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# AFTER THE LORDS OF MEMORY

## A ROLEPLAYING GAME

Playtest Edition v0.19

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*“It goes on to say that her tears were poisoned, and made the people forget their ways. Everything was forgotten after the lords of memory came forth. All crawled away to live as animals.”*

*“Now, all that was ancient history when Vilin wrote this book, and this book is very old. But don’t believe the danger has passed. It has happened many times. It is happening now.”*



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# INTRODUCTION

*After the Lords of Memory* (ALM) is a fantasy role-playing game. Players take on the role of adventurers exploring a dangerous wilderness. The world, the dangers within it, and the adventurers' enemies and allies are all controlled by another player: the game master (GM). The GM's job is to bring the world to life, describing the situation around the adventurers and what happens in response to their actions.

From time to time, the adventurers will be tested. They will come into conflict with the dangers of world, its inhabitants and possibly each other. When the outcome is uncertain, the game uses dice to determine what happens next.

## WHY PLAY THIS GAME?

This game is designed for a player-directed exploration campaign—as the adventurers explore the wilderness, they should make and update a map of the areas they have traveled through. Apart from being a record of their journeys, over time it will become a vital tool for the party as they plan their forays.

*After the Lords of Memory* is intended to work well with sessions that are 2-4 hours long. The adventures are played out in detail ranging from daily events and decisions, down to the moment-by-moment action of deadly combat.

Between adventures, time moves briskly, covering entire seasons in a few minutes of play as adventurers consolidate their gains and prepare for the future.

Adventurers begin as normal villagers or townsfolk—perhaps with a taste for risk, but they don't start out as heroes or great wizards. That comes with time, if they survive long enough, for adventuring is often lethal. The party will need to choose wisely when to take bold risks and when to favor caution, but also to think strategically.

What threats are out there in the wilderness and which is most dangerous? What possible alliances are there, and which should be cultivated? What can be put off for another season, and which must be dealt with before it's too late?

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## QUICK START

If you are playing as an adventurer, go directly to "Making Characters" on page 2. A few tips to get started:

- In this game, you **advance your skills and stats by using them**
- Your adventurer has a good chance of being **maimed or killed**
- In frightening situations, you have the option of **panicking**
- The party should **set a clear goal** (perhaps the

GM has one lined up if you're playing an quick intro session or a one-shot)

- **Making bonds with other communities** and groups out in the wilderlands is useful for many reasons—skills, staging areas, safe way points, and replacement characters

After your first foray into the wilderness, consider skimming parts of this book for tips on how to make adventuring more profitable:

- Travel duties (page 20), which will make adventuring safer
- Retainers (page 16) can boost the party's strength and skills
- Downtime actions (page 34) help you prepare for future problems
- Shrines (page 51) and Bonds with the Powers of the earth, another way of making allies

## GAME MASTERING

If you're running the game, you have a bit more reading to do. Many groups will take the system out for a spin as a one-shot before deciding on campaign play. If you only have half an hour before you play:

- Read "Playing the Game" on page 3 so you know how **resolution, conditions** and **injuries** work.
- Skim the **stats and skills list** (page 8) so you have a rough idea of what to call for, but don't sweat memorizing it. When you're quick-starting, calling for the wrong ability is better than pausing the action to flip through a book.
- Make sure you understand **rush play**, the turn sequence for the action bits (page 26)
- **Burdens** (page 15) and **travel** (page 19) are central to the game
- Grab a one-page adventure from the internet; assume all the monsters are 3d or 4d at whatever they do, 5d if they're badass.

# MAKING CHARACTERS

By default, the adventurers are all inhabitants of a wilderlands village that ekes out a precarious living, under threat from the dangers beyond the village. In campaign play, it's likely that these dangers are already affecting the village and will . If so, the state the village is in may in affect starting stats, skills, trappings or equipment (see XXX).

## CREATING ADVENTURERS

Adventurers are created in four steps:

1. Roll ratings for five of the six **stats**
2. Determine **background**
3. Write down the **skills** and **trappings** that come from the background
4. Record additional **equipment**

## STATS

Stats express an adventurer's aptitude in six basic areas:

**Vigor**—physical fitness, strength, agility  
**Grit**—hardiness, composure while suffering  
**Wits**—insight, alertness, learning  
**Sway**—persuasion, charm, and influence  
**Panic**—adrenaline, animal terror  
**Troth**—trustworthiness, familiarity

**Vigor**, **Grit**, **Wits**, and **Sway** are determined randomly. Roll on this table four times, once for each stat and record the rating

d12	Stat Rating
1-2	2d
3-7	3d
8-11	4d
12	5d

**Troth** starts at a rating of 3d. The adventurers are trusted acquaintances, but do not yet have experience working smoothly under the immense pressures of adventuring. **Panic** starts at 2d. That soon changes.

## VILLAGE BACKGROUNDS

Roll d20 to determine character's background. Write down the skills, trappings and conditions the background offers.

For a quick start, finish off your character by adding a one or two burdens of travelling gear. (Take more if you like, but you'll be burdened.)

d20	Role	Skills	Trappings
1-2	Farmer	Labor 3d, Farming 3d	A hand axe (2)
3	Shepherd	Husbandry 3d, Tending 3d	A stout crook (2), iron shears (2)
4	Fisher	Boating 3d, Navigation 2d	A small skiff
5-6	Hunter	Bow 2d, Hunting 2d, Stalking 3d	Bow (3), quiver (2), 12 good arrows
7-8	Forager	Foraging 3d, Stalking 2d, Navigation 2d	Trowel (1), dowsing wand (1)
9	Sooth	Tending 3d, Commune 2d, Rituals 1d	An ancestral shrine
10	Factor	Scribe 3d, +1d Bond	Portable writing set (2)
11	Elder	Farming 3d, Perform 3d, Troth +1, Condition: Old	A strongbox in the family home; holds 3 burdens.
12-13	Warden	Survival 3d, Navigation 2d	An heirloom knife (1), sword (3) or staff (3)
14	Outcast	Threats 3d, Survival 3,d Burglary 2d, Broken Nose	A secret place in the forest to sleep
15	Tinker	Threats 2d, Craft (smithing) 3d, Navigation 2d	Ironmonger's tools (3)
16	Groom	Husbandry 3d, Riding 2d	A stiff brush (1), a blanket (2)
17	Reeve	Riding 3d, Arms 2d, -1d Troth, +1d Bond	Riding horse
18	Minstrel	Perform 3,d Labor 2d	A simple musical instrument (1-3)
19	Crafter	Craft (choose) 3d, +1d to Bond	A saw (2), hammer and nails (2), or chisels (2)
20	Lunatic	Seeing 2d, Survival 3d, -1d to Troth	Crow feathers (1)



# PLAYING THE GAME

Play is a conversation about the experiences of the adventurers as they unfold. The GM describes the current situation—what’s happening, what the adventurers see, hear, feel and smell—then asks the players what they do.

The players respond by saying what their adventurers are saying or trying to do. The GM, in turn, describes what happens next, or describes the next interesting situation as the adventurers move towards their goal.

## TESTS OF SKILL

Adventurers regularly try things that are difficult, uncertain, or which could shape unfolding events in a significant way. In these situations, the adventurers’ abilities are tested by rolling dice.

## CHOOSING THE SKILL AND DIFFICULTY

The GM declares the crucial skill or stat that will determine the difference between success or failure. The GM also declares a difficulty.

Diff	Description
/1	Easy, but with a possible pitfall
/2	Requires careful attention
/3	Tricky, even for the competent
/4	Very difficult
/5	Extremely difficult
/6	Nearly impossible
/7+	Impossible

Sometimes the rules will call for a specific skill and difficulty. **The notation Grit/2 means a test of Grit with difficulty 2.**

## HARDER THAN IT LOOKS

Sometimes tests are made harder because of specific situations. **The notation +1 means that the difficulty is 1 higher than usual.** These could be conditions afflicting the adventurers (see “Conditions” on page 5), or it could be temporary situations that nevertheless sound bad.

**Sybs: I fire my bow at the orc.**

**GM: Okay, that’s a Bows/2 test but.. well, you’re on a moving wagon, and it’s on fire. I’m going to raise that by +1.**

## ADVANTAGES

Sometimes, the adventurer making the test will have a clear advantage. Perhaps everyone around them is jeering their debating opponent. Perhaps a *buoyant*

*sphere* is lashed to their back while they climb. In these cases, give them +1d for the test.

If it’s not obvious, roll unmodified. Let success or failure tell you if it was an advantage or not.

## UNSKILLED TESTS

If the adventurer does not have the crucial skill, they can make an unskilled attempt at the task - resolve the test using the skill’s base stat, but with a difficulty penalty of +2.

**Sybs: Bows/2.. I don’t have Bows.**

**GM: Okay, in that case, test Vigor/4.**

## MAKING THE ROLL

The player then builds a pool of six-sided dice (D6), one for each point of rating their adventurer has in the crucial skill, and rolls them all. Any dice that come up 4 or higher are successes.

If the number of successes is equal to or greater than the difficulty, then the attempt has been a success. If there are fewer, the attempt is a failure.

## EXTRA SUCCESSES

In some situations, the degree of success is important. Beating the difficulty by one or more might mean that success is sweetened with extra effects or benefits.



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## DEGREE OF FAILURE

Sometimes it matters how much a test has been failed by. The difference between the difficulty and the number of successes is the degree of failure.

## OPPOSED TESTS

If two sides are opposing one another, both test. Whoever generates the greater number of successes is the winner; if they have the same amount, it's a tie.

If one side has the relevant skill and the other side doesn't, the underdog is making an Unskilled Test. Once the dice are rolled, treat the skilled side as having two more successes than they rolled.

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## WORKING TOGETHER

Helpful companions are essential when facing danger, but helpful companions aren't easy to find. Green adventurers can just as easily get in the way as be helpful. Trusty, experienced companions can act in concert, even when there's no time to coordinate.

## OPPORTUNITIES

If an adventurer's action creates a perfect opportunity for another to follow through, the follow through action has a +1d advantage. This is the safest way to provide help, but it requires forethought.



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## HELPING UNDER PRESSURE

When an adventurer joins in to help another party member at their task, the helper tests Troth/2. If it passes, the helper provides a success to the original task. If they fail, they add +1 difficulty instead.

## MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

When adventurers work together to accomplish a task that can easily be divided up (e.g. digging a ditch), or one where the group is successful as soon as anyone is successful (e.g. tossing a room to find a hidden key), use the helping rules as normal.

## STRAIN THE WEAKEST LINK

Other times, the group acts together, but a single failure is significant. Examples include running away from enemies, traversing a tricky ledge, or sneaking past guards.

In these situations, test a group member chosen at random, with help from the lead adventurer. For large groups, increase the difficulty.

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## ADVANCING ABILITIES

In this game, adventurers improve their stats and skills by using them. Each ability accumulates ticks, representing insight and experience acquired while adventuring.

## INSIGHT: EARNING TICKS

When you test an ability and roll either all failures or all successes (including any bonus dice), you earn one tick for advancing that ability. Declare, "I learned something!" to the group.

This is more likely the fewer dice you are rolling, so relying on allies and advantages will help you succeed, but slows down your rate of advancement.

## IMPROVING RATINGS

Skills, Troth and Panic require three ticks in order to advance. Stats require six. As soon as you have earned the necessary number of ticks, erase all the ticks and raise your rating by 1d.

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## EXPERIENCE POINTS

In addition to advancement ticks, adventurers also earn Experience Points. Adventurers start out with no xp, but can earn them by during play. They can be spent in several different ways.

## DECLARING A GOAL

When the party agrees on a goal for their adventure (see page 14), everyone earns 1 xp.

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## EARNING EXPERIENCE

At the end of each session of play, or when the players have accomplished a major goal, ask these questions. For each ‘yes’ answer, the adventurer earns one xp:

- Did you meet your declared goal?
- Was it truly heroic?
- Did you help a community (whether you meant to or not)?
- Did you learn something new about the world or its inhabitants?
- Did you suffer from the environment, injuries or curses?

For each ‘yes’ answer, earn one xp.

## SPENDING EXPERIENCE

Adventurers can spend xp in three ways: bonus dice for tests, accelerated advancement, or learning completely new skills.

### EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT—+1D

Spending 1 xp adds +1d to an ability for a single test. Up to 3 xp can be spent this way to earn +3d. The xp must be spent before the dice are rolled.

### KEEN INSIGHT

When you make a test and you *don’t* earn a tick because you have a mix of successes and failures, you may spend xp to ignore dice that break the pattern. Each xp spent this way ignores one die. If the remaining dice are all either successes or failures, you earn a tick for the ability. (This only affects tick-earning, not whether the test succeeds or fails.)

***Barset needs to make a Vigor/2 test. His Vigor is 5, so he rolls five dice. Two come up successes, and three are failures, just enough to succeed.***

***Barset hasn’t earned a tick, but by spending 2xp, he is able to set aside the two successful dice. The remaining three dice are all failures, so he earns his tick for Vigor.***

## LEARNING NEW SKILLS

In this game, academies and great teachers are exceedingly rare. Knowing a thing is possible, however, is often all one needs to get started. Whenever you see a skill used successfully, you may pay 1 xp to learn it.

If you ever earn a tick for a stat while making an unskilled test, you can learn the new skill instead.

### STARTING RATING

Every skill is based on some stat or other. When you learn a new skill, the starting rating is 2d less than the base stat (minimum 1d).

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## TEN SKILLS

Adventurers can have a maximum of ten skills. If you already have ten, you cannot learn more unless you renounce your past before the powers (see “Other Prayers—Renouncing the Past” on page 52).

## WEIRD SKILLS

It’s possible for adventurers to learn very unusual skills this way, even things that are very difficult in a human body. Consult the GM in these situations. (See **TODO**)

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## CONDITIONS

Conditions are tags—descriptive words or phrases—which represent problems that adventurers can’t easily get rid of, problems that relate to their physical or mental state, their equipment, or how they are perceived by others.

### JUST THE BAD STUFF

Not everything bad going on for an adventurer is a condition; only those things that are distracting, that nag at the adventurer’s attention or mind.

Falling into a river with all your gear on is awful; the wet clothing, rusting armor, the sodden backpack and the ink bleeding in your scrolls. This is the Wet condition. In other circumstances, being wet might actually be refreshing: that’s not a condition.

### ADDING AND REMOVING CONDITIONS

The GM may give adventurers conditions as a result of failure, when the rules say so explicitly, or as a way of recording something that’s happened.

Likewise, conditions are removed whenever the rules say, and whenever it’s clear from the situation that they no longer apply.

### CONDITIONS FLARE UP

The GM keeps track of each adventurer’s conditions and uses them to create adversity by having them flare up. At any time, the GM can cause a condition to:

- draw an adventurer’s attention away from the big picture
- show signs of impending trouble
- impede (/+1) a test (before the dice are rolled)
- taint a success, or to worsen a failure
- exploit a golden opportunity with a serious consequence

The specific adversity should always relate to the condition that’s flaring up.

### PAIN IS GAIN

The GM should keep a running tally of the number of times conditions turn into adversity. Keep a separate tally for each character, and a shared pool for adversity

that applies to the entire party. These get paid out at the end of each foray. **TODO: reinstate this.**

Conditions should suck. If adventurers aren't trying to get rid of them, they're not annoying enough.

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## HEALTH AND CRITICAL INJURY

Characters have a Health score that represents a buffer of physical toughness, the ability to withstand bumps, bruises, scrapes, stress and fatigue.

### FULL HEALTH

Characters start out with a maximum Health equal to their Grit plus 3. Under normal circumstances, Health never rises above this value.

### TAKING DAMAGE

Whenever characters take damage, subtract it from their current Health.

### ARMOR

Every time a character is physically harmed, subtract their armor points from the incoming damage.

Armor doesn't protect against damage from exertion, vertical falls, and the like.

### RECOVERING HEALTH

A night's rest restores 1 Health. A full day of complete rest (with no duties) restores d6 Health.

### CRITICAL INJURIES

Once adventurers run out of Health, they are beyond mere scrapes and bruises and start getting really hurt.

Health doesn't drop below zero, but any excess damage becomes a critical injury. The amount of excess damage indicates the severity of the injury.

The specific type of injury is determined by rolling d6 on the Critical Injury table (page "Critical Injury Table" on page 7), and looking that number up in

the column for that severity.

***Barset tumbles from a great height and suffers 6 points of damage. Unfortunately, he only has 2 Health left. He reduces his Health to zero, which leaves 4 excess damage from the sudden stop.***

***He now must roll a severity 4 ('maimed') critical injury. He rolls a 2, looks that up on the table and finds he breaks his knee.***

### CRITICAL INJURIES ARE CONDITIONS

For the most part, critical injuries are Conditions. This means that they can interfere with anything you try to do where the injury is relevant, either by restricting what you can do, or by increasing the difficulty of tests.

If you have broken your knee, you're in tremendous pain and probably can't walk much faster than a slow shuffle.

If you've got a crushed hand, you can't pick anything up or wield weapons with it.

### TENDING INJURIES

Injuries that are left untended can get worse over time. Cleaning, dressing, applying poultices will protect a wound from infection or uncontrolled bleeding.

Test Tending/2 for injuries, /3 for maimed, /4 for crippled. Tending the dying will soothe them, but not save them.

### HEALING FROM CRITICAL INJURY

Unless the specific critical result says otherwise, injuries heal after a week of full rest. Maimed results heal after a month. Crippled result heal after a season.

### PERMANENT INJURIES

Many injuries have permanent effects. These never heal, and make adventuring harder forever. Eventually, retirement will start to look like a good option.

### SIMPLIFIED CRITICALS FOR NPCs

Hirelings, minions, incidental monsters and the like use simplified criticals. Rather than rolling for a specific effect, the GM can simply narrate one based on the severity of the roll.

### "DESTROY GEAR"

Many critical table entries cause the destruction of equipment. Use a random method to determine which piece of gear is destroyed. (The character sheet has numbered slots, or you can shuffle your gear cards and have someone pick one.)

Gear destruction should be as catastrophic as feasible: book bindings give way and the pages flutter everywhere, lanterns and bottles shatter completely; metal gear is dented to the point of uselessness, blades crack, armor straps tear and rivets burst, shields buckle or the handles fall off. Either way, the gear is useless.

### CAPPED STATS

Some critical injuries permanently limit an adventurer's potential. If this happens, write the adventurer's current Rating in pen: it no longer advances. Ticks still accumulate: if the adventurer gains the requisite number of ticks to advance, they gain 1 xp instead.

### RESISTANT GEAR

Gear made of *white metal* is only destroyed by mundane attacks and accidents on a 1 in 3. Gear made of *dark glass* is only destroyed on a 1 in 6.



# CRITICAL INJURY TABLE

d6	1 / Stung	2 / Bloodied	3 / Injured
1	Winded. On your turn, pass Grit/3 before you can act. Destroy gear.	Brow wound bleeds into eyes. (C) Helm saves but is knocked off.	If your last sleep was by a fire, no harm, otherwise a nasty cut or laceration.
2	Whap! Arms/3 or drop your weapon or shield.	Destroy two gear. If unarmored, stunned for d3 minutes.	Lose d3 fingers on weapon hand; a bond this place's Power saves.
3	Wits/3 or you're turned around and disoriented.	Stunning blow to the head. For one hour, you see past the gray veil, into the world of the dead.	Laceration is bleeding (C) quickly. Take hourly burden of blood loss. Grit/4 or contract local sickness.
4	Chest blow knocks you back three paces. If you have never visited a shrine to the Power of this place, 4/ Maimed instead.	Armor, helm or shield value reduced by 1. If you don't have these things, 3/Maimed instead.	Oddly painless injury bleeds all over d3 items of gear. You are marked by the Power of this place.
5	Thump! Flinch and lose bearings, unless you have the higher ground.	Whomp. Pass Vigor/3 or be knocked down. Destroy gear.	Painful thigh muscle tear. If you're on a ley line, enemy takes d6 electrical harm as well. Weird.
6	Fluke circumstance leaves you uninjured. Heart pounding, you get a second wind. Restore d3 health.	Heirloom shield or armor breaks enemy's weapon, otherwise you're stunned and disarmed.	Arm struck numb (C) for d6 hours. Heirloom weapon, shield or armor saves. Held gear destroyed on 3 in 6.

d6	4 / Maimed	5 / Crippled	6+ / Dying
1	Cheek strike splits helm, otherwise lose d8 teeth and gain horrible scar (C).	Head blow, out for d6 hours. If you are bound to a Power, you awaken somewhere else. Sway capped.	Mortal organ wound. Every action is at a cumulative +1. At +4, you die.
2	Knee strike. Vigor/4 or fall. Knee broken (C) and unusable; armor saves to Limping (C).	Head strike causes coma. Pass Grit/3 tomorrow, next week, and each new season to awaken. Wits capped.	Chest strike damages heart. Die in d6 hours unless bound to the Power of this place. +2D to your next attack.
3	Lung collapse (C); can't tolerate thin mountain air. Destroy gear.	Weapon hand crushed. Tend/2 with <i>bone-wort</i> within 2 weeks or it's useless permanently.	Unless you carry <i>dark glass</i> , strike to the heart breaks you. Each week you adventure, roll d6: on a 6, you die.
4	Breastbone and collarbone broken. Lose use of d2 arms, unless people pray for your safe return.	Pelvis broken, legs paralyzed, one forever. Rest a season and Grit/2 to regain use of the other.	Internal bleeding adds hourly burden max Grit times, then death. <i>Clawleaf tea stops it for d3 days; Wispwort stops it.</i>
5	Lose an eye; face horribly scarred. If the moon is waxing, the eye may one day heal.	Spiral fracture (C) in arm holding shield or weapon. Arm is useless until <b>&lt;rare herb&gt;</b> is taken.	Throat destroyed, you expire. If you've buried a companion, Maimed-3 instead.
6	Ribs shattered. Vigor capped. Heirloom armor or shield breaks to save you.	Internal injury. Bloody urine (C); never again heal from rest on forays. Destroy gear. Grit capped.	Abdominal strike is fatal if unarmored. Destroy gear. Grit/4 or fall. Edged or piercing weapon stuck fast.

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# STATS AND SKILLS

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Adventurers each have six stats and up to ten skills. When calling for a test, the GM choose a skill from the list if there is one that matches, otherwise call for the most appropriate stat.

There's no need to stress about memorizing the full skill list. Adventurers improve at whichever skills they are called to test, so as long as you're consistent they will become more capable.

## VIGOR

Vigor is physical fitness. Test it when speed, strength, or agility are at stake.

## GRIT

Grit is toughness and endurance, both mental and physical—composure under duress, but also the acceptance of suffering as necessary for many things. It is tested when healing from injuries, enduring hardship, recovering from exertion, resisting poisons, or exposure from the elements.

## SWAY

Sway is persuasiveness, charm, and influence. Those with sway know how to deal with others directly, but also understand how social groups work, and the habits that go along with cultivating influence.

## WITS

Wits are insightfulness, alertness, and learning ability. The adventurer with their wits about them notices patterns others skip by, or irregularities that others missed.

## PANIC

Panic is a measure of the adventurers raw, animal adrenaline. It is used differently than other stats. See “Stats and Skills” on page 8.

## TROTH

Troth is a measure of the trustworthiness and reliability of an adventurer to the party. See “Troth” on page 10.

## ARMS (VIGOR)

Skill in the use of the body, hand weapons, armor and shield to fight enemies (see page 28).

## ASSURANCES (SWAY)

Influencing people using diplomacy, sincere intentions, or mutual interest (see “Assurances” on page 25).

## BATTLE (GRIT)

Formation fighting, whether three abreast in an orc tunnel, or as part of a battle front. Most battle tests are everyone tests. Maneuvering as a unit, 1. Forming for ranked fighting, 2. Advancing or holding under fire, 3. Orderly retreat while under attack, difficulty 4.

Increase difficulty for chaotic or confusing environments, lack of cohesion.

Close formation grants an additional point of armor against melee attacks from the front. Also, long, thrusting weapons can also attack from the second and third ranks.

## BURGLARY (WITS)

Finding ways in, knowing when to go in, knowing what to look for and what to avoid. Test Burglary to notice tripwires and traps, bypass them, or to search an area when time is short.

## BOW (VIGOR)

Killing at range with bows, slings, crossbows or thrown weapons. Striking a stationary, human-sized target at the weapon's optimal range is difficulty 1; moving targets 2; actively evading targets provoke an opposed Vigor test. Increase difficulty at longer ranges, for wind, or if the firer is moving or mounted.

## CAVING (VIGOR)

Free climbing stony surfaces. Short climbs over uneven, dry rock is difficulty 1; increase difficulty for moisture, sheer surfaces, overhangs, and long climbs. Halve the difficulty once anchoring ropes are set up. Wearing armor raises the minimum obstacle to the climber's armor points. Failure usually involves a slip or fall.

## COMMAND (SWAY)

Getting your way using imperious statements, barked orders, or your status. If your audience thinks you might be an authority, this is how you prove it (see “Encounters” on page 25).

In rush play, this skill is used to order multiple people to act in unison (see page 27).

## COMMUNE

The unseen Powers of the earth have influence everywhere, but surrendering to them profitably takes courage and discernment. Commune is most frequently used at shrines (see “Powers of the Earth” on page 51).

## CRAFT

Making and repairing things falls under a series of craft skills. Each specialty is a distinct skill:

- Brewing
- Building
- Carpentry
- Cobbling
- Cooking
- Fletching
- Dying
- Masonry
- Smithing
- Weaving

## FARMING (WITS)

Caring for crops or plants; inferring the nature of communities by what they seem to eat; predicting the week's weather.

## FORAGING (WITS)

Finding food, water, or particular plants in the wilderlands. Most often tested as a result of a travel duty (see page 21).

## HUNTING (WITS)

Tracking and trapping small game using snares. Identifying tracks is Hunting/1, extra successes provide additional information. Add difficulty for hard ground, recent rain or light snow.

When hunters take the Tracking travel duty (see page 21), they are watching for tracks in order to identify what animals (or people) live in the area.

Hunting can be used as an alternate skill for the Foraging travel duty (see page 21), provided the hunter also has the scouting duty (allowing them to be far ahead of the main group).

## HUSBANDRY (SWAY)

**Caring for an animal** properly, Husbandry/2. Add difficulty for alien, exotic or magical animals.

### COMMUNICATING WITH ANIMALS

**Reading an animal's attitude**, Husbandry/2

**Speaking with animals**, Husbandry/4. (This doesn't make animals any smarter, but allows the adventurer to communicate and understand anything the animal itself can convey to others of its own kind.)

### TRAINING ANIMALS

During Downtime, adventurers can train animals in their care, teaching them useful behaviors, or compensating for inconvenient ones (see page 35).

## LABOR (VIGOR)

Carrying out back-breaking manual work - hauling, digging, laying stones - quickly and without injury. Ditches, loading, earthen mounds and ramparts, dry stone walls, standing stones. Feats of strength such as lifting gates or bending iron bars.

## NAVIGATION (WITS)

Finding one's way through the wilderlands. Most often checked as part of a travel duty (see page 21).

## PERFORM (SWAY)

Attracting and holding the attention of crowds, conveying information or tales, using a musical instrument, song, acting or rhetorical flourishes. (See "Perform" on page 25.)

## RIDING (SWAY)

The skill of guiding a mount at speed, over difficult terrain, or for long distances—all without injury to beast or rider.

## RITUALS (WITS)

Conjuring up the forces of magic involves carefully following rituals inscribed in old books, or gleaned from visions and fever dreams. (See "Ritual Magic" on page 37.)

## SCRIBE

Reading, writing, copying inscrutable documents, and research. Scribe is the skill for gleaned knowledge from books ("Books & Scrolls" on page 64), or navigating organized troves of lore (e.g. libraries), of any kind.

Reading short passages in old Seree, /2; Martoi or Dradkin, /3; Thirudic runes, /4.

## SEEING (WITS)

This magical skill is used to perceive the unseen world. It is used to see through illusions and glamors, as well as to learn rituals being cast (see "Snatching Rituals" on page 39).

## STALKING (VIGOR)

Creeping silently and unseen. The base difficulty is the stalker's armor level plus 1, or the enemy's Wits target, whichever is higher. Noisy ground cover (e.g. dry leaf litter) increases difficulty, background noise decreases it.

## SURVIVAL (WITS)

Finding sheltered camp sites in the wilderlands, lighting fires in wet and windy conditions. Usually tested as part of a camp master travel duty (see page 21).

## TACTICS (WITS)

Recognizing opportunities in battle, and the significance of battlefield developments (see "Larger Battles" on page 29).

## TENDING (WITS)

Examining and dressing wounds to stop bleeding and to prevent infection. Knowledge of poultices and

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tinctures (made from herbs found with Foraging) to use to soothe or cure fevers and sicknesses.

## THREATS (SWAY)

Unwelcome truths, lies, implied threats and bald-faced intimidation. See “Threats” on page 25 for using these to get your way in interpersonal situations.

## TUMBLING (VIGOR)

Leaping, acrobatics and breakfalls. Test Tumbling/1 to reduce falling damage by the number of successes.

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## PANIC

Travelling in the wilderlands regularly places adventurers in unfamiliar, dangerous, or even terrifying situations. The GM will call for a Panic test when the adventurers see terrifying sights. The players, too, can declare that their adventure is panicking.

## TERRORS

Rarely, the adventurers will encounter sights more frightening than mortals were meant to endure. This should be reserved for truly terrifying things the adventurers have not dealt with before: living dead, horrible magic, demons erupting from the bodies of fallen friends, or the all-revealing glare of the demigods.

When this happens, the GM may call for a test of Panic. Those that fail are terrified—fear swamps their minds and narrows their perception. This doesn’t force the adventurer to *do* anything, but during rush play rush play (see “Rushed Play” on page 26) their only lead-ins will describe the source of the terror.

## GET IT OFF ME!

Sometimes, adventurers are stuck in situations where only a burst of raw, animal strength and will help them. When a player declares that their adventurer is panicking during an action, their Panic rating is added to the rating of the task at hand. This is an enormous advantage, but it comes at a price: panic is blind, reckless and disorienting. Panic can be used for:

- **Running away** from danger, or toward a companion in immediate danger
- Frenzied attempt to **tear free** of something, or to **fight something off**
- **Terrified commands** (see page 27) to get people to flee, or aid someone in immediate, visible danger

Panic can never be used for anything requiring precision, detail, nuance, concentration, caution or calm.

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## THE COST OF PANIC

When an adventurer panics, it wipes out any sense of what’s going on around them. Their awareness of the situation will have to be rebuilt from scratch.

In addition, there’s a side effect of their reckless behavior, chosen by the GM. For low-Panic adventurers, consider the modest end. For adventurers with Panic 4 and 5 or higher, make it really bad. The adventurer:

- leaves something behind, maybe everything
- shoves someone over, climbs on someone, savagely attacks someone with their weapon—just to get them out of the way
- runs too far; keeps running until they’re completely lost
- misses obvious details like the way out, what their friends are shouting, that pack of wolves
- loses their way, leaves everyone else behind, and/or blacks out for an extended period, maybe hours

The GM should not tell the panicking adventurer what they’ve done until they’ve had time to calm down and figure it out from the evidence.

## ADVANCING PANIC

Panic advances normally when the GM calls for terror tests. When the player chooses panic, a tick is earned automatically.

Panic advancement ticks can be eased away during downtime (see page 34), but once Panic advances, no soothing can reverse it. Adventurers with high panic may seem fidgety, jumpy, and alert—or easily distracted, perhaps vacant. Maybe even haunted.

## LOW AND HIGH PANIC

Adventurers with low Panic are (potentially) calm, well-adjusted individuals—because they haven’t seen the horrors of the wilderlands. Adventurers with high panic have become hardened to these situations, but at a cost. Adventurers with high Panic ratings have a hard time leaving safety (see “Leaving Safety” on page 19).

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## TROTH

Troth is a measure of how instinctively and smoothly an adventurer works with the rest of the party.

Do they instinctively know how to help, working with the others in a pinch without having to coordinate? Or are they at odds, trying to help but mostly just getting in the way? In a life or death situation, the ability to trust one’s fellow adventurers makes a big difference.

Troth is most often tested while helping (see “Working Together” on page 4), but it has a few other uses.



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## KNOWING LOOKS

When adventurers are passing secrets in the presence of others, test Troth/2. Raise difficulty for complexity or suspicious observers.

When characters have been through as much as they have together, just a glance can say a lot. Even a subtle change in body posture can be enough to tip off a close friend of an impending action. Perhaps enough that they can set up a, “when I dodge, throw the vial onto the floor!” gambit in the presence of an enemy.

Similarly, when players are discussing strategy at the table and NPCs are present, astute NPCs might realize something’s up.

**Yuming (to GM):** I fill in the islanders on our discovery at the shrine.

**Mered:** Hey, you should tell them about the moon baby and the tomb of Vilin and all that.

**Yuming:** Wait, won’t they assume it’s us that killed their oracle?

**Mered:** Uh, yeah. Well, we should at least explain what we know about the six shrines and the Martoi.

**GM:** Are you guys saying this out loud?

**Everyone:** No!

**GM:** Okay, but you’re definitely hesitating.

**Mered,** test Troth/2 to see if you’ve tipped them off that you’re holding out on them.

## A FRIEND IN NEED

Adventurers that have been with one another for a long time have an instinctive sense when one of their own has gotten into trouble—they’re afraid, hurt, outnumbered, surprised, or panic.

Test Troth/3. On a success, the impression comes immediately. On a failure, the impression comes late—anything the party does to respond to the situation is deemed to be after a delay of some sort. (Maybe

they sleep on it, or wait three more days for a signal fire that never comes.)

**GM (to Garron):** Garron, the snare is tight, looks like you’re dangling here for the night.

**GM (to everyone else):** Back to you guys. The echoes of the fight have died down, and the hall is quiet.

**Yuming:** Let’s go help Garron.

**Sean:** Why? We don’t know he’s trapped yet, we’re at the camp site.

**GM:** Maybe you do. Yuming, test Troth/3.

## SUBTLE SIGNALS

In time, adventurers know each other so well that they can coordinate instinctively, even over long distances.

Treat this as a *knowing look* (above), except the adventurers don’t have to be in contact. The test for a subtle signal is Troth/4. On a failure, maybe the signal didn’t get through, maybe something else heard it, too.

**GM (to Yuming):** The snake cultists start chanting, this is pretty obviously the ritual you read on the walls of the well. They haven’t seen you yet, but they’re inching closer to the altar you’re hiding under.

**Yuming:** Damn. I ready my knife. Time for the cavalry to come, but .. don’t use the well entrance.

**GM:** Test Troth/4.

**Yuming:** I spend 3 xp for 3 extra dice. (rolls) Five successes!

**Garron:** Let’s go, folks.

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## KNOWLEDGE AND LORE

Frequently, adventurers will need information, whether planning a foray, looking for an advantage in



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a tricky situation, or trying to understand the meaning of something they've found.

In ALM, it's assumed that the adventurers know significantly more about the world they live in than the players do.

## WHAT ADVENTURERS KNOW

When the players inquire about something their adventurer could plausibly know, consider a test. The difficulty depends on how obscure the required information is.

Obscurity of the Information	Difficulty
Commonly known	No test
Known to the skilled; coincidentally appropriate information	/1-2
Known only to masters; the key fact for this situation	/2-3
Obscure secrets; the answer to this riddle	/3-4+

## THE CRUCIAL SKILL

For lore about skills, the practice of it, or the tools involved, test the skill itself. (It's a test of Arms to know things about weapons, armor, and fighting styles.)

For facts about communities and groups, or for facts that group members would have, use the adventurer's bond with that group (see "Settlements and Groups" on page 30) as a skill rating.

## FAILURE

Failure means the adventurer doesn't know. Alternately, they *think* they know, but they're wrong, have misleading or partial information, or what they know is badly out of date.

## ..BUT I KNOW WHO WOULD

If the degree of failure is small, the failure might mean that the adventurer knows someone (or has heard of someone) who would probably know the answer. Most likely, this knowledgeable person is some distance away, perhaps a sage (see page 16).

## ASSESSING OTHERS

To slyly infer the skill of someone from circumstantial information (how they walk, the way they speak about it, the items they carry, clues about their person), test the crucial skill /2.

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# THE LIVES OF ADVENTURERS

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In ALM, adventurers are hardy, but they will occasionally be killed, eaten, or captured. Sometimes they fall into dark crevices, with no hope of return.

Surviving adventurers will eventually become capable and strong, but the aches, pains and nightmares from previous adventures accumulate and trouble them.

## ADVENTURING ROSTER

The starting set of adventurers makes up the initial roster of active characters, the characters who are going out on forays. Over time, however, the roster will grow.

Replacement and alternate playable adventurers are added to the roster whenever any of these things happens: an active adventurer dies, goes missing, or retires from adventuring.

It's up to the group whether adventurers can be played by anyone, or only the player who originally breathed life into them.

However large the roster is, each player will have only one active character at a time.

## RETIRED ADVENTURERS

Experienced adventurers can be stationed in settlements like villages and towns (see "Settlements and Groups" on page 30). The adventurer must either be entitled to hospitality, be able to work, or be given enough money to pay their way.

Retirement need not be permanent. If the group wishes, they can be reactivated and sent out on the road once more.

While they are stationed, they are assumed to be keeping their ear to the ground to collect rumors and information of use to the party. They are also useful for lining up expedition gear and retainers, saving valuable time when the party passes through to resupply themselves.

## ADDING ADVENTURERS TO THE ROSTER

An adventurer needs to be added to the roster whenever a player needs one—because they've just joined the gaming group, their adventurer has died or been lost, and all inactive characters are implausibly far away to join the action (or spoken for by other players). New characters come from one of five places:

- Home. Roll a new starting character.
- A porter, lantern bearer, mercenary or other retainer travelling with the party. They have Troth 1, or Troth 2 if they have been on more than one foray with the party.
- A character from a community with which the party has a Bond. Impressed by the party and their worthy goals, they have taken up the

call. They have Troth 2. Roll randomly on the community's character list; if there is an inactive adventurer present in that community, the die roll can be modified by plus or minus their Bond.

- A character from a nearby community. These characters will generally be outcasts—no respected citizen would throw in their lot with a wandering group of ill repute. They have Bond 0 with their community and Troth 1.
- At the GM's discretion, another NPC known to the party (or travelling with it), either a friend or supporter of their cause.

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## WHY DID THEY JOIN US?

When new adventurers are recruited to join the party, roll to see why they're leaving a life of comfortable safety.

Roll d12 + the Bond rating with the settlement.

d12 Why did they join the party?	
1	They're an outlaw wanted for murder. Life on the road with weapon in hand is a chance to turn over a new leaf. Bond 0, Troth 1.
2	Branded a criminal after an altercation with the wrong person. Bond 0.
3-4	Life is hard for an unscrupulous liar. Nobody trusts you! Bond 0, Troth 1. If it's a city, Bond 2 with gamblers, coin clippers or forgers.
5-6	Unfairly persecuted by the powers that be, it's time to move on. Bond 0.
7	Their bad debts are legend. Time to hit the road. Bond 1, Bond 2 with a group of gamblers.
8-10	Their reputation here depends on Bond 1.
11	A vision came to them in a dream about the nearest monstrous threat as yet unknown to the party.
12	This is as worthy a cause as any.
13	The party saved their life, perhaps without even realizing it.
14	They believe in the cause fervently. They're willing to die for heroes such as these.
15	Won over by the party's reputation, they stole something valuable to contribute to the cause. They begin with a mount, heirloom weapon, or a ritual-bearing scroll. Bond 0.

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## THEIR DEATHS

### KIDNAPPED, LOST, OR LEFT FOR DEAD

If an adventurer is separated from the party under especially grim circumstances, rather than switching the spotlight on them, they're gone. Maybe they'll find their way home, maybe not.

At the start of each season, they test Troth/2. If they pass, they have returned with a grim tale of their misadventure. If not, they test again at the start of each next season, but with a cumulative +1. Once the difficulty exceeds their Troth, they are surely dead.

### GRAVES FOR THE DEAD

When an adventurer dies, their spirit joins with the Power that rules the land where they died. Losing a character can be a sad or poignant experience. Allow it to be so.

When the party buries a dead colleague, they earn an amount of xp equal to that character's Troth. The player who lost a character takes that same amount and applies it to their next character.

If the body cannot be found, a shrine can substitute instead (see "Shrines and Communing" on page 51). In some cases, spirits reward valiant deaths (see "Gifts from the Powers" on page 54).

### HEIRLOOMS

When an adventurer lies dying, they may make a gift with their final words. One piece of gear they carried may be bequeathed to another member of the party. Such heirloom items are thought to bring luck. (Hopefully better luck than the departed had!)

If the adventurer's death was too quick, the shade of the departed makes its wishes known in dreams.

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## ADVENTURING GOALS

Venturing into the wilderness and other dark places is dangerous. Accidents, close calls and the grind of days will use up their resources and weaken them. Having a clear goal protects the group from trying to do too much, and in knowing when to return.

It also helps the group decide what preparations to make and what gear to bring—whether to travel light, to bring along retainers and allies, to supply for a long trip, or arm for battle.

Adventurers each earn 1 xp (see "Experience Points (xp)" on page 4) when they all agree on a goal for the party.

### SUGGESTED GOALS

Explore a defined region of the wilderness to locate settlements and threats. Patrol a known area to find signs of incursions. Find a shorter route through tricky terrain to reach an important area.

Establish a friendly bond with another settlement. Forge a safe road from one to the other.

Revisit known communities to check on their well-being. Gather rumors. Find a sage or oracle to reveal a truth. Uncover a trove of lore.

Scout a dangerous locale to prepare for a theft, raid or assault. Procure the weapons of war. Eliminate a monstrous threat.

Place a cache of equipment and supplies to extend your next foray's reach. Station a seasoned (or retired) adventurer there to advocate for the adventurers when they return.

Restore a village's accord stones. Recover ancestral artifacts to strengthen ties with the ancestors. Commune with the Powers of a place. Establish a permanent accord with a Power (e.g. a shrine, a stone circle).

Secure a site of strategic importance. Restore a ruin to serve as a shelter or a stronghold.

Find and retain specialist hirelings (mercenaries). Find a skilled master to learn from. Meet the demands of a magical ritual to improve its power.



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# BURDENS

The road has a way of wearing you down. Your pack, overfull with supplies, gear or treasure (if you're lucky), pulls you down with each step. Your scavenged and ill-fitting armor chafes and bothers you.

The porters squabble, the mules bray. All the while, memories of Ganner—the way he slipped into that crevasse, the five ways you could have saved him—play in your mind over and over.

You started out attentive, watching the horizon for any sign of danger, but now it's all you can do to avoid the tree roots and stones on this endless, dusty track.

Staring at your feet, you trudge on.

## BURDENS

Burdens represent sustained effort and the toll it takes, sapping adventurers of the stamina to deal with emergencies and brief opportunities.

Soft folk will find that the burdens of the road wear them down very quickly, while those who have been hardened by seasons of travel can carry out their duties tirelessly, drawing on reserves that astound those milk-fed town folk.

## TYPES OF BURDENS

- Encumbrance from items, armor and shield (see page 15)
- Dragging something—or someone—heavy
- Travel duties (see page 20)
- Sustaining a long-lasting magical effect (see page 37)
- Vows to unseen Powers (see “Shrines and Communing” on page 51)

## THE TOLL OF BURDENS

Burdens have three main effects:

- The more burdens you bear, the slower you will travel over long distances (see page 19).
- Burdens are inconvenient for physical actions such as sprinting, swimming and climbing (see “Adventure Sites” on page 24).
- Burdens make recovering from exertion much more difficult (see page 27).

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## GEAR & PROVISIONS

In ALM, the amount and type of gear that adventurers bring with them is of tremendous importance to the success of their forays.

### GEAR BURDENS

The weight and inconvenience of gear is measured in loads. **Every four loads is one burden** (see page 15).

### LOADS FOR VARIOUS ITEMS

A load represents the smallest amount of weight or inconvenience the game cares about. Large or heavy objects are another 1-3 loads more. Delicate objects also occupy more loads—they may not weigh much, but they need to be protected from bumps and knocks. Finally, objects that hamper movement or vision (e.g. metal armor, helms) also count for more.

### ABSTRACT GEAR

While preparation is important in ALM, this is not a game about shopping—some gear is handled abstractly, so that game play can focus on adventure. Travelling gear is the bits and bobs that anyone moving from place to place might need. Expedition gear

Whenever the character has a chance to rummage through their possessions, the player can declare they are carrying a particular item from the list by deducting the item's load from.

### TRAVELLING GEAR

Travelling gear is available in any settlement. A burden (4 loads) of travelling gear costs a few coins.

2—blanket, woollen	1—pot of lantern oil
1—cord, thin, 5 paces	1—sack (holds up to 1B)
1—knife (small, bone handle)	1—spade
1—fishing hook and line	1—tinderbox, flint and steel
1—needle and thread	1—waterskin (empty)
1—oil hand lamp	1—whistle
1—pitch for one torch head	

### EXPEDITION GEAR

Expedition gear is more specialized. All settlements will have these items, but unless they are doing very well they will not have enough spare to part with. A burden of expedition gear (4 loads) costs a pouch of silver.

Expedition gear can be converted into anything from the travelling gear list, as well as:

2—arrow heads	1—iron spike, small
1—chalk	2—lantern, metal
3—chest, small leather (4B)	1—pot of lantern oil
4—barrel of water (6 portions)	1—pulley
2—hammer and nails	2—rope, 20 paces
2—hand drill	2—shovel
	3—tarp, oiled, 3 paces
	3—tools for a craft skill

### PROVISIONS

Provisions can be bought at any settlement that isn't starving. A burden (4 loads) of provisions costs a few coins, or a pouch of silver in winter.

1—a day's ration of cheese, bread, dried meat or fruit  
 2—a day's grain for a mount  
 1—herbs for tea  
 2—honey  
 2—rum or ale  
 1—salt, handful

## SACKS, PACKS AND STRAPS

In ALM, little attention is paid to the sacks, packs and straps used to carry all of this gear. It's assumed that when equipment is obtained, suitable means of carrying it are also purchased or scrounged.

The one exception to this is items the adventurers find. If the party stumbles on a huge pile of coins, or (for some reason) wishes to gather a few hundred-weight of river stones for some peculiar project, they will need to produce some containers from their travelling or expedition gear. After this point, the containers themselves can be disregarded (i.e. they have no load of their own).

## MONEY & TRADE

In ALM, most trade is conducted in silver. The game isn't concerned with tracking individual coins, but larger amounts of money are heavy.

## POUCHES, SACKS AND TALENTS

A pouch of silver weighs one load. A sack of silver (four loads), is a burden. A talent of silver (four sacks) is enormously heavy (four burdens).

In the Seree era, talents were minted into solid, urn-like shapes with handles for easier transportation.

## A FEW COINS

ALM isn't concerned about purchases of a few coins. For small transactions of this sort, roll d6. On a 5-6, a pouch has been emptied. Otherwise, ignore the expenditure.

For bulk purchases of cheap items (e.g. provisions, travelling gear), a pouch of silver can make four purchases.

## GOLD

Gold is highly prized, and valued one size category more than silver: a few gold coins are worth a pouch of silver; a pouch of gold is worth a sack of silver, and so on. A talent of gold is worth 64 pouches of silver!

## STORING MONEY

Storing large quantities of money is risky. It must be hidden in a cache, or deposited for safe-keeping with trusted servants or powerful friends.

## AVAILABILITY

Items are readily available for purchase at settlements of at least the stated size. They can be found

at settlements one step smaller, but it will involve scrounging and wheedling, or they must be commissioned. Either way, procurement will eat up 1-3 weeks of time. Items with an asterisk must always be commissioned.

If an inactive adventurer is stationed at the settlement, procurement time is waived if they pass Troth/3. They were already on it.

## EQUIPMENT LIST

Item of Equipment	Load	Cost	Avail.
Hand weapon	3	1p	Town
Specialty weapon	B	3p	Town
Arrows or crossbow bolts (12)	2	1p	Village
Travelling gear	B	c	Village
Expedition gear	B	1p	Town
Provisions	B	c	Village
Provisions, in winter	B	1p	Village
Reinforced leather (1)	B	2p	Town
Metal helm (1)	B	1s	Town
Mail armor (2)	2B	1s	Town
Plate armor (3)	3B	2T	City*
Wooden shield, buckler (1)	1B	1p	Town
Tower shield (2)	2B	1s	City
Riding Horse	-	2s	Town
Warhorse	-	3T	City*
Pack Mule	-	3p	Village
Cart (20 burdens)	-	1s	Village
Longboat	-	1T	Town
Barque	-	12T	City*

## COST

c—a few coins  
 1p—silver purse / gold coins  
 1s—sack of silver / gold purse  
 1T—silver talent / sack of gold

## RETAINERS

The adventurers will sometimes find themselves in need of help—more help than people will freely give. In these times, they can hire retainers. Porters to carry additional gear and provisions, lantern bearers to light the way (and keep the adventurers' hands free), or muscle to deal with stubborn problems.

Type of Retainer	Cost/Mo.	Avail.
Porter, Labourers (Labourer 4d)	c	Town
Local guide (Wits 4d)	c	Village
Lantern bearer (Panic 3d)	c	Town
Packmaster (Husbandry 3d)	1p	
Mercenary, light (Arms 3d) Scouts, archers	1p	City*
Mercenary, heavy (Arms 4d, Battle 1-2d, armored) Crossbowmen, Armored infantry	2p	City*
Mercenary captain (Command 3d, Tactics 3d)	1s	City*
Driver, mule cart and mule (20B)		Town
Longboat and crew (40B)		Town
Barque and crew (280B)		City*
<b>Non-Travelling Specialists</b>		
Artisan (Skill 3-4d)		Town
Master Artisan (Skill 5d)		City*
Sage (Scribe 5d)	1-2s	City*
Healer (Tending 4d)		Town
Steward (Command 3d, Scribe 2d)	2p	Town*
Servant (Labourer 3d)	c	Town

\* Rare, and must be found (see below).

## TODO

- Explain each retainer and how they contribute, mechanically.

## FINDING HIRELINGS

Finding and hiring requires implicit permission from the community (see page 30), and takes a period of downtime to arrange (see “Downtime” on page 34), unless an inactive adventurer stationed in the community has anticipated the need by testing Troth/3. Regardless of availability, retainers can only be found in ones and twos in villages, and by the handful in towns.

## FINDING RARE EXPERTISE

Finding retainers with special expertise, who are available and suitably disposed to aid the party takes time. “Finding People” on page 33.

## RETAINER SKILLS

If it matters, retainers have the listed stats or skills, and another skill or two at Rating 2d. All retainers have Troth 2d.

## HIRING INSTRUCTORS

Retainers can be hired as instructors, but experts will have to be persuaded of the worthiness of the student in order to give up their secrets.

## WE’RE GOING WHERE?

Non-travelling specialists can be persuaded to leave their settlement, but will expect double pay and assurances they will be returned safely home.

Leading valued community members into the wilderness to die is a sure way of tarnishing your reputation.

## RETAINERS ARE PEOPLE

The people that agree to come along with the party aren’t gear, but people with their own beliefs, hopes and fears. They have agreed to perform a service, but they have their own expectations and limits, some reasonable, some not. Retainers won’t hesitate to renegotiate if they feel they’re being asked to do something outside of their duties—or indeed, any time there’s something to gain.

When the party has one or more retainers with them, the GM adds the Retainers Travel Events card to the hand of fate (see page 66).

## TYPES OF RETAINERS

### GUIDE

Guides who are familiar with the area automatically perform a travel duty of navigation (see page 21).

### LANTERN BEARER

Lantern bearers provide light, necessary for travelling at night or delving into dark places.

**TODO** How much oil do they carry?

### LABOURER

When the party needs ploughed fields, trees uprooted, tunnels, earthworks, fortifications, trenches, labourers can speed the job significantly. Assuming materials and tools are provided, labourers can

Labour	Work Accomplished
Digging, earthworks	Daily: 5 cubic paces Monthly: 120 cubic paces
Excavating stone	Daily: 2 cubic paces; a single-file tunnel half a pace long. Monthly: two 3-pace cubes

Labour	Work Accomplished
Stone Walls (2 paces high, 1 pace thick)	Daily: 3 paces long Monthly: 100 paces long
Clearing forest	Daily: a 3-pace square Monthly: a 20-pace square

## MERCENARY

Mercenaries are muscle for hire. Though they are happy to rough up weak opposition, especially when there is a possibility of looting, they don't consider themselves expendable shock troops. They're best used as a deterrent or threat.

Mercenaries must be hired with caution; they've been known to spontaneously "renegotiate" their contracts at inconvenient times. A disorganized or weak party that surrounds itself with armed thugs may find

## MERCENARY CAPTAIN

Captains are used to keep mercenaries in line, to issue commands during maneuvers or battle, and to anticipate and prevent discipline problems. They automatically perform a travel duty of leadership for up to 20 mercenaries.

Mercenary captains must be selected with care to ensure their loyalty lies with their employer. Captains that sense weakness or foolishness in their employers may try to wrest control of the expedition from their employers (either subtly or overtly), for safety's sake.

## PACKMASTER

Packmasters, grooms, or herdsman look after animals during a journey; making sure they're not injured, alarmed, leading (or coercing) them over tricky terrain, and ensuring they're cared for when the party stops to rest. Packmasters automatically perform this as a travel duty (see "Drover" on page 21).

## PORTER

Experts at carrying heavy loads while remaining sure footed, porters will carry three burdens of gear on behalf of the party without slowing the party down.

## STEWARD

Stewards look after property on behalf of its owners. Finding a reputable and trustworthy steward is vital, lest the servants run wild and let the property go to run (or even make off with its valuables). (TODO Connect this with property and forming groups).



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# TRAVEL

At the start of a journey:

1. Adventurers choose their travel duties (see page 20)
2. Adventurers face the fear of leaving safety
3. Work out the party's speed of travel

Travel itself is resolved one day at a time:

1. Adventurers state their route/destination for the day
2. Adventurers eat a day's food, or lose 1 health
3. The GM works out how far that day's travel will take them
4. The GM rolls a travel event (see page 19), and resolves it

## LEAVING SAFETY

When the adventurers leave a hospitable settlement, they must face the fear of the mortal dangers beyond. Test Panic/2. Each extra success is deducted from their current Health. (This does not cause criticals.)

## ROUTES AND DESTINATIONS

The players state their route—moving toward a landmark (e.g. a distant mountain), a cardinal direction (e.g. west) tracked by the sun and stars, by following a path or road, or randomly.

## SPEED OF TRAVEL

ALM assumes the GM is using a map divided into 6-league squares or hexes, which is about a day's hike for a practiced but laden traveller. In normal conditions, the party travels one hex per day.

## DIFFICULT TERRAIN

**Obstructed** terrain requires forces the party off a straight line, zig-zagging back and forth: thickets in dense forests, switchbacks in steep terrain, land broken by ravines and crevices, numerous pools and streams

Sometimes the route is straight, but **hard going**: ascending steep hills, wading through wetlands, pushing through deep snow, or picking a way along treacherous glaciers.

In either case, difficult terrain reduces the party's travel speed by half a hex per day.

## GOOD ROADS

A muddy track that goes where the adventurers are headed is invaluable. Such a road adds half a hex to the party's speed.

## MOVING QUICKLY—FORCED MARCHES

A party that is moving at full speed gains an additional half hex, but must check exhaustion every day (see "Travel Exhaustion Checks" on page 20).

## MOVING SLOWLY—TAKING IT EASY

A party that takes it easy subtracts half a hex of movement, but automatically passes travel exhaustion checks.

---

## TRAVEL EVENTS

As the adventurers move through the wilderness, the GM should determine what notable events happen to them.

## HAND OF FATE

The GM maintains a set of relevant event cards (see "Travel Event Tables" on page 66), representing the terrain, the season, the location in the world, and nearby sources of encounters (e.g. monster lairs, settlements, unquiet tombs). The composition of the group may also contribute cards if there are hirelings or animals with the adventurers.

As the players move around the wilderness, the GM adds, removes or replaces event cards as appropriate. The hand starts out shuffled, but from that point on the GM should use the cards in the order they appear, determining an event from the top card and then placing it at the back of the hand.

The contents of the hand of fate should be kept secret. The season may be obvious from the time of year, but if the party wants to know what hidden forces are shaping their journey, they will need pay attention to what they encounter.

## THE EVENT ROLL: WHAT/WHERE/WHEN

As each day of travel begins, the GM rolls three dice: d20, d6, and d4. The d20 indicates what item on the event card has been encountered. Apply modifiers as indicated on the card. The d6 indicates the initial **intensity** of the encounter, and the d4 indicates time of day.

## EVENT INTENSITY (D6)

The intensity die indicates how much warning the party has. Sometimes the party stumbles into the mother bear's lair, but more often bears are seen fleeing into a thicket.

d6	People/Creatures	Weather
1	Old tracks/barely audible sounds	Distant, not approaching

d6	People/Creatures	Weather
2	Tracks/distant sounds	Arrives tomorrow
3	Sounds or voices	Half a day's notice
4	Sighting	An hour's notice
5	Approaching	A few minutes' notice
6	Close Encounter	No warning

Sometimes there's a crack of thunder and the heavens open with rain; sometimes lightning is seen on the horizon for hours before the storm arrives.

### WATCHERS

When the party has watchers on duty, they can provide early warning by spotting or hearing encounters first. Watchers that successfully notice whatever's being encountered provide early warning (see page 21), possibly avoiding an unpleasant close encounter completely.

### TRACKS

If the party doesn't have anyone with the tracking duty, tracks go completely unobserved (unless they're huge).

### EVENT TIMING (D4)

The d4 indicates the time of day the event happens. Some event types only occur at particular times of day; in those cases, ignore the roll.

d4	Event Timing
1	Dawn
2	Mid-day
3	Dusk
4	Night



### OVERLAPPING EVENTS

Events needn't be fully resolved before the next one occurs. Events can linger, overlap, or interact.

If the adventurers are fleeing a determined pursuer encountered by chance, for example, they may run into bad weather (the next event) before they get away.

### VERY SAFE PLACES

At the GM's option, travel events in very safe places can be reduced to one every few days. These might include patrolled roads between settlements where the party has bonds.

### TRAVEL EXHAUSTION CHECKS

From time to time, the day's event will be a travel exhaustion check. Everyone travelling must make a travel roll to see how they fare on the journey. Adventurers who fail this roll are keeping up, but barely—it's costing them.

Walking adventurers test Grit/Burdens. (Duties add to the burdens.) They take damage equal to the degree of failure (ignores armor).

### TRAVEL CRITICALS

When a failed travel roll leads to damage beyond an adventurer's remaining health, the excess damage becomes the severity of a random travel critical effect.

Roll	Severity 1-2	Severity 3+
1-3	Road weariness sets in. No special effect.	Tired and careless. One randomly chosen travel duty neglected. Recover 1 health.
4	Carelessness leads to eating extra rations (2/week)	Stumbling along blindly. All travel duties neglected. Recover d6 health.
5	Random item of personal gear left behind.	If no one has a duty of navigation, the Power of this place chooses your path.
6	Bad stumble, fall, or other accident. Re-roll on the critical injury table with the same severity.	

### TRAVEL DUTIES

The duties of the road each take energy. Each one counts as a burden, increasing the difficulty of the adventurer's travel roll by +1.

Adventurers can take up to 3 duties. Additional adventurers taking the same duty count as helping under pressure for tests.

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## CAMP MASTER

The camp master's task is to choose a good site that provides shelter, water, safety, and how to prepare it to prevent nighttime disasters. They make the often difficult choice of when to stop, and when to press on in the hopes of finding something better before nightfall.

### DROVER

If the group has mounts, beasts of burden or other, more exotic animals, it is wise to set someone to watch over them and ensure they are properly fed, cleaned, and to notice and treat developing travel injuries.

### FORAGING

As they travel, foragers spread out from the main group to find edible plants, roots, and mushrooms nearby.

#### SPECIFIC FORAGE

Instead of rummaging for edibles, foragers can spend their time looking for specific plants, herbs, or game. Test Foraging/1, with +1 to +2 for rarity, and another +1 to +2 for the wrong season.

Longer forays make this easier: reduce the difficulty by the travel roll's trip duration penalty.

### LEADING

Leaders keep a watchful eye over hirelings, mercenaries, or other hangers on. This makes sure that squabbles don't turn into fights, that the group begins the day's travel when it intended to, and that the rations aren't mysteriously disappearing.

Leaders also maintain a proper marching order. Without this, groups tend to spread out into a long line of stragglers, unprepared to act cohesively in the face of an encounter.

### NAVIGATING

Navigators and local guides speed the group's travel by finding routes that are shorter or easier.

If a navigator ever beats a navigation obstacle by 3, some sort of shortcut or safe path has been found through the area. This eliminates the *obstructed* aspect of the area. If the navigator is also scouting, they have blazed a trail ahead of the main party and everyone benefits from the speed increase. If not, then the path is useful only on subsequent trips.

### SCOUTING

Scouts move ahead, alongside, or behind the main group in order to find trouble before it finds the group. This means lots of additional walking, but they build a fuller picture of the area, and may discover things hidden in the landscape.

## SEARCHING THE AREA

When scouts pass by a hidden feature of the landscape, test Wits/2. Raise difficulty by +1 for obstructed terrain, well hidden features, and bad weather.

## PERFORMING

By singing, playing ballads or telling tales while the group is resting, performers keep up morale.

Test Perform/2. On a success, everyone in the group restores an additional health.

Performers boost morale! As long as the group isn't moving quietly, test Perform/2 to give everyone an extra health.

(This duty has no effect if group is trying to move quietly.)

effect on hirelings!

## STEALTH

The larger the group, the more noise it makes. If someone takes a duty of stealth, they're ensuring that the group chooses low-profile routes, isn't shouting, that animals are kept quiet, and fires are only lit where they can't be seen.

## TRACKING

Skilled hunters who watch the ground can identify tracks and reveal what sorts of creatures live in the area.

## WATCH, DAY

Weary travelers tend to look at the trail in front of them, looking up only occasionally. Who is watching the horizon, the trail behind, or a distant silhouette in the sky? The day watch.

In the event of an encounter (see page 19), a randomly chosen day watcher may roll Wits/2. +1 or +2 for particularly stealthy encounters. Success increases the distance of the encounter by 1, beating the difficulty raises it by 2.

## WATCH, NIGHT

While the rest of the group sleeps soundly (or as well as they can), the night watch keeps alert for danger at night—approaching animals, people, or worse.

## SLEEP SOUNDLY

Anyone who has a lower Panic than the a watcher's Troth regains an extra Health for each night's sleep.

## ANIMALS AND VERMIN

In the event of a nighttime encounter with noisy vermin or animals that are easily scared off, the night watch shoos them away.

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## INTRUDERS

In the event of a stealthy incursion, the watch test Wits against the stealth of the intruder. Additional watchers count as help.

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## MOUNTS, WAGONS AND BOATS

Riding on mounts, or in wagons and boats is a much easier way to travel than on foot. Those who ride don't have to carry their physical burdens, so those are ignored for travel rolls.

### SWIFT HORSES

Swift, long-distance runners like horses add half a hex on easy terrain, as long as everyone rides.

Instead of Grit, test Riding/2 for trained horses. Increase difficulty for exotic or aggressive animals.

### SURE-FOOTED MULES

Sure-footed animals eliminate the penalty for hard going, as long as everyone rides. Test Riding/3 for mules.

### BOATS

Those who row or sail aren't carrying their burdens either. Crew test Boating /2. /+1 or /+2 if the vessel is undercrewed.

Passengers have an easy travel roll, Grit/1. Luxurious!

---

## PATROLLED AREAS

As the party moves about the map, it may enter regions of influence around settlements or monstrous threats. Swap in the travel event card for the area. Some areas, however, are actively patrolled, on the lookout for intruders or strange visitors.

Most villages and towns can't afford regular patrols—anyone on patrol isn't helping with essential

work. They must rely on word passed back from whoever happens to bump into the strangers.

Alerted groups, however, (militarized settlements in wartime, raider encampments) will have spies, outriders or scouts.

### SPOTTED BY PATROLS

Patrols automatically spot parties moving along major roads or other obvious routes or choke points (passes, causeways, major bridges, fords).

If someone is dutifully picking routes to avoid detection (see "Stealth" on page 21), the party can avoid patrols for a week by testing against half the patrol's Means.

### TRACKING

If patrols have Hunting skill (and most do), then they will be eventually pick up the adventurers' tracks. This happens in d6-Means days of the party entering the patrolled territory.

Weather such as light rain or heavy snow adds anywhere from 1 to d6 more days to the counter.

### PURSUIT

Patrols that pick up tracks often decide to make a forced march to catch up. Unless the party is mounted or making forced marches themselves, they will eventually be caught.

---

## FOOD AND WATER

For each leg of the journey, the party must consume one ration per person for every day of travel. If they don't, they take 1 Health.

### MOUNTS

Mounts consume twice as much food (usually grain, or hay) as adventurers, except in lush areas where they can graze while the party is resting. Hungry mounts can't be ridden (or at least, it's no better than walking).

### WATER

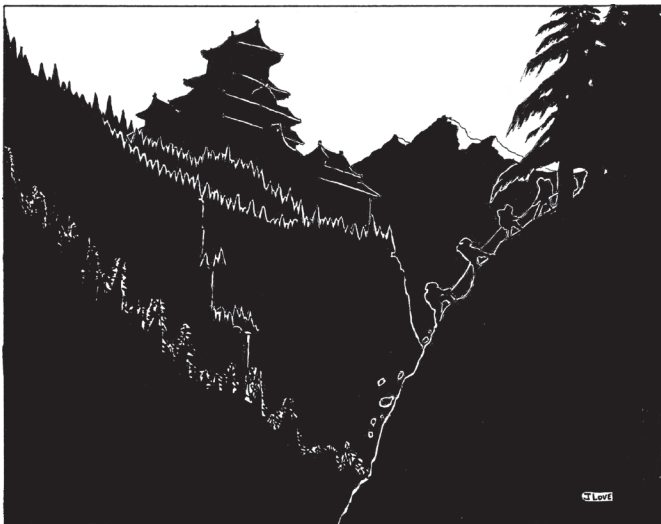
Water is too heavy to carry in great quantities, and the need for it is much more serious.

Unless they make efforts to carry a great supply, groups are reliant on local water supplies.

In moist climates (forests, wetlands, river systems), the availability of fresh water makes keeping track of it unnecessary.

### ARID CLIMATES

In arid climates (deserts, badlands, rocky plateaus) groups must travel along watercourses except for short forays of a day or two. For longer trips, groups are completely dependent on foragers for their survival.



## FINDING WATER

In arid climates, foragers are considered to be finding water; only once the group has sufficient water do they begin to find food.

## DYING OF THIRST

If a group makes a trip of a week or more without water, it is dying of thirst. It loses control of its destiny, and it lives or dies at the whim of the Power of that place.

## WEATHER & EXPOSURE

Many weather effects have no specific mechanical effect, although GM may treat the prevailing weather like a party-wide Condition (see page 5), increasing the difficulty of tests. Shooting arrows in high winds, or navigating using landmarks that are hard to see through curtains of heavy rain.

If an event card indicates an extreme of hot or cold weather, however, adventurers must make an exposure test.

### COLD EXPOSURE

Resisting cold exposure is a Grit test. Cold in most terrain is /1; mountain passes are /2; peaks and glaciers /3. High winds add /+1, being wet /+1. Winter is /+1, summer is /-1.

Blankets or sturdy cloaks add +1d. Heavy coat +1d. Full-on winter skins (hat, gloves) +1d.

Failure does cold damage equal to the degree of failure, with critical injuries rolled on the Cold critical table.

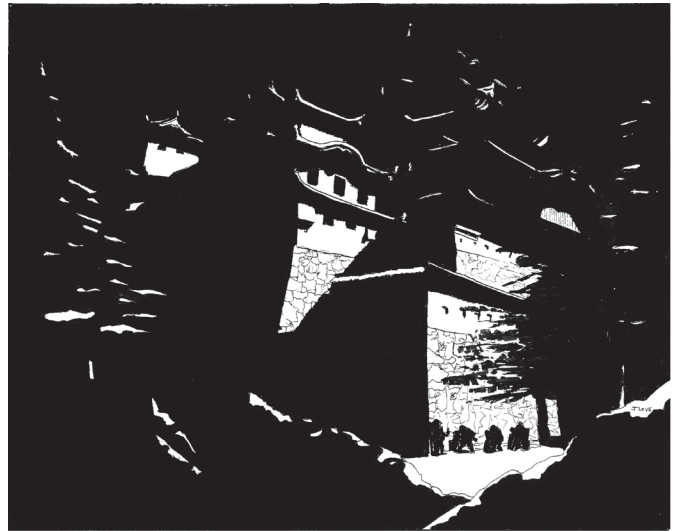
d6	Cold, Severity 1-3	Cold, Severity 4+
1-3	Chattering teeth	Acquire local sickness
4	Numb	Drowsy and confused
5	Frostbitten face	Frostbite claims d6 fingers
6	Acquire local sickness	Eyes freeze; permanent blindness in d6 weeks

### HEAT EXPOSURE

Resisting heat exposure is also a Grit test. The difficulty is the physical burdens borne by the adventurer (armor and equipment). Arid terrain adds /+1, deserts /+2.

Travelling alongside a stream, river or shoreline the party can splash in adds +1d.

d6	Heat, Severity 1-3	Heat, Severity 4+
1-3	Flushed	Acquire local sickness



d6	Heat, Severity 1-3	Heat, Severity 4+
4	Weak	Blurred vision
5	Weak	Delerious
6	Blurred vision	Minor heart attack; Grit no longer advances.



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# ADVENTURE SITES

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In adventure sites, where darkness, potentially inhabitants, and tricky terrain

## EVENTS

Roll for an event every time the characters **move** into a new area, **delay**, or make a **disturbance**.

## LIGHT AND DARKNESS

At night in dense forests, ravines, castle dungeons and at any time underground, there is a thick, inky darkness. Without light of their own, adventurers must navigate by touch.

### LIGHTS OUT

Whenever the party is moving in darkness using light sources, add the darkness event card (see “Darkness Events” on page 66).

### LIGHT SOURCES

Candles produce a tiny, naked flame that sheds just enough light for the bearer to make out the shape of the immediate area.

Oil lamps are small clay pots with an exposed wick. They provide the same light, but last a bit longer. If dropped, candles break and go out; oil lamps shatter and catch fire.

### LANTERNS

Lanterns are oil lamps enclosed in a wood or metal frame, with the light protected from the wind by thin sheets of translucent animal horn. If dropped, the horn shatters and they lose their wind resistance.

### TORCHES

A torch is a stick with a hard, fist-sized lump of tar or pitch on the end. They produce a large, bright flame, and lots of black, stinking smoke. They are essentially lighting for battle; they light quickly and can be thrown, dropped, or used to hit things without risk of going out.

## NATURAL CAVERNS

Navigating tombs, dungeons and catacombs can be challenging enough, but natural caverns can be substantially harder. Inky pools of darkness lurk everywhere—in uneven floors, walls, behind outcrops or curtains of stalactites. Shadow-filled hollows can conceal tunnels, exits, or cave-dwelling creatures. Toothy stalactites join into columns at the edges of caverns, but these can suddenly open out again after a claustrophobic squeeze. These exits are effectively secret doors.

Wet, living caverns can be so rimed over with slippery limestone that there the path must be picked

through a forest of jagged stone teeth and pools of unknown depth. Hiding in such places is easy. Natural caverns inhabited by large, heavy, or bipedal dwellers will tend to form trails, broken stalagmites and so on.

## LEAPING ACROSS GAPS

For death-defying leaps across chasms, pits, or acid pools test Vigor/Gear Burdens for a leap of 3 paces, /+1 per additional pace. A tie means the athlete is balanced on the edge. Failure by 1 means they’re hanging from it. Failure by 2 or more means an immediate fall.

## CLIMBING & ROPES

Climbing up or down a steep surface with available handholds is a test of Caving/Gear Burdens. Having a dangling rope makes descent automatic, and adjusts ascent difficulty by /-2. Raise difficulty by /1-3 for long to impossibly long climbs. Failing means a fall; determine where randomly.

Hammering spikes into stone walls to tie climbing ropes is very loud. If ascending, the lead climber must free climb, but any falls are capped at d6 damage. Remaining climbers test at /-4. One spike and one length of rope are required for every 20 paces.

## FALLING

Characters that fall from a height take from d6 to d20 damage, depending on the length of the fall.

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# ENCOUNTERS

When the party encounters social beings, their initial reaction will probably be biased by the context. Outlaws will be hiding from the law, bandits looking for an easy mark, merchants at market looking for rubes, and so on. Bear in mind that many adventuring parties look like bandits themselves!

When social beings are encountered and it's *not* obvious how they will react to the party, roll their initial reaction on this table:

d6	Initial Reaction
1	<b>Assume the worst</b> —Assumption of imminent violence or exploitation. If they're weaker, they avoid, posture, and prepare defenses. If they have the advantage, maybe they think it's best to deal you a blow while they can.
2	<b>Wary</b> —Set boundaries (metaphorical or physical)
3	<b>Uninterested</b> —Dour and sullen, self-absorbed, or perhaps more interested in dealing with their problems or private discussions. Either way, they aren't making time for you.
4	<b>Mistaken assumption</b> —The group makes a confident, incorrect assumption about what you're doing here, or perhaps even your identity. They've heard rumors, and your presence confirms them.
5	<b>Curiosity</b> —You're the entertainment. Maybe that's good, maybe that's really bad, depending on their nature.
6	<b>Common cause</b> —So glad you turned up, now we can help each other!

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## INFLUENCING PEOPLE

When the party engages with the intention of getting something, role play the interaction while considering the NPC's own goals. If it becomes completely obvious to what the NPC would decide, that's what happens. If it comes to a head (or needs to) and you're still not sure, call for a test.

### INFLUENTIAL SKILLS

If a test is necessary, call for a test of Assurances, Perform, or Threats (see below), depending on how they are going about it.

- Sure, no skin off my back /1
- Some inconvenience /2
- Real effort or expense /3

- Undue cost or hardship /4
- Outlandish requests /5
- Existential risk /6

These difficulties assume the petitioner is offering some inducement, leverage or assurance that is equal in value to the request. If their offer is poor, raise the difficulty.

### ASSURANCES

Diplomacy, convincing people of hard-to-believe facts, impressing sincere intentions, the merits of alliances, or of worthy investments of time, effort or money.

Failure means they're not willing to do it. Or, perhaps they are—but you'll have to pony up substantially more than you were offering.

### PERFORM

Perform is used when communicating with large groups—crowds, audiences, noble courts. It is of no use for diplomacy, but excellent for conveying simple information to many people at once.

### THREATS

Threats come in many forms: dire, but plausible warnings; cold pronouncements of the consequences; lies meant to separate the listener from the truth; polite requests over a subtext of animal aggression; naked threats of violence. Failure means it doesn't go smoothly. Perhaps the listener:

- dismisses what you're saying
- considers you a ruffian
- calls your bluff—make good on your threat, or you lose them
- never trusts you again

### ETIQUETTE

If your attempt at influence happens within the boundaries of a community (or a group of its members), you are bound by its etiquette. The community's assumptions and beliefs form the invisible landscape around you.

Plucky confidence goes a long way, but in a world of precarious living, ignoring etiquette increases the likelihood of you being dismissed. In ALM, groups exist to benefit their members. Disrespectful behavior is the mark of an outsider—someone who does not value what the community values, seems outlandish and unreasonable, and perhaps harbours dangerous intentions for the social order.

### RESPECTING ONE'S BETTERS

Customs vary, but one rule is universal: disrespecting someone with a higher Bond than you with the

community earns you at least a +1 to any attempt at influence. (See page 30 for more on Bonds.) Disrespect means:

- insults or rebukes
- disregard for customs or rituals
- questioning the group's inherent value, or its goals

## ON THIN ICE

In competitive, strife-ridden and insecure groups (e.g. feudal nobility, dogmatic cults or temples, hidebound cabals), the bar for disrespect is much lower:

- contradicting or disagreeing
- expressing anger or disapproval
- failing to acknowledge those with high status as one's betters
- failing to dress to impress

## AT COURT

When they can, people with status insulate themselves from social manipulation by forcing petitioners to make their appeals in the most intimidating circumstances possible: public speaking in a lavish setting; complex rules of etiquette, and plenty of sycophants to tsk and only one chance to get it right.

Appeals to courts must be made using Perform, or add +1 to +2 to the difficulty based on the grandeur of the court.

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## FAR, CLOSE & RUSHED PLAY

When playing out an adventure, you will narrate the unfolding events with different levels of detail.

### CLOSE

Sometimes you'll play out adventurers feeling their way along cavern walls, or exchanging tense words and nervous glances across the negotiating table. This is close play.

### FAR

At other times, time will breeze by: days spent waiting out storms while huddling in cliffside caves, a month at sea, a season spent practicing swordplay and drinking away painful memories—these events could might pass with just a mention.

Play will gloss over numerous events not important to describe, summarizing and hitting only the highlights. This is far play.

### BACK AND FORTH

Often you will spend extended periods in close play, such as while exploring a dangerous cave. At other times, you will switch back and forth frequently, such as when you describe wildlife and foliage seen on a long walk through a forest, and players wish to interact with the things they describe.

Perhaps they notice footprints in soft mud and stop to investigate, but soon press on with their journey, their minds on the destination.

Except during downtime (see page 34), when the whole group shifts to far play, transitions between close and far play needn't be mentioned.

## RUSHED PLAY

The third level of detail is rushed play. The GM imposes this whenever events are happening faster than the adventurers can integrate them.

When the floor falls away, when arrows start landing unexpectedly, when the screaming Ricalu scouts crash into the party's shield wall, this is rushed play.

## RUSHED TURNS

Unlike close and far play, rushed play follows a strict turn sequence. Each turn has the same sequence:

1. The GM gives the adventurer a "lead-in", telling them what situation confronts them.
2. The adventurer says what they try to do.
3. The action is resolved.

Play continues clockwise until the rushed situation ends.

## WHO STARTS?

The GM nominates chooses who will be the active player first. This is often the player whose adventurer who noticed something urgent happening, but not necessarily.

The GM starts each adventurer's turn by describing the most noticeable thing confronting them, then asking what they do. Once the action is resolved (with a test, or just with narration), the player to their left gets a turn. (Adventurers who are incapacitated or not present in the rushed situation are skipped.)

## THE LEAD-IN

The most noticeable thing could be the ogre advancing on them. It may be a gravelly scrape from behind, or an sheet of orange flame curling across the ceiling. Perhaps it's the shooting pain from their leg injury, or maybe it's seeing Ganner lurch backwards and slump down, for reasons unknown. Sometimes it's the actions of visible companions.

When choosing what to describe, the GM should consider three things:

- What's happening around (or to) the adventurer?
- How aware are they of this situation? What has had their attention so far?
- How much time do they have to take things in before they must react?

Good lead-ins imply action—it should be apparent that the situation is evolving rapidly, and that something will happen if the adventurer doesn't intervene. (If not, perhaps rush play is over!)



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## AWARENESS

Adventurers that have had time to observe the situation get clearer, more complete information. Adventurers that are overwhelmed by pain or chaos, have been bumped around or surprised, only get general impressions.

## LOOKING AROUND

Asking for more information about what's going on is often wise. But this takes time! During rushed play, adventurers should feel torn between understanding the situation better and acting on their partial information.

If a test is in order (e.g. because of chaotic action), consider Wits/2. Success means clear description. Extra successes earn details, or (at the GM's option) allow the adventurer to take a quick follow-up action.

Failure means partial information, vague impressions, or that the adventurer has left themselves open as they gawk dumbly.

## RESOLVING THE ACTION

The GM decides how the situation gets resolved. This could be through simple narration, or perhaps a test will be involved.

Are the lead-in and the adventurer's action in direct conflict? Does it matter which happens first? If so, an opposed test is probably in order.

## EXERTION

Unless the adventurers take pains to organize themselves for group action, or exert themselves, the events of rushed play will overtake them.

As the active adventurer performs their action, the rest are completing their own actions, or doing nothing other than desperately trying to integrate what is happening.

The exception is exertion. By accumulating points of exertion, adventurers can subvert the usual turn sequence by Joining in or Interrupting.

## JOINING IN

By accumulating one point of exertion, any adventurer can perform the same action as the active adventurer.

For the purposes of the active player's test (if there is one), this counts as helping under pressure.

Adventurers can only join in if they're positioned to do so. If they're not in position but nearby, the GM may increase difficulty of helping by /+1 or /+2.

## INTERRUPTING

After the GM has said their lead-in for the active adventurer, other adventurers may interrupt.

Interrupting actions must be brief - fast enough that they could theoretically complete or interfere in time. Interrupts can allow the interrupting player

to try to shoot first, shove a fellow adventurer out of harm's way, dodge an area attack or volley of arrows, and so on.

The interrupting action is resolved immediately, without a lead-in. Depending on the situation, the GM might declare that the interruption happens before the lead-in, simultaneously with the lead-in, or the GM could call for a test to determine the order of what happens.

Other adventurers may Join In by spending exertion, but you can't interrupt an interruption.

After the interruption is resolved, the original acting player gets their turn.

## OUT-OF-TURN REACTION TESTS

If the unfolding action suggests it, the GM can of course call for an adventurer to make a test out of turn as a reaction to something that's happened on someone else's turn.

## COMMANDS

When an adventurer commands the party to act, they use their turn to bark a short order—just a few words. The would-be commander tests Command/1, with /+1 or more for intense chaos or deafening background sounds. (Shouting orders during a brutal melee at foot of a waterfall, /+2.)

If the commander succeeds, one adventurer plus one per extra success may join in the commander's action without exertion.

If the commander has a burden of leadership, double the number of adventurers that may join in. Orders from leaders are expected.

A command that initiates group action should be resolved immediately. If the commander is leading by example, everyone following counts as helping under pressure.

If the commander is only directing others, one of the adventurers following orders must lead whatever test follows.

## ONE.. TWO.. THREE..

It's possible for adventurers to plan ahead to make coordinated action. This must happen before rushed play. Once the rush begins, there is no time for elaborate plan-making, and the party must rely on exertion and commands to act together.

More rarely, there is a brief lull in the action that's too short to count as the end of rush play, but allows adventurers a chance to coordinate.

## THE TOLL OF EXERTION

As rush play ends, adrenaline subsides and the effects of exertion take their toll. Everyone involved in the rush must roll Grit/Burdens.

Test Result	Mandatory Rest
Fail by 2 or more	Unconscious. Take damage = exertion
Failure	Stumbling. Take damage = exertion
Success	Winded
1 Extra Success	Ready after a deep breath
2+ Extra Successes	Exhilarating. Restore d3 health

## OVEREXERTION

The maximum exertion spend is 6. Any adventurer who spends this much resolves their action, then immediately pays the toll of exertion.

## CATCHING YOUR BREATH

An adventurer can voluntarily pay the toll of exertion early by catching their breath. This takes a minute or two during which they're out of the action. If they're interrupted, their rest counts for nothing.

## FIGHTING

Physical conflicts are part of adventuring in ALM. This section has rules for resolving individual actions during fights.

### BOUNTS

When you fight an enemy with hand weapons, test Arms opposed. The winner out-duels the other and inflicts damage: one point per extra success (see "Health and Critical Injury" on page 6).

The loser is also profoundly disadvantaged; they are rocked back on their heels, scrambling backwards, or perhaps their weapon is out of position. Perhaps the winner has moved to a better distance for their weapon.

### WEAPONS

Weapons increase the damage caused by striking. Some weapons are particularly good at penetrating armor; these ignore one point of armor protection. **Short** and **Long** weapons refer to weapon reach (see below). **Quick** weapons are easy to ready as they slip from sheaths; as long as you're aware of your attacker, you can have your quick weapon ready. Crossbows are so **slow** to reload that they are effectively one-shot weapons for chaotic skirmishes. In large-scale battles (where turns are a little longer) they can be reused as long as an action is spent re-winding them.

Weapon	Dmg	Special
Axe	-	Ignores 1 armor
Bow	-	30 paces
Dagger	+1	Short reach, Quick draw
Sling	-	15 paces
Spear	-	Long reach, Ignores 1 armor
<b>Specialist Weapons</b>		
Sword	-	Long reach, Quick draw
Pole axe	+1	Long reach
War sword	+1	Long reach
War axe	+1	Ignores 1 armor
Lance	+2	Long reach, Tricky (/+1) , Mounted
Great bow	+1	60 paces, Ignores 1 armor
Crossbow	+2	60 paces, Ignores 1 armor, Slow Reload

## PRESSING THE ATTACK

In a sparring match, or against opponents where quarter is expected, a single bout often ends the fight. In a fight to the death, however, the struggle continues.

When you press the attack against your disadvantaged opponent, you inflict double damage (*after* bonuses are added in). This normally requires the winner to *join* or *interrupt*, lest their disadvantaged foe wriggle away.

## MOST APPROPRIATE WEAPON BONUS

Whoever has the weapon with the most appropriate weapon reach gets a +1d bonus. In open terrain with combatants closing from range, this usually goes to the longer weapon. In brawls, crowds, or close scuffles, knives have the advantage over longer weapons.

If it's not obvious, neither combatant gets a reach advantage. Bare-handed opponents never get this bonus.

## TIES

On a tie, weapon has struck weapon in a particularly awkward way. Both sides must choose: drop their weapon, or it's ruined on a 1-2 in 6.

## HELPLESS FOES

When you attack a helpless enemy, test Arms/0 and do double damage. (Only do this if the outcome is uncertain for some reason. If you have time to kill someone helpless, they're dead.)

## SHOOTING

When you shoot at a stationary, nearby target with a bow, sling or other missile weapon, test Bows/1.

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Add /+1 if they are alert and moving. If they are doing nothing but dodging you, test Bows/Vigor opposed.

Add /+1 or /+2 for long or extreme distances.

Success means a hit that does one point of damage, and another for each extra success.

## SPRINTING, EVADING AND FLEEING

When you rush to get there first, just in time, or to get away, test Vigor/gear burdens. When you're racing someone else's action, roll Vigor opposed to their skill. If they win, they act before you get there/get away.

If you are riding a mount trained for war, roll Riding instead.

## FIGHTING AGGRESSIVELY

If either combatant is fighting aggressively, foregoing a proper defense in order to land blows sooner and harder, add +2 to the damage done by either side.

## FIGHTING DEFENSIVELY

If an adventurer fights defensively, they test Arms as normal, but with +1d. If they win, they do no damage, and their opponent is not disadvantaged.

## GRABBING, GRAPPLING AND SHOVING

Grabbing your opponent is handled like a bout, but you test Vigor. (If they're fighting you with a weapon, they will have reach bonus.) If you win, you do no damage, but they are disadvantaged as they would be after losing a bout.

If you're grappling, you're holding on to them. If you're shoving, you've made some space between you, or perhaps they've fallen over.

## OUTNUMBERING

There are no special rules for outnumbering an opponent. Adventurers can take turns fighting bouts (one of them is sure to overcome the enemy), or they can exert themselves to join in and help under pressure.

GMs should limit the maximum number of helpers sharply, depending on the situation.

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# LARGER BATTLES

## TACTICAL ASSESSMENT

When adventurers study the battlefield to understand the tactical situation, treat this as a Looking Around action (see page 27), but test Tactics/1, with /+1 for nearby chaos, /+1 for complex situations.

Success not only gives information about what's happening, but the tactical goals of the enemies.

## RALLYING

To restore cohesion, the party must spend time repositioning itself. The fastest way to do this is for someone to issue a rallying command.

*"To me! To me! We must hold the gate!"*

## INCOMING FIRE

When arrows land amid the party, everyone should roll damage on themselves.

- A few stones and arrows, d6
- A volley from a comparably sized group, d8
- Direct fire from a much larger group, d10
- Withering fire, d12

## HOLDING FORMATION

When a group charges through harm (e.g. arrow fire), or pursues a fleeing enemy, it's difficult for it to keep both cohesion and momentum.

Call for a weakest link test of Battle/1. Raise difficulty for being outnumbered, casualties, and surprise attacks.

Failure means the group loses cohesion, or (for very bad rolls) outright scatters.

## FORMATION FIGHTING

When a group with cohesion fights in close formation, test Battle opposed.

The winning side benefits from 1 armor from its close formation.

The losing side does not, and must give ground to retain its formation. Losing by 2 means a choice between outright flight or letting the clear line collapse into a melee.

If the test is failed, the losing side must give ground to retain formation. Losing by more than 1 means a choice between flight, or letting the front collapse into a melee.

## MELEE

When groups without cohesion fight en masse, or when the lines are confused and combatants are mixed into a disorganized melee, everyone counts as fighting aggressively.

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# SETTLEMENTS AND GROUPS

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Dotted throughout the wilderness are settlements—groups of people clinging to one another for safety and mutual benefit. Fortified farming communities, enclaves of skilled specialists, the markets of a village or town, an order of clerics, or a noble house, or merely a sturdy shelter from the elements.

Some are willing to share with strangers, others are not. Careful adventurers may find their way into these communities to form lasting bonds with them in exchange for conformity, sacrifice, or debt.

## BONDS, MEANS & STRIFE

This chapter outlines some rules for portraying groups: how the adventurers form relationship bonds with them, the entitlements that flow from these bonds, and how those bonds change over time.

The groups themselves are characterized in terms of their Means (how powerful they are), their Strife level, and what types of Strife are affecting them. These values affect how groups interact with one another: competing, warring, or allying for mutual benefit.

## BONDS

Relationships to settlements and groups are called Bonds. These bonds can represent reputations, personal relationships with influential group members, or appointments to position of status or power.

The ability to forge and maintain these bonds may spell the difference between a profitable foray and an untimely death.

## BOND RATINGS

Like abilities, Bonds with settlements have a Rating. Bond 1d indicates someone known to the group, someone trusted until they show otherwise. Bond 2d indicates a strong relationship, significant trust, or a durable, important role in the group. Bond 3d represents prominent, leading members, celebrities, and appointments to positions of significant power within the group.

***Malik of Covrel has visited the Abbot of Dunlidge many times over the years, bringing him vital news of the region at great expense to himself. He has earned Bond 2 with the abbey.***

## FORGING BONDS

How adventurers can most easily bond with a group will vary. In general, they must perform an act of generosity, service, or conformity that affects influential members of the group.

Acts of generosity meet the group's needs—food, wealth, information, splendor. Acts of service deal with known threats to the group. Acts of conformity affirm the group's values and culture. Paying tribute,

erecting monuments, swearing oaths of fealty, or adopting the group's beliefs.

Adventurers will need to interact with the group to find out what its needs and goals are; they are not always obvious.

## DANGEROUS OUTSIDERS

In all cases, the act must be consistent with the goals and desires of the group. Groups are rarely grateful to hear about new threats! Nor are they happy to learn that their goals are unwise.

Disrespecting a community member with a higher bond explicitly sends the message that you don't respect what the community values.

## CEMENTING THE BOND

In some cases, the adventurers will undertake acts deliberately, in other cases they may inadvertently form a bond as a by-product of their deeds.

Whichever it is, the GM should look for a consummate moment that has the potential to cement the bond. Perhaps this is a speech, a song by the fire, the presentation of a gift, or the end of a battle.

If the GM feels that a test is required (e.g. using Sway to petition a court), consider using the group's Means (see below) as the difficulty. For especially insular, conformist or secretive groups, /+1 or /+2.

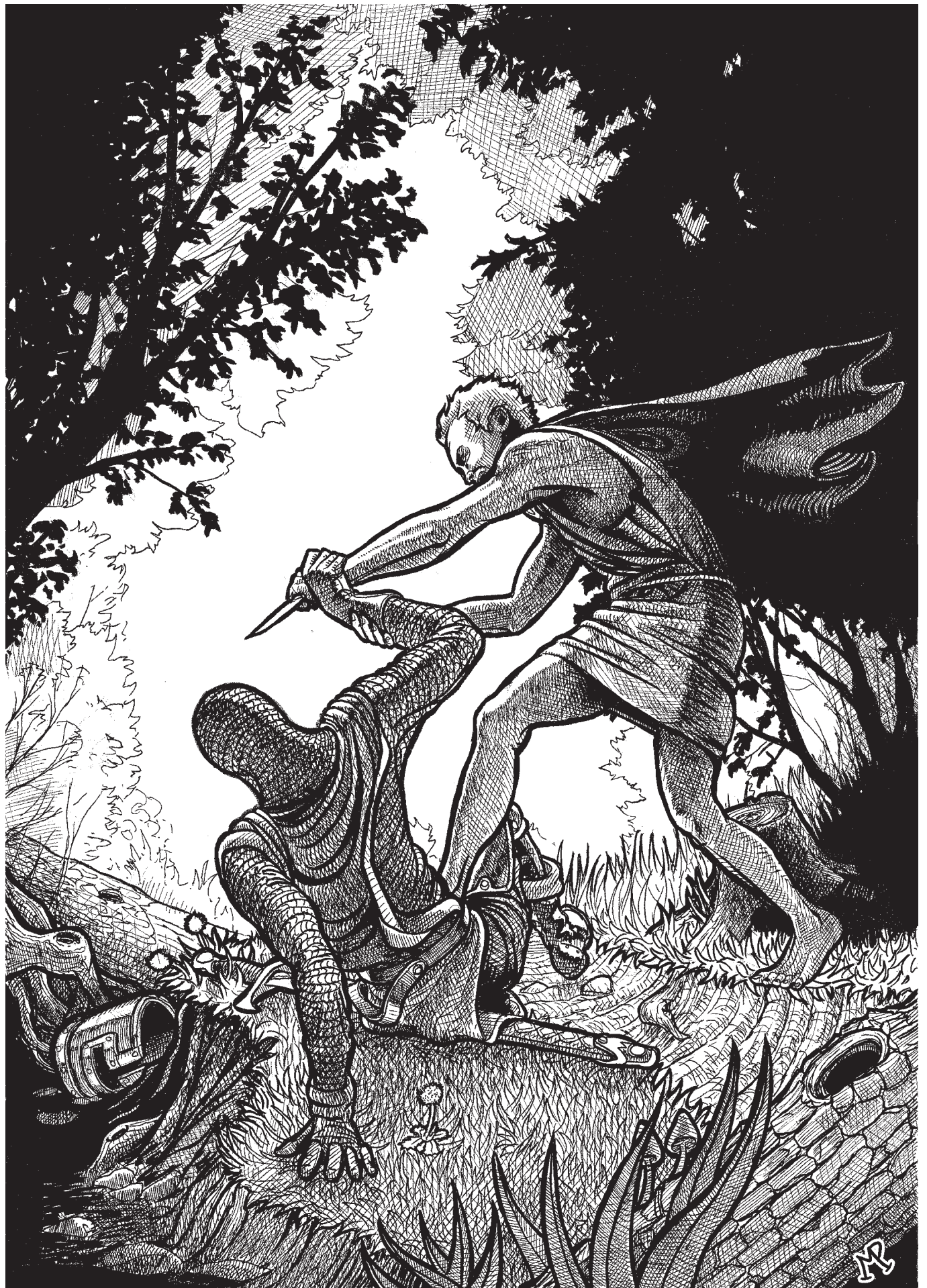
## NAME THY FRIENDS

The GM should crystallize the bond by naming an appropriate NPC who is the key figure in the relationship. Sometimes this choice is obvious from play so far. If not, the GM should name someone.

## MEANS

Each group has a Means rating which represents how well resourced, resilient, and effective it is at meeting its goals, and how able it is to influence the world around it.





Means	Example Groups	At most..
1	Ragtag bunch of wandering actors and minstrels. An impoverished cluster of farms.	A meal, a jacket, a useful tool
2	A village. An insidious and organized secret cult operating within a larger group. A nomadic band in good health. A small pack of armed rebels with a good hideout, or tacit support of locals.	Use of a guide, a few stout men to help with something, a bony nag and a cart
3	A local lord, with the trust of her people and a of vassals-at-arms to call upon. The ruling council of a prosperous small town. A thriving temple or abbey. A company of mercenaries, or a city state's standing militia.	Mules, a cart, a longboat, a few warriors, a few weapons, provisions for weeks
4	The elite of a regional religious order. A wealthy landholder. A small town's presence on the regional map.	A suit of metal armor, good quality arms, riding horses. Porters.
5	The ruling merchant cabal of a large city.	An expedition crew
6	A wealthy royal house with the full support of its vassals. A large, cosmopolitan city's presence on the regional map.	Top quality arms and armor, warhorses; an ocean ship.

Over time, the Means of groups can change. When it's doing well its Means rating may rise; when it experiences setbacks, Means can fall.

*A royal house during a protracted war, deeply in debt to upstart trading families and presiding over a city full of internal conflicts may only have Means 3 or 4.*

## WHEN TO DEFINE AND PREPARE GROUPS

Much as you won't have a map of every location the adventurers travel to, it isn't necessary for all groups to be represented mechanically as Groups.

You may wish to do this on a just-in-time basis, representing groups informally through role play, or using the stats of archetypal examples until it's clear that more depth is required.

## GROUPS WITHIN GROUPS

Similarly, you may want to decompose larger, diverse groups into sub-groups as the players get invested.

From a distance, a city can seem like it acts with cohesive purpose on the landscape. Up close, however, it degenerates into a mass of factions, each of whom have their own stories and goals.

The GM should feel free to identify additional groups within the larger whole. These might be recognizably distinct institutions (temples, a cabal of artisans), or hidden, subversive elements.

## THE ROLE OF GROUPS IN THE GAME

Do not underplay the difficulty or significance of forging bonds. Allied settlements are a vital resource in the game, and making these alliances a genuine challenge will make the entitlements all the sweeter.

## ENTITLEMENTS

In most cases, settlements restrict the benefits of their community to those they trust. Once that trust is earned, the benefit is freely given.

***Scarsaddle, a mountain village beset by bandits, is extremely wary of strangers. Trading with the goatherds of Scarsaddle requires Bond 1 or higher.***

***Owlshade, a rough sea port, will take anyone's money. No bond is necessary to buy in its markets. Buying property requires Bond 2, however, as the merchant cabal that rules it is extremely reluctant to let wealthy outsiders stake a claim here.***

## WHEEDLING

Reluctant groups can still be convinced to part with things they care about, on a case-by-case basis. Trying to get something you're not entitled to is possible, but you'll need to talk or bribe your way in somehow.

Overt wheedling is only possible for entitlements at the next bond level. For entitlements higher up, extreme circumstances are necessary: lavish gifts, great desperation (on the part of the group!), or cunning deception.

## TYPICAL ENTITLEMENTS

As long as visitors don't look too rough, strangers with no bond are normally allowed to approach or enter, to goods and pay for room and board for short periods.

### BOND 1 - FRIENDS AND FAMILIAR FACES

Without doing any particular great deed of service, Bond 1 can sometimes be obtained by swearing to keep the peace, obeying the laws and pay import taxes on goods brought in.



- Free entry into the settlement, to buy and sell
- May hire retainers
- May rent property
- The right to bring charges or bear witness against non-citizens

#### BOND 2 - CITIZEN OR HONORARY MEMBER

This level of bond can sometimes be bought for a sack of silver and swearing an oath of loyalty to the town, and to foreswear any affiliation with its enemies.

- A week's hospitality
- Right to buy property
- Equipping: d6 burdens of provisions, a burden of travelling gear
- Access to justice, to bring charges or bear witness against another member

#### BOND 3 - ESTEEMED CITIZEN OR MEMBER

Esteemed members have firmly linked their destinies to the group. Very likely they will have done all of: married in, bought property, sworn an oath of loyalty to the rulers, and donated a talent of silver to the group's coffers.

- Equipping: d3 burdens of travelling gear, d3 burdens of expedition gear
- Indefinite hospitality
- A say at council proceedings, access to privileged information
- The right to borrow something expensive (a few horses, a longboat, a set or two of excellent arms and armor)
- Free instruction in the group's special skill
- The right to found other sub-groups

## FINDING PEOPLE

Communities are networks of people that know and (usually) trust one another, surrounded by a penumbra of comers and goers. Without public directories, the best way to get in touch with someone with specialized knowledge is to make inquiries and to be introduced. In some cases, adventurers will need a series of introductions over a period of days (or weeks, when trying to win a brief audience with someone busy and powerful).

### LOOKING FOR SOMEONE

When adventurers try to find someone specific to talk to, consider calling for a test of Sway/1.

If the person sought has a higher Bond, raise the difficulty by the difference. Communities generally shield their high-status members; it may be best to talk to an intermediary or delegate.

Raise difficulty by /+1 when looking for a person with a particular specialty or attitude, by /+2 for

especially insular, secretive or illegal purposes (e.g. an assassin, a poison-maker).

## DO I KNOW ANYONE HERE?

When adventurers are in a fraught situation and wonder if there are any familiar faces in the crowd, use the same test as for looking for someone, but /+1. If it's a single, specific person and the party is wondering if they recognize them, /+2.

### FAILURE

If the test is failed, perhaps the sought-after person:

- can't be found, or doesn't exist
- refuses to see the adventurers
- is available but compromised: mired in problems of their own, willing but incompetent, or aligned with enemies

## STRIFE

Communities and groups have problems of their own—competition (or outright warring) with other groups, internal intrigue, insidious cults, or the depredations of curses, disease or famine.

Strife is represented by a type and rating. The higher the rating, the worse it is. Each strife type has a corresponding random table of events, a list of things that may go wrong.

### THE STRIFE ROLL

When it becomes time for a strife effect (more on that later), the GM chooses follows this process:

1. Choose a type of strife at random, from the list of types that affect the group
2. Find the appropriate strife table.
3. Roll a random event from that strife table, adding the strife rating as a modifier.
4. Apply the result.

This is much like the procedure for wilderlands events.

## SINCE WE SAW YOU LAST..

When the adventurers re-establish contact with a group, the GM should make a Strife roll. This represents the accumulated problems that have beset the community since the adventurers were last in touch.

Since it isn't practical for the GM to contemplate the ongoing life of every community the adventurers have visited, this roll has an additional modifier if the absence has been long.

Absence	Modifier
A month	—
A season	/+1

Absence	Modifier
A year	/+2
Years	/+3

## EFFECTS OF STRIFE

**TODO:** This could probably just be replaced with the Strife tables—this is design guidance.

Strife threatens the stability of the groups the adventurers have bonded with. All manner of things can go wrong as a result of strife, including:

- Descriptive developments without mechanical effects
- The adventurers' bond with the community, as established friends lose status or are consumed by problems
- Strife increases as problems worsen
- Means decreases, as Strife saps the cohesion or resources of the community
- Fictional developments occur that have lasting Strife penalties (e.g. the town hall burns, Trauma Strife +1)
- New groups emerge nearby or as sub-groups (e.g. Gangs, Cults)
- The group adopts a Strife goal—some ill-advised project consumes the community (e.g. persecuting outsiders)
- Structural changes, such as a new faction forms as a sub-group (e.g. Intrigue Strife allows an insidious cult to take root)

In all cases, the GM should portray these happenings to the adventurers. This portrayal could be obvious, or it may come as worrying clues whose meaning is unclear. Nevertheless, the adventurers should have the gnawing sense that things are worsening.

## HEALING STRIFE

Strife sometimes subsides on its own—a disease burns itself out, gangs are driven out by community action—but not very often. More commonly, Strife gets worse until the adventurers address it. The players must decide whether to do this, and what they'll do about it. This is a player-initiated quest like any other.

When it is done, the GM should adjust the group's Strife ratings accordingly. This requires judgement. Did the adventurers misunderstand what was going on, and spent their time attacking the wrong target, or dealing with a mere symptom? Perhaps there's no effect at all.

Did they strike a meaningful blow against the cause of the Strife? Reduce the Strife rating of the appropriate by one or two points. If they rooted it out completely, or made a meaningful change that could last for years, remove that type of Strife completely.

As with forging bonds, the GM should choose this effect carefully. Honor the accomplishments of the players, but do not make it too easy. Choosing to heal Strife should be a difficult decision.

## CONSOLIDATE OR PUSH ON?

As the players accumulate friends, problems, and opportunities, they will be forced into trade-offs about what to protect and what must be left to the cruel grind of time.

Healing Strife should therefore be sufficiently challenging as to create a sense of accomplishment. Beating up a few thugs in an alley will do nothing to reduce banditry. Burning down the hideout of the smuggling ring probably will.

## THE WATCHFUL EYE OF FRIENDS

If the party has stationed an unplayed adventurer in the community to watch over it, it is assumed they have been working tirelessly to help the community and to maintain the party's interests.

This has two effects on Strife rolls:

1. The stationed adventurer may attempt to prevent the Strife effect by rolling Troth/Strife. If they succeed, they instead of the effect occurring, the stationed adventurer has either been working to forestall it, or has their ear to the ground. There are worrying signs, but it hasn't happened yet.
2. Any bond-reduction effect is ignored completely. The stationed adventurer has kept the relationship alive, despite the complications.

## DOWNTIME

Between forays, adventurers will likely want to spend a month or two of downtime preparing, or working on other long-term projects.

Resolution of downtime is meant to be quick, because the meat of play is the action during forays. A season of downtime should be resolved within a few minutes.

## ONE ACTION PER MONTH

Adventurers can perform one downtime action per month. While a season is a long time, life is busy and the time passes by quickly. Most of an adventurers' free time is taken up by participating in daily life of the settlement, maintaining relationships, helping with the many chores, maneuvering to avoid entanglements, or simply making ends meet.

## LIVING EXPENSES

If an adventurer's bond with the settlement entitles them to Hospitality, then their basic living expenses are covered. This may not mean a glorious lifestyle,



but hot gruel and a barn to sleep in is better than nothing!

In other places, living expenses of food and shelter will run to a **purse of silver each month**; possibly more in expensive settlements (e.g. where room is scarce). If the necessary funds aren't available, the adventurer will have to work (see below).

## STRIFE CHECKS DURING DOWNTIME

If the adventurers stay in one place long enough, the community's strife will manifest. Each month, the GM should roll d6. On a 1-2 result, a Strife Event occurs (see page 33).

## DOWNTIME ACTIONS

- Communing at a Shrine
- Practice Skills
- Instruction
- Ritual Study
- Research Lore
- Reduce Panic
- Train Animal
- **TODO: Train Hireling**
- **TODO: Work for Hire**
- **TODO: Heal**
- **TODO: Buy Property**
- **TODO: Finding Rumors**
- **TODO: Patrolling/Warding**

## PRACTICING

Spend xp equal to a skill or stat's rating to earn one tick toward advancement. Only one tick can be earned this way for the month.

## INSTRUCTION

A skilled instructor can help a student learn a skill much more quickly than they can with just untutored practice. If the instructor has a higher skill than the student, the student can spend 1 xp to earn 1 tick.

If the instructor is a PC, they may pay the xp cost.

Access to NPC instructors will require finding them, paying them, and/or establishing suitable bonds with their settlement or group.

## PERFORMING SERVICE

**This can be used to buy Bond 1 with a settlement, and Bond 2 for very small communities. (Stronger bonds require heroic service through adventuring, large gifts of cash or treasure, or similarly grand gestures.) Cementing the bond requires at minimum a test of Sway. (See page 30 for more on forging bonds.) [It might be unwise to mechanize this. Consider ripping this out entirely.]**

## SOOTHING PANIC

When the terrors of adventuring are too much, adventurers may attempt to soothe their panic. Some seek out old friends to comfort them, or the guidance of wise mentors. Others spend time in quiet, peaceful contemplation. Some pray, or reflect on the grim seriousness of their task, steeling themselves against the

dark moments to come. Still others turn to drink or intoxicants to numb themselves into oblivion, dulling the mind.

Either way, spending a month soothing erases all Panic advancement ticks, if there are any. The panic rating itself never goes down.

## COMMUNING AT A SHRINE

Communing with the gods, or the spiritual powers of a place (a regional deity, a cthonic spirit, an ancestral host), to develop a bond. See "Earnings Bonds with Powers" on page 52.

## RITUAL STUDY—INSIGHT

Magical rituals often have hidden dangers. Patient meditation, exploration and fortunate dreams can reveal them. See "Forced Insight" on page 42.

## RITUAL STUDY—UNMUDDLING

By spending downtime on a poorly transcribed or hastily memorized spell, a muddled spell can be sorted out. See "Unmuddling" on page 42.

## TRAINING ANIMALS

Training clever, friendly animals to act on command is Husbandry/2. Add difficulty for animals which are aggressive (great cats), stubborn (mules), alien (giant insects) or stupid (turkeys).

The process takes a month for each type of training.

Types of Training	
Riding	Attacking
Performing	Guarding
Labour	Scouting
Fetching	Tracking
Hunting	Battle Tolerant

Mark xp the first time that training an animal goes terribly wrong.

## TODO

- Train Hireling
- Work for Hire
- Heal
- Buy Property
- Finding Rumors
- Patrolling/Warding

## FOUNDING GROUPS

Adventurers may also mobilize or organize portions of a community into new groups. Charismatic and ambitious adventurers may found religious movements,

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mercenary companies, or lead townspeople out into the wilderlands to found a new settlement.

A bunch of considerations

- This may be received as a direct threat to the place where you're canvassing. Picking recruits from the king's guard will not be taken lightly; nor will raising a militia in a village at harvest time.
- The would-be group's purpose must be attractive to those who are joining it. People join groups for self-interest.
- Word must be spread sufficiently wide, and the group induced
- The group must be provided for until it is self sufficient (if ever). There's an upkeep cost, which varies tremendously. If this isn't paid, intrigue, privation will set in immediately.
- A foundation roll is used to determine if the group gets off the ground at all, and if so, what Bond the founder has with it. Groups are never gear: these relationships must be nurtured.
- Seems I need to call for Strife rolls at other times, so that intrigue can take root on the road. Or maybe just have a seasonal one, regardless? What's the overlap between Hirelings event card and an Intrigue Strife card?

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## SANCTUMS AND FORTS

- Obtain property
- e.g. rent or buy some in a settlement, occupy a ruin and/or restore it; have something built from scratch (tho \$\$\$ + time)
- Forts are, well, forts. They provide a defensive bastion of last resort in the case of raids, where defenders can wait out besieging attackers, and pursue and or counter-attack at will. The best way to establish a fort out in the wilderlands is to restore an old ruin.
- Sanctums are , big TODO to connect this with magical/sacred research, but the basic idea is that it's safer to experiment in a sanctum. Both because it's a space you control (no interruptions), has all your stuff handy, but also because it keeps out prying eyes. Wizard towers out in the wilderlands are essentially sanctums.
- Building staff, a posse of builders on your restoration project, etc. are all little Groups. Means 1 or 2, subject to strife like any other.
- Needs templates for nascent groups
- wilderlands building groups (building materials, safety)
- new, semi-fortified farming community or garrison pulling itself up by its bootstraps (needs: specialists, farmland)
- new forts must be supported by farmland, so they're basically villages with hugely expensive

building projects

- military unit in a place of safety
- schools
- enterprises
- hermetic/sacred orders - really need followers

## ATTRACTING FOLLOWERS

Adventurers with reputations (and property?) can attract followers; these are like retainers, except they don't require payment. 'Reputation' basically means a Bond with a community.

The chance should be pretty small, but maybe gated by your highest Bond and your Skill. Maybe you have to spend a month of downtime somewhere, and that's how you attract followers.

Follower skills will vary; they needn't match. Maybe they're just random characters from settlements? Perhaps exotic characters from afar, too?

Roll d6 +1 for bond 2 or higher, +1 , +1 if you have property

1-6 nobody

6 person from the

7 an exotic specialist from afar (roll on subtable-tho none should outshine PCs)

motivation

1 loyal supporter, becomes an inactive adventurer and/or join the staff at one of your properties (e.g. sanctum, fort)

2 believe in the cause want to adventure with you

3 adventure to learn from you

4 real loose cannon, latching on to you for baggage-related reasons of their own - death wish, complete fantasy about what you're doing, opportunity to settle a grudge. Low Troth

5 want to teach you

# RITUAL MAGIC

Ritual magic is the act of evoking unseen power. It is not a science that can be mastered, but a capricious and unreliable art. The rituals that call it forth did not emerge from careful experimentation, but were snatched complete from visions and fevered dreams.

Rituals take many forms. Some are great meditations that draw on stores of elemental power. Others are prayers or evocations to spirits or Powers of the earth—spirits, gods, and demons. Some are litanies of strange words, others are dances.

## RITUAL CHARACTERISTICS

All rituals have a few characteristics in common.

- The inherent **difficulty** of the ritual. How hard is it to cast?
- A **muddle penalty** owing to hasty learning, improper transcription, or muddled, third-hand explanations
- The **skill** used to perform the ritual. Often Rituals, but sometimes Perform, Labourer, or other skills.
- The ritual's **effect**. What happens when you cast it?
- What **steps** are involved fictionally, and how long it takes, and what is needed (e.g. "dig a hole large enough for you to fit into using a silver spade")
- The spell's **culture**—who made it, or first learned it?
- The **escalating side effect** of failing the ritual test
- What the **ritual demands** in order to cast it more safely or effectively

## PERFORMING RITUALS

Follow the ritual's instructions requires a quiet, safe space and the full amount of time the ritual demands (along with any materials it requires). Once this is complete, test the ritual's skill. the difficulty is the ritual's inherent difficulty plus any muddle penalty.

Rituals can be performed from memory, or with the ritual instructions on hand (remember to keep them safe from harm). If the test is successful, the ritual effect happens immediately.

## SUSTAINED BY WILL

Some rituals allow for a sustained effect so long as the ritualist continues to concentrate. This counts as a burden (see page 15).

## FAILURE CAUSES ESCALATION

If the ritual test fails, something bad happens. Different rituals tap into different sources of power, so each fails differently. Each ritual has up to three failure

escalation paths—a gradually worsening, nasty side effect<sup>1</sup>.

d6	Escalation Effect
1-3	The least progressed path advances and manifests. (It gains one if it doesn't have one.)
4-5	If the ritual has fewer than 2 escalation paths, it gains a new one. It manifests now, at the first stage.
6	The most progressed of the ritual's escalation paths advances and manifests. If it doesn't have one, it gains a new one.

## MAGICAL INSIGHT

If the ritualist earns a tick for advancement via insight (see page 4) while casting a spell, they also gain magical insight. In that instant, they receive a vision explaining one of the ritual's demands and the benefit it has (see "Ritual Demands" on page 39).

## RITUAL FAILURE ESCALATION

Different traditions of ritual magic tend to produce different kinds of failure. If you need to determine one randomly, use this chart:

Escalation	Hedge (d10)	Sereen (d10)	Martoi (d10)
Uncontrolled	-	1-2	1
Divine Contact	1-3	-	2
Stowaways	4	3	-
Defiance	5-6	4	3
Ostium Terrere	7	5	4-5
Bound Spirit	-	6	-
Retribution	-	7	6
Depletion	-	7	7
Transformation	8	8	8-9
Taxing	9-10	10	10

*Personal* escalation paths are tracked separately for each ritualist. *Shared* escalation paths affect the source of the ritual itself, and worsen for everyone.

<sup>1</sup> The rate of escalation needs careful playtesting. An ideal arc is that a favorite spell becomes almost too scary to use.

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## UNCONTROLLED EFFECTS (PERSONAL)

The ritual unwisely taps a source too great to be fully contained and directed. An elemental source, a great pressure, a force somehow supporting the local environment.

- too much
- uncontrolled targets
- explosive area effect
- enduring geyser of magical effect
- cataclysmic effect

## DIVINE CONTACT (PERSONAL)

The ritual is the will of a Power (see “Powers of the Earth” on page 51) made manifest. Perhaps it’s the Power of this place, perhaps it’s a Power from elsewhere. Dabblers will soon confront the Power directly.

- Omen—an unmistakably odd thing happens, making it clear the Power has noticed
- Vision—the ritualist is shown a threat, warning, or an instruction. Perhaps the meaning is easily discerned, perhaps not.
- Brief possession—
- quest/geis
- avatar/transformation

## STOWAWAYS (PERSONAL)

The source of the spell’s power is somehow contaminated by beings that come through every time the ritual is used. The being may appear in the midst of the magical effect, in a shower of sparks or smoke, crawl up through a hole in the ground, or be vomited up by the ritualist.

- Odd or disturbing voices come from all around the ritualist.
- An imp appears and either harasses the ritualist (from a safe distance), or steals something and flees.
- A horror of the lower world emerges.
- d3 demons emerge.

## DEFIANCE (PERSONAL)

The ritual defies understanding and grows harder to control with each use, it slips away from you.

- /+1 to the next casting
- /+1 inherent difficulty
- /+1 inherent difficulty
- /+1 inherent difficulty
- the ritual slips from the mind, it is now unlearned and unlearnable

## OSTIUM TERRERE (SHARED)

The ritual draws power (or is otherwise connected to) an otherworldly place. The boundary wears thin.

- omen
- a glimpse of the ritual’s source
- a temporary breach

- a permanent portal

## BOUND SPIRIT (SHARED)

The ritual involves a bound spirit or minor demon, which seeks escape. The magic comes from the spirit itself, is a side effect of the spirit’s sentence (perhaps the ritual is the punishment), or is leeching off the energies of its eroding prison.

- altered target/effect
- pleading, bargaining or threats
- brief escape
- escape (ritual useless until it is recaptured)

## RETRIBUTION (PERSONAL)

The ritual violates a proclamation of great powers/the natural order/a taboo of the unseen.

- forboding weather
- animal interference
- reputation
- cults receive visions of the ritualist’s blasphemies
- guardians are dispatched to prevent the ritual ever being used

## DEPLETION (SHARED)

The ritual is a side effect of some dynamic; a migration of ethereal beings, a decline or waning, or the last pre-

cious drops of an eldritch reserve of power.

- cosmetic sputter
- delayed start
- effect fizzles
- one final use remains

## TRANSFORMATION (PERSONAL)

The ritual involves channeling a power that is transformative, either as a result of a curse woven into the ritual, acceptance of some implied bargain or mantle, or because the ritual’s power itself is corrosive (radioactive, mutagenic, sickening).

- signs (e.g. squawks for a bit, coughs up feathers)
- symptoms (e.g. grows feathers, yellow eyes)
- deformity (e.g. grows huge wings, talons)
- whole-body transformation (e.g. becomes a bird)
- mental transformation (character becomes NPC)

## TAXING (PERSONAL)

The ritual deplete the ritualist directly every time the ritual is used.

- d3 exhaustion damage (use heat criticals—see page 23)
- d6 damage
- 2d6 damage
- fatal heart attack



## ACQUIRING RITUALS

Rituals are found in books, scrolls, etchings on blades, runic inscriptions around sacred columns, bored into altars. In order to acquire a ritual, you must realize that's what you're seeing. (See the Scribe skill on page 9 for reading various languages.)

Reading a ritual often gives a lot of information about it. Usually a preamble explains the purpose of the ritual, and will state or give clues to its culture. Other times, discovered rituals will have been translated (e.g. by collecting sorcerers), and possibly stripped of clues as to their purpose.

### FIRST CASTING

Not everyone can learn every ritual. The first time a ritual performed, the ritualist must generate as many successes as the ritual's inherent difficulty. If they don't, they can never use that ritual again.

Experienced ritualists cultivate every advantage when learning new rituals in order to avoid this.

### TRANSCRIBING RITUALS

Transcribing a ritual onto parchment or into a book is a Scribe/2 test. If it's in a language you don't read, Scribe/4 to copy it symbol for symbol. This takes d6 hours (perhaps less if you're doing a rubbing).

Failure means errors were introduced, raising the ritual's muddle penalty by the degree of failure.

### MEMORIZING RITUALS

Rituals can be permanently memorized in hours equal to the ritual's inherent difficulty. Test Wits/4. If the test is failed, the spell is still memorized but add an additional muddle penalty equal to the degree of failure.

### SNATCHING RITUALS

Astute ritualists can snatch rituals from one another by observing them being performed. If this is happening in an instructional setting, treat this as memorization or transcription (above).

If this is happening without the consent of the casting ritualist, test Seeing/3. Add +1 to +3 for observing only part of the ritual and inferring the rest. Add +1 to +2 for being too far to see details/too far to hear.

As with transcription and memorization, failure adds to the muddle penalty of performing the snatched ritual.

## RITUAL DEMANDS

Mastering difficult rituals involves satisfying their demands, demands that become apparent only in moments of great insight. Perhaps these were once

known, but lost or kept out of the written record, or perhaps the ritual has never been fully mastered.

Rituals have at most d3+2 demands. Meeting a ritual's demand provides some benefit:

d10 Benefit while Demand is Satisfied	
1-3	When a known escalation path manifests, it's two stages less serious. Also, it doesn't worsen.
4	Ritual's strength, range, duration or precision is doubled.
5	Ritual's casting time is reduced one category (a day, hours, an hour, minutes, a minute, seconds).
6	+2d to use this ritual
7-10	Advanced effect, if there is one. If not, reroll with a d6.

Demand	Hedge (d12)	Seree (d10)	Martoi (d10)
Cultural Trapping	1-2	1	-
Special Tool	-	2	1
Sacrifice	3	-	2
Prayerful Group	4	-	3
Hermetic Order	-	3	-
Conduit: Engine	-	4-5	4
Conduit: Shrine	5-6	-	5
Conduit: River or Road	7	-	-
Conduit: Ley Line	-	6-7	6
Conduit: Terrain Feature	8	-	7
Vitrum Aquae	-	8-9	-
Bond: Ancestral Host	9-10	-	-
Bond: Local Power	11	-	8
Bond: Demigod	12	-	9
Bond: Demonic	-	10	10

## CULTURAL TRAPPINGS

The forces that power the ritual are expecting the ritualist to belong to a particular culture. Maybe they're expecting a particular individual! The GM should decide the ritual's originating culture (e.g. Seree, Martoi, Dradkin, Vinteralf, Ricalu, etc.), then decide what is required by rolling d6 plus the ritual's inherent difficulty:



d6 + diff	Required Cultural Trapping
2-3	Clothes of any station or role from the culture, even tatters
4	Finery (e.g. a fine sash) or jewellery (e.g. a Seree dog-icon silver ring)
5	Vestments of a particular office (sooth, priest, “Lord of Numbers”, etc.)
6-7	A valuable relic (e.g. a silver prayer bowl from a Panurian altar)
8	Vestments specific to a particular person (e.g. Titardinal’s white robes)
9-10	A priceless relic or mark of office (a golden diadem, jewelled talisman)
11	An heirloom or enchanted object from the culture
12	A specific legendary magical artifact

Whatever is required, it must be worn or displayed proudly while the ritual is being cast for it to have its effect.

## SPECIAL TOOL

The ritual requires a tool or of some sort.

d6	Ritual Difficulty		
	/1-2	/3-4	/5+
1	crow feathers	an uncut gem	an anvil of white metal
2	heavy leather gloves	a ring of gold	engraved plate armor
3	fine ceremoninal knife	heirloom dagger	ceremonial knife of dark glass
4	a chip from a mountain peak		staff chased with white metal
5	an ancestral bone		a wizard flower
6		a sanctum	a great sanctum (SQ 10+)

## SACRIFICE

Something must be (d6) 1 consumed, 2 destroyed, 3 spoiled, 4 permanently abandoned, 5 burned or 6 buried.

**TODO:** Ties into the geography, the bestiary, biomes, seasons.

d6	Ritual Difficulty		
	/1-2	/3-4	/5+
1		an uncut gem	
2		a ring of gold	

d6	Ritual Difficulty		
	/1-2	/3-4	/5+
3	quantity of <herb>, burned	heirloom dagger	ingest a wizard flower (powdered)
4	a burden of salt, poured in a circle		
5		rare wood incense	
6			drink dragon’s blood

## MEMBERSHIP IN A GROUP

The ritual requires that the ritualist be supported by, a member of, or to lead a group of some kind. Prayerful orders are cults, covens, or temples, devoted to a Power (or at least a prayerful or meditative practice). Hermetic orders are cabals devoted to the study of rituals.

Roll d6 plus the ritual’s inherent difficulty.

d6 + diff	Required Group Membership
2	a group of some sort must pray for or watch over the ritualist
3-4	friends (bond 1+) with an appropriate order
5-6	a group of skilled assistants must aid the ritual
7-8	initiated (bond 2+) with an appropriate order
9-10	lead an order devoted to the ritual’s culture
11	found and lead an order devoted to the ritual’s culture
12	an order devoted to the ritual’s culture must assist the ritualist during the ritual

## CONDUITS

A particular place (or type of place) is special to the ritual - perhaps it is the source of the ritual’s power, the spot where the ritual was first revealed.

### SHRINE

The demand is satisfied within d6 hexes of an actively maintained shrine of a particular Power. On a 1-2 in 6, it is the local Power. On a 2-4, it is the Power of a nearby place.

### RIVERS, ROADS, AND LEY LINES

The GM should choose a spot along a river, road, or ley line, d20 hexes away. Somehow, this place is of great significance to the ritual, and everywhere reachable along that river, road, or ley line.

### TERRAIN FEATURE

The GM should choose a significant terrain feature within 100 leagues. The demand is satisfied whenever

the ritualist is within it or within sight of it. Great forests, fruiting glades, legendary springs, mountain peaks, swamps, lakes, or even seas.

For weaker rituals (/1-3), any feature of that type will do. For more powerful rituals, the GM must name a particular mountain, lake, forest, etc.

#### ENGINE

The Seree discerned great rituals, far too elaborate and powerful for a single human mind. In order to cast them, they produced great, magical engines—enormous contraptions of gold and white metal, black mica and dark glass. During the wars with the gods and each other, the Seree moved their engines into hidden places, within mountains, deep underground, or in fortified vaults, and guarded their locations with murderous purges.

When the ritualist receives the insight, the spell engine will be somewhere  $d100+20$  leagues away.

On a 2 in 6, it is merely necessary to visit the engine and perform the ritual. Otherwise, the ritual demand is satisfied within  $d6 \times 10$  leagues of the engine.

#### VITRUM AQUAE

The Seree wizards of old understood that the mortal mind was too delicate, too unreliable, to achieve the great meditations necessary to cast the rituals of the luminous void.

To aid them, they developed an alchemical ritual (see “Vitrum Aquae” on page 46). By liquifying and then drinking gemstones, the wizards could crystallize mental states that could otherwise only be maintained for brief periods. This greatly enhanced their ritual prowess, at the cost of rigid, erratic personalities and mental illness, as flexible brain function was displaced.

Different rituals require different types of gemstone, depending on the ritual’s difficulty:

d6	/1-2	/3	/4-5
1	agate	amethyst	sapphire
2-3	topaz	ruby	dragon eye
4-5	quartz	emerald	diamond
6	opal	dragon scale	dark glass

#### WIZARD FLOWERS

After death (whether natural or hastened), wizard brains were boiled away by their successors in order to extract the “wizard flower,” the hardened gemstone, now a cauliflower-like structure—a magical thought in physical form, useful for constructing enchanted items of all sorts.

## BOND WITH A POWER

The ritualist must establish and maintain a bond with a Power. If the ritual has the Divine Contact failure path (see page 38), there is a 3 in 6 chance it’s the same Power.

Rituals with difficulty /3+ require Bond 2 with the Power for the demand to be satisfied. Rituals with /5 require Bond 3.

## TITARDINAL’S WHITE ROBES

When a demand is revealed, the ritualist may not know *how* to satisfy it. Perhaps they learn that they need Titardinal’s white robes, but have no idea where to find them. This is good! Adventurers who seek great power will need to do their own leg work—finding lore, books, sages, or rumors that point them in the right direction.

## MAGICAL RESEARCH

Rituals can be difficult to cast and have hidden dangers. But patient meditation, alchemical exploration, and properly solicited inspirational dreams can help.

### UNMUDDLING

Like living things, rituals want to be whole. By carefully spending time with them and savoring their poetry, the proper form can emerge.

Unmuddling a ritual takes a month of downtime (see page 34) in a sufficient sanctum, and lowers one ritual's muddle penalty by /1.

### FORCED INSIGHT

Instead of relying on spontaneous magical insights, a ritualist can spend a month downtime in a sufficient sanctum, trying to force one through intense meditation, fasting, hallucinogens or other, more extreme methods.

### SANCTUMS

Not all sanctums are equally good for magical research. Add up the features of the sanctum to work out its sanctum quality (SQ).

If the ritual's inherent difficulty is higher than the SQ, the sanctum is not sufficient for the work. No test is made, and the month is wasted.

Sanctum Feature	SQ
Shared accommodations (homes, tavern)	-2
Private chamber in a shared structure	-1
Natural altar (clearing, stonetop)	-
Sizeable, completely private space (e.g. a locked attic or crypt)	-
Purpose-built wooden sanctum	+1
Purpose built/carved stone sanctum	+2
..which is a Shrine to the local power, with Bond 2+	+1
..built with a kastromatic layout	+1
..on a ley line (one, two+)	+1,2
..at an earth wound (surface or middle depths, bottom)	+1/2
..with a workshop equipped in a culturally appropriate way given the ritual's origin	+1
..with attendants to secure the sanctum and feed everyone involved	+1
..with skilled ritualist apprentices to help (some, 30+)	+1,2
Each silver talent spent on alchemical supplies (city availability)	+1 ea. (max 3)

## FORCED INSIGHT TEST

At the end of the month, make the forced insight test. Add +2d if the sanctum quality at least double the ritual difficulty.

If the test is passed, the ritualist immediately gain a magical insight as per "Magical Insight" on page 37. If the test is failed, there is horror instead of insight.

**Horror = d6 + (base diff \* margin of failure) - SQ**

Horror	Forced Insight Failure
< 1	Someone nearby gains the insight instead. If they didn't know the ritual, it comes to them with no muddle penalty. Maybe they tell you.
1-2	Muddle penalty increased by /+1. Insight arrives in 6 months if the ritualist persists.
3-4	Otherworldly mumbling plagues the ritualist, driving them down so many blind alleys they forget how the spell. Muddle penalty increased by /+d6
5-6	Apparent success, except a gelagus arrives and infests the walls of the sanctum. 1 in 2 chance it remains, otherwise moves out into the nearest settlement.
7-9	Something bad senses weakness and arrives, either secretly or shockingly. Major haunting spirit, .
10-12	d3 minor demons arrive.
12-15	A howling portal opens to the luminous void, lasting d3 months. Tick panic. A squad of void gulls arrives in d20 hours.
16+	Minor earthquake heralds the formation of a new earth wound, centered on the sanctum. Tick panic.

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# KNOWN RITUALS

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## PROSAIC RITUALS

Throughout the wilderlands, the most common rituals are passed from elder to elder. When the need arises, they are also given to the ones sent out beyond the boundaries.

They have been sung so many times over the ages that they have no failure effects, but they are as worn as an old axe-handle: no insight can be gained either.

### CACHE

Protects the camp or a store of goods from prying eyes. Enhances natural cover, so it works best in forests, basins, gullies and so on. Extra successes raise the difficulty of finding this spot (up to 3), for anyone not present at the ritual. Requires strong incense.

**Skill:** Survival/1; 1 hour.

### FINDING

At the end of this ritual, the caster releases a bird or other flying creature, which will fly off at full speed in the direction of that which the caster seeks - allies, enemies, a lost companion, food, shelter or water. Requires a flying creature in good health. Bonus dice for burdens of grief for the lost companion.

**Skill:** Husbandry/1; 1 minute.

### LANDMARK

Take a pebble from the grave of a loved one, bury it at a spot. All those present at the time of the casting will indelibly remember this place and its approaches, however ordinary it seems.

**Skill:** Rituals/1; A few minutes.

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## HEDGE WIZARDRY

Some prosaic rituals have been lost to the village elders; some through accident, some deliberately, fearing their purpose or their origin. In the wilderlands, however, there are still a few mad old fools that remember them.

### ACCORD STONE

For time immemorial, the most fortunate villages have been those surrounded by accord stones—stelae or standing stones engraved with a reminder to wandering ancestral spirits: turn back, for those you love are behind you. By placing a ring of accord stones around a village, it can grow strong and wise. Requires a standing stone.

**Skill:** Craft (masonry)/2. d6 days for engraving one stone.

## RITES FOR THE LOST

A ceremony to commemorate companions that were left unburied, or lost and now presumed dead. Everyone present takes an amount of experience equal to that of the lost companion. Requires a burnt offering, a dirge, and a grave marker.

**Skill:** Rituals/1; 2 hours.

### SIGHTING

This ritual determines the distance to a landmark that can be seen. Requires string, parchment and pen, or a piece of polished glass.

**Skill:** Commune/1; d2 hours.

### TENNANT'S CALL

A distant adventurer comes to understand that the caster wishes them to come. The target will be granted only the most fleeting impression of where the caster is, so this is useful only for summoning adventurers to familiar places.

The call can only be heard in moments of quiet and calm, so this is no good for finding lost adventurers in distress. This is an excellent way to unretire an adventurer who is not placed where you need them.

**Skill:** Performing/6 minus the target's Troth (minimum /1); d6 hours.

### WARDEN'S STEW

Eating together reveals many things. This ritual is cast by preparing food to be shared, or contributing food to a meal. If the ritual is successful, the ritualist has +2d toward influencing others sharing the food to reveal their secrets (see page 25).

**Skill:** Tending/2; 1 hour.

**Escalaton:** divine contact (ancestral spirits); retribution (demons who would otherwise eat the dead)

**Demands:** a good village shrine adds +2d; killing an underworld demon removes the 'retribution' escalation path

**Advance:** the ring is potent enough to awaken ancient ancestral spirits since before the village

### DESECRATE

Shrines can be difficult to build; it's far easier to convert an existing one. Some Powers aren't picky, and even prefer shrines desecrated and despoiled in their name.

**Skill:** Rituals/3

**Escalation:** Retribution

**Advance:** Desecrating a shrine produces +1 bond with its Power (max 3)

## HALFSIGHT (SUSTAINED)

See into the grey world, rendering visible any unseen spirits, powers, emanations, enchantments, curses, compulsions, or illusions in the area. Requires a silver bowl and pure water or a mirror.

**Skill:** Seeing/2, minutes.

**Escalation:** divine contact.

**Demand:** a bond with an ancestral host reduces all side effects by the bond rating.

**Advance:** While sustaining the effect, the ritualist can physically interact with the grey world.

**Advance:** The ritualist enters the gray world, becoming ghostly or invisible in the normal world.

## HOURLY OF NEED

Call an ally, who will join you at some point in the future. The ally will be disposed to help you, although in an environment where potential allies are rare, you may be surprised who shows up. Requires the sacrifice of something freely given to you by a friend.

**Skill:** Commune/2, 1 hour.

**Escalation:** stowaways.

**Demand:** a bond with the local Power reduces stowaways by 1 step.

**Advance:** The ally appears immediately.

**Advance:** The call is retroactive, and targets a chosen retired adventurer, who began the journey the necessary time ago to arrive any moment now.

## LONGKNIFE

By means of certain motions with a knife, the ritualist causes cuts visible targets at a great distance.

**Skill:** Arms/2, an instant.

**Escalation:** taxing (use injury criticals)

**Demands:** using an heirloom or silvered blade stops taxing from worsening; using a magical or dark glass blade prevents it from manifesting

**Advance:** The effect becomes sustained, doing the same amount of harm as the initial attack every hour.

**Advance:** The ritual can be used with any weapon.

## MEDDLER'S BROTH (SUSTAINED)

The wizard defaces an accord stone, meddling with the agreement between the living and the dead. If successful, the ancestral spirits become confused, believing the meddler to be every village babe they have ever cared for.

Within the stone circle of the accord, the wizard heals at a rate of 3 health every hour. The critical injury healing period shrinks to a week, rather than a month.

**Skill:** Craft (masonry)/4, 1 day.

**Escalation:** Retribution (ancestral spirits); Ostium Terrere (the underworld—the village sinks and becomes an earth wound).

**Advance:** The effect includes up to two others the ritualist is touching.

**Advance:** Healing accelerates to 6 health/hour, and the critical injury period shrinks to a day.

## MEDDLER'S FLOCK (SUSTAINED)

The wizard defaces an accord stone, meddling with the agreement to fool the ancestral spirits into thinking the wizard is an elder of the village in a time of great need.

If the ritual is successful, d6+1 undead emerge from the village's graveyard to perform labor, or to harm enemies as directed.

**Skill:** Craft (masonry)/3, 1 hour

**Escalation:** retribution (undead)

**Advance:** 2d10 emerge, led by a armored warrior.

**Advance:** d100 emerge. For every 10, there is an armored warrior. If there are 50 or more, they are led by a sorcerer that knows d3+1 hedge wizardry rituals.

## THIEF'S CANDLE (SUSTAINED)

Enchants an ordinary, portable light source (a candle, torch or lantern) so that only the bearer can see its light. For everyone else, it's as if there was no light at all.

**Skill:** Survival/1, 1 minute.

**Escalation:** divine contact with the local power.

**Advance:** Each extra success allows someone else present to see the light also.

**Advance:** The six nearest allies of the ritualist can see the light through up to 300 yards of stone.

## NIGHTFISHER'S WEB

By pouring out a large quantity of salt in a spiral, the caster creates a labyrinth that attracts the demons that wander the night. Demons cannot see beyond the line of salt, nor cross it. Unless demons are especially frequent, one will arrive in d20 days.

The ritualist then hops out and closes the mouth of the labyrinth with a line of salt. The caster must remain alert, lest they drowse and not notice the creeping demon before it's too late.

**Skill:** Rituals/2, 1 hour

**Escalation:** Retribution

**Advance:** The ritualist draws up the ethereal strands of the web, and tightens them into a collar. Any demon so chained can be led around and moved, and remains powerless.

**Advance:** Rituals/3, The ritualist knots the strands of the web and flings it into the gray world, taking the demon with it.

**Advance:** Rituals/4, The ritualist winds the strands



of the web into a medallion. The demon is imprisoned within, and can be spoken to by any that wear it.

## OTHERS

- Rictus - hold person

## FEY ENCHANTMENTS

The earliest people known to sages are the Martoi. Their time had passed long before the old kingdoms began to grow, although their ghosts are said to ride forth on moonlit nights. Their castles have gone, but their magic persists in the world, usually recorded as parables or stories.

### HEARTSONG

The bards of the ancient world could reveal truths with a song. The chords of the heartsong are so affecting and earnest that half truths and lies spoken or sung over it are obvious. The truth (however ugly) resonates deeply, and is equally obvious.

**Skill:** Perform/3, several minutes

**Escalation:** Taxing

**Demand:** A musical instrument of Martoi manufacture (or design)

### KNOWING

immediately reveals who they are, and where they are from

**Advance:** Divines the true name of someone present.

True names cannot be recalled by mortals, and unless inscribed or etched immediately will be lost as soon as it is uttered. Working with someone uncooperative raises the rank of the ritual to the target's Guile, if it is greater. (TODO: So.. what the heck is this used for?)

Rituals difficulty 2, hours. Escalation: defiance.

## OTHERS

- Other animal messengers.
- Arrow of Bones

### MANTLE OF THE WOLF

This mantra taps into a spirit of rage and vengeance; it allows the caster to Panic while charging into battle. The effect spreads to any that join their actions. The effect lasts until the toll of exertion is paid.

**Skill:** Commune/3 3, hours.

**Escalation:** transformation (white-furred werewolf, kicks in d3 days later - rage, fur, d6 hours as werewolf, d3 days); retribution (Deel)

**Demand:** carrying a silver-bladed weapon reduces casting time from hours to seconds

**Demand:** bond with the Leádstæf (a demonic power) causes the spell to last as long as the battle

### RAVEN'S EYE

A raven comes to the caster and, hearing the caster's will, flies backwards in time—days, weeks, months, or even years—to learn a secret of the past. It returns a moment later, and croaks what it has learned.

Ravens don't know faces very well, and can only interpret the most basic of human interactions. (Except, perhaps, especially wise ravens.) Know that when a raven watches you, your actions are not done in secret.

**Skill:** Rituals/3, 1 hour.

**Escalation:** permanent, gradual transformation into a bird - squawk, raven eyes, claws, feathers, bird; Ostium Terrere to the grey land.

**Demand:** being near a standing stone grants +2d.

**Demand:** sacrifice, burning a quantity of [rare wood] prevents the transformation from escalating.

### RIVERBLADE

Before he fought Naulung, Gisuurig walked into the river Aff and drew forth a blade that held in it all the power of the waters.

The blade itself appears to the ritualist in some prophetic and dreamlike way—it is as the bottom of a lake, in a fissure in the ground, it is the long bone of a stag that must be slain, it must be plucked from a gleam of sunlight on the pack ice.

Performing the ritual or brandishing the resulting weapon requires a Bond with the Power of the place. Otherwise, picking it up means immediately accepting a vow (see "Earnings Bonds with Powers" on page 52). If the bond is forsaken or the vow not upheld, the weapon will always fail its wielder.

Only one riverblade can exist for any given place. If one already exists, then this ritual draws it forth from wherever it was.

### FORM OF THE WEAPON

The form of the weapon varies: the ancestors and angry spirits provide man-made weapons from the past. Ancient powers gift flakes of white metal, or long shards of dark glass. Soil mothers transform a part of the ritualist into a weapon of sharpened bone or horn. Demons might do anything (e.g. the weapon is a translucent cube that harms those the wielder looks at through it).

Regardless, it is a +1 heirloom, with one additional effect:

d6	Additional effects
1	Wielding it counts as standing in a shrine
2	Additional +2 against enemies of the Power
3	Piercing 2
4	TODO
5	A random ritual has been bound up in it; the wielder may cast it without muddle penalty.
6	TODO

**Skill:** Commune/4, 1 week

**Escalation:** Stowaways, Defiance, Bound Spirit

**Advance (random):** Other weapons or a shield can be retrieved instead.

**Advance (random):** Armor (d3+1 points) can be made. It is one burden lighter than normal armor.

## UNION OF BLOOD

The fey learned how to spread their influence through world through bargains with the Powers, pacts sealed with blood.

## SORCEROUS EVOCATIONS

The Seree emerged from the old kingdoms, first as a nation, then as an empire, scouring the lands for magic to increase their majesty. Some say they fell to warring between rival sorcerer-lords, others that they were punished by the gods.

### RUINATION

Through force of will, the ritualist can interfere with spells as they are being cast. The margin of success is added to the difficulty of the ritual being cast.

**Skill:** Rituals/2, seconds

**Escalation:** uncontrolled effects

**Advance:** Rituals/enchantment difficulty, unravel a permanent enchantment or magical effect

**Advance:** Craft (masonry)/3, inscribe a permanent glyph of ruination, with the same effect in a 30-pace arc before it

**Advance:** Rituals/4, 1 hour: create a permanent zone where all magic is +3, 10 paces across + 25 paces/extra success

**Advance:** Rituals/3, seconds

### FEAST OF GAZON

The feast requires a large ceremonial basin, filled with fine oil. As the ritual words are intoned, the oil blackens and becomes a 'second mouth' for the target (the caster or another person present). As long as the basin is 'fed' with a supply of food, the target does not need to eat.

**Skill:** Rituals/3, d6 days

**Advance:** By sacrificing a livestock animal into the

Standing at border of two conduits (see "Ritual Demands" on page 39), the enchanter cuts their hand with a blade. As the blood soaks into the ground, it forms a pact—the enchanter may now use the two conduits as a single, expanded conduit.

The unified conduits can be ley lines, terrain features, rivers, or roads. Shrines will also work, so long as the enchanter has a bond with the shrine's Power.

Rumor has it that making a union of blood at the bottom of an earth wound creates a conduit for a hundred leagues in every direction.

*One of Titardinal's rituals demands that he cast it along the river Saranel. Standing where the Saranel enters the great Tealwood forest, he performs the union of blood, extending the conduit throughout that mighty forest. The ritual's demand is now satisfied anywhere along the river, or anywhere in the forest.*

**Skill:** Rituals/3, 1 hour

**Escalation:** divine contact, retribution

basin, an additional target can be added. Food is shared between all targets equally.

**Advance:** The basin can be pre-fed with up to a person-year's worth of food.

**Advance:** Anyone immersing themselves in the basin is vomited up by the target.

### VITRUM AQUAE

Many of the Seree's most powerful achievements relied on one simple ritual, Vitrum Aquae. By drinking alchemically liquified gemstones while maintaining the perfect mental state for a particular ritual, wizards were able to crystallize their thoughts (both literally and figuratively).

After death, wizard brains were boiled away by their successors in order to extract the the hardened gemstone, now an elaborate, cauliflower-like structure—a magical thought in physical form, useful for constructing enchanted items of all sorts. In the dark centuries that followed the fall of the Seree, many heads were split in the search for "wizard flowers".

This process is only useful if a particular ritual demands it (see page 39). Over time, it tends to get more and more difficult. There is only so much brain that can be given over to magic, before an ambitious wizard can scarcely form thoughts at all.

**Skill:** Rituals/3, 6 hours

**Escalation:** defiance

**Advance:** Dark glass may be used for any ritual; if it is, there is a 2 in 6 chance the ritual may be used as an at-will ability.

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**Advance:** If crystalline white metal is used for the ritual, there is a 4 in 6 chance the ritual becomes an at-will ability.

## ASTRAL PATH

Turns the party (how many people? minimum Trusty?) astral, allowing them to leave their bodies and wander through the grey world. They are variously invisible/intangible to normal creatures, but much more visible to others.

The adventurers appear indistinct, and have no equipment save for heirloom or enchanted items. They can't eat (but their bodies still need to, and so will need tending). (Maybe they get to pick one ordinary item, Atlin suggests.)

## CIRCLE OF PROTECTION

Unseen powers whose rank is less than the ritualist cannot influence those within the circle, nor attack the

circle itself so long as it remains whole. Requires a pound of salt or a circle, inlaid by masters or flawlessly etched in stone.

## KELLERN'S CRUCIBLE

Kinda like consecration, purification, dispelling.

## SUMMONS

Calls forth an unseen power invested in this area so it may be treated with. If there's margin of success, the power must show itself physically, otherwise it may stay hidden, communicating with sounds and signs. Seree, Rituals difficulty 2, defiance. Escalation: uncontrolled (voices, possession, enduring physical manifestation). Demand: use it on a ley line to reduce from hours to minutes.

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# GREAT SORCEROUS WORKS

## INGENIUM

At the height of their power, the Seree snatched rituals from the gods themselves. Unable to bear the strain of the elemental energies involved, they constructed ingenia—artificial constructs that rendered the great meditations into physical form.

Those initiated into the secrets of the ingenium were given 'key spells' that allowed them to tap the power of the ingenium and bring forth the desired effect, placing unimaginable power in the hands of mortals.

Building an ingenium takes months, and requires:

- eight talents of gold
- six wagon loads of crushed mica
- a talent of dark glass
- two talents of white metal

If the construction is successful, a new, simpler form of the encoded ritual (the 'key spell') is placed in the mind of the ritualist. The details of the key spell are the same as the original ritual, but the difficulty is reduced by 3. (Key spells cannot be encoded into ingenium.)

The Seree speculated that the ritual of ingenium itself was a key spell, made possible by a divine ingenium at the heart of the world.

When standing directly in front of an ingenium, the key spell can be learned instantly by testing Commune/2.

**Skill:** Rituals/5, d6 months

**Escalation:** uncontrolled effects, stowaways

**Advance:** New spells can be invented.

## SORCEROUS ACCORD

To extend the reach of their ingenia, the Seree wizards placed accord stones on mountain tops to chain celestial power into conduits through the air.

The accord stone must be placed on a high point, within the demand radius of the ingenium. Anyone within d6 x 5 leagues of the accord is considered to be within the demand radius of the original ingenium.

Seree accords vary in style—the earliest were carved from the mountain peaks themselves. Later accords were made from exotic stone transported magically, every inch engraved. The last ones, erected hastily during war, have an air of desperate pragmatism to them.

**Skill:** Craft (masonry)/4, 3 days

**Escalation:** retribution

**Advance:** Accords can be chained together, potentially spreading the range of magic for hundreds of leagues.

## GUARDIAN SIGIL

The ingenium were locked away deep in mountain vaults, where no prying eyes could find them. Still, wizards had their ways, and so the Seree bound guardians to them.

Reptiles were preferred due to their uncanny stillness, but nearly every variety of animal has been tried somewhere.

If the ritual is successful, the animal is bound to the ingenium, and is nourished by its energies. Over the

next decade it take on monstrous proportions, roughly the mass of a hippopotamus.

If the ritual fails, the guardian is still bound, but it chafes in its duties, growing more and more frantic as the years pass. After d20 years, it devours the ingenium and becomes a dragon.

**Skill:** Rituals/4, d3 days.

**Escalation:** none

**Advance:** The guardian's change in size takes only

a year, and in that time it grows to the mass of an elephant.

**Advance:** Over d3 years, the guardian acquires human intelligence. Most Serees preferred to have wise, intelligent guardians, and often spent long hours reading to them and tutoring them in philosophy, natural history and war. Early Sereera guardians were legendary in their wisdom and learning, becoming great teachers within the order.

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## UNDERWORLD WHISPERS

### CHOSEN

Cast at a group of people. This spell reveals one of three things: who the group loves the most, the least, or whom they protect.

**Skill:** Panic/2, minutes

**Escalation:**

**Advance:** For d6 hours, the caster has +2d to social tests to attempt the group to surrender the chosen person to the caster (as a servant, sacrifice, meal).

### CONDUIT

By accepting the truth that they are a wholly unnatural being and that nothing is as it seems, the caster allows an incoming magical effect to pass through them and instead affect a nearby ally chosen at random.

**Skill:** Panic/spell difficulty, seconds

**Escalation:** transformation

**Advance:** The caster may choose the new target of the effect, so long as they are within arm's reach.

**Advance:** The caster may recognize the effect of the magic by its taste before making the choice of where to direct it.

### CROWN OF THE DEMONLORD

The demonlord forges a spike of metal as a prison for a demon, and hammers it into his or her skull, doing d12 damage.

If the ritual is successful, the demonlord gains the use of a randomly chosen innate power of the demon.

Requires an ingot of metal, tools to work it, and a captive demon.

**Skill:** Panic/4, d6 hours

**Escalation:** stowaways, defiance

**Advance:** Up to 3 spikes can 'worn'.

**Advance:** Two innate powers can be extracted from each captive demon.

### DIMREACHER'S HUM (SUSTAINED)

A directionless subsonic buzzing permeates the area, ruining echolocation and other lightless dark vision abilities. In addition, while the hum is sustained, encounter intensity

**Skill:** Panic/2

**Escalation:** taxing, defiance

**Advance:** The effect expands to 200 paces.

### HOWLING GATE

A magical gate emerges briefly, pulling through a being from the depths of the underworld.

**Skill:** Panic/3

**Escalation:** uncontrolled effect

**Advance:** The gate can be used in either direction, allowing the caster to cross into the underworld. The ritual becomes *sustained*.

**Advance:** Before the gate howls and pulls through its target, the caster may use it to snoop on the underworld end and only open it properly if a desirable target moves past. This use is *sustained*.

### RECLAMATION

Salt crystals drawn from the victim's bodily fluids crystallize on their skin. Causes muscle spasms, fainting, and lasting weakness (d8 harm) until they are replenished.

This is originally a dradkin funerary rite that has been weaponized.

**Skill:** Panic/2

**Escalation:** stowaway (dradkin ghosts)

**Advance:** Increased effect - an additional point of damage is done for each extra success.

### SOMATIC TRAITOR (SUSTAINED)

Target victim is betrayed by d2 of their limbs, which either attack the rest of the victim's body, or clumsily obey the caster's verbal commands.

**Skill:** Panic/target's Grit, seconds

**Escalation:** retribution (the caster's own body)

**Advance:** The entire victim's body is controlled.

**Advance:** Up to d12 human-sized targets are affected, /+1. The ritual succeeds as long as at least one victim fails the test.

**Advance:** Every enemy of the caster within earshot is affected, /+2

### SWARM (SUSTAINED)

The caster and all their gear suddenly collapses into a mass of worms, flies, or beetles, which immediately



burrow into the ground or fly away—possibly all in separate directions.

d6 hours later, the swarm reforms into the caster in some other place. The caster has no memory of the intervening time.

**Skill:** Panic/3, seconds

**Escalation:** Taxing

**Advance:** The transformed caster can move consciously, perceive the environment, and delay the return to mortal form for an additional d12 hours.

**Advance:** The swarm is of a dozen venomous cave centipedes.

## HAMODEN'S LOCK

### ADDING RITUALS TO THE GAME

There are many excellent spell lists and random spell generators available. To translate them to ALM, assign them a **difficulty**. You must also pick a **skill**, possibly based on your choice of culture that created the ritual.

Power Level	Difficulty
Minor cantrips, charms	/1
Undeniable magic	/2
Potent magic	/3
Great rituals	/4
Mighty upheavals	/5

Concern	Prosaic	Sorcery	Fey
Elemental		*	
Skill	*		*
Protection	*	*	
Destruction		*	
Necromancy			*
Illusion	*		**
Enhancement	*		*
Curses			*
Insight	*	*	*

Idiom/Skill (d8)	Prosaic	Sorcery	Fey
Rituals (intoning, hand-waving)	1	1-4	1-2
Commune (prayer, journeys)	2-3	-	3-4





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Idiom/Skill (d8)	Prosaic	Sorcery	Fey
Cultural expression skill (dance, song, food, festival)	4-5	-	5
Labors (toil, walking in a circle, visiting someone, building)	6	5-8	6
Skill: the magic is in the doing	7-8	-	7-8

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# POWERS OF THE EARTH

Beyond the visible world lie the hidden Powers—ghostly, demonic or divine presences. Some are ancient and dormant, others are fierce and dynamic, but every part of the land is given over to one or another. Some watch the goings on in the mortal world with keen interest, others are aloof and uninvolved.

## WHO RULES THIS PLACE?

Spiritual influences are numerous, but any given region has but one dominant Power—regardless of what the people worship. Use this chart to determine what it is.

d12	Village or City	Great Forest	High Place	Low Place	Water Body	Dark Below
Ancestral Spirits	1-5	-	-	-	-	-
Angry Spirits	6	1	-	1-2	1-2	1
Ancient Power	7-8	2-4	1-5	3-5	3-7	2-6
Demonic Upsurge	9-10	5-7	6-7	6-8	8-9	7-10
One of the Demigods	11-12	8	8-9	9-10	10-11	-
Soil Mother	-	9-12	-	11-12	12	12
Luminous Void	-	-	10-12	-	-	-

Most Powers are unique to that place. Some ancient powers, demigods, and the greatest demons, however, dominate more than one region, sometimes great distances apart.

### ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

Ancestral spirits are the accumulated dead of a village, town or city. Settlements surrounded by accord stones (see page 43) often have sizeable hosts of ancestral spirits. They protect the young, whisper words of wisdom into dreams, and embrace the gifts of the newly dead as they cross the grey veil.

### ANGRY SPIRITS

Sometimes, the bond between the living and the dead is broken—perhaps meddlers have tainted the accord, or perhaps troubled years have led the people into a foolish course that displeases the ancestors. Perhaps a settlement is abandoned, and the dead grow anxious, frantic from loneliness and the hunger for life. Sometimes foolish leaders bring war upon their people, and whole regions are thick with the spirits of unburied dead.

### ANCIENT POWERS

Long before people walked the land, it was watched over by ancient powers. Often the ancient powers are concerned with natural processes. Some are content to see the animals prosper, others revel in the erosion of the land, or the whim of chance and fate. Some express the divine essence of a certain type of stone, a river, or an animal. Their knowledge is hard to absorb, for it is often alien to how people see the world.

### DEMONIC POWERS

In some cases, a horror from the depths emerges to claim part of the surface realm for itself. Some have been exiled, and are reeling from a lost power struggle in the deep places. Others claw their way to the surface out of hunger or ambition.

When people abandon the accords and allow the ancestral spirits to grow weak and dormant, a vacuum is left that demons are eager to fill.

### THE DEMIGODS

In other places, the demigods hold sway. Knowledge of the demigods was spread by the Seree during their dominion over the many realms. Even so, the form their worship takes varies considerably from place to place—even their names and supposed roles vary as well.

### SOIL MOTHER

The will of a great forest is actually that of a living being, but it has such potency that it acts like a Power in every sense. The roots of a great forest run deep, and sees through many eyes.

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## SHRINES AND COMMUNING

Wherever people have lived, there are shrines to the Powers. Shrines mark a connection between the Power and the material world. A Power can perceive everything that happens at their shrines, and can potentially be heard or even bargained with.

In the wilderlands, settlements are far enough and safe roads are few. Local customs evolve, and worship can look quite different from place to place. Because

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of this, it's sometimes hard to tell to whom a shrine is dedicated.

Also, people aren't always worshipping who they think they are, as some powers are deceptive, or see no reason to clear up the confusion.

## ACTIVE SHRINES—/1

Shrines vary enormously. They might be deep inside a lavish temple staffed by a cadre of acolytes, forbidden to visitors, with a high priestess who communes on behalf of supplicants.

They could also be humble, such as a few rocks stacked along the roadside, with flowers and small offerings left by passers by.

Communing here is /1.

## ABANDONED SHRINES—/3

Abandoned shrines are often ruined buildings or stark, alien places. Collapsed temples overgrown by vines, a lightning-blasted obelisk of jet high on a rainswept cliff.

Communing at these places is more difficult. Traditional supplications and prayers have been forgotten, and improvisation may be unfavorable. Perhaps the omens sent by the Power have been forgotten.

Communing here is /3.

## WITHOUT A SHRINE—/5

The Powers do not see all that happens in the mortal world, and speaking or hearing them outside of a shrine is very difficult. The usual result is wasted time, but it can also be very dangerous, especially if the Power that rules this place is hostile. Communing without a shrine is /5.

## COMMUNING SUCCESSFULLY

Attempts to commune will only be successful *once per month per shrine*. Powers rarely speak in plain language, but reply in omens. Successfully communing means the seeker may ask a question.

- Who are you? (Useful if there's ambiguity about the shrine.)
- What is the extent of your domain? (Or, whoever's domain this is.)
- What is your command? (Do not ask this lightly.)

## BONDS

Seekers who have established a bond with the Power (see "Earnings Bonds with Powers" on page 52) may ask more precise questions. In all cases, the Power will only answer questions about things within their realm (or at its borders).

- Bond 1—Questions about large geographical features, settlements, shrines
- Bond 2—Questions about people in the Power's realm, the past

- Bond 3—Questions about secret places, magic, the future

## COMMUNING FAILURES

Failure to commune by a slight margin may mean that the Powers sent no message or omen to the seeker, or the seeker didn't notice it. More serious failures may include:

- Exhaustion or health loss
- Disturbing visions
- Anathema—the petitioner can never Commune at this shrine
- Marked by the Power (see below)

## MARKED BY THE POWER

Powers can place marks upon mortals' souls. These marks are invisible, but anyone bonded to the Power that made the mark will immediately and unconsciously understand its meaning. Woe to anyone who earns a mark of displeasure in a pious land!

To sense a Power's mark without a bond, test Seeing/2.

## OTHER PRAYERS—RENOUNCING THE PAST

Shrines are transformational places. Normally, adventurers may learn only ten skills. When an adventurer solemnly renounces an aspect of their life up to this point, a skill of their choosing is erased.

## OTHER PRAYERS—GRIEVING THE DEAD

If the party is grieving the loss of an unburied companion, prayer at a shrine can substitute for the burial, cremation, or cairn (see "Graves for the Dead" on page 14). This commends the spirit of the deceased to the Power of the shrine.

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## EARNINGS BONDS WITH POWERS

As with settlements and communities, adventurers can form bonds with Powers. This can be done three ways: long periods of prayer, acts of service, or solemn vows. Not all bonds are harmonious, nor do they imply servitude! Great shamans and mystics may have bonds with several Powers.

Powers can perceive anyone bonded to them, at all times.

## PRAYER

By spending a month at a shrine in prayer and fasting, the adventurer earns Bond 1 with the Power. If the area is safe (e.g. a village shrine, or a fortified area of the wilderness), this may count as downtime (see page 34).

The Power cannot refuse this bond, although antagonistic Powers may attempt to interfere with the seeker during their stay.

## ACTS OF SERVICE

If the party knows the will of a Power, carrying out a significant act of service can earn or improve a Bond.

The act is completed through prayer at a shrine, dedicating the act performed to the Power. If the act was appropriate, one adventurer must test Commune against the new Bond rating. If successful, everyone present who participated in the act improves their Bond by 1.

- harming the enemies of the Power
- having experiences sacred to the Power
- cultural expressions: establishing a great feast or holy day at a nearby settlement
- great sacrifices
- harrowing ordeals
- building a shrine to the Power, in a place of its choosing
- founding an order devoted to the service of the Power

## ORDEALS AS ACTS

Sometimes the acts are chosen by the Power, and imposed upon the party—these may be terrifying or dangerous ordeals that begin without warning.

***In one campaign, the adventurers made contact with Ranian, the spirit of a mountain. Ranian is an ancient power concerned with luck and the danger of life on its slopes. During an attempt to bond with Ranian, it transported them to mountain peak. This began a harrowing ordeal as they struggled to descend the frozen slopes without falling or freezing to death.***

## SOLEMN VOWS

Adventurers may make solemn vows to a Power. This is immediate and requires no test, but saddles the adventurer with a burden (see “Burdens” on page 15) that reflects the nature of the vow.

The adventurer may refuse after learning the nature of the vow, but if they do, they can never have a bond with this Power. If they accept, they immediately acquire Bond 2 with the Power, or Bond 3 if they already have Bond 2.

Vows are permanent and may not be renounced. If the vow requires action that the adventurer fails to uphold, their bond provides no benefit, but the burden of their vow remains forever.

d12	Vows to the Ancestors
1	must fast during daylight / on certain days / regularly, for several days / cannot eat meat / must only eat meat / must eat only one type of food at a time / all food must be suitably blessed
2	constant sounds of prayers, mantras, or babbling
3	cannot/may not not sleep more than one hour per night
4	bleeds from stigmata
5	marked by an enemy of the Power
6	must go about bare-footed
7	must pray or meditate each morning and night
8	may never wear armor
9	may never use edged or pointed weapons
10	must announce their bond as part of their name, and to any settlement they enter or treat with. (“I am Garron, known to the ancestors of Magda,” or, “I am Yeshuin, servant of Cicollus.”)
11	must carry a prominent symbol of the shrine—a staff, talisman, robes, tattoos, scars
12	must spend this same month next year, and every year thereafter, in service at a shrine of the Power

d12	Vows to Angry Spirits
1	nose and lips slough off, leaving a drooling skull-like visage
2	plants die in the vicinity of the vow-maker, 20 paces for every month they stay
3	domesticated natural animals fear the vow-maker, husbandry tests automatically fail
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	must eat only raw meat, or insects
10	
11	must cut off a hand and sacrifice it
12	

## GIFTS FROM THE POWERS

The main benefit of being bonded to a Power is the possibility of gifts—blessings, boons, and wisdom (mundane or strange)—that flow from the Power's favor.

By making a sacrifice of value to the Power, the party may receive a gift. The method of sacrifice depends on the shrine, but whatever it is, the object of the sacrifice is lost to the party. (Stealing objects from a shrine is of course possible, but Powers detest thieves, and will mark them!)

### ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

The spirits of the ancestors grow sleepy as the years wear on. Gifts that remind them of their living days,

or the yearnings and trials of the living can call them back.

Ancestral spirits value:

- Cultural relics from the ancestors' history
- Books relating to skills of value to the village
- Recovered bones, ashes or grave markers of ancestors, buried outside the settlement
- Silver or golden treasures, which evoke prosperity (even those obviously sacred to enemies, if they represent a triumph)
- Funerals for any dead who died in service of the community the spirits watch over

d12	Gift from Ancestral Spirits
1-2	A vision or dream implants a random prosaic ritual; it is memorized with a muddle penalty of /+d3. If the adventurer receiving the ritual wishes to give it another, they can excitedly relay the details to one other adventurer upon waking from the vision.
3	As (1), but a ritual of hedge wizardry, and muddle /+d6.
4-6	The ancestral spirit of a warden returns to serve as a mentor in dreams. It can provide instruction in Bow, Hunting, Riding, Stalking, Survival, and Threats, with rating 5d to any with a bond. After a month, it fades back into the ancestral host. It can simultaneously instruct all active adventurers.
7-8	As above, but the spirit of a great hero, with Rating 5d in Arms, Battle, Command, Riding and Tactics.
9	As above, but the spirit of an elder sooth, with Rating 4d in Assurances, Command, Rituals, Scribe and Tending.
10-12	A dream in which the spirits answer a question to the best of their knowledge.

### ANGRY SPIRITS

Angry spirits value:

- Sacrifices that remind them the living suffer as much as they do
- Revenge enacted upon the living, especially their

descendants

- Feats of grandeur that strike terror
- Extended, voluntary possession
- Opportunities for mass possession

d12	Gift from Angry Spirits
1-2	Shadowy, cadaverous ally appears to serve as a guide or tracker. Bright light burns it.
3-4	A nightmarish, shadowy spirit stalks the instructee. Tick both Wits and Panic.
5	A vision of a monstrous threat in the region, and Bond 1 with that threat
6-8	A random ritual of hedge wizardry is burned into someone's mind.
9	A nightmarish vision of the nearest earth wound
10-12	An omen that those who prayed will be spared from harm from the spirits for d8 days.



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# GAME MASTERING

## SUCCESS AND FAILURE

When an adventurer succeeds, they accomplish what they were trying to do. When they fail, it should hurt.

Success means it goes well - the GM describes how the adventurer gets what they were after (the player could instead provide the color description), and the situation immediately afterwards.

## FAILURE

When an adventurer fails, it hurts. The GM has a choice:

- the attempt fails outright
- occasionally, the attempt succeeds, but with a painful cost

In some situations, the degree of failure matters. Missing the difficulty by one is bad, but not as bad as missing by three. Nevertheless, even failing by one should hurt.

## COSTS

When there's a cost to success (or an extra cost to failing), the GM has a lot of latitude to decide what this should be, though it should generally relate to the current action.

It might be a direct consequence of a crappy effort, or might be the result from having to concentrate so hard, you don't notice a small problem before it escalates dramatically.

***Garon stands up in the wagon as it careens down the trail, taking aim with his bow at the orc running alongside. No sooner has he loosed the arrow than he is clouted on the neck by a low-hanging tree branch and sent tumbling over the back of the wagon.***

## FAILURE OPTIONS

..but it costs you / someone you love / the innocent / the powerful..  
..all available time / the initiative / the advantage  
..some of their standing / friends / authority / power / relationships  
.. something useful / valuable  
.. an injury / their health  
.. psychologically

You fail..

..and that's it.

..and there's a cost.

..and/unless you face a new, difficult situation.

You succeed..

..but only if you deal with an unexpected problem.

..but an enemy..

..is made.

..sees everything.

..somehow benefits.

..twists how it turns out.

## MORE ON TESTING

If the player attempts something extremely involved or difficult where the stakes are interesting, ask 'How? What's the first thing you do?' It might be best to resolve a small piece of the action first.

If the player seems invested in an action, but interesting outcomes don't immediately spring to mind, ask 'Why? What are you trying to do?' Perhaps it would be best to resolve it with a slightly zoomed out description, using one roll for the whole effort instead of just the action that starts it off.

Use this technique to avoid peppering an adventurer with a series of nearly identical tests.

## HOW MUCH DETAIL?

The scope of a test is an important pacing tool. Consider the 'zoom' level that you're discussing the action at. Sometimes you'll spend ten minutes resolving a critical few seconds, sometimes months will sweep by with a few sentences.

When picking a zoom level, also consider how relevant the action is to the party's current goal. If the players are desperately trying to reach Morgwil's iron tower, Barral's juggling antics while resting in camp might not be that important, however difficult. "Okay, you spend twenty minutes juggling."

TODO: Adventurers usually come from families; they always have a place to stay, but they do not have a safe place to stash equipment. The needs of their family will be such that they (This belongs in a Property section, or maybe the starting village.)

Agenda, Principles, GM Moves  
sdfsdf

Celebrate their Successes

Grind them Dispassionately

Talk to the Unarmored Character

The player characters regularly put themselves in situations few would choose willingly. In Oathsworn, this isn't because they are tougher or braver than others, but because they are willing to make the sacrifices that come with these choices.

Even if they become all-conquering, monster-slaying plunderers - armed to the teeth and wrapped in enchantments and armor - inside is a vulnerable human being with all the same fears and doubts as everyone, probably more.

This is who you are talking to.

What civilization?

Lateral failure, lateral perceptions  
failures affect PC companions, and NPCs, to increase the sense that they're in it together, and to incite blame; or just plain to cause interactions. Players notice things about one another's characters, with soft moves.

This game is trying to pressure characters into treating each other poorly. Recognize this, and maintain whatever separation

Think about what success and failure might look like. Given the situation, what's the best and worst that could reasonably be expected?

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## SCUFFLES, SKIRMISHES & BATTLES

Fights range from an ungainly scuffle over a knife to pitched battles with hundreds or thousands of combatants on a side.

### THE FEEL OF BATTLE

In ALM, pitched battles between trained forces are rare. While brutes ready for violence are common, military training is rare, and few groups will fight with cohesion and discipline.

Most groups encountered, including starting adventuring parties, have neither skilled leaders nor training in unit tactics. Individuals hesitate from the panic and surprise at finding themselves in a potentially life and death situation, uncertain what course of action the group will commit to. In order to act cohesively, the instincts to either freeze or flee must be overcome.

Many groups will have a mix of personalities and inclinations to bloodshed - some hardened by acts of personal violence, others unused to combat. Some will think it best to show force, others that distance is the best form of safety.

Hostile situations are usually tense standoffs, sizing up the enemy, fighting down panic, looking for unspoken signals for what to do. Allies transfixed by

the sight of steel don't return your sidelong glances, making coordination difficult. Who will make the first move?

When untrained forces come up against decisive action - unexpected resistance, concerted charges, or ambushes by hidden foes - the most likely reaction is complete chaos.

Over time, the adventurers must acquire the skills essential to fighting effectively. Those that don't will most likely be routed and cut down by the first organized enemy they meet.

### THE RUSH OF BATTLE

Whatever sort of fight it is, once maneuvering and attacking has begun in earnest, it is resolved using rush play.

### PERCEPTUAL CONFLICT

ALM is intended to be played without miniatures, with an emphasis on personal action. The adventurers might be acting alone (or even individually), or they might be in command of a sizeable force of followers and mercenaries, but either way, play focuses in on their choices, situation, and actions.

There is no shared map of the battlefield for players to look at, no convenient bird's eye view showing where everything is. Players may draw their own, of course, but the GM doesn't refer to it.

Instead, the battle progresses the same as other rush play: the GM describes what each adventurer perceives, then asks how they react.

Being forced to act on frustratingly incomplete information is part of the game.

### THE START OF BATTLE

Each fight starts differently. In the case of armies forming for a pitched battle, the clash of swords will be obvious hours before it begins.

If the party is ambushed by hidden assailants, their friends may start falling around them before they even realize that enemies are near.

When the battle starts, the GM should answer three questions:

- Which side (if any) has the initiative?
- Which sides (if any) have situational awareness?
- Which have cohesion, and are positioned and ready to act together?

### SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

During battle, events are unfolding faster than adventurers can absorb. What the GM chooses as a lead-in depends a lot on the adventurer's situational awareness.

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## THE HIERARCHY OF STIMULUS

Urgent distractions form a rough hierarchy, with more pressing things pre-empting facts that can only be understood from absorbing the whole.

1. Personal chaos (being in a melee, tumbling down a slope)
2. Terrifying threats (e.g. newly spotted/approaching undead, enemies)
3. Injuries
4. The immediate tactical situation (the enemy line, 20 yards away)
5. The broader tactical situation (more distant enemies, allies, the lay of the land, tactical opportunities)
6. Hard-to-notice details

## THE FOG OF WAR ADVANCES

Unless the players fight to maintain an understanding of what's going on around them, the GM should drag it down. The positions of enemies, allies, and the progress of the battle are only available with good awareness.

Awareness can be gained and lost as the battle progresses. Looking around from a good vantage point builds your awareness, as long as you don't catch an arrow for your troubles. Being slammed to the ground by a mounted warrior, on the other hand, ruins it.

In perceptual conflict, a side with poor awareness may have no idea what's going on other than what's happening directly in view. It may not even realize it's in a battle.

## INITIATIVE

The initiative is an intangible, powerful advantage. Who is making the big moves, forcing the other side to react?

When the enemies have the initiative, the lead-ins may be very confronting - massed archers about to shooting, cavalry thundering toward them.

In the most dire situations, when the adventurers have neither the initiative nor awareness, the lead-ins may be the *effects* of enemy action—arrows landing, friends grunting and falling, Garren being dragged off into that pool of water..

When the adventurers have the initiative, the GM's lead-ins should leave them a little space to start something. If they have awareness *and* the initiative, lead-ins may present good information about opportunities on the battlefield.

## RETAINING OR WINNING THE INITIATIVE

Retaining the initiative requires keeping up the momentum of the battle, not letting the enemy consolidate and respond. Note that big moves aren't necessarily *good* moves. A foolish leader can easily squander

the battle by smashing their forces against a prepared enemy.

If your moves stall or are unsuccessful, the enemies will have time to take stock and take action of their own.

Winning the initiative in the face of enemy action requires halting or wasting the enemy's momentum. This can be done with determined resistance, rebuffing charges. Alternately, allow the enemy to waste its own energy by yielding the ground it wishes to seize, and melting away to strike elsewhere.

## COHESION

Acting decisively and effectively requires that the party be positioned and ready to act in concert.

If the party has someone with the leader duty maintaining marching order, the party starts the battle with cohesion unless it has been established as currently disorganized or off doing separate tasks.

Even so, a party that is acting as a bunch of individuals will rapidly lose cohesion—Tolseter is rummaging through his pack instead of leading the porters. Sanven is nowhere to be seen (as usual). Garren is delivering savage blows, but he's gotten ahead of everyone else, and he's going to be outnumbered.

Like initiative and situational awareness, cohesion can be gained and lost during the battle. An effective leader will work hard to maintain the cohesion of their troops.

## GOALS, DISCIPLINE & MORALE

Once blood is spilled and casualties start falling, it takes discipline to hold the line.

The GM should bear in mind the goal of troops, as well as their leaders. Bandits and predators want to come out ahead, but are willing to leave any battle where serious harm looks inevitable. Disadvantaged enemies will fight to reach safety. Fanatics are looking for glorious death, and those defending homes or loved ones are stubborn in battle.

Disciplined troops (those with Battle skill) will tend to follow their leader's orders much longer. They also know that holding the line is safer than a rout, when pursuers can.

On the other hand, those fleeing know they don't have to run faster than the pursuers, only faster than their friends. Holding the line on your own is a fool's game.

## FIGHTING COORDINATED ENEMIES

The interaction of rush play, initiative and cohesive group actions means that disorganized parties will get utterly dismantled by disciplined enemies, regardless of individual heroics.

An effective commander on the enemy side will be directing their warriors to act in concert: while

adventurers are acting alone (or exerting themselves to join in and interrupt), the enemies will be acting six or more at a time.

PRESSING THE ATTACK

- predators are trying to kill one victim and escape without injury, as do assassins
- frightend animals and giant blunderers don't usally follow up, but move on to other targets and/ or escape
- This probably belong in a bestiary, in terms of monster tactics and fight moves generally

Only the most desperate will continue resisting once maimed or crippled.

THE STARTING VILLAGE

The village is a *group* (see “Settlements and Groups” on page 30). It will have certain forms of strife, depending on the threat it faces.

d6	Threat	Village
1-2	Isolated: Spring has come, and there have been no tinkers from other places all winter.	Means: 4 Strife: 2 (Intrigue, Wilderlands) Adventurers: a purse of silver
3-4	Threatened: A monstrous threat has demanded extortionate tribute or payment.	Means 4: Strife: 2 (Trauma) Adventurers: a random, unique <i>gift</i>
5	Attacked: A monstrous threat has attacked the village and will probably return.	Means 3: Strife: 2 (Trauma, Intrigue, Privation) Adventurers: a random, unique <i>gift</i>
6	Poisoned: The adventurers awaken from a dream-like fugue to find their village overgrown, nearly everyone missing and the survivors either mad or living like animals.	Means 1: Strife: 3 (Privation, Trauma) Adventurers start with torn clothes as their only equipment. Panic +1.

GIFTS FROM THE VILLAGE

d12	Gift	Load
1	Witch-grain basket (if left out overnight in forest, acts like a forager)	1
2	Bundle of herbs for attracting fur imps	1
3	Wanderer's coat, embroidered with all the myths and lore of the village	2

d12	Gift	Load
4	A hand-carved pipe	1
5	A bracelet, precious to the ancestors	1
6	A medallion, precious to the ancestors	1
7	A purse of silver	1
8	Incomplete map (village not marked on it)	1
9	Warden's boots, which have walked many paths	-
10	Use of the boat or pony	-
11	A sturdy blade	3
12	A cooking pot; produces double portions with rabbit	1

THE CAMPAIGN MAP

ALM works best as a longer-term campaign that plays out on a regional wilderlands map. Many aspects of the game only make sense in this context: bonds with settlements, shrines, caches, knowing the position of monstrous threats, adventure sites, and safe and unsafe roads.

MAKING THE MAP

There are many good wilderness maps available online, or if you have the inclination, you can make one yourself using a hex map editor or painting software. Look for maps with a nice variety of terrain. Also, it's good if there are plenty of obstacles—wide rivers, short mountain ranges, wetlands—as these tend to increase the value of hidden short cuts. Hills, mountains, valley systems and dense forests are also useful because you can hide many adventuring sites in them. Wide open deserts and badlands also make good obstacles if there are a few rivers from which to draw water.

Showing the players the map can be a great way to get them engaged; however, it will reduce their need to prepare and maintain a map of their own. Better to let them realize that a map would be extremely useful and start making one themselves.

AREAS

Realistic maps can be beautiful and inspiring, but bear in mind that your players will not experience the map as an aerial view. Gorgeous, crinkly coastlines will go unappreciated, unless you're willing to spend session time clearing up confusion as to which tiny isthmus the party is on. Complex features like this can be reduced to an *areas* of hard going terrain, and narrated as such:



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**GM: Your journey along the coast is tricky; there are countless projections and peninsulas out into the bay, and the mussel-pickers' trail appears to head up and down each of them, avoiding the steeper, rocky terrain further away from the water.**

Hex maps are useful, but—depending on how quickly you are resolving long-distance travel—you may want to refine hilly and mountainous areas. I like to know two things:

- Where are the **peaks** of mountains and hills? These are useful areas from which to spy the surrounding terrain, and they can be seen from afar and used as travel landmarks.
- Where are the **ridge lines** of mountains and highlands? These sweep out in the lowlands, forming the edges of valleys. Also, ridges implicitly form the boundaries of different river systems.

## STOCKING THE MAP

Once you have your map (or at least, the region immediately around where the party begins), you'll need to stock it. This can be an iterative process, where you detail the area around the party (or where they're headed) and leave the rest more vague. However, you should place a few things to begin:

- The starting **village**
- The nearest or most obvious **adventuring site** or two
- The nearest, most obvious **settlements** (which might not be that near)
- The location of **monstrous threats**
- The **region of influence** of each settlement, site and threat, where adventurers might encounter related events
- The extent of the **local Power** (and what it is), and a few neighbouring Powers

## ESCALATING DANGER

It's useful to arrange the map so that the starting village is in a little eddy of relative calm. This will allow new players a chance to learn the system and to get a toe-hold on the map before the monstrous threats and other world events overtake them.

The further away from the village they travel, the more dangerous it gets. The essential ingredient of danger or safety is how much control the adventurers have in taking on risk. Regardless of how tough a given monster is in combat, there are many other, non-mechanical factors that make a threat more dangerous.

## SPEED

It's easy to get away from **slow** monsters. Maybe they're just slow all the time, maybe they're fast in short spurts but can't match the adventurers for endurance (like cheetahs). Maybe they have difficulties in the current terrain. In any case, adventurers can reduce risk by simply leaving.

It's much harder to escape from **fast** monsters. Maybe they have a terrain advantage, maybe they know shortcuts. Maybe they have mounts, or long legs. But as long as they can find you, they control the distance.

## COHESION

**Unorganized** monsters can be dealt with piecemeal - maybe they communicate poorly, maybe they hate each other. Angering one won't necessarily mean angering the others, and even if it does, they're not organized enough to do anything about it.

**Factional** monster concentrations are broken into smaller groups that don't quite get along. They have great communication within the smaller groups, but organizing beyond that is fraught. Pissing off one faction probably won't prompt an immediate reaction from the others, could actually win friends.

**Cohesive** groups have set internal conflicts aside, and are willing to pull together for the common good, sometimes rapidly. **Militaristic** groups are not only willing to work together, they've drilled for it. Sometimes they're praying for it, so their response to external threats will be quick and decisive. **Gestalts** are extremely dangerous - they are so cohesive that the entire community can respond as a single organism.

## TERRITORIALITY

**Defensive** creatures just want to be left alone - they might even avoid the party if they can. If cornered or attacked, they might react violently, but the motive is to intimidate intruders to drive them away.

To **territorial** monsters, on the other hand, just being around is a threat. Moose might not want to eat you, but they'll pursue you until you wish you'd never set eyes on them.

**Vengeful** monsters don't just want you gone, they want you to remember them and to warn your friends. Maybe they send bounty hunters, trackers, rangers or wargs after you. **Predatory** monsters are similar.

**Proactive** monsters aren't waiting to stumble into you, they're on the lookout for threats before they develop, and will act to neutralize them before they get out of hand. They know what you people from the lowlands are all about, and they're not having any of it. If they get the drop on you, they'll mess you up just to send a warning.



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## PERCEPTIVENESS

The quickened trees of Grilwood might be organized, vengeful, but are so **oblivious** that unless you smell like orc or try to cut one down, they probably won't even know you're there. **Inattentive** monsters aren't expecting to meet anyone, while Alert ones do from time to time. A **vigilant** threat, on the other hand, may have scouts, spies, keen senses, or magical scrying.

## RANGE

Vampire bushes and the Blood Willow are nasty, but controlling risk is easy because they're stationary. **Territorial** monsters might be bad, but they're not so bad if their territory is only the graveyard you were digging in. Some are **site-bound** and don't leave the site where they are found, others will venture in the **local** area, and some will have a wider territory. Still other threats will have a **regional** reach, able to come and get you long after you thought you were safely back in town.

## NUMBERS

**Singular** threats can often be dealt with decisively (whether by evasion, bribery, negotiation, or violence) in a single encounter. **Numerous** creatures are not so easily dealt with, and **hordes** are impossible to stop with anything less than an army, or cataclysmic magic.

## OBSCURITY

How well does the party understand what they're dealing with? If the threats are **understood**, the party is at least aware of how much trouble they are likely to bring down on themselves. If the threat is **unknown**, the party may not realize it's in danger at all.

## EASE OF ACCESS

This has a subtler effect on risk level. **Inaccessible** sites are those with obstructed approaches—defenses, narrow defiles or bottlenecks, town walls or ruined fortifications, difficult ascents or caverns, or a long trip across the desert. These barriers may confine the danger making the surrounding area safer, but once the obstacles are crossed, retreat can be difficult.

If a threat is **hidden**, this takes control out of the adventurers' hands, and multiplies the effects of the threat's territoriality. Threats that are hidden and predatory are a big problem, while hidden and defensive sites may never be found at all.

**Sealed** threats are somehow confined, imprisoned, or penned in. Perhaps a cave-in has trapped underground dwellers, a barricade is preventing the crypt ghouls from flowing into the rest of the dungeon, or demons are trapped behind a door of black granite.

These barriers offer parties at least an opportunity for control—don't break the seal, and you're safe.

Once the seal is broken, however, it's usually hard to put back. In some cases, only experienced parties can break the seals, which is a useful way of shaping the danger level.

## OVERALL THREAT LEVEL

These individual factors all combine to produce an overall threat level. Fast, militaristic and predatory threats are much more dangerous than threats with just one or two of those factors.

Barrow wights confined to their tombs might be physically dangerous, but can be situated in low-danger areas without throwing things off. They might be territorial and unknown, but they're also **unorganized, inattentive, hidden, and site-bound**, giving players a lot of control over the danger they invoke.

A pack of handwolves, however, is much more dangerous. Even though an individual handwolf is no huge threat, as a group they are **fast, cohesive, vengeful, alert and numerous**.

The orcs of Tirru-Stryggal from the adventure **The Raid Mirror** are almost as deadly as they come: hidden, regional, vigilant, fast, militaristic, predatory, fortified, unknown, numerous. This is a threat that will destroy all but the most prepared and capable parties that tangle with them.

## ESCALATING REWARDS

Similarly, settlements the adventurers might ally with can be made more powerful further from the starting point.

It's much more useful to make alliances with **fast, cohesive** and **vigilant** settlement than with an **oblivious, factional** and **site-bound** group. Those are like to bring as much trouble as they do aid! **Hidden, inaccessible** and **sealed** supporters aren't very useful either when on the offensive, although they make excellent havens.

## AD LIBBING DETAILS

From time to time, the rules will require you to cough up information about areas or things you haven't had time to prepare in detail. For this reason it's a good idea to have some a few notes and resources on hand to help you respond on the fly:

- Concepts for a couple of **adventuring sites**—dungeons, ruins and so on. Keeping a few one-page dungeons on hand is useful, as these can be slotted in with a lot of flexibility.
- A couple of **historical figures and events** that might be referenced in engravings or books the adventurers come across.
- A sense of a few **cultures** at play. Who is living here now? Who lived here before? Who lives

nearby?

- A rough idea of the **world beyond the vicinity** that NPCs would know about. What do they think is over the mountains? What far-away, rumored place to they talk about in whispers?
- A **name list**, for NPCs and places.

## ADVENTURING SITE SEEDS

d20 Adventuring Site Seeds	
1	barrow tombs
2	cursed village surrounded by meddled accords
3	cult hideout carved into the rock
4	abandoned blight ant tunnels
5	crack to the depths
6	crashed sereer folly
7	martoi cyst
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## SEASONAL MOVES

As players adventure and change, the world beyond the immediate view of their characters evolves as well. Each season, the groups on the map make **seasonal moves**. Groups include settlements, monstrous threats, and any other groups that have been placed by the GM or revealed in play. The section on each group will say what its goals and seasonal moves are.

### IMPROVEMENTS

In some cases, seasonal moves are about improving the group's Means rating. Farming settlements expand by cutting down, blight ants forage in the forest. These might not have a mechanical effect, such as when an insular devotional order spends the season on ritual study.

### ATTACKS

In other cases, seasonal moves interact with other groups, usually to their detriment. Bandits prey on towns by rendering unsafe the roads necessary for trade. Cults sow dissent in cities and settlements in an attempt to work their evil agendas. Blight ants descend on farmland and begin raiding crops, cattle and people. Sometimes this improves one group's Means at the expense of another; at other times it inflicts Strife.

### STALEMATES

In other situations (such as feuds between villages), the move has no mechanical effect other than to tie up the group in the status quo.

### CHANGES

As a result of seasonal moves, it's possible that a group changes. For instance, if a village is reduced from Means 2 to Means 1, it becomes unable to cling to its niche and becomes a band of refugees.

### TIDINGS & RUMORS

Where there are roads enough for people to move, news of the consequences of seasonal moves will travel. Look for opportunities for the adventurers to learn of these things—either through inactive adventurers that can pick up news, or messengers sent deliberately by fond friends wanting to warn the party.

# TREASURE

When adventurers come across a cache of treasure, valuables or useful items, use the random treasure table to determine what it is. Small caches are a roll or two, rich stashes are three or four. Huge hoards could be as many as ten rolls.

## TREASURE TYPES

There are six treasure types: pragmatist, raider, noble, magpie, sorcerer and demon. **Pragmatists** keep useful objects they need in order to survive, work and get by. **Raiders** are adventurers, bandits, and militias: armed and prepared to take people’s things. **Nobles** are successful raiders who have accumulated wealth and social clout.

**Magpies** are unintelligent animals or monsters that are attracted to shiny things, and might have the remains of a wanderer or two in their lair. (Other animals have no treasure as such.) Use the ‘**Sorcerer**’ type for any occult specialists: priestesses, cult leaders, ritualists and necromancers. **Demon** treasure is for intelligent, otherworldly beings.

## MIXED HOARDS

It’s common for a hoard to be a mix of types. The secret stores of an aggressive reptile cult might contain, such as S x 2, R x 2.

## RANDOM TREASURE TABLE

Treasure Type (d100)						
D	M	N	P	R	S	Treasure Item
Prosaic Items						
00	00	00	00-08	00-02	00	Purse of Silver
-	-	-	09-13	03	-	Hatchet
-	-	-	14-18	04	-	Engraved Relic
-	-	-	19-23	05-06	-	Knife
-	-	-	24-29	07	-	Bow
01	01	01	30-34	08	01	Preserved Herbs
-	-	-	35-39	09-10	-	Food
-	-	-	40-45	11	-	Cloak
-	-	-	46-50	12-13	-	Cask of Drink
-	-	-	51-55	14	-	Musical Instrument
02	02	02	56-61	15-16	02	Boots
-	-	-	62-66	17	-	Adventuring Gear
-	-	-	67-71	18	-	Provisions
Goods						
03	03	03-04	72-73	19-21	03	Uncut Gems (d6)
04	04-05	05-06	74	22-24	04-05	Rare Wood

Treasure Type (d100)						
D	M	N	P	R	S	Treasure Item
05-06	06	07-08	75-76	25-26	06	Furs
07	07	09-11	77	27-29	07	Bolts of Cloth (d3)
Martial Items						
08	08-09	12-13	-	30-33	08-09	Expedition Gear
-	10	14	-	34-35	10	Dagger
09	-	15-16	78	36	-	Sword
10	11	17	79	37	-	Leather Armor
-	12	18	-	38-39	-	War Axe
11	13	19-20	80	40	11	War Sword
-	14	21	-	41-42	12	Great Bow
12	15	22	-	43	-	Crossbow
-	16	23-24	81	44-45	13	Wooden Shield
13	17	25	-	46	-	Metal Shield
-	18	26	-	47-48	14	Spear
14	19	27-28	82	49	-	Pole axe
-	20	-	-	50	15	Lance
15	-	29-30	-	51-52	-	Livery
-	21	-	-	-	16	Barding
Treasured Martial Items						
-	-	31	-	-	-	Heirloom Shield
16	22	32	-	53	-	Heirloom Weapon
17	-	33-34	-	-	17	Heirloom Mail
18	-	35	-	54	-	Heirloom Plate
-	23	36	-	-	-	Enchanted Mail
19	-	37	-	-	18	Enchanted Plate
20	24	38	-	55	-	Enchanted Weapon
Ritual Items						
21-24	25-28	39	83	56	19-22	Incense
25-30	29-34	40-42	84	57	23-30	Devotional Bauble
31	35	-	85	-	31	Graven Idol
32-34	36-37	-	-	-	32-34	Ceremonial Vestments
35-36	38-40	43	-	-	35-36	Rare Monster Parts
37-45	41-45	44-48	-	58-59	37-45	Single-Use Magic
46-50	46-48	49-50	-	-	46-50	Multi-Use Magic
51	-	51	-	60	-	Permanent Magic
52	49-50	-	-	-	51	Wizard Flowers (d3)
53	-	52	-	-	52	Ritual tablet/scroll

Treasure Type (d100)						
D	M	N	P	R	S	Treasure Item
54	-	-	-	61	53	Ritual tome (d3 rituals)
Lore						
55-69	51-56	53-59	86-89	62-66	54-68	Book (see page 64)
70	57	60	-	-	69-70	Map of Site
71-74	58	61-62	90	67-68	71-73	Map of Specific Route
75	-	63	91	-	74-75	Map of Region
Valuables & Art Objects						
76-77	59-62	64-65	-	69-71	76-77	Urn
78-79	63-65	66-68	92	72-73	78-79	Engraved Plate
80	66-68	69-71	-	74-76	80-82	Tapestry
81-82	69-71	72-74	93	77-78	83-84	Decorative Screen
83-84	72-75	75-77	-	79-80	85-86	Carved Seat
85-86	76-78	78-79	-	81-83	87-88	Carved Coffin
-	79	80-81	94	-	89	Ornamental Dagger
87	-	-	-	84	-	Ornamental Shield
-	-	82	-	-	-	Ornamental Plate
88	80	-	-	-	90	Ornamental Musical Instrument
89	81-82	83	95	85-86	91	d6 Gems, Rarity A
-	-	84	-	-	-	d3 Gems, Rarity B
-	-	84	-	-	-	Gem, Rarity C
90	83	-	-	87	-	Ornamental Armor
-	-	85	-	-	-	Jewelled Crown
-	84	-	-	-	92	Jewelled Gold Ring
91	85-87	86-88	96	88-90	93	Silver Ring
92	-	89	-	-	-	Gold Medallion
93-94	88-90	90	97	91-92	94-95	Silver Jewellery
95	91-92	91-92	-	93	96	Decorative Bauble
96	93-94	93-94	98	94-95	97	Silver Plate
-	95	95-96	-	-	-	Coffin of Silver (Talent)
97-99	96-99	97-99	99	96-99	98-99	Purse of Gold

## TODO

- Explain the value of things (plate = sack)
- Random enchantments/magic item table
- Random ritual table

## GEMS

Gems vary in size, but a handful of them is Load 1. The value, however, varies enormously, ranging from a silver purse to a silver talent for a single gem.

d6	Rarity A (purse)	Rarity B (sack)	Rarity C (talent)
1-2	agate	amethyst	sapphire
3-4	topaz	ruby	dragon scale
5	quartz	emerald	dragon eye
6	opal	diamond	dark glass

Dragon scales are iridescent, iron-hard scales as long as a finger. Dragon eyes are When struck with a hard object, they produce miniature lightning bolts that arc to the nearest object (d3 damage). Dark glass is a magical form of obsidian found only in the underworld.

## SELLING TREASURE IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Villages and towns appreciate glitter as much as anyone, but their economies can't support large cash outlays. There simply aren't enough wealthy buyers. Treasure sold in towns drops a money category (talent, sack, purse, few coins). Treasure sold in villages drops *two* categories.

## HEIRLOOM TREASURES

Heirlooms taken as spoils retain their heirloom status. The original blessing may not carry over, but the Powers are watching what happens, and that has much the same effect.

## ENCHANTED AND MAGICAL TREASURE

**Todo:** table of effects

## ENGRAVINGS ON TREASURE

All heirlooms, art objects (tapestries, urns, etc.), enchanted, decorated or ornamental objects have a fragment of story visible on the surface. For tiny art pieces and trinkets, or incidental decorations on useful objects (e.g. swords), roll once. For decorative art pieces, roll twice. For large frescoes, paintings, or tapestries, roll 2-3 times.

d12	Ornamentation
1-2	Conspicuous cultural detail that ties it to a culture in the campaign world (e.g. artistic style, depiction of a recognizable architectural or clothing style, depiction of a deity, iconic symbology, a legend)

d12 Ornamentation	
3	Depiction of a figure of note (e.g. a hero, ruler, wizard, a Power)
4-7	Depiction of a rare ability (masterful swordsmanship, use of a particular magical ritual)
8-10	Conspicuous detail that ties it to a particular location (a characteristic building, characteristic natural feature, a symbolic map, it's got an actual map on it)
11	Depiction of a historical event (a battle or victory, founding of a settlement, an execution, coronation, political union)
12	Top to bottom engravings count as a book with d2 Lore (see "Books & Scrolls" on page 64)

Players are never paying so much attention as when they are inspecting their treasure; this is your opportunity to inject a few details of the historical world. This works best if these are potential leads for adventurers to plan new forays—depiction of a rare ability or location implies that these things are possible, or exist somewhere.

## BOOKS & SCROLLS

The materials, skill and time for book-making are precious, making books both rare and valuable. When books are found unexpectedly or as part of treasure, roll to determine what sort of book (or scroll, or tablet) it is. Carried works will tend to be smaller than those stored or displayed in a fixed location. Sometimes writings are permanently etched into altars, obelisks, or painted onto walls.

### BOOK TYPE AND SIZE

Carried (d12)	Stored (d12)	Type of Work	Loads	Lore
1	1	Scrap of parchment, folded	1	1
2-3	2-3	Engraved clay/wood/wax tablet	2	2
4-6	4	Scroll, short	1	1
7-8	5	Scroll, d6 paces long	2	2
9	6-7	Scroll Set	4 (1B)	3
10-11	8	Slim folio	1	2
12	9	Leatherbound book	2	3
-	10	Large book	3	4
-	11	Tome	4 (1B)	5
-	12	Carvings/fresco	-	2d6

## BOOKS ARE PEOPLE

Putting thoughts to parchment is never easy. Writing a scroll is demanding; preparing a treatise on a life's work can leave a sage broken for years. But, as the writing goes on, the work takes on a life of its own, and soon the author's plan is a distant memory, with something else taking its place.

d8 Book Personality	
1	Enthusiastic and helpful, it wants to be understood. Repetitive. +1d to read, -1 Lore.
2	Meticulous and detailed, dense and precise, exhausting to read. +1 Lore, /+1 to read
3	Evocative and poetic, it draws the reader in, but its lore is evoked very gradually. Can be read aloud (use Perform instead of Scribe) for +1d.
4	Obscure and suspicious. Even readers familiar with the topics have a hard time. Perhaps the best bits are in code. /+1 to read
5	Sneering, pompous. Judgemental of the reader. Once it has been read, subsequent tests are at /+1.
6	Polemic and ranting, alienating or distracting the reader.
7	The book is a bound imp; the words shift to challenge, insult and debate the reader. Instead of Scribe, test Threats or Assurances. +2 Lore.
8	Reading the book is itself a ritual. If the book is successfully read, the effect begins.

## READING

Despite their value, books are difficult to use. In an era unfamiliar with the free exchange of knowledge, books were usually written to *store* information rather than to share it. They often have no clear title, subject or thesis, table of contents or index. Even in works written in the common tongue, there is great variety in vocabulary, scripts and letter shapes from place to place (even scribe to scribe). Some use jargon specific to the author's tiny cabal.

To read short scrolls test Scribe/1, longer works are Scribe/2. Works in old Sereer are /+1; ancient works (e.g. Martoi), or wholly foreign languages (e.g. Dradkin), /+2; completely alien forms (e.g. Thirudic runes, Void Gull), /+3.

Failure usually indicates the reader couldn't make sense of the book.



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## EXPLORING A BOOK

There are two ways to use books; the first is to explore it to see what the author intended to convey. This can be done a number of times equal to the book's 'Lore' value. If the read attempt is successful, roll on the chart below:

d6	Exploration Result
1	Fiction, mythologized account, scribblings. Misguided, factually incorrect, or aspirational. Useless.
2	A second-hand account or retelling, but good enough to learn a new skill from it (see page 5).
3	Instructions, counts as a Rating 3d instructor.
4	An account of a ritual being performed, count as instructions but muddled /+d6.
5	Definitive passage, counts as a Rating 5d instructor. (Uses up d3 Lore)
6	Ritual instructions, with d3-1 demands explained. (Uses up d3 Lore)

## RESEARCH

The second way to use books is to consult them to find answers to questions. Use the rules for adventurers knowing things ("Knowledge and Lore" on page 11), but the book's Lore points can be used as one-time Rating bonus dice.

The question doesn't have to relate to the book's primary subject—this is a close reading, looking for clues and secondary points. Old books are excellent ways to find clues about geography, cultures, settlements, the Powers of the earth, the nature of beasts or animals. For this to work, the book has to be at least vaguely appropriate to the question.

Books must be more recent than the information being sought (with the exception of Void Gull and Thirudic works, which can answer any question).

# TRAVEL EVENT TABLES

The event tables in this section are used to create travel events as the players move about (see “Travel Events” on page 19). The GM will choose a set that’s appropriate for the path the adventurers are taking, and will adjust the set over time as the party’s circumstances change.

## SEEKING

Some of the events/encounters on the cards can be deliberately sought out, potentially via travel duties such as Foraging, Scouting, or Tracking. For those events, the difficulty and recommended skill is listed.

## RECOMMENDED SKILLS

C—Commune                      N—Navigation  
F—Foraging                      W—Wits  
H—Hunting

## LONG SEARCHES

The longer the party searches, the higher the chance they find what they’re after.

Search Duration	Rating
A Day	—
Days	+1d
Weeks	+2d
Months	+3d

## MAKING YOUR OWN EVENTS TABLES

The usefulness of travel duties depends on appropriate events being in the events tables. Duties needn’t all be equally valuable in all events tables. Icy glaciers have nothing at all to forage, but considerable hazards make a camp master very useful. Consider adding:

- edible plants, tubers, bark; drinking water hazards (foraging)
- small game (hunters)
- camp hazards, difficulty finding shelter (camp master)
- obstructions and navigational hazards (navigator)
- discoveries of interest (scouts)

# RETAINERS & COMPANIONS

d20	Retainers, Followers and Companions Events
1-12	Make an observation or comment that expresses their personality
13	Lobby, maneuver, or manipulate for greater pay, a greater share, or status
14	Turns out to have been hurt (a snuffle turns into a fever, sprained ankle swelling badly)
15	Lost something important (a weapon, what they were supposed to be carrying, all their remaining food)
16	Are unready and cause a significant delay
17	Overcome with dread, someone refuses to go any further.
18	Precipitous initiative: open it, trigger it, break it, crawl in, eat it, or go on a head for a look-see
19	One or more attempt to slip away
20	A simmering conflict breaks out into violence

# DARKNESS EVENTS

d20	Darkness
1-5	Candles and torches burn out. If there is no light or safety, panic strikes the hirelings.
6-10	Candles and torches burn out; oil lamps must be refilled. If there is no light or safety, panic strikes the animals.
11-15	Candles and torches burn out, oil lamps and lanterns must be refilled.
16-19	The environment makes good on its threat: <b>Trackless</b> —muddle up directions, send people the wrong way <b>Complex</b> —hide something, separate people <b>Treacherous</b> —trip someone down a hidden slope or into a hole <b>Deep</b> —overcome the beasts or retainers with animal terror
20	The darkness comes to life.

## WINTER EVENTS

d20	Winter Event
1	Thaw—Unseasonably warm and sunny. Snow and ice start to melt, streams begin to trickle. Earthen ground becomes mushy; concealing tracks becomes difficult. Swap in Spring events for the next roll.
2	Light rain—Lasts d3 days with few breaks. Ground becomes slushy. Test for exposure.
3	Sleet falls for d6 hours, soaking everything. Visibility drops to nothing; test for exposure.
4	d12 rations' worth of iceleaf poking through a crust of snow; Duty foragers may test Foraging/3 to find it.
5	Omen of spring: a tiny green shoot poking through the ice, or a bright red bird. Foraging or Hunting /6 to find deliberately.
6-9	Winter's hard slog. All: travel test at /+1.
10-12	Slushy flood at night. No Health regained. Cold Exposure tests for all. Duty camp master tests Survival/4 to avoid.
13	Light snowfall for d3 hours. A dust of white covers everything; /+2 to tracking anything before the snowfall, +2d after.
14	Night comes swiftly. Backtrack to decent site and lose a hex, or make camp in dark: duty camp master tests Survival/3 or no healing tonight.
15	A dust of snow reveals contours. Duty scouts test Wits/3 to spot a ruin, cavemouth, or strange pool.
16	d3 Frost martens
17	Hailstones—d6 damage to everyone caught in the open.
18	Heavy snowfall—d4 feet of snow falls over the next 12 hours. Everything becomes tough going. All: Travel test at /+2.
19	Icy wind gusts last a day. Test for cold exposure.
20+	Deadly cold snap. Test for exposure at /+1.

+1 in deepest winter      +1 in exposed terrain  
+1 at high altitude

Unless otherwise specified or the weather changes first, each result lasts d6 days, then it becomes over-cast.

## SPRING EVENTS

d20	Spring Event
≤ 1	Cold spell—mornings are crisp, nights cold. Test cold exposure.
2	Flash flooding along water courses and flood plains. Thunderous roar followed by a crashing, muddy wave filled with debris. Anyone caught is swept away and lost.
3	Thick fog lasts d2 days (costs 1/2 hex), then d12 springthaw undead, freshly pushed from the ground by frost.
4-5	Nip in the air makes for pleasant hiking. All: travel test at /-1.
6	Water seeping up through the ground soaks the camp site. No rest. Duty camp master tests Survival/2 to avoid.
7	Hunters may catch (/3) d6+successes rations' worth of hares.
8	An old accord stone heaved from the ground by the frost, eroded beyond recognition.
9-10	Biting insects for d6 days. No healing.
11	Steady, wetting rain for 2d6 hours.
12-14	Torrential downpour soaks everything, lasts d6 hours. On a 6, followed by steady rain for d6 more days.
15-17	Duty foragers may find (/2) origole shoots, 2d6 rations' worth in total.
18	Duty scouts may find (Wits/3) a curious, natural shrine made by animals.
19	Lightning strike ignites a small fire that burns for d6 days; an omen of approaching summer.
20+	Warm gusts. Swap in Summer events for the next roll.

-2 in early spring      +2 in late spring

Unless otherwise specified or the weather changes first, each result lasts d6 days, then it becomes clear and warm.

## SUMMER EVENTS

d20	Summer Event	Find
1	Toad as big as (d6) a 1: dog, 2-3: horse, 4-5: rhino, 6: cottage.	-
2	Heat shimmer demon	H/5
3	Buried (d6) 1-4: meeb, 5-6: titan meeb. Duty camp master tests Survival/3 to avoid the spot, or it attacks at night.	-
4-6	Duty foragers may find (Foraging/2) d3 portions of squoss lichen each.	F/4
7	Cloud of locusts gets into everything, spoiling d6 rations/person and spooking mounts.	F/5
8-10	Sweaty slog in the heat, all test travel. Duty leader tests Command/3 to avoid group stringing out as a long line.	-
11-12	Travel tests for all. The summer daylight seems to last forever—march into the evening and go half a hex more for +1.	-
13	d8 bandit wasps	H/3
14	Party drinks fever water. Test Grit/4, incapacitated for 1 day/degree of failure. Duty foragers test Foraging/3 to avoid.	F/4
15	Brush fire, moving at walking speed in a random direction. Burns out after d3 hexes.	-
16	Duty scouts test Wits/4 to notice a natural spring burbling from a moist cave.	W/6
17	Drought begins, lasts d3 weeks. On a 1 in 6, all summer. Plains wilt, forests denuded. Foraging tests at +2.	-
18-19	Dragon, 1-2: making presence known, 3-4: hunting, 5-6: flying home with a kill.	H/6
20+	Searing heat wave. Test exposure at +1.	-

+2 in high summer

Unless otherwise specified or the weather changes first, each result lasts d6 days, then it becomes clear and hot.

## AUTUMN EVENTS

d20	Summer Event	Find
≤ 1	Cracking thunderstorm soaks all. Visibility 100 paces. 2 in 6 chance d6 mature storm seals spot party.	-
2	Giant centipedes, d3.	H/2
3-5	Foragers may find (/2) red and purple umpkins sprouting through the soil. 2d6 rations.	F/4
6-7	Beautiful weather, light breeze; all regain 1 Health.	-
8	Omen of conflict: a crow plucks at the eyes of carrion. If the party leads a force to war, +1 to their next travel roll. Otherwise, hirelings erupt in conflict.	C/3
9	Lone blight ant queen, flying to found a new colony d3-1 hexes from here in a random direction.	H/4
10	Ashbear, roll d6. On a 1-2, adolescent. On a 3-4, adult. On a 5-6, mother with d3 cubs.	H/4
11-15	A long march. Travel tests for all.	-
16	d3 seed onddo, hunting implantable quarry	H/6
17	Gritty rain for d6 hours. On a 6 it lasts d3 days.	-
18	The wind that shakes the world. Gale force westerly winds lasting d6 hours; on a 6, it lasts d6 more days. Anything exposed tossed takes considerable harm. Bodies of water impassable from the waves.	-
19	Wyverns, d3. In late autumn, any wyverns on the wing are starving, having had insufficient food to hibernate.	H/6
20+	Early chill. Reroll on winter table, and swap it in for d6 weeks.	-

-2 in early autumn

+2 in late autumn

Unless otherwise specified or the weather changes first, each result lasts d6 days, then it becomes cool and breezy.

## GREAT FOREST EVENTS

d20	Ley Line Event	Find
≤ 1	Duty hunters may find (Wits/3) d8 deer.	-
2	Changeling child	H/6
3	Duty foragers find wild mushrooms (d3 portions). Foraging/3 to avoid the poisonous ones.	F/2
4-5	Duty hunters may find (H/3) rabbit warren, catching d6 rations' worth.	H/5
6	Duty camp master tests Survival/3 to recognize the camp is beneath a vampire tree.	S/4
7	Duty foragers may find (Foraging/2) hazel and collect d3 rations' worth. A day collecting nets 2d6 more.	F/4
8-10	Pushing through endless branches, test travel at +1.	-
11-12	Impassable thickets; duty navigator test Navigation/4 or backtracking claims all progress today.	N/2
13	Deep stream or pond blocks direct route, duty navigator noticed a quick way around. Navigator/3 or lose today's progress.	N/3
14	Duty scouts may find (Wits/3) a shrine to the power of the forest, carved into an ancient oak tree.	W/5
15	Duty scouts may find an overgrown ruin (Wits/2). d6 for size: 1—hints of a wall, 6—sizeable fort.	W/4
16	Giant weasel, badger or pond beaver	H/3
17	Cultists (1-2 soil mother; 3-4 demon; 5-6 ancient power)	W/3
18	d3 wild, fey horses. 1 in 6 chance they're unicorns.	-
19	Forest dragon	H/5
20+	Duty foragers may find (/3) a fruiting glade of the soil mother d8-3 deer d3-2 wolves d4-2 onddo	F/4

-2 if in an edge hex

+2 if 2+ hexes from the edge

## PLAINS EVENTS EVENTS

d12	Ley Line Event	Find
≤ 1		-
2		-
3		-
4		-
5		-
6	d6 groven. On a 6, 3d6 near a large burrow.	-
7		-
8		-
9	White cenops	-
10		-
11		-
12+		-

-2 if ≤2 .... of the edge      +2 if 6 ..

### Make a handwolves table

- forage
- bad site events for camp masters
- obstructions for the navigator
- terrain stringing everyone out (leader/command?)
- small game for hunters
- travel tests
- items to scout



## PENUMBRAL EVENTS

For thousands of years the stone circles around villages have stood as a marker of the sacred bond between the living and the ancestral spirits. Outside those circles, the dead are not nearly so well behaved.

### PENUMBRAL EVENTS TABLE

d12	Penumbral Event	Find
1-2	Strangler	W/2
3-5	Trickster	W/1
6-7	d2 Beggars	-
8	d6 Foragers gathering mushrooms	-
9	Fey mound, d20 revelers	C/3
10	d3 knights	C/3
11	d4 knights, d8 squires	C/3
11	Hedge wizard, 3 in 6 chance of d8 followers	W/4
12	Fey procession, roll d6 to determine who leads them. 1-2 a Queen of Shadows; 3-4 a King of Shadows; 5-6, both. d3 Shadow Lords and d20 revelers accompany them.	C/5

## LEY LINE EVENTS

d20	Ley Line Event	Find
≤ 1	d3 ghost dogs pick up the party's scent	H/4
2	Whispering demon	H/6
3	Glittering mist emerges from a cold, mica-lined ravine. 3 in 6 chance it's a way down.	W/4
4	Duty night watch spots the silhouette of a ruined tower; with each blink drawing nearer, looming overhead, then passing just as quickly.	-
5	A sorcerous stone accord (see page 47). On a 1-3 in 6, it still works. On a 4-6, it has been shattered, or the ingenium it supposedly connects to is unresponsive.	W/3
6	Duty foragers find analeaf—d3 bushes of d6 portions each.	F/4
7	Duty scouts may find (Wits/2) a tiny moon shrine made of faintly glowing white stones.	W/5
8	Duty navigator may realize (/2) the party has moved unnaturally far; d3 hexes along the ley line.	-
9	Moon tomb. (Martoi cyst?)	W/4
10-13	Progress is strange here. Travel rolls for all, but made using Wits.	-
14-16	Night glitter. Blue lights at ground level, in the distance along the ley line, flicker and twinkle.	W/1
17	Lightning strike. A close encounter is a direct hit on the party; the briefest tingling sensation, then d3 party members take d8 damage each.	W/6
18	Procession of the the translucent dead of an ancient community, long gone.	W/5
19	Duty scouts find a glittering moon door whose twin is (roll d6), 1-3: d6 ley intersections away; 4: hundreds of miles away; 5: in the gray land of the dead; 6: in the astral realm.	W/6
20+	Huge full moon, many times its usual size.	W/3

-2 crossing a ley line  
+2 following a ley line  
+2 ley intersection

## TOMB EVENTS

d20	Tomb Events	Find
≤ 1	d6 giant isopods	H/1
*	d20 mummified finches	H/3
*	invested hook slug	H/4
*	invested whip scorpion	H/3
*	invested spider	H/4
*	tomb lizard (natural ghoul)	H/4
*	ghoul (fallen necromancer, eating the spirits of the dead)	-
*	d12 skeletons	-
*	d3 ghosts	C/4
*	necromancer, with flock of d12-4 of risen dead	-
*	grave knight, d8-4 tomb guards	-
20+	d6 tomb guards	-

-1 undisturbed tomb  
+1 meddled accord

+1 Power: angry spirits  
+1 per level

animals  
mold  
tomb lizard

distraught spirits

undead generally can't understand the living (or vice versa) except at a shrine

## EARTH WOUND—SURFACE

d12	Earth Wound Surface Event	Find
≤ 1	Earth wound primary entrance.	var.
2	Dradkin scouting party, d3. 1 in 6 chance of a fleshpriest.	-
3		
4	Giant hunting spider. 1-2 on d6, pack mother with d6 spawn.	H/5
5	Alternate entrance; roll d6. Fissure, subsidence, sinkhole.	W/3
6-8	Gust of mildewy air.. from somewhere.	-
9	Chimeric aberration	-
10	Cultists. Roll d6. 1-2: d6+2 cultists at a rough camp site. 3-4: 2d6+2 cultists at an established camp site. 5-6: 3d6 x 2 cultists in a ruin, restored to serve as a temple, led by a potent <b>visionary</b> .	T/5
11	Village accord stone, defaced with a meddler's etchings	W/2
12+	White lichen infestation	F/3

-2 within a league  
+2 further than 6 leagues

## EARTH WOUND—SHALLOWS

d12	Earth Wound Shallow Depths	Find
1	Gaping pit to the depths. d6: 1-2 a massive circular staircase; 3-4 the internal architecture of castle Baryal (underground?!); 5-6 a vast natural cavern with irregular, stalagmite-studded, crumbling slopes leading downward.	N/5
2		
3		
4		
5		
6-8		
9		
10	An accord stone, cracked from over-meddling.	N/5
11	Chitin dragon	H/6
12	Crack, fissure, or natural chimney to the surface. <i>Seriously consider moving these to a random cavern structure table</i>	N/5

## EARTH WOUND—DEEP WASTES

d12	Earth Wound Shallow Depths	Find
1		-
2		-
3		-
4		-
5		-
6-8		-
9	Void gull expeditionary force	-
10		-
11		-
12	Crack or fissure up to the shallow depths.	N/6

## POWER—ANCESTRAL HOST

If travellers have been marked by the ancestral host as enemies, use the Angry Spirits event table instead.

### ANCESTRAL SPIRITS EVENTS

d12	Ancestral Spirits Events	Find
1	White, misty footprints lead in the direction the party wishes to travel	C/4
2	An old coin.	W/4
3	Clear spring with cold, drinkable water. Those who camp by it regain an extra d3 health.	-
4	Blackberry bushes, fruiting despite the season. d6 rations' worth.	F/3
5	Starling or other small bird watches and follows the party.	H/2
6	Modest shrine—a flat-topped stone, carved niche, or a great stump.	W/2
7	Ritually hidden cache. Beneath a flat stone is an oilskin bundle, with 2d6 rations' worth of dried fruit and meat, and a burden of adventuring gear.	S/4
8	Ruined cottage, barely a square of ankle-high stones, somehow provides perfect shelter against the elements.	C/2
9	Ancient graves marked by small, flat stones.	W/2
10	Invisible, ancestral sooth. Close contact causes the adventurer to relive a fearful event or great loss. If they choose, the sooth will ease the memory: reduce Panic by 1.	C/6
11	Sounds of distant grandmothers singing	C/1
12	Mute, ghostly warden patrolling for enemies of the host. Bows 5, Health 10, insubstantial.	-

Disease: runny nose, or hiccups

## POWER—ANGRY SPIRITS

Unburied war dead, victims of calamities, ancestral spirits angry with the state of a community, or whose community no longer exists.

### ANGRY SPIRITS EVENTS

d12	Angry Spirits Events	Find
1	Possessing spirit attempts to control one of the party	C/4
2	Cadaverous, zombified animal (wolf, deer, etc.)	H/2
3	Possessed animal (fresh), enraged and desperate	H/5
4	Terrible nightmares. Lose all healing or mark 1 tick for Panic.	-
5	Vampire bushes, area d12 x 10 paces across	F/3
6	Sabotaging spirit—saddle strap, reins, rope bridge, etc.	C/4
7	Swarms of vermin (rats, large worms, biting insects) erupt from the ground	-
8	Bloody rain falls for an hour	-
9	d6 ghoulish predators, arisen from the ground	C/4
10	Sun is unnaturally dim for d3 days	-
11	Dense fog descends for d3 days	-
12	Fat gray maggots appear, spoil d6 rations per person	W/4

Disease: a pox that brings fever, weakness and leaves scars

# WILDERLANDS SETTLEMENTS

This is a section full of example settlements, maybe ordered by how exotic they are. Eventually I'd like:

- Village (covered by the starting village, except I guess I don't have an entitlement table for it).
- Nomadic band of Galu or goat-men
- Theocratic, insular city state (e.g. Novy Dom)
- Cosmopolitan city where everything goes (e.g. Owlshade)
- Generic farmland events table, with walled farmsteads.

## THE TOWN OF FAIR RIOT

Fair Riot stands deeply within the wilderlands, and although it was once much better connected with nearby settlements, harsher winters and monstrous threats have closed the roads to the townspeople. Its walls still stand, but they are in bad need of repair.

**Means:** 3

**Strife:** 2 (Privation, Wilderlands, Cults)

### SEASONAL MOVES

- Patrol the surrounding area with small bands of volunteer rangers to identify threats
- If the surrounding area is safe, expand arable land (1-2 in 6, Means rises, max 5)
- Farm surrounding arable land (reduce Strife by 1)
- Make use of a safe road to a village or other town (if there is one); reduces Strife by 1

d8	Events Near Fair Riot
1	Patrolling militia, d3 (leather armor, bows, club or hatchet)
2	d6 nervous foragers, d3-1 militia escorting
3	d12 farmers sewing, weeding, reaping, or mending fences, d6 militia escorting
4	d6 cultists at/heading to/from a secret shrine in the wilderlands
5	d6 woodcutters (saws, hatchets), cart and mule, d2-1 militiamen
6	Funeral party, d20 townsfolk plus a priest, at/heading to/from a mausoleum on an estate now reclaimed by the wilderlands
7	d3 stonecutters with a mule cart; heading to/at/returning from a small quarry
8	Ranger's camp, with a hastily erected shrine to the local Power

## EVENTS INSIDE FAIR RIOT

### FAIR RIOT ADVENTURERS

d20	Role	Skills	Trappings
1	Burglar	Burglary 3, Stalking 2, Threats 3	Dagger, 2 pouches silver
2	Ruffian	Threats 3, Arms 2	Dagger, leather armor
3-4	Ranger	Bows 3, Survival 2, Navigation 2, Troth +1	Hunting bow, leather or mail armor
5	Artisan	Craft (choose) 3	
6	Physicker	Tending 4	
7	Farmer	Panic +1	
8-9	Merchant	Assurances 3, Navigation 3	Old map of d6 trade roads
10	Long-shoreman		
11	Ratter	Caving 3, Hunting 3	
12	Actor	Tumbling 3, Perform 3, Assurances 2	
13-14	Militia		
15	Journeyman		
16	Acolyte	Commune 3, Rituals 2, Scribe 3	Bond 2 with local Power
17	Former Cultist	Rituals 3, Seeing 2, Panic +1	1 Hedge Wizardry ritual, a secret way through the wall
18	Sage	Scribe 4, Rituals 1	
19	Noble	Command 2, Riding 2, Arms 2, Bond +1	Horse, mail armor, sword
20	Servant	Labourer 3, Assurances 3	



## ZARRIUN'S TOWER

Zarriun is long gone, but her tower remains. At the top is the sanctum, used by a cabal of apprentices and dweomites—the ninth generation since Zarriun's time. A kastromatic spell built into the tower itself causes it to move from time to time, travelling along ley lines to gather magical energy. At the base is a semi-permanent encampment, a ragtag group of hangers-on, procurers, artisans and a few stalwart guards. Outside the tower, justice is administered by the chief warden.

**Means:** 3

**Strife:** 1 (Intrigue, Wilderlands, Privation)

### SPECIAL

The tower is an unusual settlement; wealthy, but lacking the surrounding farmland and artisans that its special needs requires. It buys valuables like a city, but prices for staples and equipment are tripled.

### SEASONAL MOVES

- Scout out the nearest village; once that's found a town.
- Attack a nearby Soil Mother (Means for Means). This usually brings retribution to a nearby village.
- Send out procurer wagons to the nearest village or town (-1 Strife).
- Move the tower d6 x 5 leagues along a ley line toward the nearest ley nexus (2 in 6 chance of +1 Means)
- Tower moves from a ley nexus in a random direction (d8, 1=N, 2=NE, etc.), stopping at the next ley line. -2 Means.

d12	Events near the Tower
1-2	Foraging party: d6 foragers and d3 guards
3	
4	d8 Horrible floating stinus worms
5	Scouting party, making a new path to water, settlements, or forage. Forager and d4 guards.
6	Dradkin from the nearest Earth Wound, spying on the tower
7	Imp, escaped stowaway from a ritual gone wrong.
8	Ball lightning floating at ground level.

### ENTITLEMENTS

With a few exceptions, the Tower has the standard bond requirements and entitlements. In general, room & board or hospitality is in the ramshackle buildings around the base of the tower.

### BOND 1—FRIEND OF THE WARDEN

Outside the tower, justice is administered by the chief warden, who administers the small community and manages the logistics of foragers, guards and procurers coming and going.

### BOND 2—FRIEND OF THE ORDER

The tower order has the standard entitlements, but Bond 2 requires Scribe 3+. (The tower order issues most of its instructions in writing, and those who cannot read cannot hope to advance.)

### BOND 3—MEMBER OF THE ORDER

Ritualists with a demonstrated commitment to the order may become honorary members of the order. This requires Ritual 3+. Members may rent the sanctum for a fee of 1 silver talent/month.

## TOWER ADVENTURERS

d12	Role	Skills	Trappings
1	Dradkin escapee	Caving 4, Stalking 2, Bond 0	Stolen knife, heirloom kinleather vest (armor 0)
2-3	Forager	Foraging 3, Seeing 2	Silver-plated sickle
4	Crafter	Craft 3 (choose), Scribe 1	d6 gems (rarity A)
5	Procurer	Assurances 3, Scribe 1	Sack of silver
6	Guard	Threats 2, Arms or Bows 2, Scribe 1	Leather armor, choice of weapon
7-10	Apprentice	Scribe 3, Rituals 1	Rituals: 1 Prosaic, d2 Hedge, all with muddle d3
11	Dweomite	Scribe 4, Rituals 2	Rituals: 1 Prosaic, 1 Hedge, 1 Seree, muddle d2
12	Wizard	Scribe 4, Rituals 3, Bond -1	Rituals: 1 Prosaic, d2 Hedge, 1 Sorcery, in a spellbook (3)

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# MONSTROUS THREATS

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Monstrous threats are located on the map; they have an area of influence around them. While the party is in that area of influence, the relevant encounter table is added into the mix.

## VILLAGE.. NEW SETTLEMENTS, ANYWAYS

- secure the village
- build or improve a shrine, celebrate
- secure and cultivate farmland (for crops or grazing)
- secure roads to neighbouring communities (especially a town)
- feud over borders with another village
- if means reduced to 2, they become refugees

## BLIGHT ORCS

- send out scouts, expand the patrol area
- identify vulnerable village, probe its weaknesses
- erect a new orcnest
- raid a village

## CULTS

- find monstrous allies in the wilderness
- bring forth the horrible future

## DEMONIC EMERGENCE

- [varies by demon] - parasitize a community
- bless those who heed the call
- attack an ancestral host
- belch forth monsters
- change the landscape
- wound the earth

## WINTER

A particular demon

- Send out harbingers to claim the next area for winter

---

## BLIGHT ANTS

Giant ants. They move in, strip everything bare, and move out. Their natural food is forests, especially those infested with Soil Mothers. When new queens spawn, they fly in a random directly. The waste they leave behind leaves the land vulnerable to upwellings of demons.

Blight ants are dangerous, as they are cohesive, territorial, and vigilant.

### BLIGHT ANT COLONY MOVES

- Raid arable land (means for means)

- Raid a settlement for livestock and captives (inflicts Strife: Trauma)
- Dig up delicious soil mother nodes (means for means, inflicts Strife: Trauma)
- Means 6 (summer): Spawn d3 queens, at a cost of 1 Means each

## BLIGHT ANT EVENTS

d6	Blight Ants	Find
1	Empty tunnels	W/3
2	Old stumps	W/1
3	Scent trails	W/3
4-5	Lone scout	H/4
6	Lone forager	H/3
7	Castoff exoskeletons	H/1
8	2d6+Means Foragers, d3-1 soldiers	H/2
9	d6+2 Raiders, 2 in 6 chance of captive livestock (d6) or people (d8)	H/4
10	Imposter beetle	H/3
11	Nest entrance, d6+Means soldiers	H/2
12+	d6 Soldiers	H/3

+ the Means of the nest      +1 within a league of the nest

### BLIGHT FORAGER

Dog-sized giant ant

Health 3, Cohesion 1-2, Smelling 4d

- Follow the scent trails
  - Tear off anything edible and carry it back to the nest
  - Drag away the wounded (of either side)
- Foragers (and all blight ants) are immune to soil mother toxins.

### BLIGHT SCOUT

Dog-sized giant ant

Health 4, Cohesion 2-3, Smelling 5d, Pincers 4d

- Follow interesting smells
- Lay down scent trails
- When I find food, mark it and hurry home

### BLIGHT SOLDIER

Horse-sized giant ant

Health 6 (1 Armor), Cohesion 4; Pincers 4d (+1 dmg)

- Defend the hive's territory from anything that smells wrong
- Swarm in through any entrance
- Ignore injuries; others will take up the fight

---

behind me

### BLIGHT QUEEN

Rhinoceros-sized giant ant

Health: 10 (1 armor); Pincers 4d (+2 dmg, long)

- Lay eggs
- Call the soldiers, they will protect me
- If the inner sanctum, flee to the surface and fly away

Treasure: Means x R, d2 M

### IMPOSTER BEETLE

Rhinoceros-sized beetle

Health 12 (2 armor); Flailing 3d (as club)

To blight ants, the lonely imposter beetle smells like a placid blight forager happily doing its job. This allows them to move and graze in blight ant territory. They are terribly insecure, always feeling they're on the verge of discovery.

Treasure: d2 x M

- Ask if I smell right in a hushed whisper

### SKILL: SMELLING

The world of blight ants is rich with smells—of food, of the scent trails the scouts lay down, of the dead, of the nest, and the pheromone-laden smells. The difficulties below reflect the straining and sniffing that people without antennae must do.

- Following blight ant trails, /1
- Smelling the concerns and emotional states of blight ants, /2.
- ..of rther arthropods, /3.
- ..of people, /4.

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## THE MARTOI

Communities near active fey are subject to the strange weapons of the Martoi (described in the strife tables section).

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## NECROMANCER

meddler's broth, meddler's flock

regeneration, some kind of horrible spell

as they get powerful, they acquire more spells, and a retinue of admirers

Spells by Means

will try to meddle with a village's accords to make a bargain with the dead

doom whisper—turns the dead of an accord upon the living using an enormously powerful illusion on the gray side, tricking them into living again, and in the process; this is one of the paths to lichery (maybe there's a small chance each time of turning oneself into a being that spans both sides of the veil).

possessed—living, but slowly rotting. random reactions apply, ranging from friendly and curious to cruel, to cannibalistic. It changes every

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## SORG THE DEVOURER

TODO

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## OTHER MONSTERS

Hedge fisher - gossamer is actually its tendrils (maybe a kind of dead- possessed plant)

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# BESTIARY

(This section describes monsters that don't have a map presence.)

## CARREG

## GHOUL

A fallen necromancer, potentially living in stupor for a long time; some fragment of hostile magic remains, perhaps paralysis, sometimes longknife.

## INVESTED ANIMALS

Nurtured by ancestral spirits without people to care for, invested animals grow to giant size.

## UNDEAD

- possessed (frantic, erratic living, slowly rotting into skeletons)
- risen dead—flesh of soil (if any), perhaps just muddy skeletons, solid bones
- ghosts—1-4 in 6, hunger for the living
- tomb guards—disciplined a
- tomb knight—a great spirit inhabiting a skeletal body, usually some sort of hero. Armored, tactical knowledge.
- vampire—a tomb knight that's been infected with hunger for the living

# STRIFE TABLES

Roll d6 + Strife + Absence modifier (see “Strife” on page 33). If a result indicates to add a type of Strife the group already has, +1 Strife instead.

d6	Crime
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	Organized crime becomes entrenched. Add Intrigue strife.
7	
8+	

d6	Cults
1	XXX
2	XXX
3	XXX
4	Shadow hounds inhabit the alleys, preying on the impoverished and intransigent.
5	Cults infiltrating institutions; on a 1-3 in 6, -1 Bond for not knowing the secret protocols.
6	Imps that cavort freely; people cower.
7	Cult groups pray openly in the squares.
8+	Popular movement installs a hideous, smoldering imp (or other beast) to office.

d6	Intrigue
1	Constant gossip about misdeeds, rudeness, shirking, as factions begin to form
2	Groups and institutions begin to coalesce into factions. Belonging to the wrong ones starts to impede relations with the others.
3	A petty scandal (an affair, neglect of duty) leaves a prominent figure in disgrace
4	Decision paralysis as group’s leadership feuds. Entitlements and wheedling get tied up in bureaucracy.
5	Group’s laws changed in an attempt to tilt the odds. 3 in 6 chance it disadvantages the party’s friends most, -1 Bond.
6	Assassination of prominent figure. If d6 ≤ Bond, someone the adventurers are connected to: reduce Bond.

d6	Intrigue
7	A prominent institution, family or partnership (depending on group size) splits in a schism.
8+	Purges: arrests, expulsions, trials or mob lynchings. -1 Means

d6	Privation
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8+	

d6	Strange Weapons of the Martoi
1	Wailing at night deeply unsettles the community.
2	Water tastes strange, whether from wells, streams or rivers.
3	Reports of people going missing. If investigated, many showed up again after an absence of 2d6 weeks, with no memory of where they were.
4	Animals (dogs, cats, vermin) seen fleeing the city.
5	
6	
7	Rampant dementia. 1 in 6 chance an NPC the players seek has become affected, d6: 1-2 recovering from a brief spell; 3-4 some good days, some bad days; 5-6 total incapacity.
8+	A tenth of the community loses their memories and the power of speech, drops their tools and crawls away from the community to live as animals. -1 Means

d6	Trauma
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	



d6 Trauma	
7	
8+	

d6 War	
1	Smiths, armorers, fletchers are fully engaged in preparations, causing long waits and higher prices
2	Gangs are pressing people into service to bolster standing forces (if any)
3	An effort to repair (or create) defenses has begun - a palisade, repair of stone walls.
4	People from the surrounds are crowding in, tripling prices for board and provisions. Add Privation strife.
5	Desperate for mercenaries, the group is drawing the worst of the worst to itself, paying through the nose.
6	A significant structure (wall, outer fortification, neighbourhood) has been damaged, burned, destroyed. Add Truma strife.
7	The group is under siege (if it has wall) or under direct threat. Add Truma strife.
8+	The group is currently under attack; defenses are failing. Add Trauma strife.

d6 Wilderlands	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	d3 gigantic slugs/snails creep in during the night to eat food reserves. On a 1-2 in 6, add Privation strife.
6	Nights are d3 times longer than usual. Add Cults strife.
7	
8+	A husk dragon arrives to extort the locals.

# RANDOM GROUPS AND PLACES

Use these tables as desired for inspiration in detailing groups.

d8 Group Leadership Dynamic	
1	Strong leader focused on the group's needs or purpose
2	Strong leader supported by effective lieutenants, focused on the group's goals or needs
3	Powerful leader, but focused entirely on private or selfish goals
4	Ineffective leader, sidelined by effective lieutenants focused on the group's goals
5	Ineffective leader, sidelined by lieutenants focused on private goals
6	A group-minded leader doing their best despite selfish or ineffective lieutenants
7	Power shared harmoniously, if inefficiently, among relative equals (in practice, if not in title)
8	In absentia: the leader has recently become sick, injured, dead, deposed, enchanted or missing

## SETTLEMENTS

d6 Primary Settlement Religion	
1	Ancestral Worship
2	Worship of the local Power
3	A mystery cult (see below) has become the dominant form of worship
4	Idiosyncratic dogma—a peculiar local spin on popular regional deities is taken very seriously
5	
6	

## CULTS

d6 Mystery Cult Nature	
1	Reactionary political movement evoking a fringe religious tradition as their identity, but with no magical basis.

d6 Mystery Cult Nature	
2	Cult entirely based around the mystical teachings of their leader (1-3 a hedge wizard, a complete quack.
3	Active demonologists attempting to bring forth d6: 1-4 a demon of the underworld; 5 the nuss; 6 void gulls.
4	Cabal with pretensions of recapturing the glory of the great sorcerers of the past.
5	Loyal but politically heretical servants of the local Power
6	Originally benevolent group seeking the freedom to pursue personal mystery and visions

d6 Cult Favored Location for Gatherings	
1	
2	A fragment of Castle Gharial, nearby in the wilderness.
3	
4	
5	In a blasphemous secret shrine hidden somewhere in the seat of power—below the ground, in a secret room, on a hidden part of the roof
6	In the middle of things in plain sight—the town square, a market, a common green

d6 Cult Altars	
1	An ornate pool of stagnant water, redolent with odors of fermenting fruit.
2	A rude wooden table, sticky with entrails, ash, nubs of incense and bits of stained parchment.
3	Hundreds of slabs of stone suspended from cords, each etched with profane writings.
4	A mighty spur of unbroken primordial rock from the deepest earth.
5	A glittering spire of green, translucent rock. Lights slowly pulse from within, as if at a great depth from the viewer.
6	Around a stone plinth in plain sight right in the middle of things—the town square, a market, a common green

# UNDERGROUND PLACES

d8 Entrances	
1	A natural cavern at ground level, formed between the earth and a leaning stone, leaving a gap as if by accident.
2	The shell of a stone ruin, whose interior has plunged into a cavernous shaft, like marrow sucked from a bone.
3	A wide, shallow basin of dressed stone, many paces wide. A spiral stair in the center
4	A gaping, ragged hole in the ground, as if blasted from below. Wisps of white smoke drift from it; shiny black rocks dot the surrounds.
5	A portion of Castle Gharial protruding from the earth (perhaps a fragment of tower, or a stretch of parapet sloping into the ground like a trench)
6	A wide area of porous, unstable ground, with many collapsed areas where soil has crumbled down into rocky voids. Toward the center they are deeper and more connected.
7	A wide, natural basin; shallow at its edges, but impossibly steep at its center. Nevertheless, the ground nearby always feels ‘down’, and the tunnel at the center seemingly horizontal to those at its threshold.
8	A natural fissure, wavy, irregular and very narrow, with an underground entrance tens of paces below ground level.

## CASTLE GHARIAL

For reasons unknown, many deliberately constructed portions of the underworld have precisely the same layout, that of a large, fortified castle. Over the years, as partial maps made their way to sages, the similarities were noted.

Castle Gharial manifests differently in each instance - riven by the shear forces of the deep earth, parts collapsed or underwater, would-be exterior spaces filled with solid, local stone.

In many instances where only a portion of the full layout appears, such as only the gatehouse, or multiple sections of the outer wall. Nevertheless, the fact they are all drawn from the same pattern is unmistakable.

The architectural style predates the Seree (who wrote about it themselves) but clearly differs from section to section of the castle. The castle also has extensive “underground” works. Reliable maps of portions of the layout are quite valuable, as they are useful in many other places.

Schematics of the upper portions (especially the towers, with sometimes breach the surface) are cheapest. Diagrams of the under-works are expensive and unreliable.

## DEMONLANDS

Primal, creative forces emanate from the lowest depths and make their way to the surface over the aeons. These great forces raise and lower mountains, squeeze life-giving waters to the surface in natural sprints, and heave up the fertile black soil from the depths.

This happens at great speed where there are no people. Only the roads hold the world together—where people seldom go, strange new landscapes can be found. Copses turn into dark forests, hills into imassable crags; ponds into broad lakes, and lakes into seas.

Distances on old maps are much shorter, except for those places that have remained connected. Many treasured places, familiar to travelers of generations past, are hidden and remote.

The sages say that the worship of demons hastens this process. This is also thought not to happen underground, and subsurface roads—although dangerous—can also prove to be tremendous short cuts compared to overland journeys.

What’s weird is that the people of these odd places don’t think they’re new, and have been there for generations.

d8 Demonland	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

## STRANGE PRESUMPTIONS

d8 Strange Presumptions	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

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d8 Strange Presumptions	
7	
8	

## WEIRD SKILLS

d8 Weird Skill	
1	
2	
3	<b>Slaying:</b> The heroes of old (it was said) could face great beasts as equals in arms. Trying to kill a manticore with a sword is like trying to kill a rhino with a hunting knife, but those who know Slaying ignore the reach advantage of large foes.
4	<b>Skinning:</b> Wearing the skins of the deceased to take their form convincingly. /1 for a carefully prepared, skin of the same size as the wearer. Add difficulty for the wrong size (although masters can squeeze down even into mouse skins), wrong form (e.g. wrong # of legs), and hastily prepared or rotted skins.
5	
6	
7	
8	

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