEAL		
1 Final resting place of a hero never mourned.		
2 Wooden mask marked with a lost clan's sigil.		
3 Secret names of the will-o'-wisps.		
4 Undying flame hidden in the swamp's heart.		
5 Waterlogged diary with half-legible confessions.		
6 Still-beating heart buried within twisted roots.		

YETI		BRUTE
FROSTBITE GRAY	GLACIAL WHITE	ICY BLUE
Massive, furry beasts roaming between icy peaks, fiercely guarding the remote passes as if bound to the land by some unseen force.		
* Frigid aura	● FROST BREATH	
* Snowy camouflage	● HOWLING ROAR	
* Speech (roars, gestures)	● ICICLE THROW	
Wants to maintain its lonesome vigil, instinctually. Doesn't want for the terrible secrets below to see light.		
☞ the snow moving, steaming breath, pale blue eyes ♫ crunch of snow under massive feet, deep roars 🌿 fresh snow cut by a wild tang		
UNDER THE ICE		
1 City frozen in time, its bells still ringing.		
2 Souls wandering, lost beneath the ice.		
3 Portal to a realm of eternal winter.		
4 Cursed blade locked in unmelting ice.		
5 Phoenix stuck in a cycle of death and rebirth.		
6 Balor shackled in ice-forged chains.		



CHAPTER 6

GAME OPTIONS

SETTING DIALS

MAGIC

Fantasy settings sometimes feature magic in a limited way, as a rarity or an exclusively evil force. In others, the wonders are widespread and available to all, sourced from the whimsical world itself or as an industrialized and quantified resource. Base *Grimwild* takes the middle road, with magic available, but not ubiquitous.

Rare Magic

- ◆ Limit the party to one magic user, if any.
- ◆ Potent spells can't open new opportunities; they act only as normal spells with broader impact—often with more risk.
- ◆ Establish before your game if magical healing exists.

No Magic

- ◆ All magical paths are removed, as is arcana. Reflavor talents as skill and technology as needed.
- ◆ Consider also dialing down deadliness (next page) or using the Vigor Pool optional rule to make up for the lack of magical healing unless you're looking for a gritty tone.

Common Magic

- ◆ Make arcana more plentiful in the world, and reflavor more talents to be magical in nature.
- ◆ PCs should start with 1 minor arcana, and the story of where it came from.

Dangerous Magic

All spells can trigger a **magical twist** (as sorcerer) when two or more 1s are rolled. When triggered, pick one of the following:

Wild Surge: make a 1d story roll to see the collateral damage

Dark Omen: GM takes +1 suspense

6d Corruption pool: Od → change trait, desire, bond, or appearance negatively.

SCALE

There is a vast difference in the scale of character impact between small village common folk and mythic heroes. Use these options to change the scope of the game.

Smaller Scale

- ◆ More rolls have **risk**, and are judged as impossible.
- ◆ Mooks should be rare, with even common enemies posing a threat.
- ◆ The max level for PCs is 3, though the GM should allow talents to be switched out after in-game milestones.

Larger Scale

- ◆ Fewer rolls have **risk** and are judged as impossible.
- ◆ Mooks should be waded through freely, as pure set dressing, while toughs can be taken a few at a time. Bosses should be epic in their own right, not just being linked challenges more often, but having an interesting 'catch' or 'secret' to overcoming them that provides the real test.
- ◆ PCs start at level 3.

LETHALITY

In some stories, a single knife wound can end an adventurer's career, taking months to heal if it doesn't kill them outright. In others, pulp action heroes can jump off cliffs and grab blades with their bare hands, then laugh about it later in a tavern. Base *Grimwild* strikes a balance, with characters more durable than the commoners around them, but a few bad calls can still leave them on the ground.

More Lethal

- ◆ Use high and dire stakes more often. When weapons appear, the players should know that death could happen at any moment.
- ◆ Healing often takes longer, and resurrection is impossible. When a PC is desperate, give them an urgent condition which will lead to dropped (4d bleeding out, 6d blacking out).
- ◆ When a PC is dropped, they make a 1d story roll, making death (or permanent injury) a coin flip.

Less Lethal

- ◆ Use low stakes more often, even in combat if the heroes aren't against strong foes.
- ◆ PCs will rarely have permanent conditions, and resurrection is possible.
- ◆ When a PC is dropped, they make a 3d story roll, giving much better odds to stay in the fight.



OPTIONAL RULES

TOKEN INITIATIVE

Gameplay

Use this rule to strike a balance between the normally free-flowing scenes of Moxie and a structured turn system. In this approach, there's no set turn order. Instead, players are given tokens to represent the "camera time" they have to act within a scene.

At the start of an intense moment, give each player 2 tokens. Players must spend a token before a story beat (usually an action roll). Play continues until all tokens are spent, after which all players regain their tokens, ensuring everyone gets the same screen time.

REST RESETS

Gameplay

Use this rule if you want talent and ability resets to be more narrative focused.

Talents no longer reset each session, instead resetting during rests and other narrative breaks. Some rests may not be relaxed enough for a full reset, though precautions (*hidden campsite*, *watch rotation*, *entertainment*) can help. While resting, the world around the PCs still moves forward—the GM should highlight any timers and threats beforehand. Consider playing out a vignette to close out or open up the next day. When the group decides on a reset:

- ◆ PCs take spark
- ◆ All talents are reset
- ◆ PCs heal 1 harm
- ◆ All thread is reset
- ◆ GM takes 2 suspense
- ◆ Some Conditions fade

STAT PROGRESSION

Gameplay

Use this rule if you want a way for character stats to be increased.

When a PC levels up, they can forgo a talent to increase a stat by 1, to a max of 3. Each character can only do this once. Stat increases can be very impactful—avoid this option for smaller scale games.

VIGOR POOL

Gameplay

This rule is intended for games without healing magic.

Each PC has a 3d Vigor resource pool. When the PCs have a moment to catch their breath, they can roll the pool to clear 1 harm. This pool refreshes after an extended period of rest. Lower or increase the pool to change the lethality.

ARMOR

Gear

Use this rule to give better definition between those who wear armor and those who don't. Protective gear comes in two basic types: **Light** and **Heavy**. Each session, they bestow an Armor resource pool. After taking a physical consequence, you can choose to roll the pool to lessen the consequence (as a Messy on a defense roll).

Light armor gives a 1d Armor pool, and also bestows the *Lightly Armored* condition, hindering movement—usually affecting spellcasting.

Heavy armor gives a 2d Armor pool, bestowing the *Heavily Armored* condition, restricting movement and your ability to be quiet—usually affecting spellcasting, speed, and stealth. Plus, any attempt to swim is likely impossible.

Bulwark (Fighter Path Talent Rework)

Increase your Armor pool by +2d, regardless of the type you're wearing (if any). When you roll your armor pool, you avoid the consequence instead of reducing it.

SUPPLIES

Gear

Use this rule if you want the threat of running out of essential supplies, such as torches and rations to matter.

Each PC has a 4d Supplies resource pool for common items and rations. Roll the pool with heavy use, and as time passes outside of civilization.

For finer detail, separate Rations (or other important goods) from Supplies and track each with a smaller pool.

ENCUMBRANCE

Gear

Use this rule to establish carrying limits and keep what PCs have on hand more grounded. This option is often paired with the Supplies rule.

Each PC has space for 2 + their Brawn stat in gear they can carry. Main armor and weapons aren't counted towards this number. Additional weapons, kits, rations, and treasures take up space, however, based on size. Most gear takes up 1 slot, while small items fill one half. Large or bulky items fill two or more. Characters can declare gear (related to their vantage) throughout their adventures, filling slots as needed.

Small items



Most gear



Large or Bulky



Large & Bulky



WEALTH

Gear

Adventurers (and some players) love shiny coins to spend. *Grimwild* normally abstracts away all treasures except the most valuable—if you want a bit more fine control, use this rule.

Each PC has a 4d Coins power pool to represent the gold they carry on their travels.

Characters are expected to be able to pay for their own drinks, rooms, and other trivial purchases, but other expenditures are uncertain. PCs roll the pool for larger purchases (*buying a round of drinks, bribing a guard, getting a horse, buying party wear*), or drop 1d then roll for huge expenses (*securing passage across the sea, hiring an assassin, buying a trained warhorse*). Impact moves may mean there's a hidden flaw or hitch in the buying process, though the deal may still happen. When carousing by selling off treasure (pg. 39) or as the GM sees fit, add +2d to the pool (max 8d). Treasure hoards may add more, or be treated as a linked Wealth pool.

FOCUSED GROWTH

Advancement

Use this rule if you want to narrow the focus of your game. Tying experience to the story can help incentivize more passive players to engage with the themes. Make use of slow progression rules, slashing xp boxes before filling them (effectively doubling the amount needed to level), but at the end of each session, give a chance for an additional xp based on what happened in the game. This can often be connected to the adventuring party concept.

Themes about **social relationships** → bonus xp to those who changed their **bond**.

Theme about **personal flaws** → bonus xp to those who introduced **tangles**.

Party concept: **Disciples** → bonus xp to those who **convert** others.

Campaign focus: **Treasure Hunting** → bonus xp when **carousing**.

MILESTONE LEVELS

Advancement

Use this rule to eschew keeping track of experience altogether. Players don't add xp after each session. Instead, the party members level up after meaningful completion of a major **group story arc**. The group should talk about what counts as meaningful, but ultimately the choice is up to the GM.

ACTIVE VIGILANCE

GM Tools

Use this rule to allow for randomized vigilance—when you want the dice to tell you what you do and don't see.

When the GM decides to use vigilance, they spotlight one of the PCs, and have them make a story roll affected by their vantage. On a perfect, the player gets a reveal. On a messy, they get a hint. On a grim, the GM uses strike. Certain groups may prefer to have the reason for the story roll a secret, though *Grimwild* thrives when everybody is in the know. Discuss with your group beforehand to find out what they prefer.

TICK POOLS

GM Tools

These are a predictable version of any kind of diminishing pool, usually 2d-4d. **When triggered, they drop exactly 1d, and are never rolled.** These are less dramatic and less dynamic, but are useful when GMs want pool progress to be non-random. Because of the smaller size, rules or talents that drop 1d are more impactful. If used, these are recommended to go alongside standard pools, not acting as a full replacement.

WRITERS' ROOM

GM Tools

Use this rule if you want to expand the types of details your players can add.

Story details added with both tangles and thread don't need to be connected to PC vantage. The PCs can freely offer their own impact moves to gain spark (as a tangle,) or another benefit and can expand the world with their own details. Only details that benefit the party cost *thread*.

HOME BREW TALENT GUIDANCE

GM Tools

Keep text concise and clear. The goal should be to make the rules easy to understand and remember. Try to use terminology and wording from existing talents—this streamlines understanding and provides a mental jumping-off point for experienced players.

Avoid extra rolls and tracking. Lots of small levers, toggles, and different kinds of uses all slow the game down. Even worse, adding extra rolls with use, such as for defense or story rolls, adds multiple layers of complexity—forcing players to grab dice, make rolls, and interpret them. This may not sound like much, but it can add up. Try to keep specific tracking down to 1 per talent.

Power levels are important, but not too important. Aim for power levels around what already exists, but don't get too hung up on it. PCs are always limited by their *spotlight*, so it's difficult for even somewhat overpowered characters to overshadow others. In general, core talents are twice as powerful as path talents, increasing to 3x the power at level 3, and 4x the power at level 6.



LEGACY TALENTS

The following talents are from Grimwild v1.4, or earlier versions of the Community Edition. These were dropped for various reasons, from balance to theme. Ask your GM before taking any of the following.

WEAPON MASTERY

Legacy Fighter Core Talent

Choose a fighting style that you have mastered: *brawling—dual-wielding—one-handed weapons—ranged weapons—thrown weapons—two-handed weapons*. You have a **mastery die**, a special d6. When you fight in your style, take +1d (the mastery die) on the roll. If the mastery die is a 6, it counts as a critical. If it's already a critical, **take spark**.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, you gain +1d mastery die.

Rationale: This talent gets overpowered at higher levels, with a near 50% chance to critical and a minuscule 1.5% chance to fail at level 6. This trivializes fights and can be boring.

AWAKENED MIND

Legacy Psion Core Talent

You have spellcasting ability. Your bastions act as touchstones for your magic. Each session, you have 8 power points. Spend 1 power point to cast a spell. You can augment it by spending 1 or more points to: *cast a potent spell—take +1d (max once) on the roll—ignore thorns from damage—add another bastion as a touchstone*.

GROWTH: At levels 2, 4, and 6, you gain +1 bastion, and 2 power points per session.

Rationale: While somewhat overpowered, allowing the same number of spells with more flexibility than wizards, the power point system doesn't give flavor to its magic.

BARDSONG

Legacy Bard Core Talent

Each session, you can sing **3 bardsongs**, rolling Presence. Sing one to pull off a **potent feat of emotional influence**, like eliciting a *vex response* in an NPC, *buffing a group of allies*, or *inflicting hindrances on enemies*. You can also sing one to **interrupt** an impact move. A bardsong's effect flows from its composition. Choose a **style**, **tune**, and **impact** (pg. 56) that matches the effect.

Each session, you can also sing **3 melodies**, spur of the moment tunes without specific composition. Spend them to: *assist without risk—calm or intensify a vex response—clear a mark*. These don't require a roll. You cannot affect yourself.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, you gain +1 bardsong and +1 melody per session.

Rationale: Multiple kinds of tracked abilities, and building bardsongs on the fly can slow the game down. This talent is also quite powerful at low levels.

LEGACY PATH TALENTS

FLURRY (CE Monk): 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.

CUNNING ACTIONS (CE Rogue): 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.

TRAP SENSE (Rogue): You always notice traps near you. When you avoid or disable one, **take spark**.

ANCHORSHOT (Artificer): You have a hook, harpoon, and rope contraption that anchors large monsters to the ground. With it, you have **potency** to hinder the movement of anything elephant-sized or larger. When hit, the target becomes **4d Tethered**. It anchors to the ground so you can leave it.

DOUBLE-BARRELED BLUNDERBUSS (Artificer): You have a firearm that fires specialized, crafted ammo. You get one shot of each per session. When you shoot, choose the ammo: *blast core—drill shot—inferno shot—scatter shot—shrapnel burst—tangler shot*. Each shot has a **secondary effect** related to the type. You can fire two ammo types at the same time for a **potent shot**.

MECHANICAL MOUNT (Artificer): You have a small mechanical vehicle, like a steamwork spider or smoke-belching cart. It has three features: *all-terrain—armored—burrowing—grappling hook—submergible—turbo boost*. You can activate each perk once per session to pull off a **potent feat of piloting**. It also has one drawback: *conspicuous—horrifying—slow—unreliable*.

STEAMHAMMER (Artificer): You have a large steam-infused warhammer. Each session, you have a **6d Steamhammer** power pool. You can roll the pool to pull off **potent feats of pulverizing force**. You can also not expend its steam to use it as a normal warhammer.

SWIFTWING (Artificer): You have highly maneuverable wings that allow you to glide (not fly). You gain a **3d resource pool** while aloft, or 4d if you have extreme height or speed. You must roll the pool as bonus dice with any physical roll made while aloft, including defenses. At 0d, you coast back to the ground.

MIND SEED (Psion): When you plant thoughts or alter memories in someone's head, you can always choose to have them take effect exactly when you want them to. You can decide this at any time later. Once per session, you can use this for an **interrupt**.

DISTURBED MIND (Formerly Tumultuous Mind on Psion): You can spend 2 power points to gain **potency** on any Wits or Presence defense roll. Regardless of the roll, if the attacker is sentient, you can **interrupt** their next impact move.



FLAVORS OF FANTASY

Each of the following pages gives guidance, rules tweaks, and setting dials to shift the base assumptions of Grimwild over to other popular sub-genres of fantasy. Pick and choose what you want to use for your own setting, altering it as needed.

HEROIC FANTASY

Inspirational and adventurous, with a focus on self-discovery and the hero's journey. Characters grow through challenge, forge bonds through hardship, and leave the world better than they found it, often through sacrifice. These stories are about becoming more than you were and choosing to act when it matters most.

Use this flavor when you want classic heroic journeys where courage, loyalty, and resolve are tested.

SCALE

Scope increases throughout the story

LETHALITY

Some sacrifices are made, but the heroes will win the day

MAGIC

Magic is commonplace, and usable by most

GUIDANCE

- ◆ No rules tweaks. The default Grimwild rules are geared for Heroic Fantasy.
- ◆ Let characters be competent, capable, and proactive.
- ◆ Failure complicates the path but doesn't end the journey.
- ◆ Emphasize growth, relationships, and earned victories.
- ◆ Make sure to reward courage, but not recklessness.

TYPICAL QUESTS

Protect an important route that has become too dangerous to travel.

Find and accept the burden of a strange relic, because it can turn the tide of the war.

Stay and join the battle, running or staying neutral helps no one.

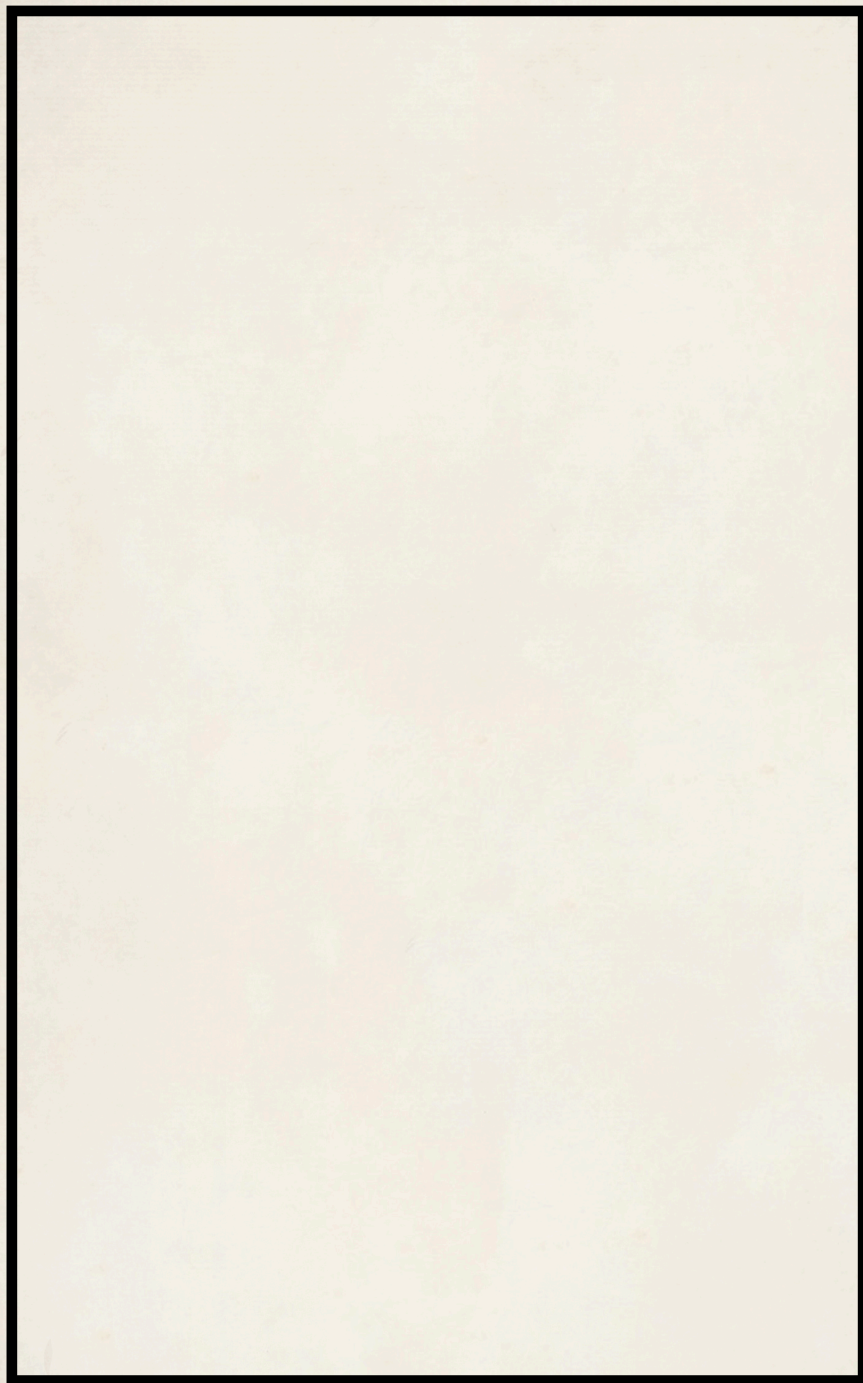
Find and destroy the source of evil that is corrupting the city.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: *Mistborn*, *Water Outlaws*

Visual: *The Legend of Vox Machina*, *The Secret of NIMH*, *Adventure Time*

Interactive: *Dragon Age*, *Baldur's Gate*, *The Legend of Zelda*



GRIMDARK

Bleak, brutal, and unforgiving. A world of moral ambiguity, harsh realities, and the constant threat of ruin. Any victories are costly, and hope is hard-won. In this world, doing the right thing hurts, but doing nothing hurts more. The point of some of these stories isn't the battle, but the nature of defeat.

Use this flavor when you want stories of moral ambiguity and characters pushed to their limits by an uncaring world.

SCALE



Wide range of conflict, usually on a personal scale

LETHALITY



Danger around every corner, and death is lasting

MAGIC



Magic is a dark, usually antagonistic force

RULES TWEAKS

The effect of **potency** is scaled down.

Magic healing is incredibly rare or non-existent.

When **dropped**, make a 1d story roll. On a grim, they die, or worse.

Marks only clear on rest, not when rolled.

Vex responses are random—you never know how you'll react in the face of true fear.

PC bonds are rolled randomly, because you can't always pick who your allies are in a desperate world such as this.

Supplies (Optional Rule, pg. 175).

GUIDANCE

- ◆ Scarcity and pressure push the characters.
- ◆ Violence is ugly and costly.
- ◆ Death isn't always meaningful.
- ◆ Hope is fragile.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: *Second Apocalypse*, *The Black Company*, *First Law*, *The Locked Tomb*

Visual: *Berserk*, *Attack on Titan*

Interactive: *Dark Souls Series*, *Diablo*, *Darkest Dungeon*

TYPICAL QUESTS

Escort civilians through a dangerous war zone.

Hold a falling stronghold just long enough for others to escape.

Cover a murder to uphold a shaky alliance.

Rally quarreling factions together against a dark, cataclysmic force.

Sneak past enemy lines on a one-way mission.

Find and kill the noble that ordered the deaths of your family.

LOW FANTASY

Grounded and often more cynical or realistic. This has small-scale conflicts with limited or no magic. These stories are about people scraping by in a world that largely doesn't care.

Use this flavor when you want tense, small-scale stories where preparation, vigilance, and relationships matter more than raw power.

SCALE



Smaller scope with personal struggles

LETHALITY



Dangers are real, and death can be quick if unprepared

MAGIC



Magic is rare, powerful, and dangerous

RULES TWEAKS

The effect of **potency** is scaled down.

Limited to 1 **magic user**, if any.

When **dropped**, make a 1d story roll. On a grim, they die, or worse.

Vigilance is more important, and is focused on hint more than strike or reveal.

The social fallout from **vex** is increased.

Encumbrance (Optional Rule, pg. 175).

Wealth (Optional Rule, pg. 176).

Slow **progression**, with a max level of 3.

Consequences stick around longer.

Factions play a major role.

GUIDANCE

- ◆ Magic is a rare and disruptive force.
- ◆ Leverage is more valuable than force.
- ◆ Winning usually has a cost.
- ◆ Gives a more 'historic' vibe.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: *A Song of Ice and Fire*, *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, *Sailing to Sarantium*

Visual: *Spice and Wolf*, *The 13th Warrior*

Interactive: *The Witcher*, *Kingdom Come: Deliverance*

TYPICAL QUESTS

The mill won't turn. Find out what happened.

Research and prepare to take down an unusual monster that moved to the area.

Guard a caravan, and help folks survive with low supplies, dangerous roads, and bad weather.

Investigate the town and find out where the necromancer is hiding, then stop them.

Intricately plan and pull off a heist to steal a fortune from the city coffers.



SWORD & SORCERY

Adventurous, action-packed, and often pulpy. Heroes rely on wit, steel, and audacity in a world full of dangerous monsters and lost riches. The only way to live forever is to be a legend.

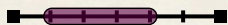
Use this flavor when you want high-action adventures driven by risk, greed, nerve, and luck.

SCALE



Use your might and wits to overcome personal stakes

LETHALITY



Danger abounds, but you are strong enough to meet it

MAGIC



Magic corrupts the fools who seek it out

RULES TWEAKS

No **magic**, or rare and dangerous magic (Setting dials, pg. 172)

Make a 1d story roll when **dropped**. Life is cheap.

Clear **marks** and **harm** after any intense scene.

Vex happens more often, but social fallout from vex responses is lessened.

Each PC has a **4d Renown** campaign timer, spreading their legend. Those in the greater world will come to know their names.

Mooks require no roll to take out.

Slow progression, but **carousing** earns +1 XP.

Vigor Pool (Optional Rule, pg. 174).

GUIDANCE

- ◆ Keep scenes moving and decisive.
- ◆ Heroes have some moral ambiguity.
- ◆ Reward bold and reckless action.
- ◆ Keep stakes personal, with gold, freedom, and survival.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: Conan the Barbarian, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser

Visual: Fire and Ice, Heavy Metal

Interactive: Thief the Dark Age, Dragon's Dogma

TYPICAL QUESTS

Steal a relic from a ruin that lies half-buried in the desert as it collapses.

Escort a desperate merchant through a mountain pass controlled by cannibals.

Fight in an arena after being captured. Make a spectacle and survive another day.

Break in to a wizard's tower to steal a powerful and dangerous weapon.

Delve into a lost civilization hidden deep in the jungle for riches.

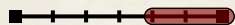
Track down a lock box stolen from the Thieves' Guild, and bring in the culprit.

NOBLEBRIGHT

Both hopeful and dangerous. Good almost always triumphs over evil. The world can be made better, and heroes are defined as much by mercy as by strength. This world is optimistic without being soft. Noblebright is about choosing light despite the dark forces in the world.

Use this flavor when you want hopeful stories where courage changes the course of events.

SCALE



Threats are far reaching,
but so are you

LETHALITY



Both physical and moral
victories matter

MAGIC



Magic varies by area and
faction, and is unaligned

RULES TWEAKS

PCs begin at **2nd level** with 1 minor arcana, and the story of your past adventure.

Make a 3d story roll when **dropped**.

Should a PC die, the player has **full control** of the end of their story.

Stakes for physical combat are often lower, while those for social conflicts are higher.

Rattled clears after any intense scene. The heroes are brave in the face of danger.

Social fallout from **vex** responses heightened. Interpersonal relationships are important.

GUIDANCE

- ◆ *Redemption over punishment.*
- ◆ *Violence is the last resort.*
- ◆ *Let emotional victories matter as much as physical ones.*
- ◆ *Promote altruism and agency.*

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: *The Princess Bride, The Stormlight Archive, The Chronicles of Narnia*

Visual: *The Last Airbender, She-Ra*

Interactive: *Kingdom Hearts, Dragon Quest, World of Warcraft*

TYPICAL QUESTS

Stay to protect a community despite the enemy nation's amassing army across the river.

Help an enemy who doesn't yet deserve a second chance.

Escort a symbolic artifact to safety while your foes want to break morale.

Resolve a conflict between two guilds to fight an otherwise overwhelming threat.

Stop and reverse a magical plague slowly making its way through the city.

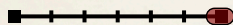


HIGH FANTASY

Epic and grand, often with a sense of wonder. Cosmic conflicts, destinies, and large-scale battles. Magic is powerful, heroes are exceptional, and conflicts are vast. These stories are about heroes standing at the center of myths, not just surviving, but becoming a part of them.

Use this flavor when you want grand stories of destiny, wonder, and world-shaping events.

SCALE



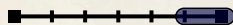
The choices made will shape the future of the world

LETHALITY



You're incredible, but up against ultimate power

MAGIC



Magic, gods, and mysticism are everywhere

RULES TWEAKS

PCs begin at **3rd level** with 2 minor arcana or 1 major arcana, as well as a story about where they came from.

Mooks require no roll to take out, while **toughs** can be taken a few at a time.

Bosses are linked challenges, usually with a trick to overcoming them.

More rolls are automatic **successes**.

Token Initiative (Optional Rule, pg. 174). This helps keep narrative balance when more rolls are automatically successful.

GUIDANCE

- ◆ Increase the scale—think in terms of regions, factions, and eras.
- ◆ Victories reshape the setting.
- ◆ Keep personal stakes tied to cosmic ones.
- ◆ Lean into the lore and history of the world.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: *The Wheel of Time*, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *Malazan Book of the Fallen*

Visual: *The Dark Crystal*, *Kill 6 Billion Demons*

Interactive: *Final Fantasy*

TYPICAL QUESTS

An ancient gate between planes has cracked open; seal it before the land is overwhelmed by evil.

A brood of elder dragons has moved to the region, force them to move elsewhere, or slay them if they won't.

A celestial artifact that prevents catastrophe is failing; find out how to repair it as time starts to unravel.

Stop a cabal of mad mages from crashing the moon down, destroying the world.

COZY FANTASY

Wholesome, heartwarming, and low-stakes. Stories are focused on friendship, personal growth, and the simple joys in a magical world. Conflict exists, but rarely with high stakes. Cozy fantasy is about finding comfort, connection, and meaning in small moments.

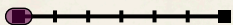
Use this flavor when you want warm, character-driven stories about belonging and growth.

SCALE



Stories are personal, and low-stakes

LETHALITY



True danger is rare, and with heart, you overcome

MAGIC



The world is full of whimsy, arcane or not

RULES TWEAKS

Low stakes is the default. Normal stakes and higher must be declared.

PCs and allies **only die in meaningful ways**, almost always outside of conflict.

Slow progression, but changing a bond or completing a story arc in the session earns +1 XP.

Characters can't progress past **level 3**. Once PCs reach major milestones, they're allowed to switch out one talent with another.

GUIDANCE

- ◆ Center relationships, routines, and emotional change.
- ◆ Tension comes from misunderstandings, not violence.
- ◆ Celebrate small victories.
- ◆ True antagonistic forces are mindless.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

Literature: *Legends and Lattes*, *The Spellshop*

Visual: *Kiki's Delivery Service*, *Spirited Away*

Interactive: *Stardew Valley*

TYPICAL QUESTS

Help a small community prepare for a festival.

Mend a relationship strained by misunderstanding.

Cleanse the evil that has taken over the nearby woodlands.

Help a local spirit rekindle their magic.

Embark on a journey, meeting strange friends along the way and discovering what "home" really means.

Protect a lost sheep and help it find its herd again.



CHAPTER 7

EXTRAS

GM TOOLS

GM Tools are extensions of the GM Toolkit—optional extras to enhance your game. They might not be for every GM, but you may find them useful. Experiment with these ideas and see if they stick in your repertoire!

FICTION PILLARS

Fiction pillars is a method of preparation that lets you create **ready-made blocks of fiction**, giving you a sturdier foundation than pure off-the-cuff improvisation. These "pillars" serve as anchors for the improv storytelling that unfolds during a session, helping you maintain consistency and confidence in your game.

Before a session, imagine and detail 7 elements that might come up in that session. These can be key NPCs, important locations, items, encounters, or events. Anything works. Add **sensory details**—sights, sounds, and smells. Define the element's pull on the story, the **drive**. This may be an NPC's goal, an object's purpose, or impact of the element as a whole. Note one way to **embody** it at the table as the GM, like a behavior or sound effect. Keep everything short—just a few words (as below) per detail. Skip any steps you draw a blank on and make final notes if you have anything left to add.

During play, we can sprinkle in these pillars to act as reinforced parts of the fiction to hang the rest of our fiction off of. They reside more vividly in our mind. You can keep any unused ones and repurpose them for later sessions.

EXAMPLE FICTION PILLARS

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Leave your troubles and arguments at the door. Enjoy the food, shows, and games.

- 👁 vibrant banners, overflowing carts, bonfires at dusk
- 👂 laughter and music, creak of carts, rustle of leaves
- 👃 roasted corn, spiced cider, damp post-harvest soil
- 👋 bite an apple, play a flute, raise a mug

RADDIGAN, BLIND GOBLIN

Trade wisdom for gold. Live plainly, and meditate for visions of the dire futures to come.

- 👁 gray-green wrinkles, clouded eyes, sparse hair
- 👂 prophetic rhymes, whispered goblin curses
- 👃 warm tea, freshly picked herbs
- 👋 turns head to think, taps cane on floor

The key is that you activate your imagination beforehand so the pillars feel more vivid and real.

HEX FLOWERS

These are an alternative to random tables. Instead of each result having a static chance, the result is dependent on starting position, changing as the game moves forward. Hex flowers are especially useful for exploration and solo-play, helping to give only semi-random answers to the questions you pose.

What is today's weather like?

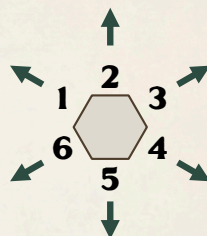
What will the terrain be in a day's travel?

Will the winds be in our favor today?

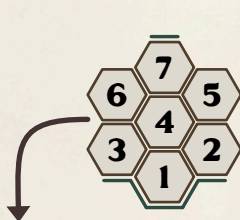
HOW TO USE HEX FLOWERS

You may recognize these as a tool in other tabletop games. *Grimwild* strives to be smooth and quick-to-play—with that in mind, these hex flowers are smaller and more simple than others.

There are 7 hexagons, each representing an answer. The party begins at the bottom hex, and moves to an adjacent hex based on a 1d roll. If the resulting movement would take you off of the flower, you instead wrap around and appear in the same row or column on the side opposite. The bottom and top most hex have walls (as seen below) preventing you from moving off the hex in that direction, keeping you in place instead. This keeps the bottom hexes most common, and those at the top more rare. After landing on a hex (or staying on the same one because of a wall,) look to the key to see the result.



RESULT: 1



EXAMPLE HEX FLOWER KEYS

SPRING WEATHER

- 1 Bright and sunny
- 2 Sparse clouds
- 3 Cloudy
- 4 Cloudy and windy
- 5 Light rain
- 6 Heavy rain
- 7 Thunderstorms

KALTHAZAR FOOTHILLS

- 1 Rolling grasslands
- 2 Rolling grasslands
- 3 Light forest
- 4 Green hills
- 5 Cave Entrance
- 6 Rocky Outcropping
- 7 Goblin Hideout (first time)



STORY KITS

These dynamic scenarios are modular, do-it-yourself scenarios designed to spark your creativity and get your imagination racing. They're not fully fleshed-out adventures—they're flexible frameworks loaded with evocative ideas, dramatic moments, and narrative twists that you shape into your own story. Each kit is packed with tension-filled prompts, intriguing setups, and compelling challenges, but it won't hold your hand. Instead, it gives you the tools to craft a unique experience that fits your table. Pair them with the light GM tools earlier in this chapter to flesh them out even more before running them.

Story kits are great for one-shots or 2-3 session arcs. Some of them can even be expanded to kick off or take up a full campaign. Each of the story kits has the following parts:

- 1. Hooks:** These are ways you can introduce the story kit to your players.
- 2. Intro Text:** This tells you the general idea of the story kit.
- 3. Pressure Pools:** These pools keep the events unfolding in dramatic fashion, rolled to build tension and keep things moving. Roll them as it feels right to keep the scenario moving along or when prompted by the fiction. At Od, the pool prompts one of the impact moves below. Pressure pools can use these icons:
 -  **Lock:** At Od, the linked pool can be rolled.
 -  **Repeat:** At Od, the pool resets and can be rolled again.
 -  **Trigger:** At Od, it prompts a roll of the next pool.
 -  **End:** At Od, the scenario comes to a close, with a dramatic move or drastic change.
- 4. Useful Pieces:** These are props, NPCs, and more that form the backbone of the story kit. Each has a general description, and 3 narrative points.
- 5. Set It Up:** This lets you make some choices that drastically change how things play out. Each has 6 or 12 toggles, and information on what each means.
- 6. Example Challenges:** These highlight likely situations but aren't prescriptive—use them as inspiration for what might unfold.
- 7. GM Notes:** This section usually blank, so the GM can record their own notes. Some story kits may also have special rules, guidance, or setting context here.
- 8. Mix It Up:** These options suggest twists to radically shift the scenario, perfect for replays.

A PLAGUE OF GOBLINS

1

A note nailed to a sign reads, *reghill at night—keep walking.*"

A shoe lies abandoned in the square, bloody and torn.

Arriving just after sunset, things are quiet—far too quiet, really.

Each night, doors lock, windows shut, and Dreghill Village holds its breath as the goblins come. Fighting back only led to disappearances, so now they stay inside and refuse to speak on what happens at night. keeps their sanity, and keeps self and neighbor alike safe from the goblin plague that transforms them a

2

4d NIGHT FALLS

- Someone locked outside
- Granary catches fire
- PCs ambushed in the square

3

4d DAWN BREAKS

- Prominent villager lies dead
- Doors smashed all over town
- Villager babbles in goblintongue

4d TOWNSFOLK SNAP

- Enraged mob chase off PCs
- Neighbors turn on each other
- Permanently turn into goblins

USEFUL PIECES

Villagers: Honest, and hardworking people that put up a united front against nosey outsiders.

- ▶ Refuse to speak on the problem.
- ▶ Disappear entirely after sundown.
- ▶ Friendly enough, otherwise.

The Well: Life in Dreghill seems to revolve around the small square in the center of the village.

- ▶ Emits a peculiar metallic smell.
- ▶ Villagers insist on gathering there.
- ▶ Goblins are drawn to it.

Mella Gortis (village elder, shrewd): The closest thing the village has to a leader, she is well-trusted by all.

- ▶ Always gets in the PC's way.
- ▶ Curses in goblintongue.
- ▶ Has a soft spot for outsiders.

4

SET IT UP

Goblin Plague: Choose 2 causes of the sickness and 1 odd thing that's ultimately a false trail.

- ☐ Villagers started eating exotic ro
- ☐ A Hag in the forest
- ☐ Dead goblin in the well
- ☐ Goblin relics from a mine
- ☐ Farmer acting really suspicious
- ☐ Artifact from the god of goblins

Death: Choose 1 usual outcome when a goblin dies and 1 rare possibility that's always untimely.

- ☐ Dies like a goblin normally would
- ☐ Reverts into a human, dead
- ☐ Reverts into a human, alive
- ☐ Releases a cloud of plague spores
- ☐ Doesn't stay dead
- ☐ Becomes a mass of bubbling goo

5

MAKE THE STORY YOUR OWN

Desires: Choose 2 goblins crave with wild abandon and 1 that strikes them with irrational dread.

- ☐ shiny things
- ☐ weapons
- ☐ hijinx
- ☐ animals
- ☐ humans
- ☐ flames
- ☐ sunrise
- ☐ arcana
- ☐ bell tolls
- ☐ kindness
- ☐ shadows
- ☐ secrets

4d | ASK ONE QUESTION

- * tightly sealed lips
- * strength in numbers

- MAKE EXCUSES
- CHANGE SUBJECTS
- IGNORE REASON

✗ 4d Angry Villagers

4d | FALSELY ACCUSED

- * since you came, chaos
- * town hates outsiders

- NEED A SCAPEGOAT
- MISJUDGED EVIDENCE
- FALSE WITNESS

✗ 4d Found Guilty

8d | CHASE 'EM DOWN

- * know the town well
- * fit into small spaces

- MAD SCRAMBLE
- GOBLIN PILE
- JUKE

✗ Lose the trail

6d | GOBLIN AMBUSH

- * super sneaky
- * night-vision

- JUMP FROM ABOVE
- BITE NECK
- YELP FOR HELP

✗ Kill a goblin

6

7

MIX IT UP

Mella Gortis is a hag in disguise—villagers originally goblins village with A Plague of Humans

8

SOLO RULES

The base rules for *Grimwild* are already very well-suited for solo play. Check out the setting dials (pg. 172) and adjust the game as you see fit. Use the following guidance and rules changes to get started in playing your own game.

GUIDANCE

Make use of montage rolls. Set the perfect scope for the story you want to play out. Use these rolls connect scenes together in the story, and focus on playing out the aspects you enjoy.

Use story rolls to see what happens next. When you're unsure of how things will play out, or want to disclaim decision-making, look to story rolls to give you an idea.

Use the crucibles for ideas. Your mind will gravitate towards what sounds like the most fun while you're rolling on them. The GM Crucible is reprinted below for ease, but use any in the book to jump start your creativity.

Focus on Quests, your string of story arcs. These give you a clear way to create purpose for your character (quests, pg. 194). Set a goal, then work towards hitting it. When you accomplish or fail a quest, skip forward in time and find another that's pressing.

Create 2 or 3 factions to represent the outside world. Each should have faction pools, traits, and relevant NPCs. This helps keep the world from feeling static.

Grab a few different colors of dice. This will help you track things like pools, and suspense, while making it easier to parse rolls.

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

Additional Solo Rules adapted from @slander.x on Discord, with permission.

GAMEPLAY

Core rules look largely the same, however there are guardrails added to replace the GM. The following rules are adding on top of base Grimwild.

When a scene gets stale: *spend suspense—foreshadow a threat to come—montage to a low stakes scene—build up to a high stakes scene.*

When you make an impact move, choose the most fitting consequence, or use the crucibles for ideas or randomized trouble (roll d8, pick between two). Remember that **harm** is reserved for particularly hard hits.

On a messy, ask the following questions. If you answer 'yes' to any, make an impact move. If 'no', take **suspense**.

- ◆ Are you in a scene with a challenge?
- ◆ Are you in the last task pool of a quest?
- ◆ Do you have 3 or more suspense?

On a disaster, or with dire stakes, you take the normal consequences, plus: roll a **peril pool** (next page)—**harm**.

LOW & NORMAL STAKES	
set dressing	set dressing
lose something	collateral damage
one mark	vex
strain bond	lose something
collateral damage	one mark
condition (short)	lock down
two marks	raise stakes
pressure pool	harm

HIGH & DIRE STAKES	
vex	lose something
collateral damage	condition (short)
strain bond	two marks
harm	condition (long)
pressure pool	harm
twist	lock down
counter	condition (urgent)
two harm	harm & condition

Consequences

Set Dressing: The trouble is only narrative.

Strain Bond: Relationship with a faction or ally is strained.

Collateral Damage: The environment is destroyed or bystanders are hurt.

Lose Something: Gear or resources are ruined or lost.

Lock Down: You lose an opportunity or are forced to make a bad choice.

Raise Stakes: The scene gets more tense, moving stakes up a level.

Twist: There's an unexpected change for the worse, such as a betrayal.

Pressure Pool: Create or roll a pool.



QUESTS

These are large-scale adventure goals that are broken up into smaller story arcs represented by task pools. These pools are linked, and used to track their progress. The number and size of the pools vary based on the quest difficulty (A *daunting* quest is $4d+4d+6d$). When you make meaningful progress towards an arc, roll that pool. When a task pool reaches *Od*, the fiction changes as you get closer to completing the quest. Most task pools are locked behind the first, though some quests may have goals that can be completed in any order. Completing each story arc awards 1 XP, +1 bonus XP for completing the quest.

Each quest also has **Peril**, linked pressure pools to represent your antagonists' plans. There should be 1 fewer pool for peril than for the quest. The pool is triggered when the threat is ignored, significant time passes, or you suffer a meaningful failure at a critical moment while on the quest (often a disaster). Similar to challenges, quests may also have a fail state—a single break point that ends the quest. If the peril pools empty to *Od*, or if the fail state occurs, the quest ends with the antagonists getting their way.



CURE THE PLAGUE

QUEST $4d$ Find Witch of Thadia
 $4d$ Gather Odd Reagents
 $6d$ Defeat Dark Source

PERIL $4d$ Law Breaks Down
 $4d$ District Risen as Undead

ENJOY THE FALL FESTIVAL

QUEST $4d$ Help Festival Goers
 $4d$ Put on a Good Show

PERIL $4d$ Townies Get Bored

X Chaos in the Streets

SAVE THE GALLIAD KINGDOM

QUEST $4d$ Find the Heir
 $4d$ Secure Passage
 $6d$ Defend Stronghold
 $6d$ Drive off Orcs

PERIL $4d$ Orcs Cut Supply Lines
 $4d$ The Siege Begins
 $6d$ The Stronghold Falls

X The Heir Dies

SOLO PARTY MODE

In this mode, your primary character, the PC, remains the main focus of the story, while the other party members are simplified **side characters**. This approach lets you create the social dynamics of an adventuring party without overwhelming complexity. The main PC is created as normal, while the secondary party members (usually 2-3) are streamlined. They have the following changes:

Talents

These side characters have no path, and no core talent. Instead, they start with one path talent. If you have a specific path fantasy in mind, consider using a half-core talent such as Arcane Training (pg. 65), or a more limited version of a path core talent. These character don't add XP or advance.

Personality, Goals, and Drive

There are no story arcs; the side PC only has 1 positive trait and desire, instead of 2. These coupled with their negative trait and desire are *usually* the only things that drive them.

Connections

Side characters only form **bonds** with the main PC, not each other. Additionally, individual wisers aren't tracked—note their backgrounds only.

Mechanics

There are no **weapon styles**, no meta-currencies (**spark** and **thread**), and no **marks**.

When the side character would take a mark (such as from **push yourself** or an impact move), they instead take **harm**.

NAME			
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES			
BRAWN	AGILITY	WITS	PRESENCE
☐	☐	☐	☐
BLOODIED		RATTLED	
DESPERATE			
TALENT			
BACKGROUNDS			
BONDS		Them → You	
		You → Them	
TRAITS 1 they are & 1 they're not		☐ Brave ☐ Gentle ☐ Protective ☐ Caring ☐ Honest ☐ Quiet ☐ Confident ☐ Honorable ☐ Rash ☐ Curious ☐ Persistent ☐ Stubborn	
DESIRES 1 they want & 1 they don't		☐ Belonging ☐ Justice ☐ Renown ☐ Glory ☐ Knowledge ☐ Thrills ☐ Harmony ☐ Love ☐ Wealth ☐ Honor ☐ Power ☐ Wisdom	
NOTES			



LIST OF ARCANA

Arcana are items imbued with magical power, covered on pg. 40. Below are some example arcana to use with your campaigns or look at as a basis for crafting your own. If a roll is ever needed and not supplied, use a relevant stat or make a story roll. Each arcana block has:

Palette: Colors associated with the item or its power.

Details: A description of the arcana's main ability. These items aren't limited to only their descriptions, but when outside of them, each of their touchstones must be applied. Power pools refresh every session unless otherwise stated.

Sensories: The swirl  shows a list of descriptors for how the item looks, feels, or sounds. The hand  gives actions to help bring the item into the scene.

Activation: The unique method to channel magic from the item.

MINOR ARCANA

Minor arcana are capable of adding set dressing effects, producing a magical effect once per session, and similar limited abilities. Despite their limits, they remain rare—few mages bother to create them unless driven by personal passion or experiment. Their value lies not in their power, but in their utility.

EVERFLAME GLOVE

MINOR

DARK LEATHER FIERY CORE YELLOW WISPS

The wearer can produce and hold an orb of flame in their palm. It illuminates and burns others as normal.

fire—orb—summon

 charred leather, slow bobbing, streaks of fire

 orb dances on fingers, floats overhead

Activated by snapping your fingers, palm up.

AXE OF THE SILENT GRAVE

MINOR

DARK OBSIDIAN RUBY EYES BONE WHITE

This heavy, obsidian axe has a skull chiseled into the head. Those slain by it can't be raised as undead.

death—eternal—attack

 dull glint, piercing eyes, worn carving

 urge to destroy undead, reverse two-handed grip

Activated by striking down a living foe.

CHITTERFANG PENDANT

MINOR

CHITIN GREEN CARAPACE BLACK IRIDESCENT PURPLE

The beetle in this pendant can be sent to buzz around and distract others for a few moments before returning.

insect—annoying—summon

 clicking mandibles, buzzing wings, iridescent sheen

 twitching legs, beetle drifts aimlessly

Activated by tapping on the beetle.

LOYAL SPEAR

MINOR

WEATHERED ASH HONOR BRASS BLOODIED STEEL

After being thrown, this spear can be recalled. It disappears in a puff of arcane mist and reappears in your hand.

fling—return—summon

 polished shine, dried blood

 white knuckled grip, acts with owner as one

Activated by giving a sharp whistle after thrown.

MAGEBANE SHIELD			MINOR
COLD IRON	NULL SILVER	ARCANE VIOLET	
This shield faintly glows in the presence of magic, and can stop magic just as mundane weapons.			
anti-magic—sense—protect			
☾ violet fractures, faint purple pulse, magic buzz			
✎ numb fingers, static raised hair			
Activated by tightening your grip.			

MASK OF THE CHANGELING			MINOR
BLANK IVORY	SHADOWY GRAY	SHIFTING GRAY	
Once per session, you can have this mask take the form of a face you've seen recently, and meld with your own.			
face—thief—transform			
☾ eerie glance, surreal features			
✎ shifting face, features soften like wax			
Activated by dragging your palm over your face.			

POISONHEART CHOKER			MINOR
VENOMOUS PURPLE	NIGHTSHADE	BRUISED BLACK	
While wearing this necklace, you can spit acid that slowly melts everything it touches, through you remain unaffected.			
acid—blood—attack			
☾ acrid smell masked by lavender and rose			
✎ subtle tightening around throat, acid dripping			
Activated by pinching the charm.			

SPRINGHEEL JUMPERS			MINOR
DEERSKIN	WORKED BRASS	SKY BLUE	
Leap twice as high with those boots, and fall any distance unharmed as long as you land on your feet.			
grace—jump—traverse			
☾ leather squeaks, blurred speed, rush of wind			
✎ vibrating calves, ground cracked where you leap			
Activated by tightening the straps.			

STARLIGHT FLASK			MINOR
COSMIC INDIGO	SILVER GLINT	SHINING LIGHT	
Once per session, you can unstopper this flask to have motes of light scatter, illuminating the nearby areas.			
light—curious—summon			
☾ swirling mist, burst of light, shadows scatter			
✎ mote hops to get your attention, sudden vertigo			
Activated by shaking and uncorking the flask.			

LUPINE CLOAK			MINOR
WOLFEN GRAY	CARVED BONE	WILD BROWN	
You turn into a normal wolf, and follow your instincts. You transform back after a few hours, or after you push yourself .			
wolf—instinct—transform			
☾ dripping saliva, glowing eyes, bristling fur			
✎ craving for meat, subtle instinct to hunt			
Activated by feeling the thrill of the hunt.			

COZY RING			MINOR
WARM COPPER	AUTUMN GLOW	SOFT EMERALD	
Those that wear this ring are protected from uncomfortable temperatures, as if staying inside, bundled up in their own home.			
comfort—home—enhance			
☾ woven copper, well-loved shine, gentle warmth			
✎ remember a fond memory, smile wistfully			
Activated by slipping it on your finger.			

WHISPERKNIFE			MINOR
NIGHT BLACK	MURKY GRAY	ENCHANTED STEEL	
When this knife is in flesh, the victim can't speak or otherwise make noise. No more last words.			
silence—voice—hinder			
☾ absorbs light, tightening shadow			
✎ faint echoes of the dead in your mind			
Activated by being plunged into flesh.			



MAJOR ARCANA

Major arcana wield the power to cast potent effects, give magical vantage, or otherwise shape reality in powerful ways with their magic. They are significant artifacts, rare and revered, often serving as the cornerstone of a mage's work or a key element in a grand design. Their presence in the world carries weight and can only be gained by taking them from powerful foes or finding them in dangerous locales.

1000 EYE CIRCLET			MAJOR
DELICATE GOLD	OBSIDIAN VEIL	PURPLE IRIS	
You can mentally control a floating magical eye (4d power pool), seeing what it sees. If destroyed, make a defense roll against rattled.			
scout—eyes—reveal			
☉ blinking and looking eyes, wet organic matter ✎ vision shatters like glass, bobbing eye			
Activated by plucking the eye from the center.			

BASILISK EYE CHARM			MAJOR
JADE SCALES	STONE GRAY	YELLOW EYE	
Once per session, you can turn a creature that sees it to stone, returning with a 6d timer.			
stone—flesh—hinder			
☉ dull yellow pulse, creeping stone on flesh ✎ limbs feel heavy			
Activated by holding the charm aloft			

COIN OF THE ROADS			MAJOR
TRAVELLED BRONZE	DUSTY GOLD	WORN GRAY	
Once per session, you can make a story roll to teleport to this coin, appearing holding it between your fingers.			
solitary—teleport—traverse			
☉ worn metal, static charge ✎ subtle urge to travel, changing image of landscape			
Activated by flipping a different coin in the air.			

CRYSTALSHARD SPRIG			MAJOR
UNCUT AMETHYST	PRISM WHITE	RAW QUARTZ	
You can brandish this rod (4d power pool) at a foe to freeze them in place in crystal for a few moments.			
crystal—grow—hinder			
☉ cracking quartz, deep earthen movement ✎ fingers turn cold, crystal grows nearby			
Activated by using the primordial command word.			

EMBERFANG			MAJOR
FORGED METAL	RED HOT	FLAMING YELLOW	
A curved sword that wreathes itself in flames when held. Once per session, add a fire-based secondary effect.			
burn—flame—attack			
☉ smoldering core, heat waves, flying sparks ✎ smoke rising from grip, hand glows as if hot			
Activated by striking it on a rough surface.			

HOVELSACK			MAJOR
BURLAP	BROWN TWINE	DARK VOID	
A bound fabric bag. When the twine is removed, it opens a portal leading into a cozy, but sparsely-furnished room.			
space—room—summon			
☉ unfolding landscape, faint jingle from bag ✎ urge to live simply			
Activated by untying the twine.			

ROBE OF POCKETS			MAJOR
VELVET	OLD ASH	AGED GOLD	
This patchwork robe produces a small, but useful object from its pockets after the wearer closes their eyes and wishes for it. (4d power pool)			
pocket—trinket—create			
☉ mismatched patches, shifting folds ☞ endless hidden pockets with wrong items			
Activated by thrusting a hand deep into a pocket.			

SEEKER'S COMPASS			MAJOR
NAVY ENAMEL	BRASS	FAINT BLUE	
The holder can ask for the location of someone or something they've seen before, and be shown its direction.			
guidance—direction—reveal			
☉ spinning brass bezel, reflection of the sky ☞ sudden directional sense, magnetic tug			
Activated by flicking the glass lens.			

SIPHON WHIP			MAJOR
BLOOD RED	BLACK LEATHER	ROSE ENERGY	
Once per session, you can wrap a foe with this whip and clear bloodied on yourself.			
bind—drain—life force			
☉ dried blood, pulsing crimson veins ☞ twitches like snake, throbs with energy			
Activated by wrapping up a living foe.			

SPIDERFRIEND WAND			MAJOR
WEB WHITE	EBONY	POISON GREEN	
Once per session, a flick and uttered word summon a loyal spider (a 4d power pool) that's about the size of a large dog to your side.			
spider—ally—summon			
☉ sticky strands, acrid odor, faint vibration ☞ fondness for anything with 8 legs			
Activated by tracing a web pattern in the air.			

SHIMMERSHOT BOW			MAJOR
ASHEN WOOD	TEAL CARVING	SUNLIGHT	
This bow creates an arrow of condensed light when pulled back. Things struck by these arrows glow brightly.			
light—arrow—summon			
☉ glowing carvings, light pulsing ☞ lighter than expected, arrows wink out			
Activated by drawing the empty string back.			

VERDANT SHIELD			MAJOR
MOSSY GREEN	OAK WOOD	SAP GREEN	
You can use this wooden kite shield to command roots and vines to bind foes, holding them in place with a 2d timer.			
entangle—roots—hinder			
☉ overgrown vines, thorns and flowers grow ☞ plants grow with a deeper green, slow wrapping			
Activated by slamming it into soft earth.			

WAVEWALKERS			MAJOR
DRIFTWOOD	FOAMY WHITE	AQUA SURF	
These shoes let you walk across water, as long as you keep moving. Once you stop, the effect ends.			
water—momentum—traverse			
☉ wet wood, spray of ocean foam ☞ like walking on rubber, moving with waves			
Activated by taking a running leap directly on water.			

KNOCKERS			MAJOR
HEAVY METAL	LEATHER STRAPS	POLISHED STEEL	
These heavy steel boots can be used to unlock doors and other safeguarded items.			
open—conspicuous—reveal			
☉ jangling metal clasps, heavy stomping ☞ lumbering gait, urge to keep them shiny			
Activated by kicking the item you want to unlock.			



MYTHIC ARCANA

These are the pinnacle of magical craftsmanship, capable of unleashing potent and ritual-level effects with devastating power. These artifacts transcend ordinary magic, often embodying ancient forces or taking part of world-shaping events. They are singular, legendary items—rarely created and even more rarely found.

BRACELET OF BLASTING MYTHIC

SCORCHED BRASS POWDER GRAY ORANGE FLARE
You can send searing beams of prismatic light from your hand while wearing this bracelet.

lights—blind—flare—explosion

- ☉ golden sparks, burnt hair and sulfur
- ☞ soot spots, sudden intense vibration

Activated by holding your wrist with your other hand.

BUGSNAX MYTHIC

YELLOW SCALES DIRTY MOSS FEY PINK
A small, talking pseudodragon (12d power pool) that likes to eat bugs and mostly obeys your commands. Refresh the pool by giving him a treat.

smoke—shimmer—bugs—glow—magic

- ☉ soft scales, squeaky chatter, buzz of insects
- ☞ rooting through belongings, camouflages to hide

Activated by whistling sharply.

CROWN OF STARS MYTHIC

BLACK VOID METEORITE TWINKLE WHITE
While wearing this crown, you can ask favors of the stars themselves, and they're inclined to hear you out. (3d story roll)

star—meteor—night—sight—obey

- ☉ chill in the air, silence, absorb light
- ☞ stars in the sky change, slight upward gravity

Activated by beseeching the heavens.

DISCORDANT FLUTE MYTHIC

CHERRYWOOD OLD BRASS ENCHANTING BLUE
The haunting melodies that come from this flute (8d power pool) can unnerve others, and influence their actions.

confusion—melody—compel—jig

- ☉ dull shine, off-kilter tune
- ☞ impuse to add a little chaos

Activated by blowing a single breath into it.

FORTUNE RING MYTHIC

LUCKY GREEN SPUN GOLD SHINING JADE
Close your eyes and trust in your fortune to roll a 8d power pool instead of any roll you make. Refresh the pool by losing a game of luck.

luck—balance—fate

- ☉ unnatural shine, sparkles brightly when used
- ☞ reckless confidence, constant fiddling

Activated by kissing the ring.

GAUNTLETS OF THE STORM MYTHIC

DARK HIDE COPPER STORM BLUE
You can call lightning into your hands while wearing this gauntlets, lashing out with bursts of energy.

thunder—lightning—arc—fear—fist

- ☉ static humming, smell of ozone
- ☞ lightning jumps between fists

Activated by punching your own palm.

GNARLSTAFF			MYTHIC
TWISTED ROOT	BOG GREEN	WILD AMBER	
This staff (8d power pool) allows you to control trees and other plants in the area. You're never impeded by natural growth.			
tangle—plant—regrow—root			
☞ damp wood, seeping sap, wet moss ✎ rigid joints, vines burst from staff			
Activated by calling for aid from nature.			

KALEIDOSCOPE ROD			MYTHIC
MIRRORED LEAD	BEWITCHED TEAL	ARCANE MAGENTA	
This beautifully carved, bright wooden rod (8d power pool) can put others in a serene trance, as they're pulled into their own dreams.			
wonder—prismatic—sleep—dream			
☞ fractured light, prism burst, stretched mirrors ✎ ground tilts away, dizzying visual distortion			
Activated by rotating the stone at the top.			

LICH SKULL			MYTHIC
OLD BONE	GRAVE DUST	NECROTIC GLOW	
The skull of a still-living lich that can be used to control and raise undead (2d story roll). Empower them further by taking harm.			
undead—command—raise—drain			
☞ glowing eye sockets, ghostly glow of purple fire ✎ Unique personality, subtle manipulation			
Activated by holding it aloft.			

SHIP IN A BOTTLE			MYTHIC
SLOSHING BLUE	OLD OAK	SAILS WHITE	
Uncork the bottle to grow the ship to full size, complete with jolly crew that follow your lead as their captain.			
voyage—ship—hearty—crew—song			
☞ sloshing water, salty sea spray, friendly chorus ✎ Feeling of responsibility for crew			
Activated by uncork the bottle and turn it upside-down.			

SPIRITBINDING BOX			MYTHIC
WROUGHT IRON	WALNUT	SPIRIT BLUE	
This box has an angry bound spirit inside. It can be released and will follow your commands as best as it can. (3d power pool)			
ghost—leash—haunt			
☞ leaking smoke, chill in the air, faint echoes ✎ urge to open the box and join spirit			
Activated by turning the dial on top.			

STAFF OF MISCHIEF			MYTHIC
JESTER PURPLE	GOLD BELLS	FUNHOUSE RED	
This staff (6d power pool) can produce any manner of illusions, even places them as traps or triggered messages for others later.			
false—image—trigger—speech			
☞ melodic tinkle of bells, echoing giggles ✎ colorful ribbon bursts forth, explode into confetti			
Activated by twirling the staff like a baton.			

ANGELBLADE			MYTHIC
LIGHT STEEL	SKY BLUE	GOLDEN FILIGREE	
This blade can fly through the air and attack on its own. It follows the owners command with a 4d power pool, refreshed when it drops to Od.			
gust—leap—wing—speed—cut			
☞ rush of wind, perfect reflection ✎ upward draft, agile movement, sword bobs in air			
Activated by tossing it high into the air.			

MIRROR GAOL			MYTHIC
DEEP TRENCH	BRUISED PLUM	SICKLY GREEN	
Reflected creatures are sent to an inverted world. Make a 3d story roll for each. On a grim, the mirror shatters and those trapped within are released.			
Soul—Reflect—Trap—Sleep			
☞ rippling glass, shifting geometry ✎ dizzying vertigo, a sense of being pulled in			
Activated by pulling off its velvet cover.			

Created by Matthew Andre

POTIONS AND OTHER EXPENDABLES

To generate a random potion, roll 2d, taking the three words in the column and row, then choose two as the touchstones, discarding the third. Decide on a fitting function below as the last touchstone, then roll 4d for the potion qualities. As a minor, single-use arcana, it produces a single potent effect when used.

Touchstones

wither	explode	ooze	confuse	speak	pierce
fungus	fire	oil	hex	spirit	bone
servant	cascade	bubble	whispers	shroud	mask
cryptic	shadow	glimmer	quick	venom	sense
light	doom	air	barrier	vine	life
beauty	skull	fog	grow	claw	guide
spread	sticky	adapt	shield	body	break
ash	slime	water	mind	thorn	wound
blind	slick	frost	vigor	fang	stitch
phantom	wild	rattle	truth	friend	silence
mist	vermin	earth	sight	feeling	lightning
eye	web	hand	gate	false	dark
dream	slow	wander	prismatic	blight	stupor
smoke	pull	poison	stasis	energy	sound
beacon	swirl	crown	flash	sap	trance
drift	unseen	sleep	curious	might	shock
wing	nature	bugs	lore	ward	terror
anchor	quiet	plague	hide	shatter	heart

Functions

Attack: deals direct harm.

Enhance: temporarily boost or bestow.

Hinder: impede others or areas.

Influence: alter thoughts or perceptions.

Protect: defend from outside forces.

Restore: heal, cleanse, and mend.

Reveal: sense and reveal the hidden.

Summon: call objects, creatures, or forces.

Transform: change the subject's form.

Traverse: move quickly, or in a new way.

POTION QUALITIES

IT'S A	foggy opaque thin round square tapered	+	flask bottle vial jug draft glass	WITH	colorful faint drifting living viscous strange	+	mist bubbles glitter sludge reagent oil	INSIDE
--------	---	---	--	------	---	---	--	--------

JAR OF MISCHIEF		TRIVIAL 
WILDFLOWER PINK	SLY PURPLE	JOYOUS TEAL
Opening this jar causes immediate chaos, as a wild magic surge (3d story roll). The function depends on the wild magic.		
chaos—random—unknown function		
 pink vapors, sparks fly, strong berry scent  butterfly flutters inside, loud pop as lid comes off		
Activated by wrenching the heavy seal off.		

HEALING POTION		MINOR 
SLOSHING RED	GOLD FLECKS	CLEAR BOTTLE
When you drink this potion, clear physical harm as your wounds are healed, and you get a second wind.		
wound—refresh—restore		
 viscous liquid  burst of energy, everything comes into focus		
Activated by swallowing the last drop.		

AETHERIC ELIXIR		MAJOR 
PHANTOM MIST	ECTOPLASM	SHADOWY GRAY
Once consumed, you become intangible and can fly for a few hours. Push yourself to interact with the physical world.		
ghost—freedom—transform		
 freezing cold, swirling ectoplasm  vial drops as it passes through your hand		
Activated by drinking it, and exhaling a held breath.		

RUNE OF DESTRUCTION		MAJOR 
PULSING RED	ASHEN STONE	BRIMSTONE YELLOW
Given time, place and activate this rune to bring ruin to the area when a set trigger is met, or an 8d timer completes.		
ruin—disaster—explosion—fire—consume		
 low rumbling thunder, cold stone  violent earthquake, stone shatters		
Activated by snapping it cleanly in half.		

TWILIGHT CANDLE		TRIVIAL 
GLOOMY INDIGO	DUSK PURPLE	BLACK WICK
This pitch black candle deadens light and sound in the area that would normally be in its light.		
darkness—quiet—summon		
 deadened air, feeling of pressure on skull  shadows expand outward		
Activated by lighting the wick.		

PORTALSCOPE		MINOR 
BRASS TUBE	WARPED BLUE	VOID BLACK
You can peer into the distance and instantly teleport to the location you see, bringing along those you're touching.		
vision—space—traverse		
 smudged brass, fuzzy view  lens shatters, scope prone to sticking		
Activated by focusing on a distant location.		

SIMULACRUM SEED		MAJOR 
SINUOUS MUSCLE	FIBROUS FLESH	SOUL LAVENDER
Grow a replica of someone over the course of a year and a day. They have the same memory and ability as they did when you started the process.		
life—replicate—summon		
 soft flesh-like texture, unnervingly heavy, warm  splits like egg, missing memories of last year		
Activated by burying the seed.		

BOTTLED WISH		MYTHIC 
PURE GOLD	CELESTIAL BLUE	ETERNAL WHITE
The drinker of this world-altering elixir is granted a single wish. Trying to gain more wishes, directly or indirectly, invites the magic to twist your intent...		
single—wish—granted		
 hypnotic cosmic swirl, unintelligible whispers  glow beneath skin, sense of being overwhelmed		
Activated by closing your eyes and making your wish.		



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Disaster: The worst results from rolling the dice, achieved by getting a grim result cut by a thorn. Disasters result in the worst case scenario, often about twice as bad as a grim.....

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Distinctive Features: The first 2 or 3 things others notice about a PC.

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Divine Blessing (Paladin)	69
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Double-Barreled Blunderbuss (Legacy Talent)	191
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Doubtful (Vantage): Second to lowest on the vantage scale. Rolls often have 2+ thorns, and establishing details may require a story roll.....

Downtime: An extended break in the fiction, in which PCs can recover and pursue their own goals, while the world moves forward in the background....

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Dropped: Additional harm while desperate, or an impact move with dire stakes can leave a PC dropped. They make a story roll (usually 2d) to see how bad the consequences are.

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Elite: A tier of enemy representing someone or something very dangerous that requires multiple actions to take down. Elites are above toughs (the standard tier of enemy) and below bosses (the highest tier). 109

Encumbrance: Optional rule for tracking space for equipment..... 175

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Expand the Map: The GM can call for this, giving everyone 3 exploration tokens to spend on regional map features..... 130

Experience: When a PC completes a session, they gain an xp, short for experience, which they mark in the xp track in the character sheet. Filling out a row in the track grants a new level. 31

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Exploration Token: Tokens spent by the GM and players to add points of interest and paths or roads to a map. 130

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Factions: A group of NPCs with a strong presence in the world. 114

Familiar (Witch)..... 85

Fancy Footwork (Swashbuckler)..... 81

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Fiction Pillars: A GM tool used for preparing "blocks of fiction" that can be dropped into the game, acting as anchors for improv storytelling..... 186

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Flight (Background Talent)..... 89

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Focused Growth: An optional advancement rule that puts focus on the theme of the game..... 176

Folk Hero (Bard) 57

Foreshadow: The GM clearly states an impending danger, giving the PCs a chance to react. If they don't, the danger comes to pass, prompting an impact move. 99

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Forked Tongue (Bard)..... 57

Frenzy (Berserker) 58

Friendly Face (Bard)..... 57

Function (Arcana): The last touchstone for minor and major arcana that defines its use. 42

G

Given Time: An action that can be taken with an undefined amount of time, usually ranging from a few minutes to hours..... 53

GM Moves: The action framework that guides GMs letting them earn and spend suspense while moving the story forward. 96

Got Your Back (Fighter) 65

Greater Effect: Critical option that intensifies success. If a task pool is rolled as part of the action, it drops 1d before being rolled. 10

Grenades (Artificer) 55



Grim: A bad result on a roll, when your highest die is a 1, 2, or 3. On an action roll, you don't get what you want, and there's a problem. On a defense roll, you fail to avoid the danger, taking the full brunt of it..... **10, 15**

Grimdark: A flavor of fantasy centered on moral ambiguity and an uncaring world..... **180**

Group-Building Questions: Useful questions for players to ask each other about their characters to flesh out their relationship..... **50**

Growth: The increasing power of a PC's core talent. Growth happens every 2 levels (2, 4, 6) or 3 levels (3, 6). **52**

Guardian (Paladin)..... **69**

H

Harm: The default weight of damage when an impact move hurts a PC, leaving them bloodied or rattled. **27**

Healer (Cleric)..... **61**

Healing Hands (Monk)..... **67**

Healing: Marks are too minor to heal, harm needs treatment, and conditions heal when it makes sense. **30**

Herbalism (Witch) **85**

Heritage: Your character's ancestry and culture, represented by three wises, and optionally a heritage talent..... **88**

Heroic Fantasy: The default tone for Grimwild, centered on stories about the hero's journey and resolve..... **178**

Hex Flowers: A GM tool that acts like a random table, but with results that depend on the past..... **187**

Hidden Magic (Witch)..... **84**

High Fantasy: A flavor of fantasy about grand stories of destiny and wonder.

184

Hint: When determining if a character would notice something hidden or secret, and the GM judges that the character has a chance to find it (but it's not guaranteed), the GM provides a hint, giving the player one chance to act on the hint. If the player responds to the hint in a reasonable way, the hidden thing is revealed..... **107**

Hit Hard: The GM inflicts damage to a PC, giving them a mark, harm, or a condition. **101**

Homebrew Guidance: Tips for fan-created content. **177**

Homely Hovel (Witch) **85**

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Impact Move: GM actions that introduce trouble for the PCs. Must be prompted to use, either by an action roll by a PC that resulted in messy, grim, or disaster, or when adequately foreshadowed, or when spending suspense..... **100**

Impossible (Vantage): The lowest on the vantage scale. Rolls can't be attempted, and details can't be established. **13**

Improvise (Swashbuckler) **81**

Infusion (Artificer)..... **54**

Inspiration (Bard) **56**

Interrupt: An ability granted by certain talents that allows a player to stop an impact move with an action roll of their own. A messy on an interrupt action gives the GM suspense (or lets them keep it if spent). **21**

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Invocation: The challenge that must be completed to enact a ritual..... 34

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Kindred Spirits (Druid)..... 63

Knowing Gaze (Warlock)..... 83

L

Lethality Setting Dial: Game setting that changes how deadly play is for the PCs..... 173

Level: A measure of a character's progression. Each session you play grants your character XP, when you fill out a row, you gain a new level. Each new level grants a new talent, and every few levels you gain increased power for your core talent. 31

Ley Magic (Summoner)..... 79

Lightning Reflexes (Monk) 67

Linked Pools: A sequence of 2+ pools used to track extra "phases" or more complex events. 19

Lock Down (Move): The GM declares something, cutting off options or forcing the story in a certain direction, with no opportunity to change it. 101

Low Fantasy: A flavor of fantasy about small-scale, realistic stories. 181

Lucky (Swashbuckler) 81

Lurker (Rogue)..... 75

Lurker (Role): Monsters that stalk and strike from concealment. 110

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Maelstrom (Sorcerer) 77

Magic Duration: Spells often last a few moments, while Potent Spells last for a scene or more..... 36

Magic Sense (Sorcerer) 77

Magic Setting Dial: Game setting that changes how magical the world feels. 172

Magic Trappings: Players choose what their character's spellcasting looks like, though it's always obvious in some way, and usually requires some kind of implements, which if lost make casting difficult or impossible. 36

Magical Buffs: Expand vantage, or setup related actions. Potent spells last for the scene, or affect multiple. 37

Magical Damage: Similar to other actions harm others, though touchstones may make the action more or less difficult. Potent spells are more intense or target an area. 37

Magical Defense: Defend another with a spell, or a group with a potent spell. . 37

Magical Healing: Spells heal marks. Potent spells heal harm. Rituals heal extreme conditions..... 37

Magical Information Gathering: Spells learn sought or vague information, Potent gives detailed or unprompted information. 37

Magical Summoning: Call allies to your side. Spells often give a single action or 2d power pool. Potent spells often use story rolls or a 4d power pool. 37



Magnum Opus (Artificer).....	55
Magus (Warlock)	83
Mark (Damage): A temporary hindrance tied to a specific stat. Mark the box below the relevant stat on the character sheet. The next time you roll that stat, take a thorn and clear the mark.....	27
Marksman (Role): A sharpshooter who excels at picking off targets from a distance.	110
Mastered Theorem (Wizard)	87
Measured Tones (Fighter).....	65
Mechanical Mount (Legacy Talent)..	191
Messy: A mixed result on a roll, when your highest die is 4 or 5. On an action roll, you get what you want, but there's also a consequence. On a defense roll, you partially avoid the danger, reducing it to a lower level (e.g. bloodied could become a mark to brawn or agility).	10, 15
Metamagic (Sorcerer).....	77
Mighty (Berserker)	59
Milestone Levels: An optional rule allowing PCs to level up after big story moments.	176
Mind Blast (Psion).....	71
Mind Over Matter (Monk)	67
Mind Seed (Legacy Talent)	191
Mischief Maker (Artificer)	55
Monster Menagerie (Summoner)	79
Montage Roll: If you don't want to play out a scene in detail, everyone rolls 2d, using the highest of everyone's results for the final result for the group. Individual failures may still result in impact moves.	16

Mook: The lowest tier of enemy, someone or something that poses little threat to the PCs. Mooks can be defeated in a group with a single action roll, or sometimes not require a roll at all..... **109**

Movement: This is usually handwaved as part of actions, unless there's an interesting obstacle in the way.. See *Combat Rulings*

N

Natural Moxie (Swashbuckler)..... **81**

Noblebright: A flavor of fantasy centered on stories of hope and courage to change the world. **183**

O

Oathsworn (Paladin)..... **68**

Opportunist (Rogue)..... **75**

Otherworldly Form (Warlock)..... **83**

Outside Help: When an NPC or environmental element would provide a clear help to a PC, the GM rolls 1d and adds it to the PC's result, as a normal assist. **14**

Overkill (Berserker)..... **59**

P

Pact (Warlock)
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Panache (Swashbuckler)..... **80**

Path (Exploration)..... **132, 134**

Path: The collection of a core talent and 7 path talents around a central theme. Players choose 1 path at character creation..... **45**

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Redirect (Monk).....	67
Regeneration (Background Talent)....	89
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Relentless (Ranger).....	73
Resolve (Move): The GM gives a quick out on a problem to move the story forward, then takes suspense.	99
Resonance (Monk).....	67
Resource Pool: Rolled when the resource sees significant usage. When it drops to 0d, the resources run out. ...	19
Rest (Healing): A significant stretch of time between action. This clears all marks and harm.	30
Rest Resets: Optional rule to reset talents during narrative breaks, not at the start of a new session.	174
Retirement: An end to a PC's story after being dropped. If dropped again before leaving, the PC dies.	28
Reveal: When something is hidden or secret, but a character has relevant vantage that would make it clear to them, the GM tells that player the hidden thing that they detect.	107
Rings False (Cleric).....	61

Risk: If something is interesting
narratively that could happen if the
players fail a roll, then they should roll.
Otherwise, they just do it. Spells
without risk have no resource cost,
unless potent. **11**

Ritual: Rituals are complex operations
needed to create incredibly powerful
magical effects, beyond what is possible
with characters' normal abilities.
Rituals require a source of magic,
anchors, and the completion of a
challenge. **34**

Role (Monster): Defines how the
monster acts in combat. **110**

S

Sacrifice: An end to a PC's story after
being dropped. They make a single,
automatically successful action for
whatever effect feels appropriate, then
die. **28**

Salt of the Earth (Background Talent)
89

Scale Setting Dial: Game setting that
changes the power of the PCs and the
problems that they face..... **173**

Scene: A continuous period of action.
95

Scout Ahead (Ranger)..... **73**

Seasoned Hunter (Ranger) **73**

Seasons **140**

Secondary Effect: Critical effect option
giving the PC the effects of a perfect on
a different, but related roll. **10**

Sermons (Cleric)..... **61**

Set Dressing: Anything that's just flavor
and doesn't have an impact on the
narrative..... **25**

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Setup: Whenever a previous action would make a follow-up easier or more effective, the follow-up gets +1d from whoever did the previous action (but without sharing the risk). Setup can be granted as a critical bonus or as a result of a normal action roll..... 10, 14

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89

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Solo Party Mode: Simplified rules for running secondary PCs..... 195

Solo Rules..... 192

Soothsayer (Witch)..... 85

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Spark: A resource that every PC has, which can be spent to get +1d on a roll. It has a max of 2, and carries from session to session. 12

Specialty School (Wizard)..... 87

Spell: A spell is the default level of magic produced by PCs. Spells have narrative impact similar to what could be achieved with a normal action roll, but with specialized vantage from the touchstones of the spell. 32

Spellcasting Ability: The ability to cast spells granted by talents..... 38

Spellcasting: Spellcasting is the ability of characters to produce magical effects. Spellcasting is granted by certain talents, each of which specify the source of your power, the individual rules surrounding how you cast, and the touchstones that define and limit the effects of your magic..... 32

Spellcraft (Wizard)..... 86

Spelleater (Sorcerer)..... 77

Spotlight: Definitive method to prompt players into action, and ensure that no one is left out. 95

Stakes: Setting for the danger in a scene or action. Low stakes impact moves have the weight of a mark. Regular stakes are the default, with impact moves having the weight of a harm. High stakes impact moves give desperate harm, and dire stakes can immediately drop you. 103

Stat: Stats define the core capabilities of a character. The four stats are Brawn, Agility, Wits, and Presence..... 22

Steamhammer (Legacy Talent)..... 191

Stockpile: Stronghold Resources..... 142

Story Arc: Overarching goals or storylines for a character or group, representing narratives that span multiple sessions. 26

Story Kit: Rules for one-page, dynamic Grimwild scenarios..... 188

Story Roll: A roll of the dice, like an action or defense roll (i.e. resulting in a grim, messy, or perfect), rolled to resolve anything not covered by a more specific rule. The GM chooses 1d, 2d, or 3d based on how good they feel the odds are. 92



Strike: When something is hidden or secret, and no character has vantage that would let them get even a hint to its presence, the GM can choose to strike—the players run into a trap or ambush, or fail to spot something helpful. **107**

Stronghold: A place of respite, built by the players. **142**

Supplies: Optional rule to track party resources. **175**

Suspense Move: GM moves that lead to more intense scenes, giving suspense or prompting impact moves later. **98**

Suspense: Resource for the GM used to prompt impact moves, and is gained either by forgoing on impact move on a messy or worse on a player's action, or when starting a challenge, which grants 2 free suspense. **96**

Swarmer (Role): Monsters that overwhelm with numbers. **111**

Swift Recovery (Fighter)..... **65**

Swiftwing (Legacy Talent)..... **191**

Sword & Sorcery: A flavor of fantasy centered on high-action adventures about greed, nerve, and luck. **181**

T

Tactician (Fighter)..... **65**

Tactician (Role): Clever strategists and commanding leaders. **111**

Talent: Special abilities granted to PCs when created and when they gain a level. Talents let you do things you couldn't otherwise, and they increase your vantage when relevant, even when you're not directly using them. **52, 88, 190**

Tangle: Player introduced narrative beats that are bad for a PC, like their past coming back to haunt them, mistakes, or unwise decisions. The player chooses something that's bad for the character (but still reasonable), and gains spark. **25**

Task Pool: Usually rolled with a successful PC action to bring the goal of the scene closer. **18**

Teamwork (Background Talent)..... **89**

Teamwork: When PCs work together, one rolls while the others assist. **14**

Tether (Monk)..... **67**

The Legend Of... (Swashbuckler)..... **81**

Thematic Path Talent: A temporary path talent that should fit the trappings of its source. **53**

There is no Try (Monk) **67**

Thieves' Cant (Background Talent).... **89**

Thorn: Eight-sided dice used to represent danger on a roll. When a thorn comes up 7 or 8, it cuts the overall result down a level (perfect→messy→grim→disaster). **11**

Thread: Resource available to all PCs. It can be spent by a player to add a detail to the narrative. Depending on how reasonable it feels, the GM can make it true, call for a story roll, or veto it. **25**

Tick Pool: Optional rule for special pools that drop 1d when triggered, instead of being rolled. **177**

Tier (Monster): The individual power of a foe. There are 4 tiers of increasing power: Mook, Tough, Elite, and Boss. **109**

Time Passes **140**

V

Timer Pool: Tracks events happening in the background. Rolled occasionally as an impact move, or as time passes. ... **19**

Token Initiative: Optional rule to give important moments framework. **174**

Tools of the Trade: The tools and equipment characters have, determined by their vantage. Players may have to spend thread or make a story roll for items that are doubtful. **13**

Touchstone: Evocative words that define the capabilities and limitations of magical effects, namely spells and arcana. Both spells and arcana can be used in creative and freeform ways, and touchstones help to judge what's reasonable. **35**

Tough: The standard tier of enemy, representing a reasonably challenging foe. Toughs can be defeated with a single successful action roll. **109**

Trait (Character): Descriptors of characters' personalities. Choose 2 you are, and 1 you are not. **20**

Trap Making (Artificer) **55**

Trap Sense (Legacy Talent) **191**

Treasure: Items and other valuables found or given to the PCs. Treasure comes in three tiers: minor, major, and mythic. **39**

Treatment: Required to heal harm and some conditions. Treatment requires time, tools, and training. **30**

Trickster (Role): Foes that thrive on confusion, turning the tide of battle with their guile. **111**

Trophies (Ranger) **73**

True Shape (Druid) **63**

Tumultuous Mind (Psion) **7**

Vantage: The sum of everything that's true about a character in the fiction—everything on your sheet, and everything in the current scene.

Vantage is used by the GM to judge the difficulty of actions (and so the amount of thorns) and how reasonable story details added by a player might be (when spending thread). **12**

Vassal (Summoner)..... **78**

Vex: An instinctual, emotional response often inflicted as an impact move.

When a PC takes vex, the player chooses if they fight, take flight, freeze, or freakout. **29**

Vigilance: The assumed alertness of PCs. When dealing with hidden dangers, PCs will get a Reveal, Hint, or Strike depending on their vantage. . **107**

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Wayfarer (Warlock)	83
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Wild Shape (Druid)..... 62

Windcaller (Druid)..... 63

Wise: Character's areas of knowledge or expertise. They're evocative phrases that expand your vantage..... 20

Wisps (Sorcerer)..... 77

Wits: One of the four stats that define a character's capabilities, corresponding to their cleverness and observation.. 22

Wonder Magnet (Witch)..... 85

Wordplay (Bard)..... 57

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GRIMWILD

COMMUNITY EDITION

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