
GRIMWILD
COMMUNITY EDITION

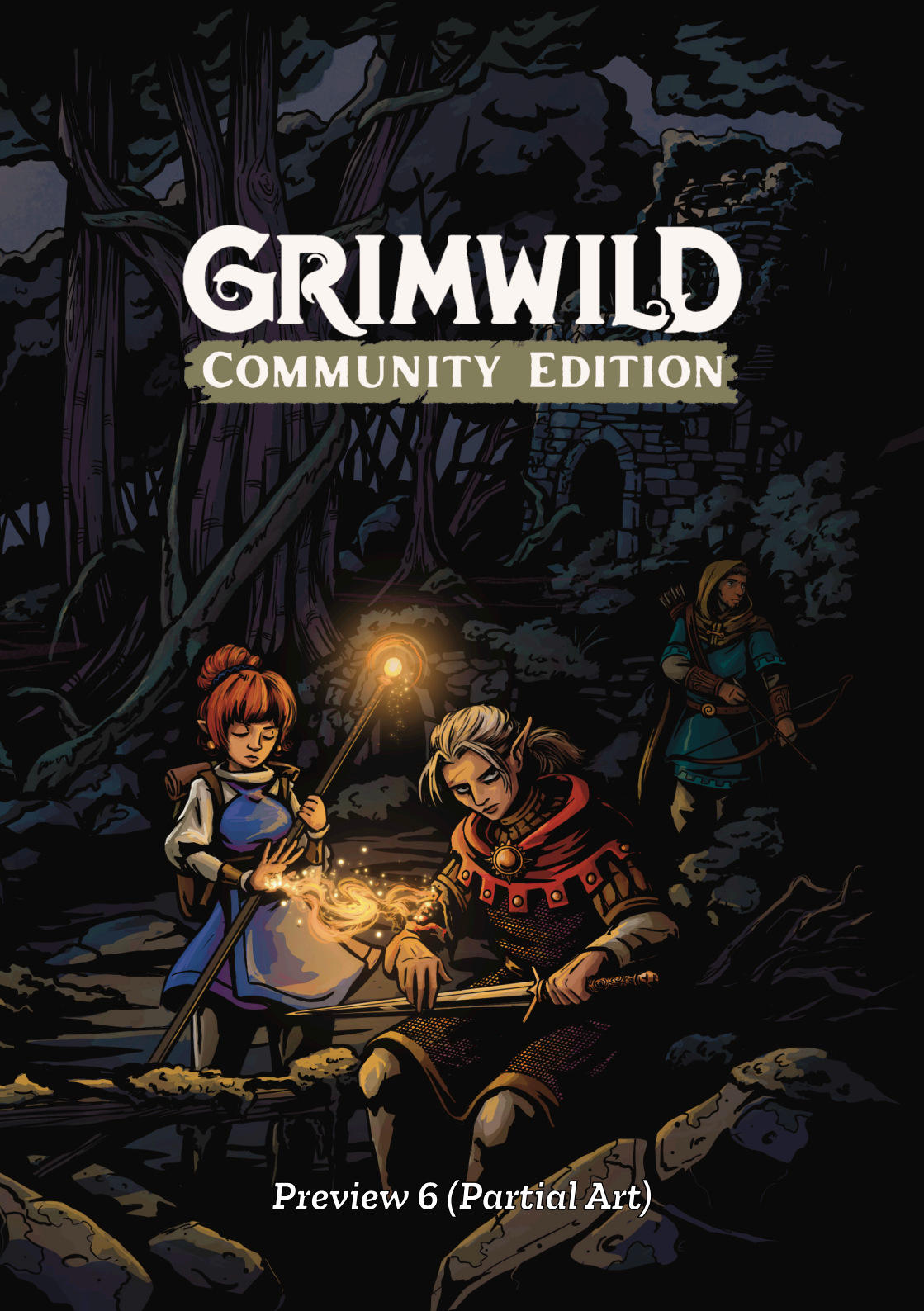

GRIMWILD
COMMUNITY EDITION
Preview 6 (Partial Art)

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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. 7: Extras.
- **Time:** Sessions work best at 3 hours. For longer sessions, consider using downtime (pg. 31) 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 at least 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. 19).
- **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 halfway there—they're all pointing towards keeping the pace flowing quickly and the action dramatic. The other half is in your hands, the players at the table, and the attitude you all approach the game with.

Play Cinematically

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

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

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

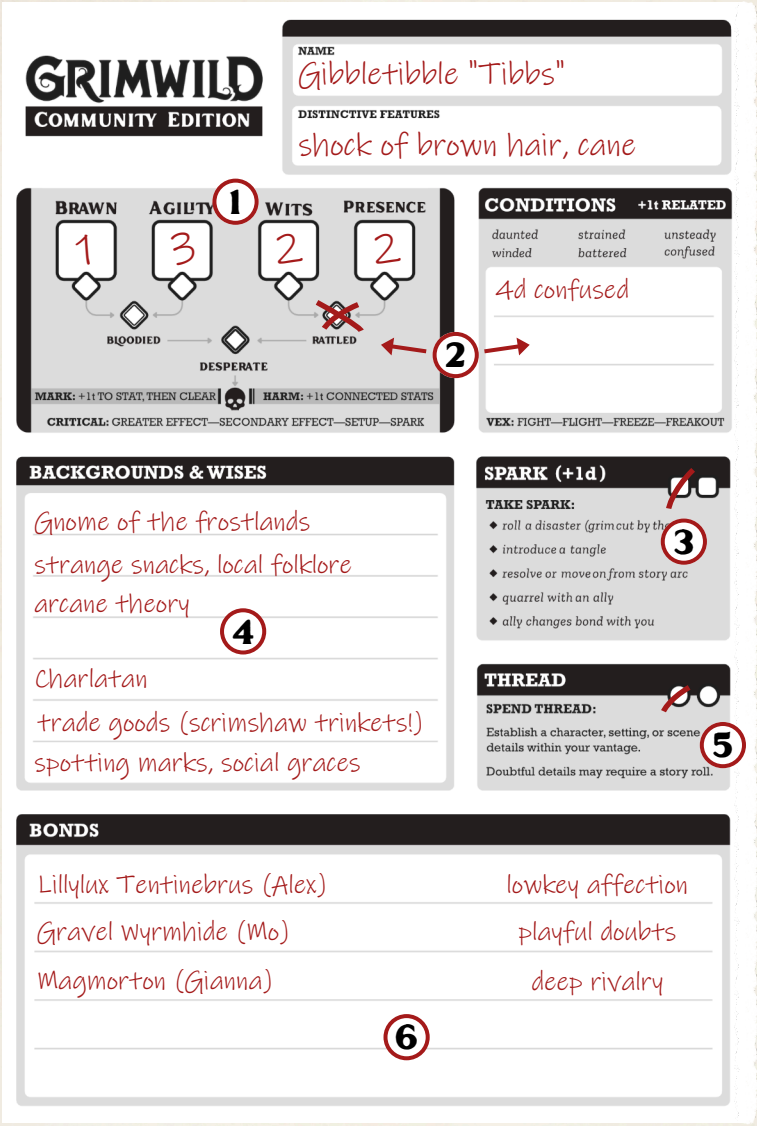
Don't be afraid to stay the same. Some aspects of your character might be immutable. That's also part of what makes a great character. There can be those things they will stick to, even to the bitter end. Just make sure it's worth it, and fun. Don't die on small hills—die on entertaining ones.

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



The left side of the character sheet (pictured) is the same for all paths, with:

① Basic stats (pg. 23) ② Damage (pg. 28) ③ Spark (pg. 13)

④ Backgrounds (pg. 21) ⑤ Thread (pg. 26) ⑥ Ally bonds (pg. 23)

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 experience.

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. 101) 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. 19) 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. 15). *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. 96) 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. 26*), roll a ***disaster***, resolve a ***story arc*** *(pg. 27)*, ***quarrel*** with an ally *(pg. 24)* , or an ally's ***bond*** with you changes (pg. 23).

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

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

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. 104). *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. 25), 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. 17) may be used if there's gray area. Perception is handled by ***vigilance*** (pg. 108).

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.

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. 36).

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 themself 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?*

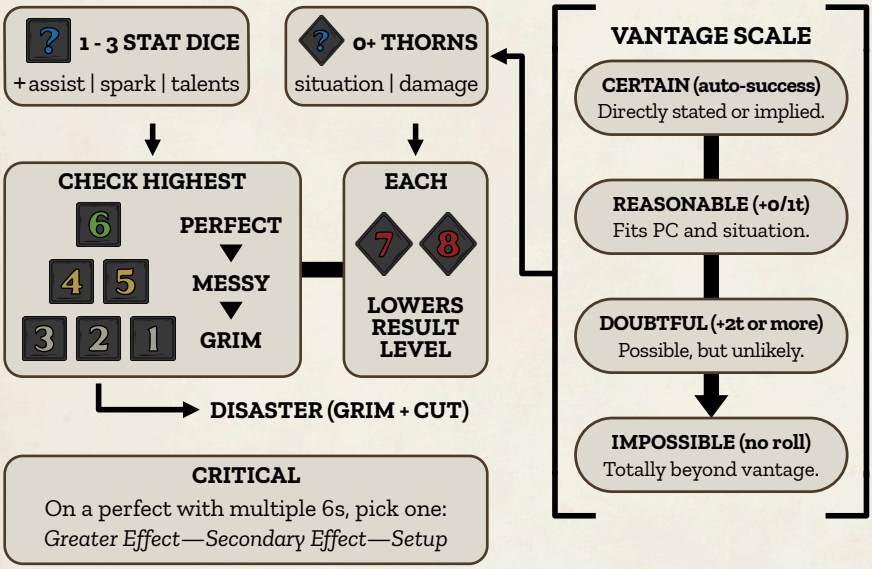
If the roll only tests your luck, it's used to determine the general answer to a question—from positive to negative. *Does my magical Robe of Pockets have anything useful for this? | I look down the hallway, do I see any guards?*

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 your action:

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. 97) 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. 110). **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. *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. Creature power pools are rolled when directly targeted, and can roll 1d of their pool to assist. **Bonus dice pools** (pg. 54) 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 pool 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. 115), 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.*

Pools Follow the Fiction

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. 26). *I am brave and rash, but not quiet. I want love and thrills, but not wealth.*

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Detail your 3 most distinctive, outward features that others quickly notice. This may include clothes, hair, markings, or how they hold themself. Consider other features that some may notice after spending time traveling with you. Check out the character crucibles on page 52 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.

Tavern Planning Scene Artwork

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 (max 3). 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, 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 themself 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. This will surely end well...*

Potency

The ability to pull off jaw-dropping feats. ***Potency*** is outside what is normally possible for an adventurer, and is granted only by specific talents and arcana (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. 34) 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. 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

Damage in Grimwild is variable, and can come in the form of ***marks***, ***harm***, ***conditions*** (pg. 30), and ***vex*** (pg. 30). A mix of each is important for reaching the right level of lethality. When applying consequences as the GM, consider the scene tone and gauge if you need to switch it up and rely on other forms of damage.

In general, reach for ***marks*** as minor damage, and ***harm*** as consequential and dramatic blows. Use ***conditions*** to track specific, narratively important injuries. Include ***vex*** to force an emotional response, and add setbacks with other impact moves *(the rope bridge breaks | start a 4d reinforcements arrive timer)* to keep scenes dynamic.

Marks

Light damage, a temporary hindrance to a stat *(out of breath, confused)*. When the stat is rolled, clear the ***mark***, and take +1t on the roll.

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, ***vex*** 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

This is a lingering hindrance to PC's body or mind. Adventurers have ways to protect themselves from ***harm***, whether armor, quick reflexes, or magical ability. Take vantage into account—harm should only come into play when those defenses can be overcome, or circumstances could otherwise leave a character dropped. **When harm is likely, and dramatic weight calls for it, the GM can inflict one of the following:**

Bloodied: Pressing physical damage that inflicts +1t to Brawn and Agility.

Rattled: Pressing mental damage that inflicts +1t to Wits and Presence.

Desperate: Damage taking you to the edge, only taken as harm upon a second bloodied or rattled, adding +1t to all rolls and making some outright impossible. Harm that would leave you desperate a second time drops you instead (pg. 29).

Example Damage for Normal Stakes

- 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 just die without fanfare. This end is more common in darker worlds and low fantasy settings.



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 carry ***risk***. Magic can replace some requirements, though only ***potent spells*** can heal ***harm*** directly. Treatment is almost always successful, with ***impact moves*** from treatment bringing 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 cleared, 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. If you prefer per-session talents to reset during rest instead of with new session, use the Rest Resets optional rule on page 175.

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 175.**

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. 25), 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, while rituals cover 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 themself, 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 doesn't require potency, 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

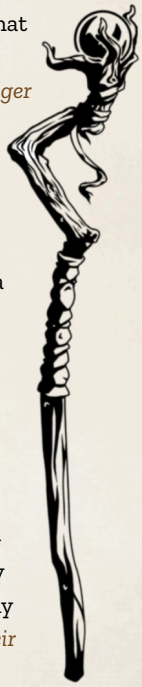
Using magic to ***assist*** a roll is just set dressing with no cost—just keep the narration reasonable (the weaker end of a spell) and remember you share the risk. If you're making the action roll on a group level, cast as usual.

Detecting Magic

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

Dispelling Magic

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



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.

Spellcasting Trappings

Discuss with the GM how your casting appears, its visual style, movements you make, and tools you use. Using magic (even non-spellcasting) is clear and evident—trying to hide it is usually extremely difficult. 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).*

Buff & Enemy Debuff 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 to a question, 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 2-3d power pool. Potent spells conjure tougher creatures, often as a 4-6d power pool. Rituals can be permanent, on a massive scale, or bind powerful creatures with a linked 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. 70).

Druid

These naturalists don't have spellcasting on their own, however those wishing to control the elements can take the *Primordial Bonds* path talent (pg. 64).

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 source (the magical essence) with a technique (its use) as touchstones. Sorcerer spellcasting can be taken by other paths with the *Eldritch Affinity* talent (pg. 76).

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—wary 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 off-the-cuff magic per session. Wizard spellcasting can be taken by other paths with the *Arcane Training* talent (pg. 66).



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, sailing ship, major arcana.*

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. 101).

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*
beast or 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. Those with power pools and other limited effects refresh every session unless otherwise noted.

The touchstones, which help to adjudicate its use. When using arcana outside of its description, its name and all touchstones 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
- 2d Power Pool for an effect
- Once per session effect
- Using a different stat for actions

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

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

Mythic arcana: Wondrous effects based on their touchstones. These greatly expand vantage, can be used for ritual magic, and may have any number of extra potent abilities. These exalted items have no upper power limit.

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. 87).

Trivial arcana is a special tier exclusive to expendable arcana, allowing a single minor effect (as an action or spell). 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, or otherwise expand vantage. When arcana is used, the GM will pick whatever stat makes the most sense based on the item 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 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 wises.

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. Limitations may lower overall tier.

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*	*tendril*	*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***

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. 27)
4. **Make Characters:** Follow the character creation flow and make PCs together. Prioritize fitting in with the theme, setting, party, and group arc. (pg. 47)

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 *Stirring the soul with song or deed.*
Spend **inspiration** to bolster your allies, and influence foes to turn the tide.

Berserker *Blood, mettle, and the sounds of battle.*
Fly into a **frenzy** to wade through foes and lay waste to your enemies.

Cleric *Faith is stronger than any blade.*
Use your **rites** pools to call upon your god, wielding their divine magic.

Druid *The fury of nature—untamed and relentless.*
Use your **wild shape** pool to take bestial forms and learn their abilities.

Fighter *Resolve honed with every strike.*
Spend **mastery** to fight with unparalleled expertise in your chosen style.

Monk *Perfection is a journey, not a destination.*
Spend **flow** to act with mystical grace and stop foes in their tracks.

Paladin *An Oath taken, a burden willingly carried.*
Spend **smite** to overcome challenges with the power of your conviction.

Ranger *No escape, no mercy, only the chase.*
Tag a foe as your **quarry** to learn about, track, and slay your chosen enemy.

Rogue *A whisper in the dark, then a quiet end.*
Use your **competence** to pull off incredible feats within your chosen skill set.

Sorcerer *Magic flows like blood, powerful and wild.*
Use your magic in near infinite ways, but be careful of **magical twists**.

Warlock *Power always demands a hefty price.*
Bargain with your patron for **eldritch talents**, but beware their fickle nature.

Wizard *Arcane knowledge, wielded with precision.*
Use the **spell theorems** you've learned to call precise magic to your hands.

Extra Options

Also included are the **Adventurer**, **Artificer**, **Psion**, **Summoner**, **Swashbuckler**, and **Witch**. These alternatives were not a part of the original free version of *Grimwild*. The Adventurer is not a full path; it trades a core talent for 2 extra path talents, and more with growth—great for those not following a specific path or abandoning their original (such as oathbreaker paladins). You can find it with all other character sheets.

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 wises, 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 another talent from your path's list, a background talent, or a path 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. 23)

7. **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. 27)

8. **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. 23)

9. **Review:** Revisit the campaign theme, setting, party identity, and group arcs you set. Make sure everything matches up well and make any adjustments.

10. **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. 17) 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. 21). 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. 50), or use either of those as guidelines to create your own. Backgrounds and their wises should fit the campaign world and be approved by the GM. A heritage background isn't required if you prefer it as just set dressing. If you need more ideas for wises, check out the expanded wises crucible! (pg. 50)

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

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

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

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

Scarlet Agent of the Crown.

Charlatan

AKA Spy, Swindler

social graces
spotting marks
timely misdirects

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

Scarlet Agent of the Crown

social graces
timely misdirects
luxuries

COMMON BACKGROUNDS

Charlatan
AKA Spy, Swindler

social graces
spotting marks
timely misdirects

Clergy
AKA Cultist, Priest

allegories
signs of sin
faiths of the world

Commoner
AKA Farmer, Villager

local customs
practical wisdom
superstitions

Crafter
AKA Artisan, Smith

crafting quality
trade contracts
wear and tear

Drifter
AKA Explorer, Vagabond

chance meetings
faraway tales
lay of the land

Eccentric
AKA Hermit, Recluse

hard truths
random facts
strange snacks

Entertainer
AKA Storyteller, Minstrel

legends & tales
crowd behaviors
stage presence

Healer
AKA Herbalist, Physicker

comfort foods
signs of ailment
herbal properties

Hunter
AKA Pathfinder, Trapper

survival
tracks
wildlife behavior

Investigator
AKA Guard, Gumshoe

seedy areas
connecting the dots
body language

Mariner
AKA Pirate, Sailor

nautical lore
seafaring
weather patterns

Mystic
AKA Occultist, Seer

ancient prophecies
leylines
symbology

Noble
AKA Aristocrat, Diplomat

diplomacy
influential contacts
luxuries

Ragamuffin
AKA Cutpurse, Urchin

hidden paths
rumors
street smarts

Sage
AKA Lorekeeper, Scholar

ancient histories
peoples of the world
philosophy

Scoundrel
AKA Brigand, Thief

escape routes
signs of weakness
shady connections

Trader
AKA Merchant, Peddler

cultural tastes
people's desires
rare goods

Warrior
AKA Sellsword, Soldier

battle plans
improvised weapons
war stories

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

HERITAGE

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

Once you set your heritage, give it three wises. Use those from common backgrounds (previous page), the expanded wises crucible (below), or make up your own. These wises 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***

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***

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.

Some paths include additional character-building features and advice on roleplaying. Both are entirely optional, but if they resonate with you, lean into them to make those aspects important in the game.

Core Talents

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.

Path 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, nor do they *only* fit that path. You are encouraged to check out all the talents and pick which ones fit your character best.

To avoid redundancy, similar talents across paths have been avoided. Instead, you're encouraged to reflavor talents to fit your character's theme. For example, a wizard could take the fighter's Bulwark and flavor it 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.

"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.

Bonus Dice Pool

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.

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.

"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.

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 (while you share the risk).

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.

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 25.

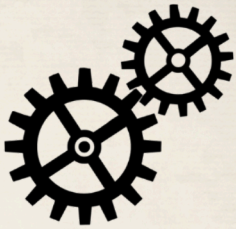
Push Yourself

Expend extra effort to activate certain talents that require it. After using the talent and resolving any related rolls, ***mark*** a stat (your choice). Choose your moments wisely.

"Thematic Path Talent"

Some core talents allow you to select a temporary or changeable path talent to go along 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.

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 3 **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: *disassemble and rebuild them using any 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.

Arcana doesn't regain uses when rebuilt, but those that expand vantage can still do so.

EVERYTHING ARCANA — (Optional)

You can reflavor 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-	*tink-*	*zapp-*	*blun-*	*fum-*	*dab-*
fizzi-	***glim-***	*boond-*	*gogg-*	*sput-*	*splin-*
clank-	*cogg-*	***whim-***	*phliz-*	*miz-*	*bung-*
spro-	*flib-*	*chym-*	***zind-***	*cran-*	*rat-*
mag-	*quib-*	*wob-*	*bogg-*	***jig-***	*quab-*
whizz-	*griz-*	*scran-*	*quirk-*	*wiz-*	***jang-***
-nic	*-crank*	*-nar*	*-tome*	*-nox*	*-lash*
-tor	***-mage***	*-gram*	*-phage*	*-press*	*-hinge*
-al	*-flux*	***-plex***	*-tron*	*-scope*	*-ring*
-con	*-bolt*	*-lock*	***-spark***	*-spire*	*-shift*
-fuse	*-meter*	*-gear*	*-lume*	***-turn***	*-stone*
-matic	*-ator*	*-cog*	*-craft*	*-drum*	***-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. 74), and pick from the tricks and flaws below.

TRICKS: *distract—fight—guard—rescue—retrieve—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*
- *Oratory*
- *Martial Ability*
- *Panpipes*
- *Flute*
- *Cutting Wit*
- *Lyre*
- *Ocarina*
- *Accordion*
- *Limericks*
- *Proverbs*
- *Dance*
- *Aesops*
- *Lute*
- *Style*
- *Singing*
- *Harmonica*
- *Drums*

SONG COMPOSITION (Optional)

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

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

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

Impact: This is how the song magically influences others.

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

Bard Path Talents

BARDIC LORE: You gain any 3 wises and 1 extra ***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. [Bard Only]

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 experience 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 themself—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. Remember to clear **marks** after the next roll.*

FRENZY SOURCE (Optional)

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

- *Ritualistic preparation*
- *Trained tolerance to pain*
- *Long consumption of strange substances*
- *Drawing power from ancestral spirits*
- *Drawing primal power from the wild*
- *Channeling memories you'll never forget*
- *Visions of horrific or heroic scenes*
- *Deep meditative focus*
- *Blood pact with a kindred force*
- *Your abilities are a strange mystery*
- *Binding your spirit to a physical totem*
- *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, dress, your 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***, you can 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 transform into beasts and channel the spirit of the wild, embracing the untamed power of the natural world.

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*	***petals***

WILD TALENTS (Examples)

Below are some examples of beasts that have wild talents. Already existing talents are listed with a page number reference. Others are made for that beast. If a wild talent feels more like set dressing in the current scene, just include it as flavor, instead.

- **Chimpanzee:** *Relentless (Ranger, pg. 74)*
- **Wolf:** *Keen Senses (Ranger, pg. 74)*
- ***Spider:*** *Wall climbing*
- **Turtle:** *Bulwark (Fighter, pg. 66)*
- **Octopus:** *Shape & color mimicking*
- **Cheetah:** *Incredibly fast sprinting*
- **Bear:** *Flesh Wounds (Berserker, pg. 60)*
- **Eagle:** *Flight (Background, pg. 90)*
- **Snake:** *Poisoner (Rogue, pg. 76)*
- **Lion:** *Fearsome (Berserker, pg. 60)*
- **Rabbit:** *Lucky (Swashbuckler, pg. 82)*
- **Fox:** *Lurker (Rogue, pg. 76)*
- **Shark:** *Aquatic (Background, pg. 90)*
- **Ape:** *Mighty (Berserker, pg. 60)*
- **Honey Badger:** *Iron Will (Cleric, pg. 62)*
- **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. Make a story roll for their attitude, or spend ***thread*** to establish a ***bond***. 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 the form freely. 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, warrior, 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.

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

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), move with them, or hinder them in another way.

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 in if it's too far.

PATH OF THE MONK

AKA the martial artist, mystic, wanderer

You channel your discipline into grace, and precision, as you follow your 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 a 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, too.

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 unwavering dedication to your oath, 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 Paladin's *Oathsworn* talent, but gain the Adventurer's *Talented* core talent in its place (pg. 46, or see character sheets). Redemption requires an appropriate ritual or mythic deed. Success restores your core talent while allowing you to keep one path 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.

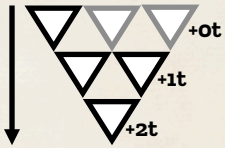
AWAKENED MIND — Core Talent

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** afterward, 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 0t, 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 roll 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. Harm isn't shared. If they're targeted, roll the pool (power pools, pg. 20).*

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 bastion roll, ignore any increases to instability, and lower it by 1. 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. [Psion Only]

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 or rattled—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 appearance, though you keep the same basic shape.

This allows you to change your basic physical features. 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 unseen through the terrain, tracking prey with deadly precision and striking them when they're weakest.

QUARRY — Core Talent

Once per session, you can choose a foe as your **Quarry**—the focus of your hunt. You have a **Quarry die**, a special d6. When you or an ally attempts to research, locate, or attack your quarry, add your quarry die to the roll. If a quarry die rolls a '6', you can add a ***critical effect***.

Survivalist: You take +1d when scouting, wrangling animals, placing traps, and on defense rolls against environmental hazards.

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

FAVORITE TRAPS (Optional)

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

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

TELL-TALE SIGNS OF WEAKNESS (Advice)

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

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

Ranger Path Talents

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

TRICKS

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

FLAWS

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

Come up with your own tricks & flaws for other companions such as hired bodyguards or homunculi. The GM may let you take this again for 3 extra tricks and another hurt damage box.

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: *find an escape route—sabotage something—set a trap—survey the area (ask 2 questions)—take out a danger*. 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 when you take this talent—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 an 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 **2 Competence** to represent your focus under pressure**.** You can spend 1 to pull off a ***potent feat within your skill set.***

Above board: *blend in—charm—investigate—negotiate—network—parkour.*

Below table: *ambush—deception—dismantle—provoke—sleight of hand—stealth.*

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, gain +1 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

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 **sources** 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. 71), 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.

MASTERMIND: You gain 1 ***thread*** per session and can spend ***thread*** to flashback to employing subterfuge or clever preparation to: *make a contact—plant a decoy—prepare reinforcements—set up an* ***interrupt****—swipe or stash a useful item*. Make a 3d montage roll. The GM must take ***suspense*** in place of an impact move.

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

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.

Above Board

Blend in: *Keep a low profile.*
Charm: *Persuade with personality.*
Investigate: *Study, observe, connect dots.*
Negotiate: *Bargain and settle terms.*
Network: *Use contacts and resources.*
Parkour: *Run, climb, leap efficiently.*

Below Table

Ambush: *Plan and attack unseen.*
Deception: *Lie, disguise, and act.*
Dismantle: *Sabotage, pick locks, disable.*
Provoke: *Manipulate, incite emotions.*
Sleight of hand: *Pickpocket, filch, steal.*
Stealth: *Hide, move unseen.*

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 combine at least 1 source and 1 technique 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 **Sources** 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).*

Sources: *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 source 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, and may even be somewhat beneficial on a perfect. 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-rending 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 action, if you immediately lash out.

Sorcerous Techniques

Attack: Lash out for harm or destruction.
Create: Summon something from magic.
Defend: Protect yourself or others.
Enhance: Imbue with magical properties.
Hinder: Debuff, obstruct, or oppose.
Influence: Affect minds and perception.
Transform: Change form or substance.
Traverse: Move or alter mobility.

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 are bound to a creature from another plane, able to summon it 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**, representing your connection. You can ***push yourself*** to return the pool to its max. It has **2 aspects**, strange traits 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, and take +1d when performing summoning rituals.

GROWTH: At levels 3 and 6, you gain +1 aspect, and +1d to the power pool.

ASPECTS (Examples)

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

- **Dragon:** *Eldritch Growth (Sorcerer, pg. 78)*
- **Ghost:** *Otherworldly Form (Warlock,pg. 84)*
- **Demon:** *Knowing Gaze (Warlock, pg. 84)*
- **Pixie:** *Arcane Training (Fighter, pg. 66)*
- **Air Elemental:** *Windcaller (Druid, pg. 64)*
- **Oozeling:** *Shift Form (Psion, pg. 72)*
- **Unicorn:** *Healing Hands (Monk, pg. 68)*
- **Shadow:** *Lurker (Rogue, pg. 76)*
- **Zombie Swarm:** *Bulwark (Fighter, pg. 66)*
- **Warrior Spirit:** *Guardian (Paladin, pg. 70)*
- **Treant:** *Primal Growth (Druid, pg. 64)*
- **Tentacles:** *Fearsome (Berserker, pg. 60)*

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, though you still summon one at a time. When you summon a vassal, you can choose which answers the call. [Summoner Only]

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!

"Fallout"

There are often consequences to the magic anchoring your vassal to this plane breaking. Consider your summon, and what form that could take beforehand. Demons may require *immediate payment for their service*, vassals from elemental planes could *bring forth raging fire or a tidal wave*, while bestial creatures could go *berserk*. On a perfect, you avoid the trouble.

PATH OF THE SWASHBUCKLER

AKA the fencer, duelist, buccaneer

You fight with swagger, skill, and a smile, turning every 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*
- *wield the sword of justice*
- *accept every challenge*
- *coin is meant to be spent*
- *infamous is still famous*
- *gentleman even in dire times*
- *honor is only for the dead*
- *a good story beats any reward*
- *never kill the helpless*
- *death before dishonor*
- *the best plan is no plan at all*
- *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 are the kinds of ideas that you alone have the gall to attempt, consequences be damned, and often a part of **tangles** or voluntarily increased stakes.*

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. 75). 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—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 temporarily 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*	***oddity***
DESIRES	***chaos***	*beauty*	*minds*	*wealth*	*rarities*	*destruction*
	secrets	***fun***	*control*	*magic*	*everything*	*monuments*
	power	*victory*	***judgment***	*unity*	*souls*	*biomass*
	worshipers	*adoration*	*fear*	***fame***	*revenge*	*knowledge*
	promises	*purity*	*progress*	*curios*	***truth***	*experiences*
	influence	*life*	*territory*	*perfection*	*order*	***entropy***

Warlock Path Talents

AFFLICTION: Once per 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***.

Flavor this as a magical transferance, life-siphoning tentacles, or even a vampiric bite.

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. Once per session, you can enchant your weapon, giving it a trait such as: *flaming—pulverizing—seeking*. While using it, you can end the enchantment to produce a potent effect with it. You can add your weapon as a touchstone on spells.

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	*grace*	*wither*	*path*	*star*	*color*
wall	***sleep***	*fire*	*gate*	*storm*	*wind*
absorb	*pain*	***adapt***	*break*	*dream*	*sun*
ward	*luck*	*shape*	***reduce***	*compel*	*silence*
might	*vigor*	*vex*	*open*	***obscure***	*cloud*
blood	*grave*	*time*	*move*	*ask*	***ice***
read	*puzzle*	*call*	*lost*	*plant*	*life*
reveal	***guide***	*shackle*	*bind*	*sea*	*hunt*
secret	*stone*	***trick***	*voice*	*growth*	*travel*
message	*fable*	*speak*	***kindred***	*weather*	*beast*
memory	*know*	*aid*	*sanctum*	***food***	*instinct*
light	*truth*	*rebuke*	*blend*	*bird*	***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, 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. Use the crucible on the right for ideas on your hovel.

charming	+	*castle*
mysterious		*cottage*
rickety		*glade*
unsettling		*manor*
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** on *any* action, 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.

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***	*soothing*	*grasping*	*shielding*	*curious*	*shadowy*
	flaming	***slow***	*dire*	*petrifying*	*ethereal*	*majestic*
	alluring	*silent*	***dazzling***	*piercing*	*sense*	*frenzied*
	cryptic	*withering*	*primal*	***toxic***	*thunderous*	*prismatic*
	freezing	*shredding*	*false*	*harmonic*	***molten***	*wild*
	mesmerizing	*unseen*	*expanding*	*swift*	*phantom*	***whispering***
ESSENCE	***oil***	*earth*	*lore*	*spirit*	*ash*	*barb*
	crystal	***air***	*fire*	*lightning*	*acid*	*memory*
	slime	*spore*	***shroud***	*stasis*	*sound*	*water*
	light	*star*	*trick*	***siphon***	*thought*	*rift*
	gravity	*smoke*	*sight*	*mist*	***bloom***	*poison*
	echo	*death*	*bone*	*mirror*	*emotion*	***growth***
FORM	***beacon***	*servant*	*vision*	*sentinel*	*ray*	*spray*
	ring	***crown***	*bond*	*shift*	*guide*	*embers*
	chains	*word*	***step***	*gate*	*wall*	*bolt*
	eye	*aura*	*gust*	***tendril***	*wings*	*wave*
	lock	*shield*	*swarm*	*pillar*	***claw***	*dream*
	bubble	*hand*	*dance*	*explosion*	*anchor*	***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 (conjuration) → This could summon a bear to fight alongside 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: *Jack of All Trades (pg. 58)*

Elf: *Keen Senses (pg. 74)*

Dwarf: *Dauntless (pg. 70)*

Halfling: *Lucky (pg. 82)*

Gnome: *Arcane Training (pg. 66)*

Orc: *Flesh Wounds (pg. 60)*

Dragonkin: *Eldritch Growth (pg. 78)*

Fiend: *Eldritch Affinity (pg. 76)*

Celestial: *Healing Hands (pg. 68)*

Satyr: *Crowd Favorite (pg. 90)*

Elemental: *Otherworldly Form (pg. 84)*

Giant: *Mighty (pg. 60)*

Turtlefolk: *Bulwark (pg. 66)*

Lizardfolk: *Poisoner (pg. 76)*

Merfolk: *Aquatic (pg. 90)*

Kobold: *Trap Making (pg. 56)*

Goblin: *Opportunist (pg. 76)*

Birdfolk: *Flight (pg. 90)*

Firbolg: *Kindred Spirits (pg. 64)*

Forged: *Artificial Parts (pg. 56)*

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 it. These weapons can draw attention, and 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—underestimation—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, you can 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.

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).

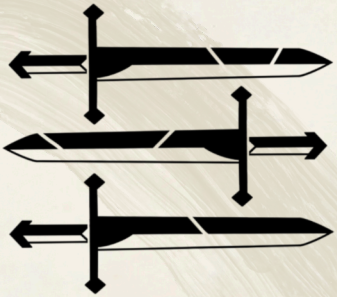
When an impact move doesn't naturally flow from what's happening on-screen (common with messy rolls), think off-screen instead and complicate their lives elsewhere or take ***suspense*** and hit later with better dramatic timing.

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 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.

*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?*

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, 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 - Other Games

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, as it gets resolved by a story beat. 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

Use this move when you want to build up drama before a big scene, giving each PC spark and taking suspense.

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 cutscene before the action. After the vignette, each PC takes ***spark***, and the GM takes ***suspense,*** often before introducing a ***challenge*** (pg. 105).

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

Use this move when you want to show the direction of the story, taking suspense while giving the players knowledge and leaving the PCs in the dark.

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. 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. 108). When you reveal details with *Clue In*, take ***suspense***.

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

Use this move when you want to introduce adversity without suspense, telegraphing danger and following up with an impact move if left unaddressed.

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*** (vague detail) or ***reveal*** (obvious detail).

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

Use this move when the players are stuck or cornered, helping the PCs and getting suspense in return.

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.

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 prompted by a roll, remember that the impact move can target anyone in danger, or the scene as a whole—the roll is for how the spotlighted action goes, not how well the PC does. When *not* prompted by their own roll, impact moves directly against a PC give them a defense roll. Some talents also give the ability to ***interrupt*** impact moves, possibly negating them. If the roll to interrupt is a messy, you take ***suspense*** or keep it if you spent it to prompt the move.

COMPLICATE THINGS

Use this move when things are too easy or stable, adding elements that raise the stakes or add thorns to relevant rolls.

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), raises the ***stakes*** (more danger), introduces or rolls a pool, or allows other opportunities to spend suspense.

The guard catches sight of you and rings the alarm bell (start 4d reinforcements arrive). | The ruffians in the tavern all draw their weapons. | The fire spreads to the furniture.

COUNTER

Use this move when you want to showcase the resilience of a major threat, countering a PC's action, or taking away their permissions.

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.

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

Use this move when injury is the most dramatic consequence, inflicting marks, harm, vex, or conditions on the affected PC(s).

Inflict direct consequences to underscore the seriousness of the situation. It's a heavy reminder that the world pushes back against their actions. Inflict ***marks*** for minor damage, ***harm*** for dramatic damage, ***consequences*** for specific injuries, and ***vex*** for strong emotions such as fear and anger. When you use it, you should be hitting them just as hard as they're trying to hit the world.

The ceiling collapses, raining rocks down on the druid and warlock. | 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

Use this move when you want to add cinematic edge, declaring an unavoidable event to take chances, options, equipment, and allies away.

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. Force them to choose between two bad options. Many ***Challenges*** (pg. 105) 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.

The thief gets away, nowhere to be seen. | The bridge behind you collapses. | 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 two ***marks***, or ***rattled*** into a ***mark*** and ***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. At GM discretion, pools can be rolled just after creation if their threat is imminent.



The lizardfolk blows a warhorn before you skewer him (start 6d reinforcements arrive). | The rushing waters break one of the bridge supports (create and 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, changing vantage, even occasionally prompting impact moves.

◉ **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.

BATTLEGROUNDS

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.*

LAIR OF THE MAGMA SERPENT

FEATURES *lava pools, unstable ground*
THREATS *4d lava eruptions*

5 fire elementals (tough blasters)
8d | magma serpent (boss predator)

Traits ✱ for the scene, affecting vantage.

Enemies in the scene, as well as their tier and role (Combat kit, pg. 111)

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 tactician)

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	4d | BARON REYNARD	6d | COUNT LUCIAN
✱ *lineal heir*	✱ *war weary*	✱ *diplomatic*
◉ **SHOW STRENGTH**	◉ **CHALLENGE HONOR**	◉ **REVEAL SECRET**
✘ ***4d leaves the table***	✘ ***4d leaves the table***	✘ ***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	8d | BODY	6d | TAIL
✱ *protect the body*	✱ *frightful presence* ✱ *impenetrable scales*	✱ *protect the body*
◉ **SNATCH** ◉ **SCRATCH**	◉ **BREATHE FIRE** ◉ **CHOMP DOWN** ◉ **ROAR**	◉ **TAIL SWEEP** ◉ **CRUSH**
6d | WINGS		**4d | KOBOLD MINIONS**
◉ **WIND BUFFET**	✘ ***fly away***	◉ **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 act 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. This is the most common of the three.

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 leaned on tree*	*bandits threaten party*

Play Example

The psion, 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 psion...

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 optional rule on pg. 178.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

TACTICIAN

Clever strategists who manipulate the battlefield, exploit every weakness they find, and command those around them. They struggle 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.

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 COMBATS

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. Many weapons are evenly matched, but the roll might shift based on situation, 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 target their allies (giving them a defense roll), complicate the scene as a whole, or take ***suspense*** for later.

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. 66). Other armors remain as vantage and set dressing—impacting rolls and thorns. Splintmail may let a berserker make a defense roll with one less thorn, but it may also add +1t when they're climbing a cliff or fleeing from an angry owlbear.

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. 110) 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.

Optional Rules - Equipment

If you want equipment choice to stand out a bit more, consider the Armor (pg. 176) and Weapon Styles (pg. 177) optional rules.

The Armor rule gives PCs a pool to help absorb hits, while the Weapon Style option gives PCs 2 weapon descriptors to help determine their vantage.

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	TWISTED FOREST	WAR IN THE EAST
elders (wise, cautious) *fine archers*	*growing eldritch roots* *ancient spirits*	***4d war refugees arrive*** ***8d baron dies***
4d ask baron for help ***8d build a wall***	***4d ask baron for help*** ***8d build a wall***	

PEMTOWN POWDERKEG

BARON OF PEMTOWN	BARON'S UNPAID TROOPS	DRUIDS OF OLDGROVE
tax collectors (corrupt) *paying off Shaz*	*veterans of goblin war* *Captain Morris (charismatic)*	*sworn to non-interference* *magical wards*
4d squander treasury ***6d discipline troops***	***4d abandon posts*** ***6d depose the baron***	***6d quiet the horrors*** ***8d parley with Shaz***

GOBLIN HORDE	SHAZ, ORC WARLORD	WOODLAND HORRORS
nomadic forest dwellers *heavily trapped territory*	*small, elite warband* *secret Pemtown tribute*	*goblin war remnants* *ominous whispers*
4d crown the goblin king ***6d march on Pemtown***	***6d subjugate the goblins*** ***8d subjugate the druids***	***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 | Gnoll Marauders begin their assault on the walled town. You spend suspense to make a move and hit the town gate with the battering ram. You roll the 6d Walls Breached pool: (3, 4, 5, 1, 1, 6) 6d→3d. If the gate falls, chaos will reign. The Cleric casts a warding rite spell and gets a perfect! Without a specific rule, you make a quick ruling and add 2d to the Breached pool (3d→5d). The wizard steps up and launches a *Frenzied Embers* spell at the gnolls—a **critical**! You roll the marauders' pool, getting (3, 5, 4, 3, 6, 2, 1, 6) **8d→4d**. For the critical, the wizard takes a ***secondary effect***—they want that battering ram to catch fire. You think it'll probably take a while to burn, so you start a **4d Ram Burning pool** and roll it: (2, 3, 3, 1) **4d→0d**! Nevermind, it's engulfed in flames!

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.

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.

PIRATE SHIP BATTLE

You (GM): "Your ship rams the pirate ship! With a messy, you disable the shop—it's not moving anywhere for now. Unfortunately the maneuver damaged your ship as well! I'll start an *8d Taking on Water* pool for your ship, once it's at 0d, you'll start to sink. Across the water, you see the Pirate Captain pull out a horn and blow it. Amidst the high waves surrounding both ships, you see 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 swordfighters too, and the Captain's an elite." You put out some tokens representing all of this on the battlemap. "Go ahead and put your tokens where they make the most sense. What do you do?"

Ranger: "I have my crossbow out and start launching bolts 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 ranger, 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.

Swashbuckler: "I leap between the two and yell to the ranger, 'Stay on the archers, I've got a date with the captain here!' I attack him with my rapier and make sure all of his attention stays on me."

They roll Agility and get a critical! The swashbuckler clashes with the captain, giving him a nasty cut across the face (4d → 2d), and decides to take a secondary effect for the critical. Angry, the captain lashes out wildly, but the swashbuckler twists their blade out of their hand!

You spend one suspense and have the swordfighters swing in to protect the captain, then a second suspense to have the kraken lash out at the ship. With a grim story roll, you roll the *Taking on Water pool* (8d → 3d). Looks like the PCs don't have much time!

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 Swordfighters (tough brutes)
4d | pirate captain (elite tactician)

4d | PIRATE CAPTAIN ○○

✱ *fearless*

- **QUICK SLASH**
- **SWING ABOARD**
- **WHIP CLOAK**

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 ranger 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 ranger 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.

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.

You check in that the battlemap 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 ranger, who rolled a grim—they're washed overboard!

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

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.

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 ranger's Brawn will get marked no matter what here. She makes the roll and gets a messy. The ranger 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.



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 bard up in the lookout makes a Wits defense roll but gets a grim. You make a note of the damage (adding +1t to helming it until fixed), then roll the **6d Storm Blows In pool** (6d→2d). Rain starts pouring down, the fighter tries to right the course. They spend spark and the bard and artificer 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.

Fail states provide an important check against neverending rolls to whittle down pools. Setting up a proper one, here the Storm Blowing In means there's urgency and care in what they do. They'll work hard together to make sure this pool doesn't get rolled.

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 task pool roll, it can even take out one elite.

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.

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

You spend suspense and have the Bandit Leader charge from the bushes. The rogue rolls a grim and gets blindsided. You give them bloodied from the ambush.

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 treeline to come in from behind and try to mount the thing. The Cleric says they've safely put everyone in town in a stone building with a fire trench built around it and they're going to protect the townsfolk and back everyone up.

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

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 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**
- ✗ ***fly away***

6d | TAIL

- ✱ *protect the body*
- ◉ **TAIL SWEEP**
- ◉ **CRUSH**

4d | KOBOLD MINIONS

- ◉ **DIE FOR MASTER!**

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

UNDEAD HORDES

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.

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.**

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.

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. Your 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.

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!

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.

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.

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.

You already have **marks** on Brawn and Agility, so it goes to **bloodied**. Unfortunately, you were also bloodied and desperate, so you're instead **dropped**. You make a 2d roll and get a messy, completely knocked out.

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.

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.

ASSASSIN ATTACK

You're walking through the library at night when an elite 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.

NEMESIS TANGLE

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

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 you 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 thread 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 a 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.

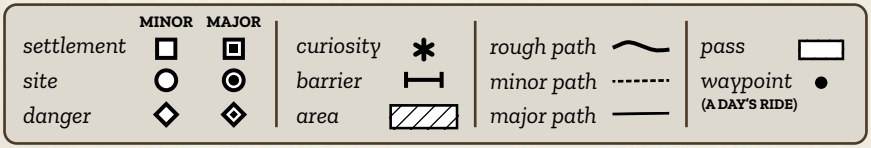
MAKING THE MAP

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.

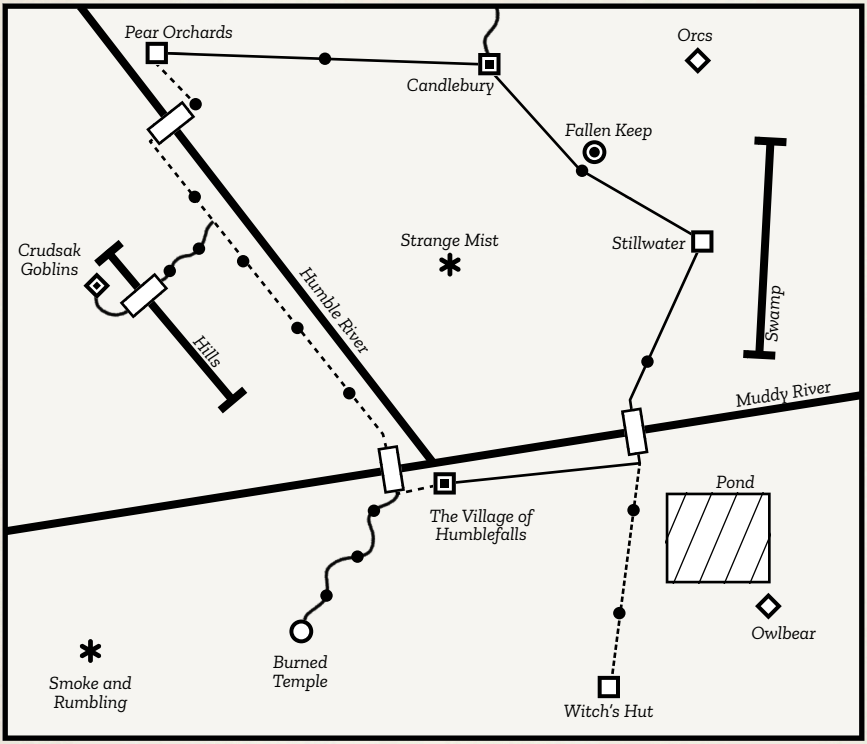
When you place something on the map, you always label it. This can be a simple evocative label of just a few keywords or even a name. If you aren't sure, you can consult the crucibles on pg. 139 for ideas! You can also label it [Remnants] [Wilds] [Ruins], if you want to specify which reality it is mostly from.

You can add factions to the map and campaign as needed. There's a factions crucible on pg. 140 to help.

Key



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. Settlements have many unremarkable buildings, though these and other locations aren't noted, unless they later become important.

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. These are points of interest with their own NPC or unique function.

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.

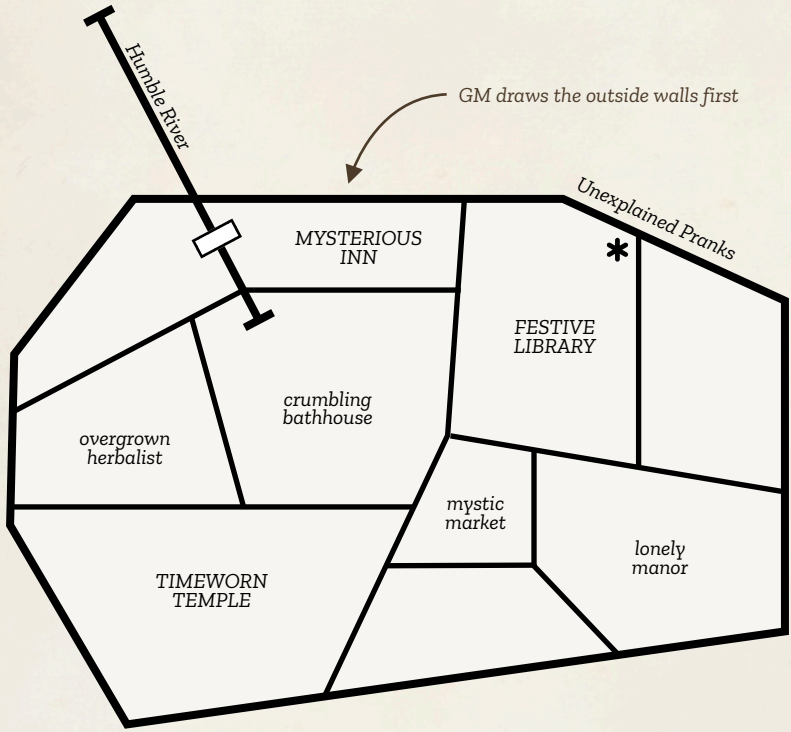
Area: Large spaces that are thematically distinct from the larger settlement. Natural areas could include lakes or indoor caverns, while artificial areas might include city districts.

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 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. 139. 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 that can be added:

ROOMS 2–3 TOKENS

Minor rooms cost 2 tokens, while major rooms play a more impactful role, costing 3. When a player adds a room, they can work with the GM to decide which one it is, or they can leave it up to the GM to decide:

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 1–2 TOKENS

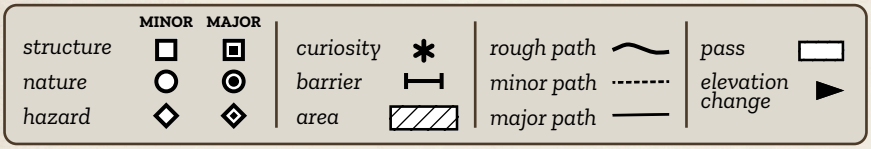
Minor details and set dressing cost 1 token, while impactful locations cost 2.

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.*

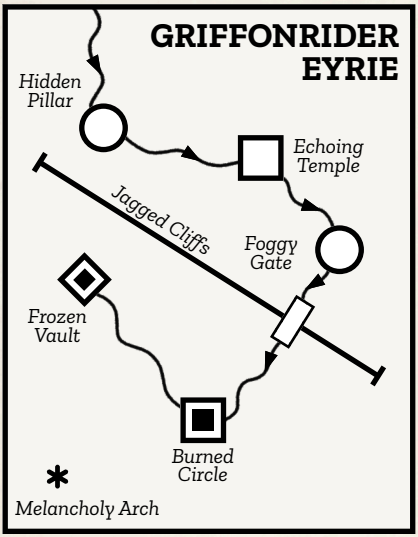
Barrier: Obstacles that make getting around the site more difficult, such as chasms, and flowing lava. *This point offers texture and the occasional challenge.*

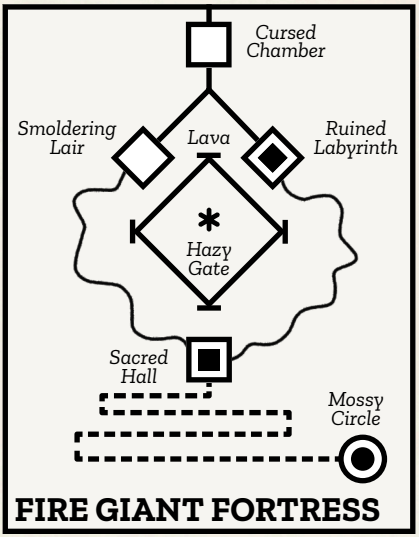
Area: Spaces, usually natural, that cover some part or all of the site, such as a lake, or ruined debris. *This part of the map gives a backdrop, and ties it to the outside world.*

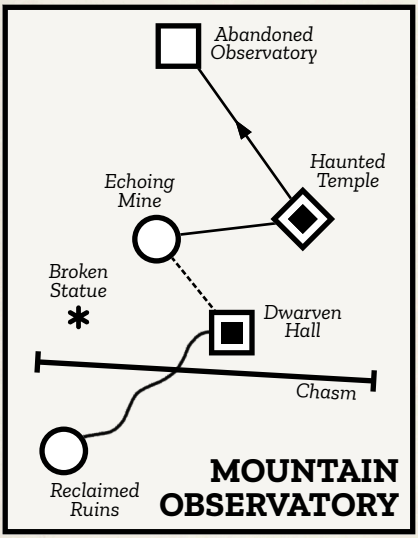
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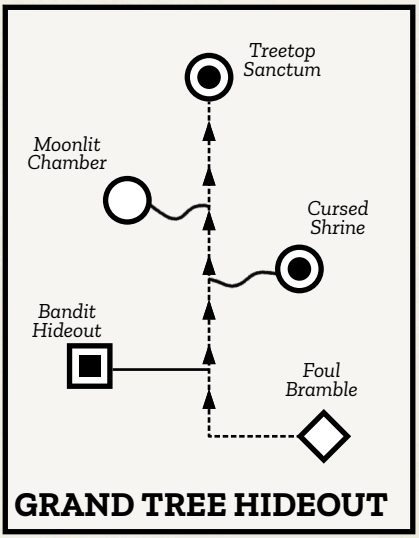


Example Sites









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*	*repurposed*	***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*	*crags*	***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*	*crags*	*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 3d campaign timer.

SPRING		SUMMER		FALL		WINTER	
green	*bloom*	*ash*	*storm*	*husk*	*mist*	*storm*	*tide*
petal	*wind*	*flood*	*haze*	*wilt*	*moon*	*bleak*	*gale*
moss	*wave*	*sear*	*flare*	*amber*	*dew*	*quiet*	*sheen*
eager	*dawn*	*lazy*	*glow*	*rust*	*chill*	*howl*	*hush*
fresh	*shine*	*gold*	*breeze*	*bitter*	*flow*	*frost*	*freeze*
well	*hope*	*buzz*	*surge*	*turn*	*smoke*	*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	*endless downpours*	*drifting embers*	*whispering winds*
rivers swell	*roaring rivers*	*ashen haze*	*iced branches*
buds bloom	*lightning skies*	*harvested fields*	*long nights*
emerald fields	*heavy stillness*	*pale fog*	*dark ice*
luminous spores	*rising heat*	*rustling stalks*	*frozen rivers*
humming bees	*warm winds*	*crumbling leaves*	*pale starlight*
light rainfalls	*rippling fields*	*silver light*	*raging blizzards*
velvet moss	*golden shimmer*	*creeping chill*	*splintering ice*
flower fields	*insect swarms*	*frosty mornings*	*howling skies*
calm winds	*pollen bursts*	*sharp scents*	*eerie auroras*
glowing fungi	*blooming thistles*	*stinging dew drops*	*endless drifts*
clear skies	*dying fungi*	*pollen fires*	*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 gnoll 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 PC's 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.



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*

MARKET SQUARE ☐☐☐☐

Silas Silverthorn (jovial, shameless haggler)

- *Growing black market*
- *Stalls change every day*

GRAND FEAST ☐☐☐☐

Chef Marceline (intense, theatrical)

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

SPY NETWORK ☐☐☐☐

Lysandra (polite, pragmatic, ruthless)

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

IRONGRIP LUMBER MILL ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Brenna Irongrip (stoic, superstitious)

- *Edge of village*
- *Possibly haunted*

Each downtime, the PC's community gains +1d stockpile.

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.

HOST KING GARAMOND ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

King Garamond the Stern (distrustful)

- *Annoying right hand*
- *Fancy royal party*

Afterward, upgrade roads connecting the two regions.

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 the 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.

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 *(hard scales)*, unique abilities *(flying, speech)*, or aspects that could prompt impact moves. *(flaming body)*

◉ **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.*

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* ***dug*** *too deep.*
6. *Adventurers left an* ***almost*** *empty dungeon.*

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.*

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*
- ✱ *Sense nearby magic*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **STUNNING TENTACLE**
- ◉ **CLAW LOCK**
- ◉ **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*	*shell*
2	*spiked*	*eyestalks*
3	*reflective*	*wings*
4	*extendable*	*antennae*
5	*glowing*	*tail*
6	*magic-sensing*	*claws*

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*
- ✱ *Ferocious swarming*
- ◉ **PETRIFYING PECKS**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Shapechanger*
- ✱ *Telepathy*
- ◉ **READ MINDS**
- ◉ **CONSTRICT**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Immensely strong*
- ✱ *Understands language*
- ◉ **BOULDER TOSS**
- ◉ **GROUND SLAM**
- ◉ **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*	◉ **BURNING WHIP**
✱ *Fiery aura*	◉ **CRACKLING SWORD**
✱ *Speech, telepathy*	◉ **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.*

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.



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*	◉ **CREATE DARKNESS**
✱ *Magic resistance*	◉ **KNOW DESIRES**
✱ *Speech, telepathy*	◉ **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.*

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*	◉ **DEAFENING SCREECH**
✱ *Disgusting plumage*	◉ **SPORE CLOUD**
✱ *Understands language*	◉ **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*
- ✱ *Horrifying presence*
- ✱ *Speech, telepathy*
- ◉ **BARBED EMBRACE**
- ◉ **THROW HELLFIRE**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Serrated links*
- ✱ *Speech, telepathy*
- ◉ **SUMMON CHAINS**
- ◉ **CHAIN LASH**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Speech, telepathy*
- ◉ **FLAMING FORK**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Invisibility at-will*
- ✱ *Speech, telepathy*
- ◉ **VENOMOUS STING**
- ◉ **VERMIN FORM**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Surprising speed*
- ◉ **TESTING CHARGE**
- ◉ **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, overturnt 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 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*
- ✱ *Terrifying speed*
- ◉ **WARNING HISS**
- ◉ **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 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*
- ✱ *Voracious appetites*
- ◉ **CLICK, CLACK**
- ◉ **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 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*
- ✱ *Extremely swift*
- ◉ **PLUNGING STRIKE**
- ◉ **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 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*
- ✱ *Knows no fear*
- ◉ **FROM THE DEPTHS**
- ◉ **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 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*
- ✱ *Complex webbing*
- ◉ **SURPRISE DROP**
- ◉ **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 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*
- ✱ *Pack coordination*
- ◉ **CALL PACK**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Untouchable*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **GALE FORCE**
- ◉ **WHIRLWIND**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Tremor sense*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **EARTHQUAKE**
- ◉ **STONE SPIRES**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Insatiable hunger*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **FLAME LASH**
- ◉ **MELT METALS**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Rushing flow*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **UNDERTOW**
- ◉ **SURGE**
- ◉ **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*	◉ **SWING WEAPONS**
✱ *Clumsy stride*	◉ **HEADBUTTS**
✱ *Speech*	◉ **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*	◉ **SLING WEBBING**
✱ *Clings to walls*	◉ **VENOMOUS BITE**
✱ *Speech (rarely)*	◉ **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 | HOLDING TRAPS
- ✱ *incredibly sticky*
- ◉ **ENSNARING PULL**
- ◉ **TANGLING WEBS**

ROUGH | HIDDEN

4d | DEADLY TRAPS
- ✱ *serrated webbing*
- ◉ **NECK SLICE**
- ◉ **CONSTRICTING WEB**

4d | COCOONS
- ✱ *wriggling victims*
- ◉ **DESPERATE PLEAS**
- ◉ **HORRIFIC FEASTING**

SECRET | ROUGH

8d | SPIDER NEST
- ✱ *rabbit-sized spiders*
- ◉ **SPLIT UP PREY**
- ◉ **BITING FRENZY**

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*
- ✱ *One with nature*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **ENTANGLING ROOTS**
- ◉ **CHARM PERSON**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Invisibility at-will*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **FAIRY DUST**
- ◉ **DAZZLING LIGHTS**
- ◉ **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, Redcap — Skirmisher

BLOOD RED | AGED LEATHER | THICKET GREEN

Malicious, bloodthirsty creatures with a blood-red cap, driven by violence and a love for carnage. They often manifest near murder sites.

- ✱ *Bloodlust*
- ✱ *Grim cackling*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **SCYTHE SLASH**
- ◉ **BLOOD FRENZY**
- ◉ **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, Satyr — Brute

EARTHLY 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*
- ✱ *Enchanting tunes*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **PAN PIPES**
- ◉ **HEADBUTT**
- ◉ **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.*

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 160.

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.*

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*
- ✱ *Immune to magic*
- ◉ **SMASHING FISTS**
- ◉ **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.*

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.*

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*
- ✱ *Extended reach*
- ◉ **TENTACLE SWIPE**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Wild majesty*
- ◉ **WARNING WHOOSH**
- ◉ **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	***Satyrs****, 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*
- ✱ *Blazing aura*
- ◉ **FLAMING HAMMER**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Slowness aura*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **FROST BREATH**
- ◉ **SUMMON BLIZZARD**
- ◉ **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 THRONEROOM

FEATURES *intensely cold*
THREATS *4d Falling Icicles*

3 Ice Trolls *(tough brutes)*
6d Air Elementals *(elite blasters)*
8d + 8d | Frost Giant *(boss blaster)*

GIANT, HILL

BRUTE

DUSTY TAN | EARTHY BROWN | MUDDY GREEN

Massive, dim-witted gluttons with big bellies and bulging muscles. They crush and consume all in their path, living only for the next feast.

✱ *Bottomless appetite*	◉ **SMASH IT**
✱ *Too dumb to trick*	◉ **THROW IT**
✱ *Speech (limited)*	◉ **EAT IT**

Wants *to force weaker creatures to bring it food.*
Doesn't want *to be confronted with logic and reason.*

- 👁 *bulging muscles, bloated belly, ragged clothes*
- 🔊 *guttural burps, dumb chuckles, heavy breathing*
- 〰 *overpowering stench of sweat, sour rotting food*

QUIRKS

1. *Always brewing up a* ***brand new stew****.*
2. ***Hoards*** *small, shiny objects—like mirrors.*
3. *Roams with a large pack of* ***stray dogs****.*
4. *Exceptionally* ***rotund****, even for a hill giant.*
5. *Extremely* ***short****, for a hill giant.*
6. *Thinks even the slightest odd thing is* ***hilarious****.*

BRUTE DIPLOMACY

The Hill Giant has what you need, but you'd rather not fight. Convincing it, though, may be even harder.

4d | THE BASIC CONCEPT

✱ *hates big words*

- ◉ SCRATCHES HEAD
- ◉ REPEATS WRONGLY
- ◉ LOSES TRACK

✘ *4d Gets Cranky*

"uhh..."
"hrmph..."
"heh heh!"
"hmm?"

6d | WHAT IT WANTS

- ◉ WANTS TOO MUCH
- ◉ BELLY RUMBLES
- ◉ WANTS PROOF

✘ *Mention food*

"hooo?"
"oh, gimme!"
"bleh."

6d | SEALING THE DEAL

- ◉ SUDDEN "GOOD" IDEA
- ◉ CHANGES THE DEAL
- ◉ REPEATS THE OBVIOUS

✘ *Fickle (roll a grim)*

"me see!"
"nom nom."
"mmm hmm."

GIANT, STORM

BLASTER

ELECTRIC BLUE | CLOUDY SKY | STORMY GRAY

Regal rulers of sea and sky, embodying wisdom and natural order. They summon storms to enforce balance, driven to maintain the world's harmony.

✱ *Crackling aura*	◉ **THUNDERBOLT**
✱ *Commanding presence*	◉ **THUNDERCLAP**
✱ *Speech*	◉ **SUMMON STORM**

Wants *to enforce what it sees as the natural order.*
Doesn't want *to see established order devolve into chaos.*

- 👁 *crackling arcs of lightning, regal figure on the horizon*
- 🔊 *deafening boom, wind rushing, building static hum*
- 〰 *electrified air, rain-soaked earth, wet stone*

ARRIVES ALONGSIDE...

1. ***Hurricane****, sweeping away defiance.*
2. ***Twin tornadoes****, ripping apart the unrepentant.*
3. ***Hailstorm****, battering the guilty into confession.*
4. ***Lightning storm****, searing away deceit.*
5. ***Torrential downpour****, washing away corruption.*
6. ***Waterspouts****, dragging wrongdoers to judgment.*

STORM OF THE CENTURY

The ritual complete, the king thought he had saved the city from famine—but he had defied nature's will.

8d + 8d | TWIN TORNADOES

- ◉ RIP THROUGH TOWN
- ◉ DEBRIS BARRAGE

8d | HEAD & MAGIC

- ◉ ARCANE STATIC
- ◉ SUMMON ELEMENTALS
- ◉ SHEET LIGHTNING

8d | BODY & PROWESS

- ◉ KICK OVER WALL
- ◉ THROW CASTLE TURRET
- ◉ SHAKE OFF CLIMBERS

✘ *The king dies*

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

SEAWEED 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*
- ✱ *Fiery tracks*
- ✱ *Understands language*
- ◉ **FLAME BREATH**
- ◉ **HOWLING CALL**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Elegant speed*
- ◉ **TALON STRIKE**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Regenerating heads*
- ◉ **PULL ARMS & LEGS**
- ◉ **FRENZIED BITING**
- ◉ **REGROW HEAD NOW**

Wants *to keep threats in front of it.*
Doesn't want *anything ever touching its body.*

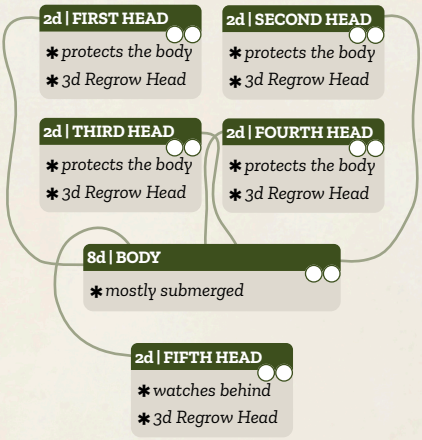
- 👁 *wide-open jaws, glistening scales*
- 🔊 *hissing, splash of water, snapping of giant jaws*
- 🖐 *rotting vegetation, stagnant muck water*

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.



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*	◉ **DRAG UNDER**
✱ *Endless tentacles*	◉ **TENTACLE SLAP**
✱ *Telepathic speech*	◉ **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.*

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)*

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*	◉ **CURSED TOUCH**
✱ *Illusory person form*	◉ **ILLUSIONS**
✱ *Speech*	◉ **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.*

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*	◉ **BURROW IN EARTH**
✱ *vibration sense*	◉ **CRUSHING BITE**
✱ *swift ambushes*	◉ **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

BURNT 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*
- ✱ *Cautious*
- ✱ *Speech (crude)*
- ◉ **CRUEL WORDS**
- ◉ **SPIKE VOLLEY**
- ◉ **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	***Underscourge****, follows along from below.*

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*
- ✱ *Unnatural beauty*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **PETRIFYING GAZE**
- ◉ **SNAKE HAIR STRIKE**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *mischievous & petty*
- ✱ *explodes when it dies*
- ◉ **ENERGY BELCH**
- ◉ **DISTRACTING FLITTER**
- ◉ **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*

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*
- ✱ *Adhesive touch*
- ✱ *Understands language*
- ◉ **RAISE CURIOSITY**
- ◉ **DEFLECT SUSPICION**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Labyrinth sense*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **MAZE AMBUSH**
- ◉ **BULL SNORTS**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Ancient wisdom*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **VENOMOUS FANGS**
- ◉ **CONSTRICT**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Slips between planes*
- ✱ *Understands language*
- ◉ **HELLFIRE BREATH**
- ◉ **SHADOWY TELEPORT**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Divides when struck*
- ◉ **SLURP FORWARD**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Slow & stubborn*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **GRAB & CRUSH**
- ◉ **RAGING ROAR**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Reeking stench*
- ✱ *Understands, telepathy*
- ◉ **SPRAY FILTH**
- ◉ **PUTRID GULP**
- ◉ **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****.*

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*
- ✱ *Lumbering speed*
- ◉ **TERRITORIAL ROAR**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Pure-hearted*
- ✱ *Understands language*
- ◉ **WINGED CHARGE**
- ◉ **WING BUFFET**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Reborn upon death*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **FLAME BURST**
- ◉ **EMBER TRAIL**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Elegant manipulator*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **ENCHANT PERSON**
- ◉ **ILLUSIONS**
- ◉ **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*
- ✱ *Swift burrower*
- ✱ *Powerful mandibles*
- ◉ **EMERGING STRIKE**
- ◉ **HEAT WAVE**
- ◉ **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)

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***

4d | FLARED HOOD
- ✱ *wide plates*
- ✱ *loose scales*
- ◉ **SWIFT HEAD TURN**
- ◉ **SWALLOW PREY**

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*
- ✱ *Impervious to damage*
- ◉ **GALE FORCE WINDS**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Extended tendrils*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **SURVIVE SCRUTINY**
- ◉ **REEL IN**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Hard carapace*
- ◉ **SKITTER AND HIDE**
- ◉ **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. ***Glows*** *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****.*

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*
- ✱ *Swampy camouflage*
- ◉ **REGROWTH**
- ◉ **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*	◉ **HURL 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*
- ✱ *Plague carrier*
- ✱ *Speech (archaic)*
- ◉ **PUTRID EXHALE**
- ◉ **FESTERING CLAWS**
- ◉ **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, 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*
- ✱ *Anchored spirit*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **SHARED MEMORIES**
- ◉ **WAIL OF SORROW**
- ◉ **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*

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. 87)*
- ✱ *Two steps ahead*
- ✱ *Speech*
- ◉ **CAST SPELL**
- ◉ **RAISE UNDEAD**
- ◉ **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.*

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	WEAKNESS
1 *Bat, mist, or wolf form*	1 *Holy symbols*
2 *Mesmerising Gaze*	2 *Garlic*
3 *Cling to walls*	3 *Running water*
4 *Preternatural speed*	4 *Lacking reflection*
5 *Lifesense*	5 *Invitation only*
6 *Call vermin*	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*
- ✱ *Protected by nature*
- ✱ *Understands, telepathy*
- ◉ **HEALING TOUCH**
- ◉ **BLESSING**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Swift & elusive*
- ✱ *Understands language*
- ◉ **LURING LIGHT**
- ◉ **FLICKER VANISH**
- ◉ **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.*

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*
- ✱ *Hardened scales*
- ◉ **VENOMOUS STING**
- ◉ **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. ***Serdrak****, mercenary lord of the skies.*

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*
- ✱ *Snowy camouflage*
- ✱ *Speech (roars, gestures)*
- ◉ **FROST BREATH**
- ◉ **HOWLING ROAR**
- ◉ **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.*

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 lethality (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 or make your own consequence:

Wild Surge: make a 1d story roll to see the collateral damage

Dark Omen: GM takes +1 suspense

6d Corruption pool: 0d → 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)* and proper ***vantage*** 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 or downtime. Increase or lower 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.

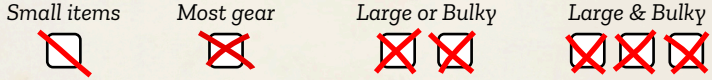
Each PC has a 4d Supplies resource pool for common items and rations. Roll the pool with heavy use, and as time passes outside of civilization.

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.



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 for everyone in a tavern, bribing a guard, getting a horse, buying nice 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. 40) 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.

WEAPON STYLES — Gear

PC weapons have 2 descriptors—their ***weapon styles***, clear ways to differentiate them from others of their 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 ***vantage*** impacts difficulty. Styles don't define weapons, they only show what aspects are most important in the fiction. Shields, bare knuckles, and even capes can have their own styles. 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*

LEVEL 0 — Advancement

Starting heroes are already fairly powerful at level 1, use this rule if you want to have low-powered, beginner PCs. These are often useful for introductory games.

PCs have no core talent, and only 3 extra stat points. Characters level up after gaining 1 experience (usually 1 session), gaining their core talent and last stat point. Half core talents *(Arcane Training, Natural Moxie, etc.)* can be replaced with the core, letting the player choose a different path talent for the character.

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.

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**.*

*Party concept: **Disciples** → bonus xp to those who **convert** others.*

*Campaign focus: **Treasure Hunting** → bonus xp when **carousing**.*

ACTIVE VIGILANCE — Game 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 — Game 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 — Game 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***.

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. 57) 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

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.

PREPARED SPELL (Wizard): You gain 1 ***thread*** per session and can spend ***thread*** to flashback to casting a spell with specific triggers. Roll for the spell's effectiveness now. The GM always take suspense in place of an impact move.

Party Arriving At Town Scene Artwork

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	Lethality	Magic
		
Scope increases throughout the story	*Some sacrifices are made, but the heroes will win the day*	*Magic is commonplace, and usable by many*

Playing Heroic Fantasy Games

Let characters be competent, capable, and proactive. Those who live in these worlds start small, but grow to actively shape their world.

Failure complicates the path but doesn't end the journey. The characters are forced to pivot, adapt, and overcome, often discovering their own resilience and the power of their relationships, earning their victory after struggle.

Make sure to reward courage, but not recklessness. It takes strength to stand up to overwhelming odds for the sake of others, and wits to plan and follow through to win the day.

The default Grimwild rules are geared for a darker Heroic Fantasy. GMs should be mindful of keeping consequences varied, but otherwise there are no rules changes.

Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
Mistborn	*The Legend of Vox Machina*	*Dragon Age*
Water Outlaws	*The Secret of NIMH*	*Baldur's Gate*
Icewind Dale Trilogy	*Adventure Time*	*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	Lethality	Magic
		
Wide range of conflict, usually on a personal scale	*Danger around every corner, and death is lasting*	*Magic is a dark, usually antagonistic force*

Playing Grimdark Games

Scarcity and pressure push the characters. Fantasy heroes often have the comfort of ideology. They'll often fight for justice and honor, while basic needs are hand-waved away. Grimdark fantasy strips those luxuries away with many characters focused on pure survival.

Violence is ugly and costly. Battle is about staying alive and seeing tomorrow—it's clumsy, exhausting, and carries a heavy toll, even after the fighting is finished. Those that survive still deal the trauma, and crippling injuries. Those that don't often die suddenly, and without warning. Death isn't always meaningful.

Hope is fragile. These stories aren't meaninglessly dark; there's often a spark of hope that keeps characters going. Their contrast against the world around them gives the oppressive environment meaning.

Rules Tweaks

- The effect of ***potency*** is scaled down.
- Casting **magic** comes with higher risk (thorns) or ***stakes***.
- **Magic healing** is rare or non-existent.
- When ***dropped***, make a 1d story roll.
- ***Marks*** only clear on rest.
- ***Vex*** responses are random.
- PC **bonds** are rolled randomly.
- **Supplies** (Optional Rule, pg. 176).

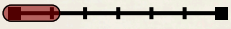
Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
Second Apocalypse	*Berserk*	*Dark Souls Series*
The Black Company	*Black Death*	*Diablo*
First Law	*The Head Hunter*	*Darkest Dungeon*

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	Lethality	Magic
		
Smaller scope with personal struggles	*Dangers are real, and death can be quick if unprepared*	*Magic is rare, powerful, and dangerous*

Playing Low Fantasy Games

Give it a more historical vibe. These stories are grounded in the familiar, where the world runs on the recognizable rules of human nature and politics.

Magic is a rare and disruptive force, if it exists at all. Supernatural forces aren't well understood and are only wielded by those willing to break the natural order.

Leverage is more valuable than force. Characters aren't powerful on their own, and will need to curry favors, discover secrets, and use their wits to survive. When it does come down to physical clashes, winning often has a cost. A single blade will only get you so far.

Rules Tweaks

- The effect of ***potency*** is scaled down.
- Limited to 1 **magic user**, if any. Magic use comes with higher risk or ***stakes***.
- When **dropped**, make a 1d story roll.
- **Vigilance** is more important, and is focused on hint more than strike or reveal.
- Social fallout from ***vex*** is increased.
- **Encumbrance** (Optional Rule, pg. 176).
- **Wealth** (Optional Rule, pg. 177).
- **Slow XP** progression, max level of 3.
- ***Consequences*** stick around longer.
- **Factions** play a major role.

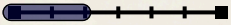
Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
A Song of Ice and Fire	*Spice and Wolf*	*The Witcher*
The Lies of Lock Lamora	*The 13th Warrior*	*Mount & Blade*
Sailing to Sarantium	*The Last Kingdom*	*Kingdom Come: Deliverance*

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	Lethality	Magic
		
Use your might and wits to overcome personal stakes	*Danger abounds, but you are strong enough to meet it*	*Magic corrupts the fools who seek it out*

Playing Sword & Sorcery Games

Keep scenes moving and decisive. These games thrive on high-octane momentum, where bold action wins out over planning and maneuvering. Make use of montages, and jump into scenes in media res (in the middle of the action) using story rolls.

Heroes have some moral ambiguity. Characters are more often outlaws, sellswords, and thieves than classic heroes. They're driven by self-interest—fighting for gold, freedom, or day-to-day survival. The narrative focuses on the immediate, visceral struggle of flawed people fighting like hell against corrupt sorcerers, ancient horrors, and tyranny.

Rules Tweaks

- No **magic**, or rare and dangerous magic (Setting dials, pg. 173)
- Make a 1d story roll when **dropped**.
- Clear ***marks*** and ***harm*** after each 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 xp progression, but **carousing** earns +1 XP.
- **Vigor Pool** (Optional Rule, pg. 175).

Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
Conan the Barbarian	*Fire and Ice*	*Thief the Dark Age*
The Grimnir Trilogy	*Heavy Metal*	*Dragon's Dogma*
Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser	*Jason and the Argonauts*	*Risen Series*

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	LETHALITY	MAGIC
		
Threats are far reaching, but so are you	*Both physical and moral victories matter*	*Magic varies by area and faction, and is unaligned*

PLAYING NOBLEBRIGHT GAMES

Hope is powerful. These games showcase the power of the human spirit, actively promoting altruism and agency. Those with good intentions and determined minds can reshape their broken world. Doing the right thing is always worth the cost.

Redemption over punishment. Even the most deeply flawed and adversarial should be given the chance to forge a better path. Because of this, violence is usually the last resort.

The internal lives of the characters are important. The emotional victories of overcoming personal trauma, forgiving an enemy, and healing strained bonds matter just as much as the physical ones. Give them the screen time they deserve.

Rules Tweaks

- PCs begin at **2nd level** with 1 minor arcana.
- 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.
- Social fallout from ***vex*** is increased.

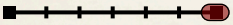
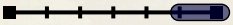
Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
The Princess Bride	*The Last Airbender*	*Kingdom Hearts*
The Stormlight Archive	*She-Ra*	*Dragon Quest*
The Chronicles of Narnia	*The 10th Kingdom*	*World of Warcraft*

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	Lethality	Magic
		
The choices made will shape the future of the world	*You're incredible, but up against ultimate power*	*Magic, gods, and mysticism are everywhere*

Playing High Fantasy Games

Think in terms of regions, factions, and eras. These stories are cosmic in scale, covering a sprawling landscape, and yet tied to the characters, ensuring their personal choices matter and their victories reshape the setting.

Lean into the lore and history of the world. Every ruined civilization, ancient prophecy, and bloodline carries meaning, playing into the unfolding destiny of the Chosen characters and their realm.

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. 175). This helps keep narrative balance when more rolls are automatically successful.

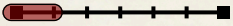
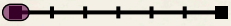
Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
The Wheel of Time	*The Dark Crystal*	*Final Fantasy*
Malazan Book of the Fallen	*Kill 6 Billion Demons*	*The Elder Scrolls Series*
A Court of Thorns and Roses	*The Never Ending Story*	*Kingdoms of Amalur*

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	Lethality	Magic
		
Stories are personal, and low-stakes	*True danger is rare, and with heart, you overcome*	*The world is full of whimsy, arcane or not*

Playing Cozy Fantasy Games

Center the warmth of relationships. The narrative is slow, showing the comfort of shared meals and a growing sense of belonging.

Tension comes from misunderstandings, or are mindless. Friction is relatable, and conflicts are low stakes, often resolved through communication, vulnerability, and empathy. Truly antagonistic forces come in the form of natural disasters, the wilderness, and nebulous supernatural forces.

Celebrate small victories. The world isn't in danger, so these stories show the delight of new friendships, finding just the right ingredient for a meal, and taking care of those around you.

Rules Tweaks

- ***Low stakes*** is the default. Normal stakes and higher must be declared.
- PCs and allies **only die in meaningful ways**, nearly always outside of conflict.
- **Slow XP** progression.
- 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.

Media Touchstones

Literature	Visual	Interactive
Legends and Lattes	*Kiki's Delivery Service*	*Stardew Valley*
The Spellshop	*Spirited Away*	*Beacon Pines*
The Ogress and the Orphans	*Delicious in Dungeon*	*Wytchwood*

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.

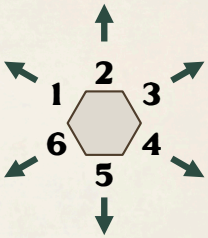
Hex Flowers

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 kits 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. You can find printable story kits wherever you found this book.

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 0d, the pool prompts one of the impact moves below. Pressure pools can use these icons:

   - **Lock:** At 0d, the linked pool can be rolled.
   - **Repeat:** At 0d, the pool resets and can be rolled again.
   - **Trigger:** At 0d, it prompts a roll of the next pool.
   - **End**: At 0d, 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 is 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, "Dreghill 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. It 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

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

3

USEFUL PIECES — IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN THE STORY

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 — MAKE THE STORY YOUR OWN

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*

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*

5

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 EVIDEN
- ◉ 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

EXTRAS

Solo Rules

The base rules for *Grimwild* are already very well-suited for solo play. Check out the setting dials (pg. 173) and adjust the game as you see fit. Use the following guidance and rules changes to get started in playing your own game. For duet games (1 GM and 1 player), use Solo Party Mode (pg. 195) for additional party members.

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. 195). 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 '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.

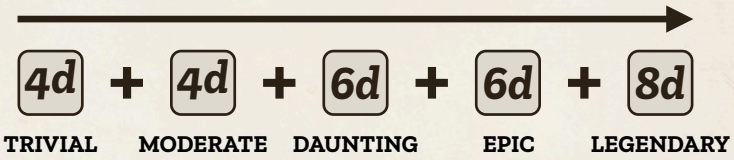
Twist: There's an unexpected change for the worse, such as a betrayal.

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 0d, 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 0d, 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*
✗ ***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*
✗ ***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. 66), or a more limited version of a path core talent. These characters don't gain 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.

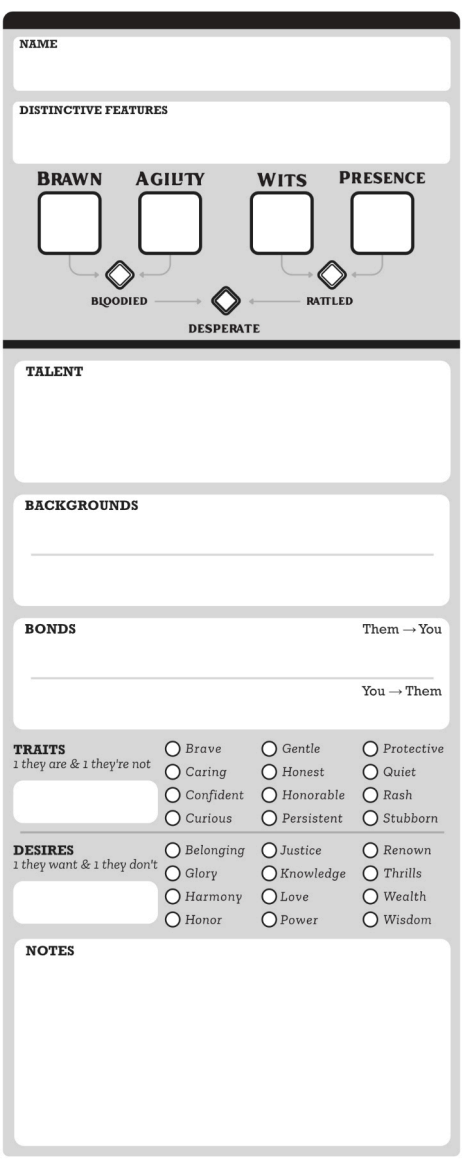
Connections

Side characters only form ***bonds*** with the main PC, not each other. Additionally, individual wises aren't tracked—note their backgrounds only.

Mechanics

There are 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. 41. 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, though 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 bestow potent effects, or otherwise shape reality in grand ways with their magic. Mechanically, they often expand vantage in powerful ways, offer a 4d power pool, or offer a single potent effect each session. 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 they can only be gained by taking them from powerful foes, completing grand and dangerous rituals, or uncovering them in perilous locations.

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—lifeforce

- *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 grow and 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 *anchoring it in 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, some created at the beginning of time, or by the hands of the gods themselves. Mythic arcana are capable of unleashing grand, often 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.

These artifacts count as having *all functions*, when used outside of their description, and *all anchors* to ritual magic using their touchstones.

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 these 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 placing 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 0d.

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 jailed inside. The surface cracks after a 3d timer pool, and the creatures are released. The cracks heal after a day.

identity—reflect—prison—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 *fungus* *servant*	*explode* *fire* *cascade*	*ooze* *oil* *bubble*	*confuse* *hex* *whispers*	*speak* *spirit* *shroud*	*pierce* *bone* *mask*
cryptic *light* *beauty*	*shadow* *doom* *skull*	*glimmer* *air* *fog*	*quick* *barrier* *grow*	*venom* *vine* *claw*	*sense* *life* *guide*
spread *ash* *blind*	*sticky* *slime* *slick*	*adapt* *water* *frost*	*shield* *mind* *vigor*	*body* *thorn* *fang*	*break* *wound* *stitch*
phantom *mist* *eye*	*wild* *vermin* *web*	*rattle* *earth* *hand*	*truth* *sight* *gate*	*friend* *feeling* *false*	*silence* *lightning* *dark*
dream *smoke* *beacon*	*slow* *pull* *swirl*	*wander* *poison* *crown*	*prismatic* *stasis* *flash*	*blight* *energy* *sap*	*stupor* *sound* *trance*
drift *wing* *anchor*	*unseen* *nature* *quiet*	*sleep* *bugs* *plague*	*curious* *lore* *hide*	*might* *ward* *shatter*	*shock* *terror* *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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

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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Writers' Room: Optional rule to give more freedom when PCs add story details. **178**

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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GRIMWILD
COMMUNITY EDITION

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