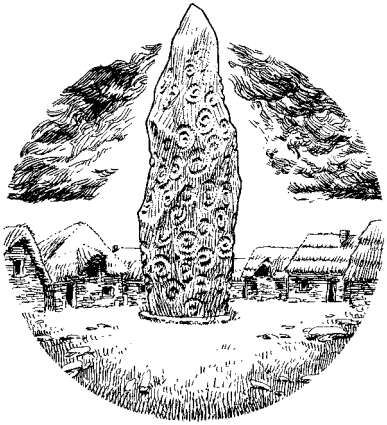
Book I



Stonetop

In memory of Aubrey "Aubs" Johnson (1984–2022),
our fallen Fox, gone too soon.

And in memory, too, of my dad, Nick Strandberg (1941–2025).
Mom often says you were scared at the prospect of being a father,
that you didn't think you knew how.

You did a damn fine job nonetheless.

WRITTEN BY
Jeremy Strandberg

ILLUSTRATED BY
Lucie Arnoux

ARRANGED BY
Jason Lutes

PROOFREAD BY
Angel Green
Rob Rendell
Matt Wetherbee
John Pham, Steven Quillen, Dennis Taylor
&
A LEGION OF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE STONETOP COMMUNITY

All text herein is released under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.
Some concepts and procedures are derived from *Dungeon World*, by Sage LaTorra & Adam Koebel, released under a CC BY license.
All artwork herein is © 2026 by Lucie Arnoux.

PUBLISHED BY
Lampblack & Brimstone

Contents

Welcome to Stonetop	7
Getting Started	15
Playing the Game	35
Playbooks & Inserts	103
Running the Game	167
Player Moves	207
Harm & Healing	237
First Adventure	251
Threats	277
Expeditions	301
Sites	345
Dangers	379
Discoveries	421
NPCS & Followers	449
Homefront	483
Writing Moves & Love Letters	549
The Game Ongoing	571
Acknowledgements	597
Mediography	598
INDEX	600

No one knows how the Stone got there, or what the runes cut into its surface might mean. Few even remember how the village sprang up around it. When storms roll up and the Stone pulls lightning from the sky, outsiders cringe and cower. But us? We barely even notice.

We live here, see. This village, Stonetop—it's our home. It's not a glamorous place. Far from it. But we look out for each other. We might not always get along, but we're a community. Everyone contributes. Everyone shares.

And right now, as the first wildflowers bloom in the Flats and the trees bud in the Great Wood, trouble is a-brewing. The world itself is darkening, like the sky before a late-summer storm. Everyone can feel it. Folks are getting scared.

You and me? We're the ones folk look to when they're scared. Like it or not, we're the brave ones. The clever ones. And yeah, sure, the strange ones, too.

These are good people, here in Stonetop. Our kith and our kin.

If we don't step up to protect them, who will?

Welcome to Stonetop

Stonetop is a hearth fantasy role-playing game, set in an iron age that never was. It's meant for 3-5 people to play over multiple sessions. Expect each session to last 3-5 hours.

Decide which of you will be the game master, or GM for short. Everyone else is a player. Each player controls and portrays a player character (or PC), one of the heroes of the village of Stonetop. The GM controls and portrays the world around them.

Together, you'll tell the stories of these PCs and the village they call home. These stories will play out over months or years of fictional time.

Most of the time you spend playing will revolve around crises that threaten the village, or opportunities to improve its lot.

You'll face dangers both monstrous and mundane. You'll seek out the wonders of the past. You'll trudge through rain and snow to haul some treasure home.

But you'll spend time on the slow, quiet moments, too. Talking to your pa by the hearth. Courting a sweetheart. Bringing in the harvest with your neighbors, or dancing 'round the Stone come spring. Seeing children grow. Laying dear old friends to rest.

Over time—in both the game and in real life—your characters and the village will struggle, change, and grow. Together, you'll tell a story that you could never tell alone.

Welcome to Stonetop, friend.

Welcome home.

Expectations

Stonetop works best with 3-5 people: the GM and 2-4 players. With just one player, some of the mechanics and procedures fall flat. With 5 or more players, it becomes increasingly hard to share the spotlight, make decisions, and keep things coherent.

It's best if the players are consistent from session to session. Players have a lot of input into the fictional world, and they decide together how to deploy their village's resources and what projects to pursue. When you have different players each session, it's hard to keep everyone on the same page.

Premise

Everyone should buy in to the game's core premise: PCs are the heroes of an isolated village in a fantasy iron age. They have roots in the village and care about its inhabitants. Adventures involve defending the village from threats or seizing opportunities for their home.

If you want to play rootless wanderers in search of fortune and glory, this isn't the game for you. Maybe try *Freebooters on the Frontier* instead.

Stonetop comes with a **setting** (see page 10). There are plenty of blanks for you and your group to fill in during play, but if you want to change the setting's core assumptions, you'll need to do a fair bit of work.

Commitment

A game of *Stonetop* requires multiple sessions, each of which will take 3-5 hours. You need at least 3 or 4 sessions to really experience the game, but it's best played long-term, over dozens of sessions. *Stonetop* is not a good choice for one-shots.

Prior to play, the GM should familiarize themselves with the **Getting Started** chapter (page 15) and prepare the materials for play. If possible, the players should review the **Setting Overview** handout.

If players want to read more, they can read the first few chapters of this book: **Welcome to Stonetop** (this chapter), **Playing the Game** (page 35), and the **Playbooks & Inserts** (page 103). Players should NOT make characters in advance.

Structure

During the first session, you'll create characters together and introduce them to each other. As you do so, you'll create your group's specific version of Stonetop. You'll also roll some dice to find out what the first season of play holds.

After the first session, the GM will spend a few hours organizing their notes and preparing an initial adventure.

In subsequent sessions, the GM will set scenes and the players will portray their characters. In the first of these sessions, you'll start in the village of Stonetop and establish a little bit of normal life. The GM will then introduce a threat or opportunity, which will prompt the PCs to undertake an **expedition**.

Dice notation

If you're unfamiliar:

- A "d6" is a six-sided die, a "d10" is a ten-sided die, etc.
- "Roll 2d6" means: "Roll two six-sided dice and add the result."
- "Roll d10+1" means: "Roll one ten-sided die and add one to the result."

The expedition will take one or more sessions to resolve. When the PCs have met their goals, or failed to do so, they'll return home. You'll explore how the village reacts to their return (and their success or failure), and how the PCs settle back into normal life.

If your group keeps playing, then future sessions will skip forward a bit in time. The game will help you identify the next interesting situation—the next challenge, crisis, or opportunity that needs to be dealt with in play. The situation will likely lead to another expedition, which again will take one or more sessions to resolve.

Between sessions, the GM will likely want to spend 1-2 hours updating their notes and preparing for the next session. Players will occasionally need to select new options for their characters, or think about what they want to do next, or answer the GM's questions.

Eventually, your group will decide to stop playing. If interest wanes or real life interferes, the game might just fizzle out—and that's okay. But hopefully, you'll be able to bring your game to a satisfying conclusion. See **"Ending your game"** (page 591) for advice on this.

Content

By default, a game of *Stonetop* features the following content:

- Fairly graphic violence
- Kidnappings, abductions, families in danger
- Bigotry, racial tensions
- Horror elements such as mind control and possession
- Personal corruption (especially if someone is playing the Seeker)
- Starvation (or the threat thereof)

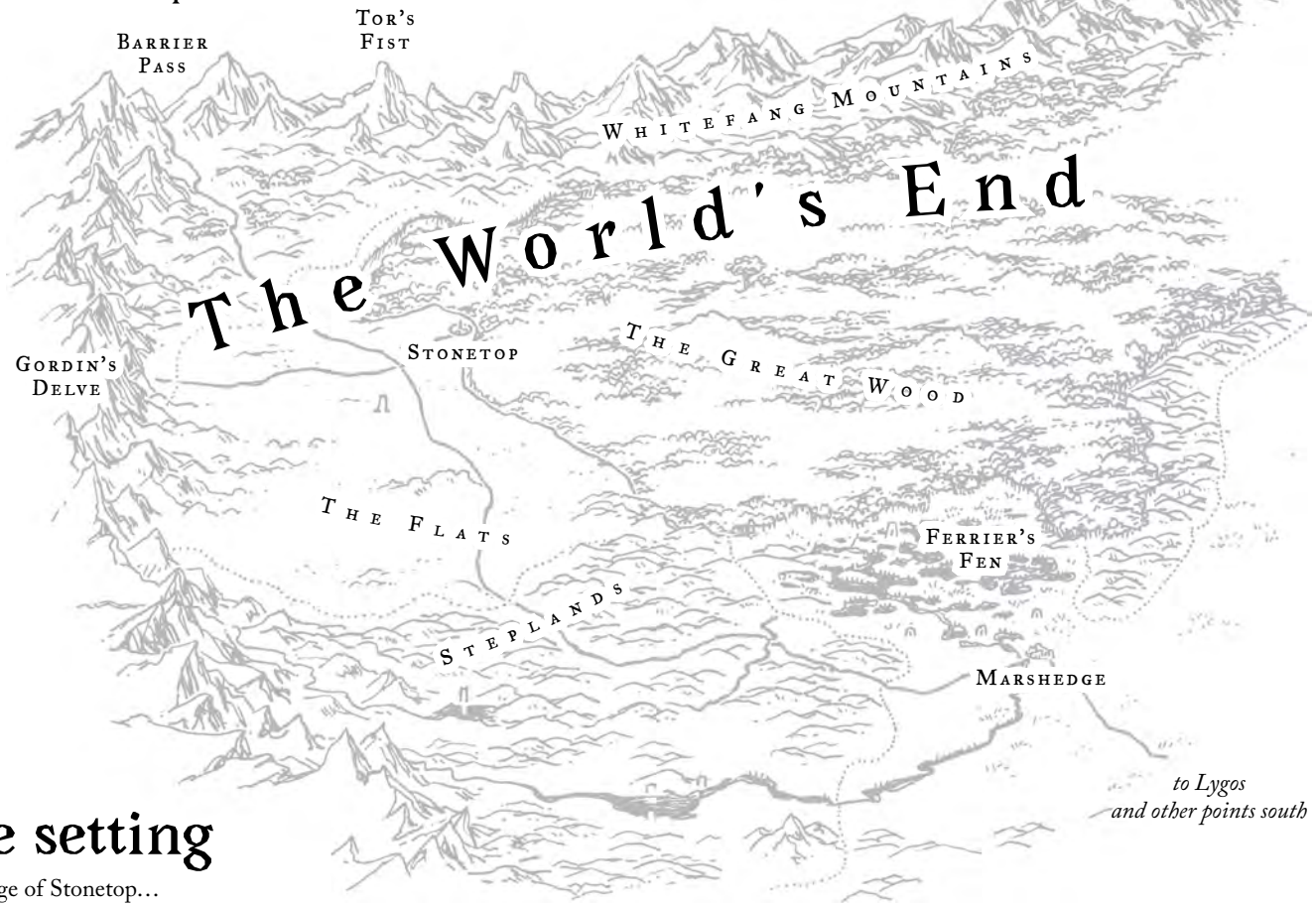
Other disturbing and emotional topics are certainly possible. Talk to your group about any topics that you wish to exclude, veil, or handle in a specific way.

GMs, see page 18 for guidance on facilitating conversations about content.

Materials

To play this game face-to-face, you'll need printed materials (playbooks, inserts, and reference sheets), plus pencils to write with. If you play online, you'll need digital versions of the same.

You'll also need dice. *Stonetop* uses the many-sided dice common to roleplaying games. As a player, you'll need at least 3d6 and ideally one each of a d4, d8, d10, and d12. The GM doesn't generally roll dice during play, but they'll want a d6 and a d12 for rolling on the inspirational tables in *Book II: The Wider World and Other Wonders*.



The setting

The village of Stonetop…

… **is home to around 300 folks**. It's a nice place, though poor. People look out for each other.

… **is built around a massive standing stone** of unknown origin, carved with faint runes. Lightning strikes the Stone often.

… **stands at edge of the Great Wood.** Villagers hunt and trap but—per a compact with the Forest Folk—never fell a living tree.

… **lies in the World's End**, a sparsely populated region, dotted with ruins. The nearest settlement is days away.

Neighbors

The **Forest Folk** disappeared ten years ago, and no one knows why. Perhaps the **Fae**—magical, fickle beings of the Great Wood—had something to do with it?

Horrid little **crinwin** also lurk in the Great Wood. They've grown bolder and more numerous since the Forest Folk left.

Gordin's Delve is the closest settlement, a mining town four days to the west.

Barrier Pass is a few days north, in the mountains; stoic, grim, unwelcoming.

The **Hillfolk** are nomads who roam the rugged Steplands to the south and the Flats to the west. They hold the mining folk of Gordin's Delve in contempt.

Marshedge is a sizeable town about ten days' march south and east.

There's no empire, no kings or nobles—at least not around here. More "civilized" towns and cities lie farther to the south. Lygos is the closest such city.

The Makers

The **Makers** are long gone, but their ruins (many sized for giants) remain.

Stonetop is built on Maker-ruins: an ancient cistern, the crumbling Old Wall, some old foundations. The Ruined Tower is about a day from town. The Great Wood is littered with the Makers' work, though much of it is overgrown.

The **Makers' Roads** still stretch across the region, impossibly well-preserved and far safer than they ought to be. The West Road runs between Stonetop and Gordin's Delve. The Highway crosses the West Road a few miles from town, running from Barrier Pass to Marshedge and beyond.

Other things of note

The PCs are all human. Strange peoples (like the Forest Folk, the Fae, or the mask-wearing Ustrina from beyond Gordin's Delve) exist but are poorly understood.

Wise folk whisper of the Things Below, primeval entities of darkness, corruption, and ruin. Their power taints all that it touches.

People are terrified of deep water. Evil dwells there. Evil that will drag you to your doom. Everyone knows this.

Magic is not common, nor easy, nor safe. It can be borrowed from spirits or gods or Things Below, or wrested from the forgotten lore of the Makers. But it is not to be trifled with.

Iron is the most common metal. Good steel is hard to find. Bronze tools and weapons are common enough, but old-fashioned and laden with superstition.

The characters

As a player, you'll pick a playbook for your character. Each represents a local hero, with deep ties to the community.

The Blessed is a nature priest who speaks to spirits and beasts. Works subtle magics via sacred markings and materials.

The Fox is clever, quick, skillful. Not above bending the rules and fighting dirty. Can be quite the charmer.

The Heavy isn't just any violent individual, they're *our* violent individual. A champion, yes, but a liability, too.

The Judge settles disputes, keeps the chronicle, and stands as a divine bulwark against chaos. Insightful and tough, not necessarily persuasive.

The Lightbearer invokes divine power via flame and candle. A beacon of hope, charity, and mercy. No great warrior, but a fiery foe of the dark.

The Marshal leads the militia and a crew of followers. Makes choices about who lives and who dies.

The Ranger is at home in the wild. A resourceful guide and deadly hunter.

The Seeker collects lost lore and power. Has potent artifacts that might well lead to their ruin.

The Would-be Hero is full of fear and anger, and in over their head, but they just might outshine us all.

Why play?

Because the characters of Stonetop are awesome and compelling, capable of epic deeds and yet fallible and human.

Because the world of Stonetop is rich and mysterious, familiar and fantastic. You and your friends get to both explore this world and help create it.

Because adventures are fun, but they're more meaningful when you undertake them on behalf of your kith and kin.

Because here, in the real world, our communities are often fractured, broken, disconnected. Because maybe you want to imagine a community that works, one that pulls together and struggles together and looks out for its own. Because play is practice, and practice is how you change yourself, how you change your world.

Because Stonetop itself is a good place, a place worth fighting for.

And if you don't fight for it, who will?

Getting Started

Get ready
Review the setting
Set expectations
Discuss tone and content
Create characters
Intro the PCs
Let spring burst forth
After the session

Get ready

Make sure that everyone is on board with the concept of *Stonetop*: that they'll play the heroes of a small, isolated village. If someone wants to play a rootless, treasure-hunting mercenary, they're unlikely to enjoy themselves, and that will drag down the game for everyone.

Prior to the first session, ask your players to read the **Setting Overview** handout, at least the first page. Encourage them to think about any content that they want to exclude, veil, or handle in a particular way (see page 18). Consider posting a shared document online where you and your players can record these things anonymously.

Set the expectation that the first session will mostly involve creating characters and the village itself. It's still *play*, and quite fun, but it's not the immersive, portraying-your-character type of play that they might expect. (This is different if you choose to use an **adventure starter**, see page 22.)

It's fine if players want to look over the character playbooks beforehand, but discourage anyone from making decisions just yet. Character creation should be done together, as a group.

As the GM, familiarize yourself with the Setting Overview, the Stonetop **steading playbook**, and the **Moves & Gear** handout. You should have a sense of what each character playbook is about, but you don't need to understand them in depth. Look at a few of the **arcana** handouts (minor and major) to get a sense for what they are and what they're like, but there's no need to study them in detail. If you have time, read through the rest of this book and *Book II: The Wider World and Other Wonders*.

As far as physical preparation goes, beyond this book you'll need hard copies of the following:

- 1 copy of each character playbook
- 1 copy of the steading playbook
- 1-4 copies of the Setting Overview
- 1-3 copies of the Moves & Gear handout (on colored paper if you can)
- 1 copy of the arcana cards
- 1 copy of the GM playbook

Print the PDFs for these documents double-sided (flipped on the short edge).

After you've printed everything:

1) Staple the Stonetop steading playbook, the Moves & Gear handout, and the Setting Overview, each at the top left.

2) Fold the character playbooks into individual booklets.

3) Cut out the "inserts" and slip the class-specific inserts into their appropriate playbooks.

4) Keep the Inventory inserts stacked and handy. Set aside the Revenant, Ghost, and Thrall inserts.

5) Assemble the GM playbook. Stack the sheets so that "Nearby Threats" is face-up. Fold all the pages over to make a booklet. Staple it along the spine.

6) If you have time, cut out all the arcana cards, major and minor.

There's nothing secret in any of these documents, so if any of your players are around ask them to help with the folding, cutting, and stapling!

If you're playing electronically, you'll need to configure and distribute materials in whatever way works best for you, your players, and the platform that you're using to play. Make sure that everyone has access to electronic copies of:

- The Stonetop steading playbook
- The Setting Overview
- The Moves & Gear handout
- The character playbooks and inserts

Make the arcana handouts available individually, as needed.

Review the setting

Once you've gathered for the first session, **ask everyone to take 10-15 minutes to read the Setting Overview** handout. Do so even if everyone reviewed the handout in advance. It helps to refresh memories and get everyone on the same page.

When everyone's done, **ask the group what questions they have**. Answer to the best of your ability, inviting others to help. Note that some questions (like, "Where *did* the Forest Folk go?") are mysteries that can only be answered in play.

Ask everyone what they find intriguing or exciting. What catches their imagination and makes them want to learn more? Take notes! Be sure to include these topics in the game.

Set expectations

Refer to the first page of the Setting Overview. **Ask everyone if they're comfortable with the players' agenda and principles**. Clarify and answer questions. Emphasize the importance of collaboration.

Explain that you have an agenda and principles, too. Specifically, your agenda is to:

- Portray a rich and mysterious world
- Punctuate their lives with adventure
- Play to find out what happens

Make it clear that you'll be **fleshing out the world together**. There are no "official" answers to many of the questions raised by the Setting Overview. There are many blanks to fill in. You (the GM) have a setting guide, but it's mostly filled with *ideas* rather than *truths*.

Discuss tone and content

Talk to your group about **tone**: *Stonetop* takes itself seriously, grounding itself in human concerns. The PCs are exceptional, but they aren't super-human. Violence has consequences. Monsters are scary. Magic is strange and dangerous. People matter.

The setting, playbooks, and rules go a long way towards establishing a consistent tone, but **you and your players ultimately determine the game's tone in play**. Obviously, you can play the game however you want. You'll almost certainly have moments of levity and silliness—you're doing this for fun, after all—but *Stonetop* works best when everyone mostly plays it straight.

Next, discuss any **content that you and your players actively want to exclude, veil, or handle in a particular way**. Explain why this is important, reading or paraphrasing the following:

"This game is collaborative, with each of us contributing to the game's fiction. We each have our own tastes, sensibilities, and boundaries, which the others can't fully anticipate. So, before we start play, we're going to establish guidelines for the content that we'll include in the game. The goal is to make the game enjoyable, comfortable, safe, and welcoming for everyone, and that's more important than anyone's sense of realism or historical accuracy."

If someone strongly objects to establishing content guidelines, or refuses to respect the wishes, boundaries, and dignity of their fellow human beings, then consider whether you really want to spend hours and hours playing with them.

Grab the Stonetop steading playbook and find the section on Content. Explain the difference between excluded content and veiled content.

Excluded content just won't be in the game, period. For example, if "torture" is excluded, then PCs won't torture anyone; monsters and NPCs won't torture anyone; no one will threaten anyone with torture; no one will have torture as part of their backstory. No torture, not even off-camera.

Veiled content can be part of the game, but only off-camera. If "torture" is veiled, then PCs, NPCs, and monsters can all threaten to torture each other, or have been tortured in the past. PCs, NPCs, and monsters can commit torture, too, but if they do, you "fade to black" or "pan away" and the actual torture happens off-camera. You can—and probably should—address the aftermath of the torture on-camera, but skip the torture itself.

Excluded or veiled content can be broad ("slavery") or specific ("graphic depictions of harm to eyes"). It can be potentially upsetting ("torture"), or something that a player finds distasteful or mood-breaking ("punny names"), or even trivial ("NPCs named 'Sean'").

Start by sharing the content that you (the GM) want to exclude or veil, plus any such content that was shared with you in advance. Then give the players a few minutes to consider what (else) they want to exclude or veil. Ask for them to share, and note the content on the steading playbook.

If you suspect that some players will be shy about sharing, have the whole group submit their excluded/veiled content anonymously (via an online document or form, note cards, etc.).

Anyone can call for content to be excluded or veiled. If one player wants to exclude something that another player wants to veil, then that content is excluded.

It's fine to ask each other for clarification on what exactly is being excluded or veiled, but **don't ask for reasons**. Players can volunteer their reasons, but sometimes those reasons are private, unpleasant, or even traumatic and no one should be asked to unpack that for a game.

Let everyone know that **they can call for new content to be excluded or veiled at any time**, in this session, between sessions, or during future sessions. They don't need to speak now or forever hold their peace.

Finally, ask if anyone has **special requests** regarding specific content. Is there certain content that anyone wants to handle in a particular way? Are there any truths they want to assert about the world, the village, or the game? For example:

- "Spiders are okay, but I need us to avoid describing their legs.'"
- "I'm cool with bigotry between the Hillfolk and Gordin's Delve, but I want Stonetop to be an open-minded and welcoming place."
- "I don't want the Stone to be some source of ancient evil."
- "I want to play a woman Marshal, defying a woman's 'proper place!'"
- "Let's say that gender norms in Stonetop are super fluid and accepting."

Discuss, negotiate, and compromise as needed, trying to find common ground that works for everyone, and note these special requests in the steading playbook.

Making corrections

Mistakes will happen. When excluded content comes up in play, or veiled content gets included on-screen, whoever notices should call "time out" and point out what happened. Don't make a big deal about it; acknowledge the mistake, fix the fiction if necessary, and move on.

Likewise, if anyone realizes mid-session that some particular content is bothering them, they can call a time out. Identify the content that needs to be handled differently (clarifying as needed, but not asking for reasons). Update the steading playbook. Fix the fiction. Check in with the player and make sure they're okay. When everyone's ready, continue.

If you or a player realize that you're uncomfortable with content that came up during a previous session, discuss it before the next session. Update the steading playbook and fix the fiction as needed.

"Fix the fiction" means: decide as a group what happened *instead*. This isn't meant to undo the consequences of players' rolls or decisions, but rather to bring the fiction back in line with the comfort level of the group.

If a player consistently ignores the group's content guidelines, talk to them about it between sessions. If they persist, stop playing with them.

Create characters

After you review the setting, set expectations, and establish content guidelines, it's time to make characters! Do this together, during the first session.

First, have everyone pick a character playbook. Refer to the "Setting Overview" handout for a quick overview of each, and discuss who would like to play which class. This will be much quicker and easier than reviewing the entirety of each playbook. If anyone is unsure, have them read the front page of the playbooks they are considering.

As each person makes their choice, hand them the appropriate playbook, along with any class-specific inserts. Everyone gets an Inventory insert as well. If someone chooses the Seeker, hand them the major arcana cards and tell them they'll need to choose one before play proper begins, as indicated by their playbook.

Ask each player to work through their playbook from front to back, making choices and filling in blanks as needed. Answer questions as they arise. Common questions at this stage include:

- **My background says "go mark this now." What does that mean?** If they take that background, they should open their playbook and mark that particular move, option, or special possession now (so that they don't forget to do so later).
- **What does my instinct do?** It describes how their character tends to behave. Each session, they get XP if they demonstrate their instinct in play, or struggle against it.
- **Do I have to pick from these appearances?** No, they can make up something else. The appearances are there to spark their creativity.
- **Do I have to pick one of these names?** No, but the name lists are meant to give the world a cohesive feel. The steading playbook includes extra names if they want to pick something else.
- **Do I have to live in Stonetop?** Yes, at least for now. There are only two exceptions: a Blessed with the Raised by Wolves background and a Lightbearer with the Itinerant Mystic background. Even they should have close ties to the village, and be there often.
- **How does "armor" work?** Their armor value is (usually) based on their current gear. Armor reduces any damage they take. Multiple items with "*x* armor" don't stack with each other, but items that grant "+*x* armor" do stack (with each other, and with "*x* armor" items). 0-1 armor is typical. 2 armor is tough. 3 armor is the best a starting character can get.
- **What does ◇ or ◇◇ mean?** The item counts against their load. If they bring it on an expedition, they'll mark that many ◇ on their Inventory insert. They can mark up to 3 with a light load, up to 6 with a normal load, and up to 9 with a heavy load.

  Items without a ◇ or ◇◇ are either *small* (they don't count against your load, but you typically carry only ~4 of them on each expedition) or something that you don't carry on your person. It should be obvious which.

- **Can I have a different special possession?** Sure, but keep it setting-appropriate and on par with the other options. Check other playbooks for inspiration.
- **Do I get any (other) weapons or gear?** Special possessions are the unique or interesting things that they own or have access to. Every character has access to common weapons, armor, and gear included on the Inventory insert. They shouldn't define their Inventory at the start of play. They'll do that when they first Outfit for an expedition.
- **How much damage do weapons do?** Damage is based on the playbook, not on the weapon. The Heavy deals 1d10 damage and the Lightbearer deals 1d4, regardless of whether they use a dagger or a maul. Some weapons of war deal "+1 damage," but that's an exception.

  No, they don't add their STR or DEX to their damage rolls.
- **What do the various tags mean?** *Hand*, *close*, *reach*, *near*, and *far* describe a weapon or light source's useful range. From closest to furthest, the ranges are *hand* < *close* < *reach* < *near* < *far*.

  "Piercing" weapons ignore some of the target's armor. A weapon with "*x* piercing" has a piercing value equal to Stonetop's Prosperity (+0 by default).

  Area, *awkward*, *crude*, *cumbersome*, *dangerous*, *forceful*, *messy*, *thrown*, *warm*, etc. are fictional cues. They have no numeric effects, but they color the fiction—which is important!
- **What does "roll + [STAT]" mean?** They'll roll 2d6 and add the modifier they've assigned to that stat. If the total is a 10+, yay! If the total is 7-9, okay. If the total is 6-, uh-oh.
- **What happens if I roll a 6 or less?** If a move doesn't specify what happens on a 6-, then it means that the player marks XP and something bad happens. You (the GM) decide exactly what.
- **What does "advantage" mean?** They roll an extra die and discard the lowest. Usually, that means rolling 3d6 and keeping the 2 best dice. If they have "disadvantage," they roll an extra die and discard the highest (usually 3d6, keep the 2 worst). If they have advantage or disadvantage on a damage roll, they roll their damage die twice and keep the best/worst roll (and then add any bonus dice from moves).
- **Should I fill in the back page, too?** Yes. They should complete the left column of their playbook's back page, making choices or answering questions as they wish, within the content guidelines established by the group.

If you're using an **adventure starter** (see page 22), you might have specific instructions for certain playbooks.

Intro the PCs

Everyone should stop and wait at the **Introductions** section of their playbooks, which comprises the second column on the back page. They can read it over and think about answers to the questions, but shouldn't make any hard decisions until everyone's ready to do so as a group.

When all the players are at that point, set expectations: they'll take turns introducing themselves, adding details, asking and answering questions about each other and the setting as it develops through conversation.

While this happens, encourage them to...

- **Pay attention:** take interest in what everyone else says.
- **Ask and answer questions:** if they want to know more about something that comes up, ask. Answer questions asked of you honestly.
- **Play off of each other:** incorporate details mentioned by others into your own contributions.

As GM, you'll ask a lot of questions, too. See the following pages for suggestions.

Whenever someone wants or needs to add a new NPC to the mix, suggest that they pick one of the unused names from the front of their playbook. Additional names are available in the steading playbook. Also give each NPC an occupation and/or trait (the steading playbook has a list of suggestions, see page 163).

Take notes! Add NPCs to the steading playbook as you go, or take more freeform notes for now and update the Residents of Stonetop and Notable Neighbors later.

Adventure starters

If you want to start an adventure right away, during the first session, then download an adventure starter from www.lampblackandbrimstone.com.

Each starter presents abbreviated steps for character creation and introductions, and then launches into a specific adventure. The results won't be as unique or fleshed out as what you get with the standard process, but you'll get to the action more quickly!

1 Vital info

Choose someone to go first. They'll introduce themselves by name, pronouns, background (and playbook, if unclear), origin, and appearance.

Ask questions based on their class and background. Use the following questions as a guide, but of course ask whatever your curiosity demands. Encourage the other players to do so as well: "Anyone else curious about anything that was just mentioned?"

It's okay to leave blanks! If someone isn't sure about a detail, or doesn't want to decide just yet, that's fine. Make a note and come back to it later—or just leave it as an open question to be answered in play.

If their origin is someplace other than Stonetop, ask them the following (unless the answer is obvious):

- What brought you (or your family) to Stonetop? Why here, specifically?
- Who else, if anyone, came with you?
- How long ago was this? Decades? Years? Months? Days?

The Blessed

Initiate
- Who are your fellow initiates?
- How long ago were you initiated?
- How were you chosen? By lineage? By trial? By sign or omen?
- Did anyone else seek your role?
- What did the initiation rites entail? Were they public or secret? Festive or somber?
- What do your duties as an initiate entail?

Raised by Wolves
- Were you one of the Forest Folk? Stolen, lost, or abandoned? Something else?
- Did you grow up in the Great Wood? On the Flats? Somewhere else?
- What drew you to Stonetop? What ties you to the village?
- When did you first make yourself known to the village? How did that happen?
- Do you live in town? On the outskirts? In the Wood? How often do you visit?

Vessel
- How did you gain or become aware of your power? When did this happen?
- How has your life changed since gaining your powers?
- Do you have a mentor? Or are you self-taught, going by instinct and insight?
- Do you hold some formal position as a servant of Danu?

The Fox

The Natural
- What mundane craft, trade, or skill do you excel at, better than anyone?
- What well-earned reputation do you have?
- What lies get whispered behind your back?
- What secret do you know? About whom?

A Life of Crime
- What criminal enterprise were you a part of? Who ran the show?
- How did you get into that life?
- How did you get out?
- Who or what did you leave behind?
- Who here knows about your past?

The Prodigal Returned
- Why did you leave? How long ago?
- Where did you go first? Why?
- Where were you the longest?
- What brought you home? When?
- What has changed most while you were away?

The Heavy

Sheriff
- Is this a formal position, or just something everyone agrees on?
- How long have you acted as sheriff?
- Who, if anyone, did this job before you?
- Just where exactly did you learn how to fight so well?

Blood-soaked Past
- How did you earn your grim reputation?
- What did people used to call you, back in your dark bloody days?
- What prompted you to put all that behind you? When did that happen?
- Who here knows about your past?
- Who have you, personally, lost to violence?

Storm-marked
- When did the marks manifest? How?
- Are they a symbol of your strength, speed, and courage? Or the source?
- Are the marks a blessing? Or a curse?
- How do folks in Stonetop generally treat you?

The Judge

Legacy
- How long have you been the Judge? How long before that were you the apprentice?
- Who was the Judge before you? Are they still alive?
- How were you chosen as the prior Judge's apprentice?
- What is the symbol of your authority (hammer, shield, or helm)? Where does the Chronicle say it came from?

Missionary
- Where are you from, originally? Where did you do your apprenticeship?
- How were you chosen as an apprentice?
- How long were you an apprentice? How long have you been a full Judge?
- Of the Judges in the other steadings (Devin, Haeris, etc.)…
  …which was your mentor?
  …which was a fellow apprentice?
  …which is reliable but inflexible?
  …which is clever but ambitious?
  …which lacks the necessary mettle?
- When did you arrive in Stonetop? How were you received?
- Was there a prior Judge in Stonetop, or are you the first?
- What is the symbol of your authority (hammer, shield, or helm)? Was it bestowed by your order, or did you find it?

Prophet
- How did Aratis call you to her service?
- What is the symbol of your authority (hammer, shield, or helm)? Where and how did you acquire it?
- How did you establish yourself as Stonetop's Judge?

The Lightbearer

Auspicious Birth
- How was your birth marked by Helior?
- How did your connection to Helior shape your youth?
- Do you hold some formal position as a servant of Helior?
- Who in town resents you, or at least what you represent?
- Who in town is your most devoted disciple?

Itinerant Mystic
- What is it that keeps drawing you back to Stonetop?
- Where else do you regularly travel to?
- How long have you lived this wandering lifestyle?
- Why is it that some folk from Stonetop are always so happy to see you?
- Why is it that some folk from Stonetop can't wait to see you go?

Soul on Fire
- What sort of vice or iniquity once ruled your life?
- What brought you so low, only to find succor in Helior's light?
- Do you hold some formal position as a servant of Helior?
- How have the people of Stonetop responded to your preaching?

The Marshal

Scion
- Who ran the militia before you?
- When did you take charge?
- Did anyone else want your position?
- What is the nature of your crew? Why are they so respected?
- How do you recruit or initiate members?

Penitent
- Where did you and your crew operate, before? What kind of bloody business did you all get up to?
- What caused you to set that life aside?
- Did any of your old crew refuse to join you? Last you heard, what are they up to?
- Who spoke on your behalf when you first arrived? Who still doesn't trust you?
- Did you take over Stonetop's militia from someone else? How'd that go?
- How well has your crew integrated into Stonetop?

Luminary
- Are you touched by the gods? Does ancient blood flow in your veins? Or are you just the one who stepped up when needed?
- When and how did it become clear that you were a natural leader?
- When did you take charge of the militia?
- Who, if anyone, ran the militia before you?
- What is the nature of your crew?
- How do you recruit or initiate members?

The Ranger

Mighty Hunter
- How long have you plied the Wood? Who first taught you their ways?
- Did you ever meet the Forest Folk, before they disappeared? Where do you think they went?
- What deed are you most renowned for?

Wide Wanderer
- What drives you to wander, when others stay safely at home?
- Why do you call Stonetop home? Why do you always return here?
- Of the folks you added to the list of neighbors (Tirny, Eser, etc.)…
  …which one wants you dead?
  …which one is always glad to see you?
  …which one owes you a life debt?
- What's one place you've always wanted to visit, but have never been?

Beast-bonded
- What type of beast is your companion? What's its name? Tell us about it!
- How long ago did you bond with your companion, and how did it happen?
- What special power do you have with your animal companion?
- Who in town does your companion adore?
- Who in town does your companion terrify?

The Seeker

Patriot
- What grim event convinced you that Stonetop and the people you love are in danger?
- Who else knows about your arcana and the powers you tamper with?
- How did you learn so much of the Things Below, and your other area of expertise?

Antiquarian
- How did you learn so much of the Makers, and your other area of expertise?
- What do other scholars claim the Stone really is? What do you think, instead?
- What convinced you that Stonetop holds the key to your greatest discoveries?
- What is it you hope to find here? What is it that keeps you here?

Witch Hunter
- What set you on the path of hunting evil?
- What have you sacrificed, walking this path?
- How did you come to be so well versed in your chosen subjects?
- Why do you (still) call Stonetop home?

The Would-be Hero

Impetuous
- What was your first taste of danger and excitement?
- What do you dream of becoming?
- What hero of old do you idolize?
- Who have you let down the most?

Driven
- What happened to set you down this path?
- When and where did this happen?
- What was your life like before then?

Destined
- What are the elements of your destiny?
- How and when was your destiny (or what you know of it) revealed to you?
- Is your destiny a curse? A blessing? Do you even believe in it?
- Who knows about your destiny? How much? How much do they believe?

2 Special possessions

The next step is to establish each character's special possessions, and how they contribute to the village. During this round, you're trying to figure out where the PCs fit into daily life.

Almost everyone in Stonetop helps in the fields, at least during spring planting and fall harvest. Most of the crops (beans, potatoes, barley) get stored in the granary and doled out as needed. Folks keep their own homes, with gardens and small livestock.

A dozen or so folks ply the Great Wood. There are only a few full-time craftsfolk: a publican, a potter, a tanner, a smith, and a midwife. Other crafts (carpentry, weaving, etc.) get done on the side, by whoever has the skills and the tools. Most trade is based on barter, debt, and honor.

Have the players go around and share their special possessions and how they earn their keep. Most players will naturally tie their possessions into how they contribute to the village, but if they don't, press them on it.

Ask the questions below, plus whatever else you're curious about. Take notes, and update the steading playbook as needed.

Smithy or tannery
- Are you the town's smith/tanner, or their apprentice, or what?
- How long have you been doing this? How'd you get started?

Tools (carpenter's, husbandry, etc.)
- Do you earn your keep with these tools? Or is it something you do on the side?
- Where did you get them? How did you learn to use them?

Apiary, aviary, chandlery, goat herd, glassworks, or herb garden
- How big is it? And where?
- Is it yours? Yours to manage? Or what?
- How long has it been in Stonetop?
- What's its importance to the village?

Distillery
- Are you the publican? Or related to them?
- How long have you been doing this?
- How good is your stuff? Whose is better?

Anything else
- How did you come to possess that? When?
- What do others know/think about it?
- What does it mean to you? To the town?

Finally, **ask everyone**:
- Can you read and write? If so, who taught you, and when?

3 World building

The next round has each player describe the specific choices they've made in the left column on the back of their playbook. Each playbook has a different set of prompts and questions.

This step helps your group develop their specific version of the *Stonetop* world. The nature of the gods, the village's history, and more might get established. As players reveal details about their characters and the setting, take more notes and ask more questions. Pay particular attention to any threats or tensions that they introduce. These will become very important soon!

Here are some things to ask each character. You don't have to ask them all, and you certainly aren't limited to these.

The Blessed

Sacred Pouch

- How did you get your sacred pouch? What's it made from, and how is it adorned?

The Earth Mother

- Is Danu generally worshipped, avoided, petitioned, or appeased?
- Why do the villagers leave the offerings that they do? Why are these things sacred to Danu? What do they symbolize?
- How is Danu's worship different among other peoples? Do her chosen (like you) recognize any sort of fellowship?

The Fox

Tall Tales

- Where did this happen? When? Who was with you? How exactly did you ___?
- Sure, that's what you tell everyone, but what really happened?

The Heavy

A History of Violence

- For each of the things that everyone talks about: When did this happen? Where were you? What prompted it? Who was with you? How exactly did you ___?
- For each thing that folks are less keen to discuss: What's the story, there? Who, what, where, and when?
- For the things keeping them up at night: Who else have you shared this with? Who are you keeping it from?

The Judge

The Chronicle

- How was the Chronicle built/discovered?
- Who is welcome in the Chronicle?
- Why is the Chronicle located where it is?
- If the Chronicle is haunted: Whose spirit(s) do you think they are? How often do they appear?
- If the Chronicle contains dangerous artifacts: What do they look like? How do you know they're dangerous? Who else knows about them? How did they get there?

The Lawkeeper

- How many true disciples of Aratis are present in Stonetop? Just a handful? A sizeable minority? A majority?
- How do Aratis's true disciples feel about the reverence of other gods?
- What was the most recent dispute you've been called on to settle? How did you rule?

The Lightbearer

Praise the Day

Ask them about any apparent contradictions. For example, if the worship of Helior is widely persecuted but his shrine in Stonetop is given the place of highest honor... how do they explain that?

- Why does Helior's proper worship consist of the things that it does? Why do those things please him so?
- Do Helior's worshippers abroad recognize you as the appointed servant that you are?
- What was the previous Lightbearer called? When did they live and die?
- Were there other Lightbearers before them?
- Which invocations do you know?

The Marshal

War Stories

Ask for details. Drill down on their answers to fill in any gaps in your sense of what happened.

- Would you call it a victory, a defeat, or a draw?
- What part did your crew play? What part did you play?
- How do you think it would it have gone, had you not been there?
- What are your crew's tags, instinct, and cost? Who are these people? (No need to name each one just yet, but who are they in general or as a group?)

The Ranger

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Ask for details, but leave some questions unanswered. The threat should feel mysterious, at least at the outset.

- Where exactly did this happen? When?
- Why do you think that?

The Seeker

Collection

Ask about their major arcana, the minor arcana they have unlocked, and the minor arcana they have not yet mastered:

- How long have you had it/known about it?
- Who else knows about it?
- Where is it/where do you keep it?
- When did you (start to) unlock its secrets?
- What do you hope to accomplish with it?

The Would-be Hero

Fear & Anger

- From whence does this fear come?
- When did you first experience it?
- What is the source of your anger? Why does ___ fill you with righteous fury?

4&5 NPC connections

The next step creates more connections between the PCs and NPCs in the village. Go around and on each player's turn, have them pick any one question from step 4, answering it with the name of one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

Ask follow-up questions as they occur to you (like, "Owena is your wife—do you have any kids?" or, "You're secretly watching over Gerlt? Why?") Encourage the players to ask each other questions as well.

Players can invent new NPCs or reuse NPCs previously established. If they introduce a new NPC, suggest that they pick a name from the unused choices on their playbook.

Add new NPCs to the appropriate sections of the Stonetop steading playbook. Assign each one an occupation and a trait. (Alternately, just take notes for now and add them to the playbook later.)

Once everyone has gone once, repeat the process. This time, though, the players can pass instead of answering another question. Keep going until everyone has passed.

Before you move on to step 6, **ask each PC the following** (unless the answers are already clear):

- Are you married? Single? Betrothed? Widowed? Any kids?
- Are your parents still alive? Your grandparents? Siblings?

6&7 PC connections

In step 6, the players start to flesh out the relationships between their PCs.

The first player picks a question from step 6, and asks it aloud to the other players. Anyone can answer "me," and the asking player writes their name down in the space provided. Then, the next player goes, and the next. Repeat until everyone has gone.

If no one bites on a particular question, talk it through. Encourage the others to really consider it, but don't force someone to say "me." If no one bites, have the player ask a different question.

As always, ask follow-up questions to flesh out the details. "So, Ari, you've been with Vahid the entire way, huh? You met back in Lygos, then. What brought you together?"

When everyone has gone once, repeat the process, with each player asking another question or passing. When everyone has passed, move on.

Only two players?

If you have only two players, the questions in step 6 ("Which one of you...?") won't work as written. Here's an alternative.

On each player's turn, have them pick two questions from their list and pose them to the other PC as an either/or, rephrasing as needed. For example, the Blessed might ask "Do you doubt the power of Danu, or have you participated in a sacred rite with me?" The other player then chooses. Have them go back and forth like this, as many times as they want.

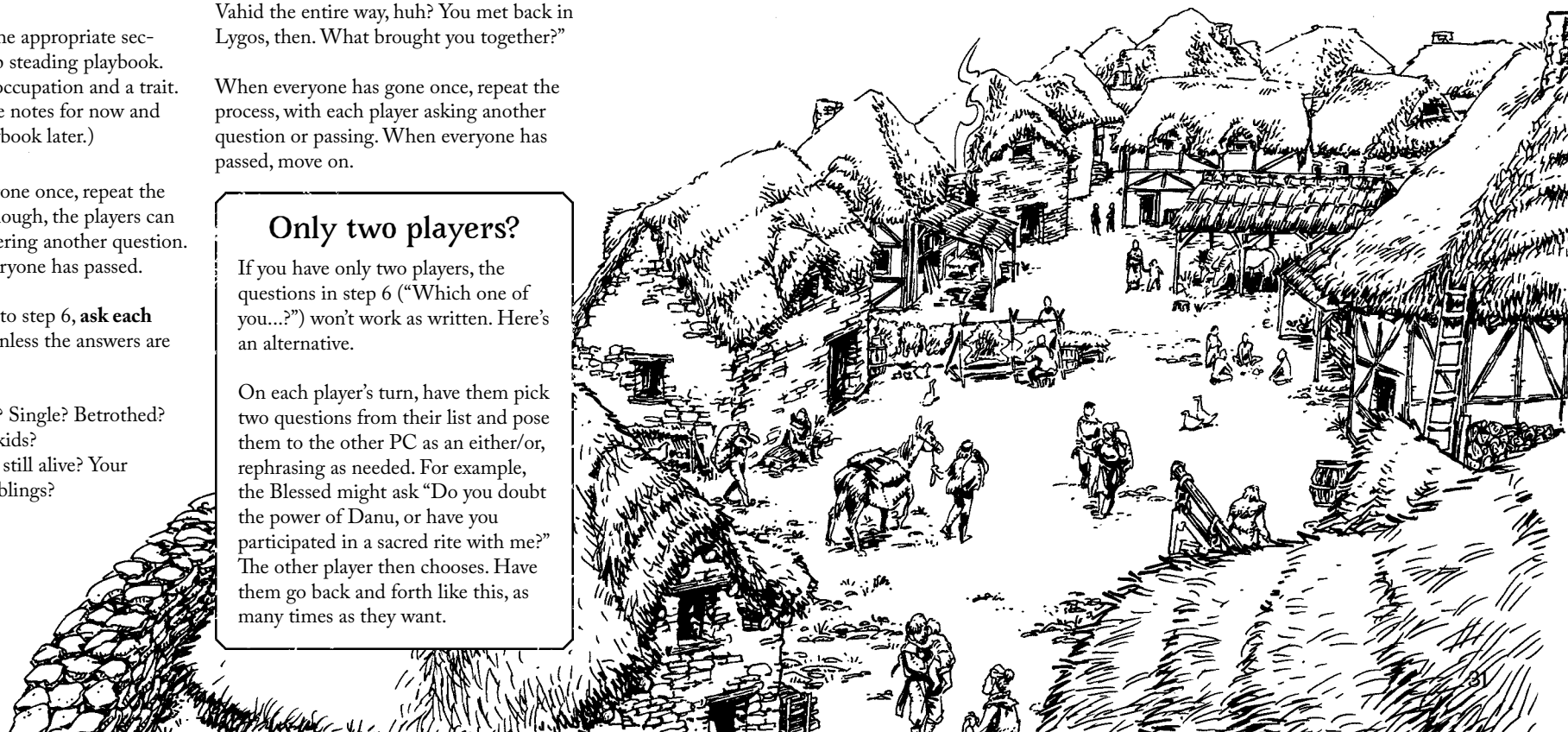
8 Homes

Finally, on the first page of the Stonetop steading playbook, add a point of interest for each PC's home. Ask questions, such as…

- Who do you live with? Family? By yourself? Do any of you live together?
- Why is your home there, as opposed to somewhere else?
- Where do your parents/grandparents/siblings/etc. live?
- Where is the smith/tannery/Chronicle/aviary/chandlery/etc.?

Also, add any new points of interest to the appropriate maps. For example, if the Seeker knows the location of some creepy carvings in a limestone cave, in the cliff face a few miles north of town, then add it to the Vicinity map.

Once you've updated the maps, it's time to **let spring burst forth**.



Let spring burst forth

Ask the players to decide whose character is the most hopeful. Refer them to the Seasons Change move on the Moves & Gear handout (on the third page, under "Homefront Moves"). Tell them that spring has just broken forth upon the land, and ask them to roll +Fortunes (+1, in this case).

On a 10+, ask them to choose one of these:

- Interesting news
- Valuable insight
- Trade opportunity

You're looking for a plot hook, something to kick off the first adventure. The other choices (like Tor's blessing or unexpected bounty) don't provide such a hook.

On a 7-9, have them choose whatever gain they like. You'll combine that with a threat to create your starting situation.

On a 6-, chuckle grimly and start thinking about threats.

Make a note of the result, and update the steading playbook if needed. Then start to wrap up. It'll be tempting to jump into character and start playing right away, but don't do it. You need to time to think about everything the players have given you and prepare the first adventure.

Before you go, ask the players:

- What excites you the most about playing your character?

Whatever they tell you, write it down. Try to work it into the first adventure.

After the session

You've got a pile of NPCs, relationships, events, and details. Now you need to turn them into something coherent and useful for both you and your players. You also need to plan the first adventure.

Organize your notes

Take some time to update the Residents of Stonetop and the Notable neighbors on the steading playbook. Include each NPC who was established, with their occupation, connection(s) to the PCs or other NPCs, and perhaps a notable trait. (You can leave the trait off for now, and ask the players about them in play.)

Space on the steading playbook is limited and the playbook can be hard to update in play. Also, you might have notes about NPCs that you don't want the players to see. Consider recording your NPCs on a spreadsheet or other electronic document.

If you're a visual thinker, **consider making a relationship map**. Each "node" on the map represents a character (PC or NPC). Cluster characters together by location (Stonetop residents here, Hillfolk there) and further cluster them by affiliation (the Initiates of Danu, the Marshal's crew, etc.). Draw lines between characters and groups, with a note describing the relationship (like "mother/daughter," "budding romance," or "watching closely"). A relationship map helps you and your players "see" the social landscape of the game, but it requires a lot of work to create and maintain.

Create a timeline, arranging the events that your players established from oldest to most recent.

As you organize your notes, you'll find contradictions like "Vahid got here last year, but Blodwen was initiated two years ago—he couldn't have participated in the initiation rites!" Either ask the players about them (before or at the start of the next session) or just make a decision about how to correct the contradiction if you think it's a low-impact change.

Flip through *Book II* and look for **potential connections** to the PCs and the details you all established during introductions. For example, if Rhianna's predecessor died five years ago fighting bandits, then maybe those bandits were Brennan and his Claws, who now run the Marshedge Guard. If you're okay with just deciding that such a connection is true, add it to your NPC notes and/or timeline. If you think it might be true, but aren't sure, then add it to your "I wonder..." list.

Share your updated list of NPCs and your timeline with the players. Ask them to review it before the next session, to help get everyone on the same page. Point out any lingering questions for them to answer, and any changes that you've made. Ask for feedback, and incorporate it as appropriate.

Identify threats

Look over your notes again and identify the sources of trouble or ongoing problems for the PCs or the village. **Write these up as threats** (page 277), to whatever level of detail makes sense right now.

If your notes imply a threat, but the threat's nature isn't entirely clear, add it to your "I wonder..." list.

"I wonder..."

Keep a running list of open questions—things that you wonder about, but either…

… you don't know how to answer yet, or
… you want to leave unanswered for now and see it get answered through play.

"I wonder... what *did* happen to the Forest Folk? What *was* that thing Vahid faced when he got the Mindgem? What exactly *is* making the crinwin so bold?"

Refer to these questions **as you prepare adventures**. Use the list to help identify the adventure's central opportunity or threat, or to help write the setup questions that you'll ask the characters.

Refer to this list **during your sessions**, when you need something interesting to say. Can you say something that answers one of these questions? Or that hints at the answer? Can you turn one of these questions back on the characters, and ask them to give you the answers?

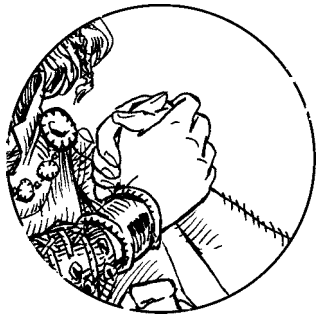
Update these questions between sessions. If a question has been answered, remove it. If a new question occurs to you, add it to the list.

Plan the first adventure

Look at your notes, your threats, your "I wonder..." list, and the results of that first Seasons Change roll, and use them to prepare your first adventure. See page 251 for guidance.

If you haven't already done so, read the rest of this book before the next session.

Playing the Game



The conversation
Your agenda
The flow of play
Dice and moves
Your principles
Other things to do
Your character
Arcana
Followers
Your home
The moves
Gear and possessions
If you want to...

This chapter is addressed to players, but the GM should read it too!

The conversation

You play *Stonetop* by talking to each other. The GM says something, you and the other players respond. You ask each other questions. You refer to the rules, roll some dice, and talk about what the results mean. You take turns talking, but it's not, like, *taking turns*. As with any conversation, you'll talk over each other, interrupt, offer suggestions, and so forth.

The goal of this conversation is to create **the fiction**, the shared imaginary reality in which the characters exist and act. The specifics of the fiction are often fuzzy, with each of you picturing things differently. But when the details start to matter, you'll talk it out, clarify the situation, and come to an agreement.

As a player, **you are responsible for your player character** (your PC). What they say and what they do. How they feel. Their background and their experiences prior to play. You speak in your PC's voice. You say what your PC does.

The GM is responsible for everything else, including:

- The world, the terrain, the weather
- Monsters and hazards
- Non-player characters (NPCs),
- What happened before the PCs got here
- What happens after they leave

The GM will ask for input and ideas. They'll ask you to make up details about the world that your PC would know. But ultimately, the world beyond the PCs is the GM's domain. The GM describes how the world reacts to the PCs' actions, and they curate what is and isn't true about the world at large.

Your agenda

When you play *Stonetop*, these should be your goals:

- Portray a compelling character
- Engage with the fictional world
- Play to find out what happens

The game's rules and structure assume that you are pursuing these three goals, and no others. This isn't a game that you play to win. The game doesn't expect you to optimize your character. It's not a game about testing your skill, and it's not a game where you show up to be led through the GM's story.

Your first and most important goal is to **portray a compelling character**. Your PC is one of the protagonists of the story. Make them worthy of that role. Don't treat them as just a set of stats and abilities. Portray them as a person, with hopes and dreams, inner conflicts, and relationships with others. Your **playbook** (page 50) will help you to sketch out a compelling character, but it's your job to bring that character to life, to portray a protagonist that you and your fellow players care about.

Your second goal is to **engage with the fictional world**. Don't just react to the world that the GM presents, care about it. Explore it and be curious about it. Talk with NPCs like they're real people, get invested in their stories. And don't just allow the world to be revealed to you—contribute! Suggest details. Ponder out loud about what things might mean. Be a fan of the world that you and the GM and your fellow players are creating together.

The GM's agenda

In case you're wondering, the GM's agenda is as follows:

- Portray a rich, mysterious world
- Punctuate the PCs' lives with adventure
- Play to find out what happens

In other words, they're supposed to present you with a world that's worth engaging with. They're meant to present opportunities and threats and challenges to your PCs and the things they care about. And then—just like you—they're meant to let the game unfold and find out what happens as a result.

For more on the GM's agenda, see page 168.

Finally, **play to find out what happens**. The rules and the dice are there to introduce uncertainty and surprises, to tell us what happens when things go wrong. Your character won't always get what they want. You often won't get what you expect.

Have ideas for your character's arc and story, sure, but hold those ideas lightly. We don't yet know what your PCs' story will be, whether it will be a comedy or a tragedy or a little bit of both. Play to find out what happens.

Flow of play

The GM establishes the situation: where you are, what time it is, who's there, what's going on. They describe the environment, add details, and portray NPCs. They ask questions about what you're doing or what's on your mind.

As a player, you ask questions to clarify and understand the situation. You answer the GM's questions. You offer up details or ideas of your own. Maybe you all act out a bit of dialogue.

Once the situation is established, the GM says something to **provoke action** and/or **increase tension**. Then they ask, **"What do you do?"**

If you…

… need more information, **ask for it**.
… **trigger a player move** (page 207), follow the move's procedures.
… **do anything else**, the GM says what happens.

If you **ignore an established danger,** or you trigger a move and **roll a 6 or less**, the GM says what bad thing happens.

The process then repeats. The GM re-establishes the situation, gives it a nudge, and asks, "What do you do?"

When the current situation ends, the GM frames the next one. If they're unsure what situation should come next, they'll ask you and your fellow players questions until it becomes clear.

The flow of play is conversational. **There are no formal turns**, not even during fights. The GM is responsible for moving the spotlight around, addressing one PC at a time and ensuring that you each have a chance to talk and act. But it's okay to interject, make suggestions, or jump in and say what you're doing before the GM asks. Just **be polite and respectful** and **share the spotlight** with your fellow players.

The conversation and the game will shift naturally between **scenes** and **loose play**. Scenes happen in a specific place at a specific time, with players speaking in their PC's voices and saying what they're doing moment-by-moment. Loose play is zoomed out, less specific, taking place over time and space. When you explore the clearing where Pryder went missing, looking for clues and discussing what you've found, that's a scene. When you spend the rest of the day following his trail through the woods—discussing how long you want to keep going and what you're each doing to get on each other's nerves—that's loose play.

Dice and moves

As you all talk about what's happening in the fiction, and what your PCs are doing, you'll often trigger **moves**. A move is a little bit of rules that shapes the conversation and the fiction.

Here's an example:

> **CLASH**
> When you ***fight in melee or close quarters***, roll +STR: **on a 10+**, your maneuver works as expected (deal your damage) and pick 1:
>
> - Avoid, prevent, or counter your enemy's attack
> - Strike hard and fast, for 1d6 extra damage, but suffer your enemy's attack
>
> **On a 7-9**, your maneuver works, mostly (deal your damage), but you suffer your enemy's attack.

Many moves are shared by all players (see page 207). Other moves are specific to your **playbook** (page 50), an **insert** (page 57), or an **arcanum** (page 58). Other moves will be custom-made for specific situations (page 234).

Triggers

Each move has a **trigger**, which says when the move kicks in. The trigger is almost always fictional; you say that your character does something that matches the trigger, and the rest of the move tells us how to resolve that action.

You might trigger a move intentionally, describing actions that you know match its trigger. Or you might say, "I Clash." That's fine, but expect the GM to ask you what that looks like, or what exactly you're doing to meet the move's trigger. **To do it, you have to do it**.

The opposite is also true: **if you do it, you have to do it**. If you elbow this guy in the face, and we all agree that you're ***fighting in close quarters***, then that's Clash. You can back out ("Oh, no, I don't elbow him after all"), but if you carry on, make with the dice.

It's everyone's job to watch for moves. If you think you've triggered a move, say so. If another player triggers a move and no one notices, say something! "Hey, elbowing a guy in the face sounds like 'fighting in close quarters,' is this Clash?"

Everyone must agree that you're doing something plausible and that the trigger is actually met. For example:

- If the guy is 12 feet tall and holding you at arm's length, then his face isn't close enough to elbow! Do something else.
- If the guy is literally made of iron, an elbow to his face won't do squat and Clash doesn't trigger. If you insist on trying, the GM says what happens.
- If the guy is distracted and doesn't see it coming, then you're not really ***fighting*** and Clash doesn't trigger. You just bash his face and the GM says what happens next.

If it's unclear whether you're triggering a move, or which one you're triggering, talk it out. Clarify your intent and the details until everyone agrees.

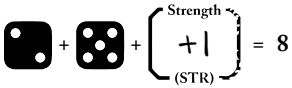
Rolling

Many moves tell you to "roll +STAT" (usually with a specific stat, like STR or INT, see page 52).

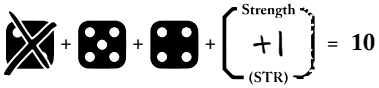
"Roll" means: roll two six-sided dice (2d6), and add them together.

"+STAT" means: find that stat in your PC's playbook and add it to the roll. Stats range from -1 to +3.

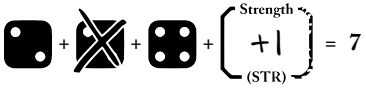
For example: I say that I elbow this guy in the face. We agree that I'm ***fighting in close quarters***, triggering Clash. I roll 2d6 and add my PC's STR. If my STR is +1, my roll might look like this:



You'll sometimes have **advantage**, meaning: roll an extra die and discard the lowest. With the advantage of an extra die, the roll above might look like this:



And sometimes, you'll have **disadvantage**: roll an extra die and discard the highest. With disadvantage, that roll might look like this:



If you have advantage and disadvantage on the same roll, they cancel each other out. Roll normally (2d6, add them).

Advantage and disadvantage normally stem from a move or condition. The GM can apply them ad hoc if they deem a roll especially hard or easy, but they're encouraged not to. See page 74.

Results

When a move has you roll, it will also say what happens based on that roll.

On a 10+ (meaning, a total roll of 10 or higher), you get a **strong hit**, the best you can hope for.

On a 7-9 (meaning, a total roll of 7, 8, or 9), you get a **weak hit**. You get only some of what you wanted, or you get what you wanted but with a cost.

On a 6- (meaning, a total roll of 6 or lower), you get a **miss**, which entails these effects:

- **You mark XP** (page 53), unless the move says otherwise
- **The GM says what happens**, and it will be bad

A 6- doesn't always mean you screwed up. It means something bad happens, something that your PC won't like. Your foe gets the jump on you. The branch breaks before you can jump. You find the missing villager, but oh no, they've been dead for hours.

A few moves say what happens on a 6-, in which case the GM must abide by those results. But for most moves: **on a 6-, mark XP and prepare for the worst.**

If a move doesn't have you roll, then it will just tell you what happens.

Whatever the results of a move, work together to **figure out what it looks like in the fiction**. The GM has final say on how the world reacts to and is affected by your actions, but they are constrained by the results of your move and they might very well ask you for input.

You and your fellow PCs have entered the cave bears' den, hoping to harvest some much-needed meat during a long, hard winter. You're playing Caradoc (the Would-be Hero).

"Caradoc," says the GM, "your eyes are adjusting to the gloom when you hear snuffling, and the sound of something moving, something big. At the edge of the light, a huge form rears up and ROARS. It's a bear, what do you do?"

"Here we go," you say. "I yell and rush it, shield up, stabbing with my spear."

"That sure sounds like you're fighting in melee with this 10-foot-tall bear. Roll +STR to Clash!"

You get lucky and roll a 4 and a 5. With your STR +1, that's a 10! You (perhaps unwisely) choose to strike hard for extra damage, but suffer its attack in turn. You deal 6 damage total, not bad! You and the GM agree that this means your strike landed and you bloodied the big beast.

But you also suffer its attack. The GM says "As you connect, it just THWAPS you with its right paw. Take 1d10+4 damage. Roll it." You take 9 damage (almost half your hit points). The GM says, "I think you get your shield up but the force of the blow smacks it into your head, and sends you staggering back. Mark the dazed *debility, as the world starts spinning."*

If you had rolled a 6 or less, then the GM probably would have said that the bear thwacked you (as above) before you were able to stab it. But, hey, at least you would have gotten to mark XP.

Hold and spend

Some moves will tell you to "hold *x* currency," where the currency is something specific like "Preparation" or "Readiness." Note how much you hold, and spend it as described by the move.

For example:

> **DEFEND**
> When you ***take up a defensive stance*** or ***jump in to protect others***, roll +CON: **on a 10+**, hold 3 Readiness (or 4 if you bear a shield); **on a 7-9**, hold 1 Readiness (or 2 with a shield). You can spend Readiness 1-for-1 to:
>
> - Suffer an attack's damage/effects instead of your ward
> - Halve an attack's effect or damage
> - Draw all attention from your ward to yourself
> - Strike back at an attacker (deal your damage, with disadvantage)
>
> When you ***go on the offense, cease to focus on defense, or the threat passes***, lose any Readiness that you hold.

Think of held currency as permission to do something awesome, now or later. When you spend held currency to do something, you just do it—even if it interrupts the flow of play, and even if doing it would normally trigger a move. If you spend 1 Readiness to strike back at an attacker and deal some damage, you just do that, even though fighting in melee would normally trigger Clash.

When you spend currency, say what it looks like in the fiction. If you can't describe it, then don't spend the currency after all.

The GM, dice, and moves

In *Stonetop*, the GM doesn't normally roll dice and they don't trigger moves. If you're fighting a monster, the GM might declare, "It leaps at you, claws out and hissing." But they don't trigger Clash and they don't roll dice to see if the monster's attack succeeds. Instead, they ask, "What do you do?"

If you ignore the leaping monster, then the GM will confirm that you understand the situation and really want to do that. If you do, they'll tell you what bad thing happens as a result.

More likely, you'll do something about this monster leaping at your face: you duck and hope it flies over you, or twist away and stab it, or raise your shield to block it. This will probably trigger a move, and the result of that move will inform whether or not the monster's attack lands.

For more details, see the **Running the Game** chapter (page 167). For more on fights specifically, see **Running combat** (page 406).

The Die of Fate

When the GM wants to let the fates decide an outcome, but there's no move that would apply, they might ask you to roll the Die of Fate. That means: roll a d6 (straight, with no modifiers unless the GM says otherwise). High is good, low is bad.

Fictional positioning

The actions that your character takes and the moves you trigger are informed by your fictional positioning—the sum of established fictional details about your character and the world around them. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Your established traits (age, height, weight, experiences, skills, habits, instincts, personality, etc.)
- Your equipment, what you have in hand vs. stowed away, what's on your person, what's within reach
- Your position, relative to your foes, your allies, hazards, cover, features of the environment
- What you can realistically see or hear or otherwise sense, given the light, your position, the weather
- What you're doing, what you're looking for, what you're focused on
- Your momentum, your footing, your balance, your emotional state
- How you describe doing something, your approach to the challenge at hand

Your fictional positioning determines what actions are feasible, whether your action triggers a move, and which move that action triggers. It affects the range of possible outcomes for a move, both good and bad.

In many role-playing games, your fictional positioning results in bonuses or penalties to your rolls, or changes the number you're trying to roll over or under. It adjusts the probability of a roll succeeding or not. That's not really a thing in *Stonetop*. You don't get a +1 bonus or -1 penalty just because the GM deems a task to be "easy" or "hard."

Instead, your fictional positioning might be reflected by…

… **how much of a spot the GM puts you in** before asking, "What do you do?" "The drake hisses and tenses, like it's about to charge, what do you do?" vs. "There's a rustling to your left and something big bursts out of the brush, coming right at you, what do you do?"

… **whether your action is even feasible.** "The cliff is pretty sheer, and wet, and your fingers are already numb from the cold. I don't think you can just climb it."

… **whether a move is triggered, or if you just do what you wanted.** "No, don't roll to Clash, you've caught him flat-footed. Just deal your damage."

… **whether a move even *can* trigger**. "You can stab it with your spear, but that won't trigger Clash. It's made of solid stone. You won't hurt it, you'll just put yourself in danger. You sure?"

… **what's required to attempt an action, and/or to trigger a move**. "No way you can make that jump right now. You need to drop down to a light load first, and even then you'll be Defying Danger."

… **which move is triggering.** "No, I don't think you're Seeking Insight, I think you're Defying Danger with WIS to spot them in time."

… **the risks being lesser or greater.** "In this case, suffering his attack will mean he just gets inside your guard." Or, "Just to be clear, if you roll a 6-, you're gonna miss the jump and you'll be rolling for Death's Door."

… **the scope of what a single move can accomplish.** "Cool, a 10+? Yeah, you get to Andras, arrows whizzing past you, and manage to drag him to cover." Or, "Okay, cool, but I think that's two moves—Defy Danger to duck inside its guard, and then Clash if you manage to pull that off. Do you still do that?"

… **rarely, whether you make a roll with advantage or disadvantage.** "Oof, with the gusting wind, I don't think the shot is impossible but it'll be particularly hard. You can Let Fly, but you'll have disadvantage on the roll." The GM should do this rarely, though, because it diminishes the impact of moves and other mechanics that specifically apply advantage or disadvantage.

PC vs. PC

There will be times when you and other PCs come into conflict. You might **Persuade** (page 226) another PC to go along with your plan. They might **Seek Insight** (page 228) to figure out what you're up to. You might **Interfere** (page 218) to keep them from doing something they'll regret, or something *you'll* regret.

When there's conflict between PCs, slow down. If you're making a move that targets another PC, or that you think another PC might object to, give them a chance to say what *they're* doing, what move (if any) they make.

If another PC does something that you want to Interfere with, speak up! Raise your hand or interrupt. Say how you try to stop what they're doing.

If it's unclear who is triggering which moves, and in what order, talk it out. The GM has the final say.

Your principles

As a player, *Stonetop* works best if you…

- Begin and end with the fiction
- Connect with the other PCs
- Show us what's important to you
- Have goals and pursue them
- Be bold, take risks
- Embrace difficulty, setback, and failure
- Participate in worldbuilding
- Build on what others have said
- Give others a chance to shine
- Participate in the conversation

Following these principles will lead you to achieving your **agenda** (page 37). Strive to follow them, always.

Begin and end with the fiction

Tell us how you do what you do, what it looks like. Don't just say "I'm Seeking Insight," tell us *how*. "I cock my head, listening to the sounds of the forest for anything odd." Don't just say "I attack," say *what you do*. "I rush in, shield up, stabbing into this thing's gut."

When you resolve a move, make sure you're clear about what has happened as a result. It's the GMs job to describe the impact of your move on the world (or to defer to you). If they skimp, or think things are clear when they aren't, then say so. If you can't picture what happened, ask for more detail!

Beginning and ending with the fiction is one of the main ways that you **engage with the fictional world**. But it's also a great way to **portray a compelling character**. Anyone can trigger Clash, but show us how *you*, Brynfor of Stonetop, fight this particular fight.

Connect with the other PCs

Explore the relationships between your character and the other PCs. Play out scenes with each other, speaking in your character's voices. Go out of your way to interact with each other, to care about each other, and to get involved in each other's lives.

Your PCs don't have to be *friends*. They don't even have to like each other. But the game assumes that they're allies at least, and that they'll work together on behalf of the town when there's trouble. Your PCs will spend a lot of on-screen time together.

When you develop nuanced relationships with your fellow PCs, and let those relationships change and grow, you are **portraying a compelling character**. When you let those relationships guide your actions and your decisions, even if it means bringing you into conflict with each other, you are **playing to find out what happens**.

Show us what's important to you

Ask yourself, as your character: Who and what will you fight for? What do you prize? What do you aspire to, hope for, dream of? For whom would you lay down your life?

Make it clear what you value, through word and deed, and you'll be **portraying a compelling character**. Show yourself caring about mundane things like your home and your garden and your goats, about NPCs and what they think of you, and you'll be **engaging with the fictional world**. Let your values guide your actions and push you into conflict, and then **play to find out what happens**.

Have goals and pursue them

Identify things that your PC wants—a steading improvement, an NPC's hand in marriage, the respect of the elders, maybe just a roof that doesn't leak—and actively work towards those things in play. Don't just react to the threats that the GM presents. Having goals and striving towards them is a great way to **portray a compelling character**, and it pretty much requires you to **engage with the fictional world**.

But also: have goals as a player. Share these goals with the GM and the other players. Have meta-game conversations about scenes that you want to have and conflicts you want to play towards. Just as important, be clear about what's not important to you, what you'd be happy glossing over. Your play time is limited, so be clear about what you want to see in the game. The **End of Session** move (page 232) gives you a formal chance to do this, but you can always step out of character and talk to each other, player-to-player.

To be clear: having goals and pursuing them doesn't mean "always getting what you want." It means having things that you work towards, things that will drive scenes and adventures. Whether you achieve your goals is up to the actions you take and the moves you trigger and the dice you roll, and how the fiction logically and plausibly reacts. **Play to find out what happens**.

Be bold, take risks

Take decisive action that moves the game and situation forward. You're the PCs, the folks that Stonetop looks to save them when danger looms. If you don't act like a hero, who will?

Avoid being overly cautious, or spending hours on careful, elaborate plans that cover every contingency. Plan a little, sure. Be clever. Play to your strengths and your weaknesses, and consider what your character, specifically, might do. But don't let the game grind to a halt. If you find yourself deliberating for more than a few minutes, stop. Make a choice. Act. **Play to find out what happens**.

Embrace difficulty, setback, and failure

Not everything is going to go your way. Part of the GM's job is to present you with adversity and threaten the things you care about. Those challenges are meaningless unless the stakes are real, unless there's a chance you'll lose. Difficulty, setback, and failure are all key parts of **playing to find out what happens**.

Difficulty, setback, and failure are also an opportunity to **portray a compelling character**. Show us how you deal with adversity, how you rise to the challenge. Show us how loss affects you. Show us how you keep going anyway.

It's not that heroes don't fall down. It's that they get back up.

Participate in worldbuilding

The GM is responsible for the world at large. But as you create your character, your playbook will prompt you to define things about the world: about the god you serve, about the troubles you've seen, about the NPCs who live in Stonetop. Choose options and make up details that you find interesting and compelling.

As you introduce your character, the GM will ask you questions. Lots of questions. Some of these will be about your PC specifically ("Do you know how to read?") but others will invite you to add details to the world ("Who, if anyone, did this job before you?"). Once play begins, the GM will continue to **ask questions and build on the answers**. They'll ask your character questions that help shape the world, questions like:

- "Rhianna, who taught you how to hunt and track?"
- "Blodwen, you live with your mother, right? Any siblings? What's the place look like inside?"
- "Vahid, you've met Brennan before, what's his most distinctive feature?"
- "Caradoc, what have you heard about the Quiet Twins and how they came to haunt the Stream?"
- "Vahid, what have you noticed that all the missing children have in common?"
- "What's the most striking detail about the Flats in early spring?"
- "Caradoc, when you got back to Stonetop, whose reaction surprised you the most?"

Answer with enthusiasm, with color and life! Think about what you know about your character, what you know about the assumed setting, what other players have already established. Steal cool ideas from books or comics, from shows or movies, from other games, from real life. Add details that you want to see in the game, that you're excited about! Give answers that you think are cool and interesting, and you'll automatically be **engaging with the fictional world**.

With that said: don't overthink it. The best answer is often the obvious answer, the first thing that comes to mind. The first thing to come to your mind is often a surprise to the GM and other players, something they'd never have thought of, and thus you're helping them **play to find out what happens**.

If you find these sorts of questions off-putting or even stressful, consider why that is. Talk to your GM about it. If you don't like being put on the spot, the GM can ask you a question and then move the spotlight, giving you time to think. If you feel like you're being asked to do the GM's job (author the world) and that takes away from your fun, the GM can ask you fewer questions that involve worldbuilding and more questions about your PC's current thoughts and feelings.

But also, it could be that you're just not used to it. Many roleplaying games have a very strict line between the player's job and the GM's job, and *Stonetop* intentionally blurs that line. If worldbuilding isn't something you're used to doing, give it a try. Stretch yourself! The more you participate in worldbuilding, the easier it becomes.

Build on what others have said

Let yourself be inspired by your fellow players. Take elements that they introduce and use them yourself. Build on them, riff on them, tweak them.

Character creation is the most obvious time to build on what others have said. The Fox tells a tall tale about how she and her sister met a creepy old man in the woods? On your turn, re-use one of those elements! If you're the Ranger, maybe what you're worried about is that same creepy old man, spotted near the Ruined Tower. If you're the Would-be Hero, maybe the Fox's sister is the NPC whose heart you hope to win.

During play, when the GM asks questions, continue to build on each other's answers. Let your own ideas grow from what's already established. Don't make up something new when you can reuse and reincorporate. **Engage with the fictional world**, even as you create it!

Give others a chance to shine

Don't hog the spotlight. Be aware of how much you talk, relative to the other players. If you've been talking a lot, suggest a spotlight change. If a quiet player is talking, don't interrupt unless its timely and valuable—and even then, raise your hand or wait for a natural pause.

Be proactive, too. Set others up for greatness! Has the Fox been flirting with one of your followers? Arrange for them to have a scene together, alone. Has the Blessed's player been quiet this session? Ask their PC to join yours on an errand, then strike up a conversation about something they care about.

This principle isn't about pursuing your agenda—it's about helping the other players to pursue *theirs*, to **portray compelling characters** and **engage with the fictional world**. But when you give each other a chance to shine, the results are often surprising, which means you're all **playing to find out what happens**.

Participate in the conversation

You play this game by talking to each other. The game is the conversation. Be an active, engaged part of that conversation. Otherwise, why are you here?

Pay attention, even when your PC isn't involved. Try to avoid distractions, in whatever way works for you (maybe take notes, or doodle, or knit, or whatever).

Ask questions. Ask for clarification, for more detail. Be curious! Ask players about their characters, about their actions, thoughts, and feelings.

Offer suggestions. If there's a pause in the conversation and you've got a good idea, offer it up.

Get excited! Ooh and ahh at the awesome stuff the other players say and do. Laugh at each other's jokes. Groan at each other's puns. Cheer when a clutch roll goes your way. Curse the fates when a roll comes up short.

You're going to have off nights, sessions where you're distracted or your energy is low. That's fine. But do what you can to focus, to pay attention, to participate in the conversation and enjoy the company of your friends. Because ultimately, that's what you're here to do.

Other things to do

Take notes! NPC names and traits. Who's related to whom. Bits of history and lore. Places. Things. The events of each session. If you think it'll be helpful to reference later, write it down. Your future self will thank you.

Learn the rules. You don't have to be an expert, but learn the basics. Know that "roll +STR" means you roll 2d6 and add your STR. Familiarize yourself with the **basic moves** (page 70), especially their triggers. Understand how **outfitting, gear, and possessions** work (page 86).

Know your character. You're the one with the playbook in front of you. Know what your stats are (or where to find them). Know what your damage die is. Know your moves, what triggers them, and what they do. Double-check things, sure, and everyone makes mistakes. But you are responsible for your character. Don't expect the GM or other players to tell you what your PC is capable of.

Watch for moves triggering. It's everyone's job to call out when moves trigger, or to question it when someone invokes a move without its trigger being met. "This feels like you're enticing her… Persuade?" "Is this really Defy Danger? Like, what's at stake?"

Work the fiction. Describe your actions in such a way that you trigger the moves you want to use, and avoid triggering moves you don't want to make. Exploit details of the established fiction, or suggest new ones that you think might help.

Advocate for yourself and for each other. If you think the GM has misinterpreted a move, or missed a detail, or skipped someone who's been waiting, say something! If you think another player is being a butt, ask them to knock it off. If you want to see something in the game, make that known. If someone else seems unhappy, ask them what's up. Communication is key!

Mind the vibe. Everyone is responsible for creating the game's tone, mood, and themes. Pay attention to the vibes at the table. Build on them, riff on them, respect them. If you like how "hope" is becoming a theme, then look for ways to explore or reinforce it. If everyone's playing serious, mud-spattered, and gritty, then don't name your brother "Fartwyn" or describe your PC as doing anime-style acrobatics.

Share the load. A lot of logistical tasks fall to the GM by default. But they don't have to! The GM has plenty to do just running the game, so do what you can to help. Divvy up responsibilities for:

- Scheduling, hosting, ordering food
- Printing materials
- Taking notes
- Updating the steading playbook
- Recapping sessions
- Explaining rules
- Wrangling players between sessions ("Hey everyone, did you level up?")
- Watching the clock, calling for breaks, nudging things along
- Watching for discomfort, calling time out, checking in with others

Even if you don't take formal responsibility for these things, you can step in and help out as needed.

Ask questions! When you're unsure about some detail, ask for clarification. When you don't know what to do or how to answer a question, ask for advice.

Respect boundaries and wishes. Before you start play, you'll talk about the content that you and your fellow players want to exclude from the game, or veil and handle "off screen," or handle in particular ways. "No sexual violence," or, "Let's veil harm to animals," or, "Spiders are fine, but don't talk about how their legs move." Once play begins, you or other players can adjust these guidelines.

Respect these boundaries. If "torture" is excluded content, then *don't have your PC torture anyone*. It doesn't matter if "that's what my character would do." The boundaries and feelings of your fellow human beings are more important than your vision for your character, more important than your player agenda and principles. You and your friends are more important than the game.

When in doubt...

If the GM asks, "What do you do?" and you're unsure, do the following:

- Visualize the situation
- Ask the GM for clarification
- Ask yourself, "What do I want? What's my goal?"
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses
- Look to others for advice
- Go with the obvious choice, the interesting choice, the meaningful choice, not necessarily the "right" choice (and remember, you get XP on a 6-)!

What not to do

Don't roll until there's agreement. If you say "Ooh, I bet I Know Things about Fae" don't just pick up the dice and roll +INT. Wait for the GM and the rest of the group to acknowledge that, yeah, you're triggering a move, this move. If you roll for a move before the others agree that you've triggered it, then it doesn't count. Pick your dice back up.

Don't cheat. If you fudge your dice rolls to get the outcome you want, or you "forget" a rule or some detail established earlier, then you're not really **playing to find out what happens**. Roll your dice in the open, respect the established fiction, and play by the rules. You'll have more fun, and you won't be a cheater.

Don't keep secrets from other players. It's fine for your character to keep secrets from the other PCs. Heck, that's great! But the other players should be in on it, able to enjoy the dramatic irony.

Don't expect fights to be fair. Just because the GM puts a monster in front of you doesn't mean they think you can defeat it. Fights will not be "balanced" to your PCs. And even a fight with an "easy" foe can go sidewise if the dice are against you. Judge your chances carefully, avoid fights that you can't handle, and be willing to flee if things go south.

Don't overthink it. Don't waste your time deliberating every decision, or making elaborate plans to cover every contingency, or thinking of the perfect answer to the GM's question. **Be bold**, **take risks**, and **embrace difficulty, setback, and failure**.

Your character

Every PC in *Stonetop* has a playbook. A playbook is a template, a set of choices and options that point towards a specific character archetype while still leaving room to make the character unique.

There are nine standard **playbooks**, which you can find starting on page 103. In play, though, you'll use either a printed copy of your playbook or an electronic version thereof. You can download these playbooks (and other materials) from www.lampblackandbrimstone.com.

To create your character, you'll choose a playbook and fill it out. Each playbook includes choices for your PC's…

- Background
- Instinct
- Appearance
- Place of origin and name
- Stats
- Playbook moves
- Special possessions

Each playbook also includes:

- A place to record debilities
- Your damage die
- Boxes in which to record your hit points (HP), armor, experience (XP), and current level
- A set of prompts and questions that help you define part of the world
- A procedure for introducing your PC to the rest of the group.

Background

Each playbook includes a choice of three backgrounds. Your choice tells us how your PC came to be the exceptional person that they are. It also helps define their backstory, and their role in the village of Stonetop.

Each background comes with one or more benefits: a unique move, a bonus playbook move, a special possession, etc.

Instinct

Your instinct describes how your PC tends to behave, for better or for worse. If you demonstrate your instinct in play, or struggle against it, you get to mark XP at the **end of the session** (page 232).

For your first PC, choose one of the instincts listed in your playbook. If you have played before, and none of the listed instincts feels right, feel free to pick an instinct from another playbook or make up a new one.

Your instinct can change during play. You'll be prompted to consider doing so each time you **Level Up** (page 81), but you can change your instinct any time it feels right to do so. Pick something else (from your playbook or another), or make up a new one. Just be sure to let the GM and the other players know.

Appearance

Each playbook prompts you to pick from a number of options for your character's appearance, or to make something else up. This is purely meant to help you visualize and flesh out your PC; it doesn't have any specific mechanical effect. Use your choices as a starting point, and feel free to add or change these details in play.

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is home (or close enough) to every PC, but you can decide where your character or your character's family came from originally. If you're not sure what to pick, pick Stonetop.

Each playbook presents a different set of possible origins. For your first PC, pick one of the origins listed—they're the most obvious and appropriate for that playbook. If you're already familiar with the world of *Stonetop* and have a clear idea, it's fine to pick a different origin.

Each origin provides a list of names to pick from. You don't have to pick one of the suggested names, but the lists are meant to give the world a cohesive feel. If you want something different, the **steading playbook** (page 154) includes additional names from each locale. Or you can search online for similar names.

Creating your character

At the start of a new game, make characters together, during the first session. It's cool to show up with a concept or some ideas in mind, but hold those ideas lightly. Be willing to discard or change them in response to the other players' ideas and interests.

Start by picking your playbook. Refer to the Setting Overview handout for a quick description of each playbook and its relative complexity. If you're unsure, look at the front page of each playbook to get a sense of what it's about. **No doubling up; each player should pick a different playbook.**

Work through your playbook from front to back, making choices as instructed. If your playbook mentions an insert or arcana, ask the GM for those. Stop when you get to "Introductions" and wait for the others.

If you're familiar with *Stonetop*, it's okay to suggest alternatives for your background, place of origin, special possessions, or even playbook moves. The GM and the rest of the group must all approve.

If you're joining an ongoing game, have the GM or another player brief you on the established details, and then make your PC before your first session. **If your PC retires or dies**, make a new PC between sessions. Either way, pick a background that could reflect a new arrival in the village or an NPC stepping up to PC status. Then work with the GM on the best way to introduce your new PC to the game.

Stats

Each PC has six stats. When you trigger a move, and that move involves a roll, the move will tell you which stat to add.

Each stat has a three-letter abbreviation, The moves and game text refer almost exclusively to the abbreviation, just for the sake of space and brevity.

The six stats are:

- **Strength (STR)**: your physical power and your ability to use it. Roll +STR to Clash, or to Defy Danger with raw might or power.
- **Dexterity (DEX)**: your grace and fine motor control. Roll +DEX to Let Fly, or to Defy Danger with speed, agility, finesse.
- **Intelligence (INT)**: your memory, learning, and quick thinking. Roll +INT to Know Things, or to Defy Danger via expertise or with a clever plan.
- **Wisdom (WIS)**: your intuition, self-control, and awareness. Roll +WIS to Seek Insight, or when you rely on your willpower or senses to Defy Danger.
- **Constitution (CON)**: your stamina, grit, determination, and endurance. Roll +CON to Defend, or to Defy Danger by holding steady or enduring hardship.
- **Charisma (CHA)**: your ability to charm and connect with others, and to get a read on what others want. Roll +CHA to Persuade, or to Defy Danger socially.

Most playbooks will have you distribute the following to your stats: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, and -1. Assign them as you wish, but you'll probably be happiest if you put the positive numbers in the stats you expect to use often. (Note: The Would-be Hero starts with worse stats than other playbooks, but offsets this through their Potential for Greatness move.)

You can increase your stats by taking the **Improved Stat** or **Superior Stat** playbook moves (see pages 106 and 107).

Debilities

During play, a move or the GM might tell you to "mark a debility." There are three debilities:

- ***Weakened***: fatigued, tired, sluggish, shaky. Take disadvantage when rolling +STR or +DEX.
- ***Dazed***: out of it, befuddled, not thinking clearly. Take disadvantage when rolling +INT or +WIS.
- ***Miserable***: greatly distressed, angry, unwell, in pain. Take disadvantage when rolling +CON or +CHA.

There's a space on your playbook to mark each debility, just below the stats.

Debilities both reflect the fiction and dictate it. If something happens that results in you being fatigued, tired, and shaky, you'll mark *weakened* to reflect that. If you mark *weakened* because a move tells you to, then that means you become fatigued, tired, and shaky.

Debilities last until a move like **Recover** (page 328) or **Make Camp** (page 334) tells you to clear them, or until the GM tells you to.

Damage

Your playbook lists a die for damage. When you have the chance to hurt a foe, roll this die to see how much damage you deal.

Your damage die is independent of your weapon. If you're the Heavy, you deal 1d10 damage; if you're the Lightbearer, you deal 1d4. It doesn't matter whether you wield a dagger or a maul, or you're choking them with your bare hands. Your damage die reflects how dangerous you are. Your weapon is just a tool. (Some weapons of war deal "+1 damage," but they're the exception.)

Some moves override your damage die. A Lightbearer using Purifying Flames deals 1d10 damage, but only when they wield a holy light against a creature of darkness.

(And, no, you don't add STR or DEX to your damage rolls.)

Hit points (HP)

Your hit points (HP) represent how much fight you've got left in you. Start play with your current HP equal to your max HP, as noted in your playbook.

You lose HP when you take damage—when you are injured, hurt, roughed up, knocked around, etc. If you run out of HP, you're out of the action and might be dying.

You regain HP via moves like **Recover** (page 328) or **Make Camp** (page 334), but your current HP can never go higher than your max.

(No, you don't get more HP each level, nor do you add your CON to your HP.)

Armor

Your armor reduces the damage you take. For example, if you take 3 damage but have 1 armor, you only lose 2 HP.

Your armor is based on the gear you have equipped. Equipment that says "*n* armor" (like "1 armor" or "2 armor") doesn't stack; use the higher number. Equipment that says "+1 armor" *does* stack with other armor.

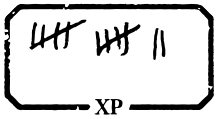
Armor is 0 by default. 0 or 1 armor is typical. 2 armor is tough. 3 armor is as good as you can get at the start of play.

XP

Short for "experience points." You start with no XP. You mark XP…

… **when you roll for a move and get a 6-** (unless the move says otherwise);
… **as part of the End of Session move** (page 232); and
… **when another move says so**.

"Mark XP" means that you make a tick mark in the XP box on your playbook, increasing your total XP by 1. Like so:



Once you've marked enough XP, you can spend it to either **Burn Brightly** (page 231) or **Level Up** (page 81).

Level

Your level reflects how much your PC has grown in competence and capability. You start at level 1. When you mark XP equal to 6 plus twice your current level, you can take some downtime and spend that XP to **Level Up** (page 81).

Each time you Level Up, you gain a new move from your playbook. At level 6, you gain access to your playbook's most potent moves. There is no maximum level, but each level requires 2 more XP to reach than the last.

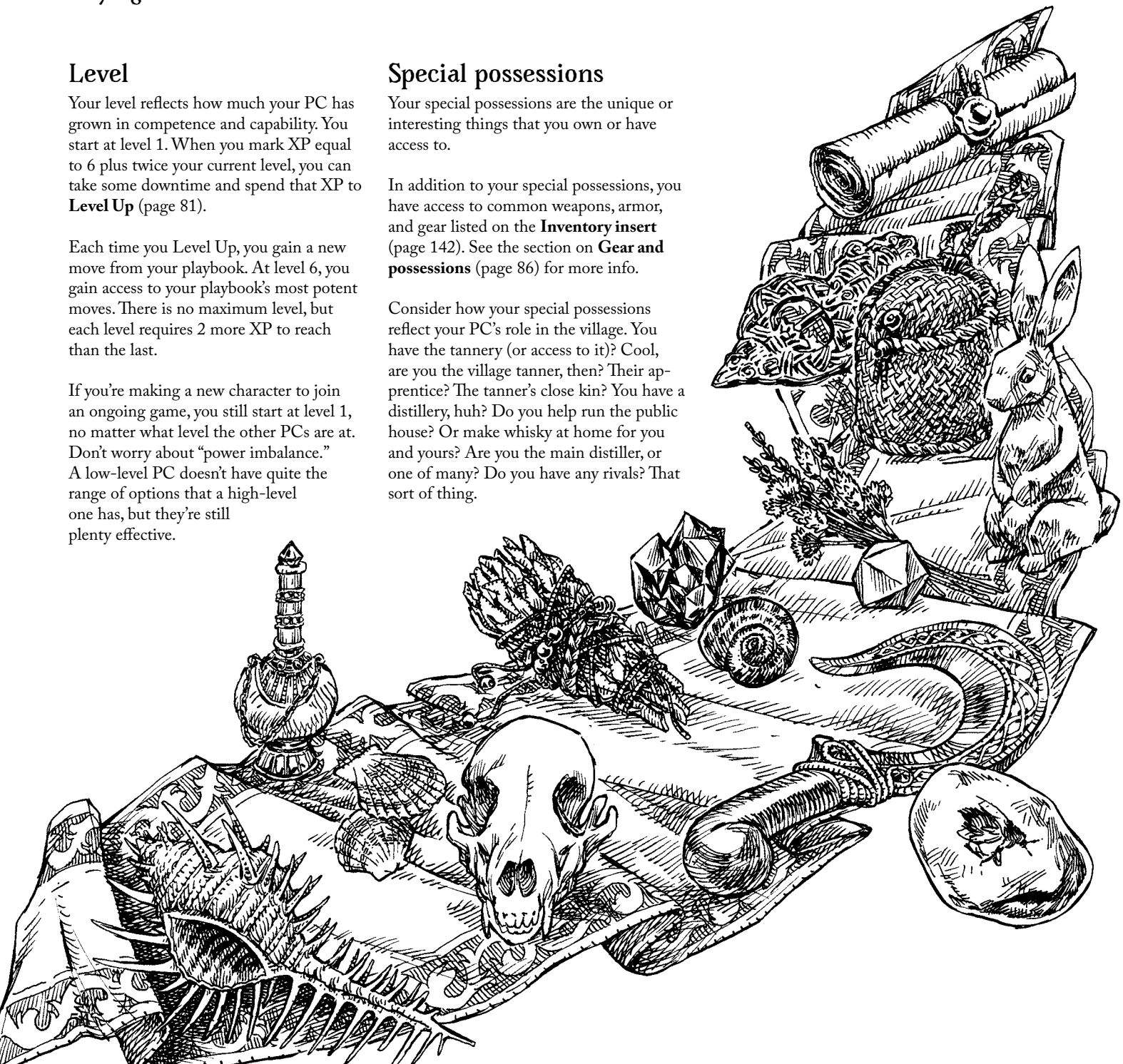
If you're making a new character to join an ongoing game, you still start at level 1, no matter what level the other PCs are at. Don't worry about "power imbalance." A low-level PC doesn't have quite the range of options that a high-level one has, but they're still plenty effective.

Special possessions

Your special possessions are the unique or interesting things that you own or have access to.

In addition to your special possessions, you have access to common weapons, armor, and gear listed on the **Inventory insert** (page 142). See the section on **Gear and possessions** (page 86) for more info.

Consider how your special possessions reflect your PC's role in the village. You have the tannery (or access to it)? Cool, are you the village tanner, then? Their apprentice? The tanner's close kin? You have a distillery, huh? Do you help run the public house? Or make whisky at home for you and yours? Are you the main distiller, or one of many? Do you have any rivals? That sort of thing.



Moves

Each playbook has a selection of moves. You'll start play with 3 or 4 of them; your playbook tells you which, or which to choose from. Each time you **Level Up** (page 81), you get a new move from your playbook.

Some playbook moves lack **triggers** (page 39); you simply gain their benefit when you take them. If you take the Improved Stat move, you permanently increase one of your stats. If you take a move that lets you always ask something, you can just do that now!

If a move says "(Requires __)," then you must meet that requirement in order to take the move. The requirement might be a level, another move, or the specific playbook (meaning that other playbooks can never take this move, even when they take a move that lets them pick from another playbook, see below.)

If a move *replaces* a different move, then it requires the one it replaces. When you take such a move, you lose the original move and any benefits that it conferred.

Many playbooks include a move that lets you pick from another playbook. Most of these moves limit which playbooks you can pick from.

If you really want to take a specific move from another playbook, but you don't have an option to do so, then pitch your idea to the GM and the other players. If everyone agrees, okay. But there are reasons why the playbooks have access to the moves they do. Magic-oriented playbooks have less flexibility when picking from other playbooks, and their moves aren't as freely available to others.

World building

On the back of each playbook, in the left column, you'll find a series of questions and prompts that will help you define the world and your character's place in it. Fill these out on your own, to the best of your ability.

At the start of a new game, your answers to these prompts and questions can have a big impact on what Stonetop and the wider world look like for your group. If you're joining an ongoing game or creating a replacement PC, you should make choices that jive with what's been established for that game.

Expect the GM to ask questions about this stuff. When and where did this happen? Who else was involved? How'd you end up there in the first place? Etc. It's good to think a little about this in advance, but as always, hold your ideas lightly. You might want to change them a bit once you hear what the other players have to say.

Introductions

Each playbook ends with a procedure for introducing your character to the group. This is to meant to happen during the first session, after you all choose and fill out your playbooks. The GM will walk the group through it, together, asking lots of questions. Pay attention to the other players, ask questions yourself, and riff on the details they provide.

The introductions procedure assumes that your character is already established in the village. If you're making a new character to add to an ongoing game, work with the GM and other players to determine the best way to introduce your new PC.

If your new PC was previously an NPC who is "stepping up" to PC status, then maybe do a pared-down version of this procedure between sessions (via email, group chat, etc.) or at the start of the next one. Some of the answers might be obvious, but some might be surprises.

If your new PC is a recent arrival in Stonetop, you might skip this procedure entirely and actually play out their arrival in town. Or the group might skip ahead in time, saying that your new PC arrived a couple months ago and has gotten settled in, and then you can walk through the Introductions normally at the start of a session.

Inserts

Every playbook comes with an insert, a half-page sheet that you can slip inside your folded playbook. Copies of these are provided for reference in this book, starting on page 141.

Every playbook gets an insert for tracking your current **inventory** (page 142), the other side of which is used to track **followers** (page 147) or playbook-specific information, such as the Lightbearer's **invocations** (page 146) or the Marshal's **crew** (page 144).

The Blessed and Ranger might have special inserts, if you take a particular background or move. The Seeker gets an additional insert for their **major arcanum** (see *Book II*, starting on page 540). So does the Heavy, but only if you pick the **Storm-marked** background (page 113).

You can gain new inserts during play. If you die and you refuse to step through the Last Door, then you gain the **Ghost**, **Revenant**, or **Thrall** inserts (pages 148, 150, and 152). Your GM might also give you a custom-made insert to represent a unique set of abilities that your character acquires during play (see **Writing Moves & Love Letters**, page 549).

Arcana

Arcana are magical items, places, or lore that can provide power—but only if you spend the time and effort to fully unlock their mysteries. The Seeker starts with a collection of arcana, and anyone can acquire them in play.

Every arcanum is different. Some are spells or abilities that you can learn by studying some scrap of lore, and any number of people could learn the same spell. Some imbue you with magical power. Other arcana are magical objects that you can learn to wield. Still others are magical places that you must return to in order to use their power.

When questions arise about an arcanum (like how it works, what's involved with using it, what it can/can't do, etc.), talk it out with the GM and the other players. Consider the details described or implied or already established in play, and extrapolate an answer together.

Minor arcana

Each minor arcanum is represented by a little card. You can see an example below.

The front side, as seen in the example below, shows what you can tell about the arcanum at a glance or with a little study. It also says what's required to unlock the arcanum's mysteries.

Unlocking a minor arcanum's mysteries often requires significant time, usually spent between expeditions. Don't be surprised if the GM asks you what chores or obligations go unmet as you pursue this magical power.

MINOR ARCANUM

An old scroll case

◇, *fragile*

A leather scroll case, cracked and age-worn. Inside is a tattered letter and a pair of small, bluish ingots. It's a letter, in an older Hillfolk dialect, from an apprentice to their master. It describes a mental exercise to draw latent power from aetherium.

You can learn **Laoj Davith's Galvanic Infusion** from the scroll, but…

- ☐ … you must translate the letter.
- ☐ … it'll take a few weeks of dedicated study.
- ☐ … you'll use up one of the aetherium ingots (or another source of aetherium).
- ☐ … you risk electrocuting yourself and/or using up the other ingot.

FRONT

1

When a requirement says that "you risk ___," then you'll be **Defying Danger** (page 210) unless you can come up with some way of eliminating that risk. Learning magic is rarely easy or safe.

Meet the requirements, and you unlock its mysteries. You gain whatever move and/or follower appears on the back of the card.

You can share a minor arcanum with another PC or even an NPC, as long as it makes sense to do so. Work with the GM to identify how the requirements change for them unlocking the arcanum's mysteries.

MINOR ARCANUM

Laoj Davith's Galvanic Infusion

When you ***touch a piece of aetherium and draw its power into yourself***, roll +CON: **on a 7+**, you absorb the power and gain 1d8 HP (even if this puts you above your max HP); **but on a 7-9**, the aetherium is drained and crumbles into a chalky mass of verdigris.

The spell lasts until you dismiss it or until you roll a 6- on any move. While it lasts, you need not sleep and remain highly alert and focused—gain advantage on any rolls with WIS.

If you remain awake for more than a few days, your body grows ever more exhausted and you risk hallucination, paranoia, and addiction.

When ***the spell ends***, you lose 1d8 HP.

BACK

1

For example, if you mastered Laoj Davith's Galvanic Infusion (using up both of the aetherium ingots in the process) and gave the old scroll case to another PC, then…

- … they'd need to acquire a couple pieces of aetherium before trying to unlock its mysteries themselves;
- … you might **Aid** (page 212) them by sharing your notes and coaching them, granting advantage when they Defy Danger to avoid the risk; and/or…
- … they might need only a few days of dedicated study, rather than a few weeks, as long as you show them the ropes.

If they complete all the requirements, then they can cast Laoj Davith's Galvanic Infusion, too!

Remember, though, that every arcanum is different. A magic spear that you bind to yourself with blood and fire isn't as easily shared as a spell written on a scroll.

Major arcana

Each major arcanum is represented by a half-page insert. They are generally more potent than minor arcana, with the potential to provide multiple moves and powers. But they are also much more dangerous, and using their powers comes at the risk of ever-greater consequences.

Opposite and on the page following is "Noruba's Ice Sphere," an example of a major arcanum insert, included here for reference.

Front side

The front side of each major arcanum shows what you can tell about it at first glance or with a bit of study.

Most major arcana provide a move or some other mechanical benefit, even before you unlock their mysteries.

The front of a major arcanum also says how to unlock its mysteries. This might involve meeting requirements (as with minor arcana) or using the arcanum's move(s) and getting certain results. Each major arcanum works differently.

Mysteries

The back of each major arcanum shows its mysteries: additional moves or options that the arcanum can provide.

When you unlock a major arcanum's mysteries, you get access to one or more of these moves or options (the front side will tell you which). You might be able to gain more, as detailed on the major arcanum itself.

Consequences

The back of each major arcanum also lists its potential consequences. You mark a consequence when a move tells you to, or when you roll a 6- on a move and the GM tells you to mark one.

You get to pick which consequence you mark. Whatever that consequence says, it happens. Don't mark a "nested" or indented consequence unless you've already marked the consequence under which it is nested; beyond that restriction, you can mark them in any order. You'll probably want to start with the ones near the top, though.

Consequences can be marked only once (or in a few cases, once per check box). There's no standard way to uncheck a consequence; they're a limited resource. Each time you mark a consequence, you must mark an empty check box.

What happens if you mark all the consequences? That depends on the arcanum. Some include a consequence that has the object break or vanish, which makes the question moot. Others require you to mark a consequence in order to use one or more moves; and if you can't mark a consequence, you can't use such a move. But if an arcanum says to mark a consequence as a result of one of its moves, and you've already marked them all, then you and your group have to decide what happens. Maybe the item is safer to use now, since you can't suffer any more consequences. Or maybe the GM gets to make something up, on par with the consequences that we've already seen in play. Decide together, case by case.

Noruba's Ice Sphere

◇, *magical*, *awkward*

A perfect sphere of dark ice, the size of a fist, never melting, hard as stone, and set like a gaudy gem at the end of a finely wrought torc. Or not a torc, perhaps, but maybe a ring that once sat upon some giant's finger?

Staring into the icy sphere brings a sense of calm, serenity, and detachment. Indeed, a lesser mind might find itself staring into its depths for hours on end.

When you ***peer into the Ice Sphere***, your mind is cleared of strong emotions.

When you ***gaze deeply into the Ice Sphere and ponder a situation, puzzle, or mystery***, ask the GM one of the questions below. The GM will answer honestly.

- Who benefits (or would benefit) from __?
- What about __ isn't what it seems to be?
- How could I learn more about __?
- What's the most likely outcome if __?
- What am I overlooking?

After the GM answers, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, hold 2 Acumen; **on a 7-9**, hold 1. ○○
While acting on the GM's answer, you can spend Acumen 1-for-1 to:

- Ask another question from the list above, and get an honest answer
- Treat a 6- that you rolled as a 7-9, or a 7-9 as a 10+

On a 6-, your connection to your body weakens—mark a debility and mark 1 circle. The debility lasts until you spend a few days living wholly in your body and averting your gaze from the Ice Sphere.

When you ***make the last mark***, you unlock the mysteries of the Ice Sphere and can use Mindwalking (see reverse).

FRONT

4

Mysteries of Noruba's Ice Sphere

Moves

☐ **MINDWALKING** ○○○○

When you ***use the Ice Sphere as a psychic anchor***, your consciousness leaves your body and walks the world as a spirit, invisible and insubstantial. Roll +INT: **on a 10+**, hold 3 Power; **on a 7-9**, hold 2 Power; **on a 6-**, hold 2 Power and mark a Consequence. While mindwalking, you may spend your Power, 1-for-1 to:

- Manifest as a ghostly voice and/or presence
- Manipulate a small (weight 0), unattended object
- Return instantly to the Ice Sphere from any distance

For every 2 Consequences you mark, gain one of the following moves:

☐ **A MIGHTY WILL**
When you ***mindwalk***, hold +1 Power.

☐ **FARWALKER**
When you ***mindwalk***, you may spend 1 Power to instantly send your mind to any place you have ever visited, physically or mentally.

☐ **TELEPATHY**
When you ***mindwalk***, you may spend 1 Power to become able to communicate mentally with someone nearby, as long as you remain in their presence. They can choose whether to respond, and can attempt to ignore you, but cannot shut you out completely without magic of their own.

☐ **TULPA**
When you ***mindwalk***, you may spend 1 Power to animate a mass of loose material (gravel, snow, leaves, etc.) into a body no larger than your own. When you would roll STR, DEX, or CON in this form, use INT instead. This form has 10 HP. When reduced to 0 HP, it dissipates and you return to your physical body.

Consequences

- ☐ Your physical body withers and fades—permanently mark the *weakened* debility
- ☐ Your emotions dull. You can no longer be affected by fear, hate, or other powerful emotions (for good or ill).
- ☐ Replace your instinct with "Detachment: To distance yourself from human connections and emotions."
- ☐ Your skin tinges bluish; your body becomes cold to the touch. You are unaffected by even the bitterest cold, but find heat and warmth unbearable.
  - ☐ When you take damage from fire, roll twice and take the higher result.
- ☐ You draw the attention of some powerful, hungry entity of the spirit world. It has your scent. Should you destroy or bind it, erase this mark.
- ☐ When you roll 6- at Death's Door, you have no choice: gain the Ghost insert (with the Ice Sphere as your tether).

BACK

4

Sharing major arcana

You can share a major arcanum with another PC or even an NPC, as long as it makes sense to do so. In general:

- Each character must unlock the mysteries of the major arcanum on their own.
- Each character tracks their own consequences separately, which means that each of you can suffer the same consequence(s)

With that said, each major arcanum is different and there will be exceptions. Talk it over with the GM and the other players to determine what makes sense.

If you and another PC share a major arcanum over any extended period, you should probably each have your own copy of the insert to track your own progress, mysteries, and consequences. Just be clear on who is actually wielding the arcanum at any given time.

Followers

A follower is a non-player character (NPC) who takes orders from you and generally follows your lead.

Followers are NPCs, meaning the GM is ultimately responsible for what they do and say, but…

… they'll generally do as you say;
… they can accumulate **Loyalty** (see below), which makes them easier to lead and manage; and
… when you direct them to act, they can trigger moves on your behalf.

Here's how you can get followers:

- The Marshal starts with a crew of followers, automatically. Track them on your Crew insert.
- The Blessed starts with followers if you take the Initiate background. Track them on the Initiates of Danu insert.
- The Ranger starts with a follower if you take the Beast-bonded background or the Animal Companion move. Track them on the Animal Companion insert.
- You might pick one or more dogs as a Special Possession, who act as followers. Track them on the back of the standard Inventory insert.
- The Seeker might start with an unlocked minor arcanum that acts as a follower. If so, track it on the arcanum card itself.
- Any PC can gain followers over the course of play.

Followers have the following stats:

- **Tags** (like *warrior*, *stubborn*, or *tall*) that describe the follower; when you **Order Followers** (page 462), their tags affect what you roll.
- **Damage**, **hit points**, and **armor** (page 53), which work the same for followers as they do for PCs.
- An **instinct**, which describes how they tend to cause trouble for you.
- **GM moves**, written as things that they can/will do (like "➤ Sniff out trouble on the wind"); not every follower has these.
- A **cost**, which describes what keeps them following your lead

When you pay a follower's cost, they hold Loyalty towards you. You can then spend that Loyalty to have them overcome their fear, resist their instinct or tags, or do something they don't want to do (within reason). See **Strengthen Your Bond** (page 464) for details.

A follower with the *group* tag represents multiple individuals who share stats and often act as one. Members of a group have the same tags, max HP, armor, damage, instinct, GM moves, and cost. They share a pool of Loyalty but each has their own current HP.

You can direct a *group* follower to act as a unit, or give orders to individual members. When an individual member stands out, you or the GM might assign a tag or two just for them. For example, if you're the Marshal, everyone in your crew might have the *archer*, *observant*, *stealthy*, and *respected* tags, but your lieutenant Eira might also be *cynical*.

Your home

Every PC lives in or near the village of Stonetop; it's the focal point of play.

The village itself has its own playbook, a living document that changes as you play. Stonetop's **steading playbook** is reproduced starting on page 154.

The steading playbook includes:

- The steading's size, stats, and current debilities
- Its current Surplus
- Its resources, fortifications, etc.
- The places of interest in the village
- Improvements that you're working on, and those that you've completed
- The village's communal assets
- A place to record important NPCs
- Maps of the vicinity and the region

Size

Size reflects the scale of the steading's infrastructure, its baseline population. The possible values for Size are:

- *hamlet* (<50 people)
- *village* (150-350 people)
- *town* (500-1500 people)
- *city* (2500+ people)

Size affects how much **Surplus** (page 67) is consumed each winter. If the steading becomes a *town*, you'll have advantage to **Muster** (page 82), **Pull Together** (page 83), and **Trade & Barter** (page 83). If it becomes a *hamlet*, you'll have disadvantage on those moves.

Stonetop starts as a *village*, home to about 300 souls. If things go poorly, it could shrink and become a *hamlet*. If you complete enough **steading improvements** (page 68), it can become a *town*.

Content

At the beginning of your first session, you and the rest of the group will have a discussion about content. In particular, you'll have a chance to establish:

- **Excluded content**, that won't be part of the game at all (on-camera or off)
- **Veiled content**, that can be part of the game (but only off-camera)
- **Special requests** for how certain content gets handled (like, "Spiders are okay, but please don't describe their legs" or "Let's say that gender norms in Stonetop are super fluid and accepting").

Record these content guidelines on the second page of the steading playbook. Review the guidelines at the start of each session. Call "time out" any time you realize that these guidelines have been broken or ignored, or if you feel that you need to add to or modify these guidelines.

Steading stats

Stonetop has four stats, each of which ranges from -1 to +3. The four steading stats are:

- **Fortunes**: morale, social cohesion, and just "how it's going." Roll +Fortunes when Seasons Change to see what happens in the coming months, or when you Requisition one of the village's assets.

- **Population**: the number of able bodies in town, relative to its Size. Population is a double-edged sword; add it to rolls to Muster or Pull Together, but also add it to the amount of Surplus consumed each winter.

- **Prosperity**: the quality and variety of services and household goods, tools and weapons, finery and little luxuries. Roll +Prosperity to Trade & Barter, and add it to the number of uses you get from supplies, the HP you regain when you Recover, and the piercing value of your iron weapons.

- **Defenses**: the martial prowess and readiness of the steading; how well-trained and well-armed the inhabitants are. Roll +Defenses to Deploy.

Fortunes start at +1 and change frequently during play. The other three stats start at +0. Population changes in response to the **Seasons Change** (page 84) and **Meet with Disaster** (page 82) moves. Prosperity and Defenses increase if you complete certain **improvements** (page 68), and decrease if you lose key resources in play.

Debilities

During play, your steading can suffer debilities much like your PC can (page 52). There are three steading debilities:

- ***Diminished***, by injury, sickness, doubt. Take disadvantage to **Deploy** (page 81), **Muster** (page 82), or **Pull Together** (page 83).

- ***Lacking***, due to shortages, hoarding, distrust. Treat Prosperity as if it's 1 lower than it is.

- ***Malcontent***, from fear, anger, and/or despair. Fortunes reset to +0 each season, instead of +1 (page 84), and folks need Persuading more often than usual.

There's a space on the steading playbook to mark each debility.

Debilities both reflect the fiction and dictate it. If something happens that results in the village's capacity being reduced by injury, sickness, or doubt, you'll mark *diminished* to reflect that. If you mark *diminished* because a move tells you to, then that means injury, sickness, and/or doubt plague the steading.

Steading debilities last until a move like **Return Triumphant** (page 79) says to clear them, or until the GM tells you to.

Surplus

Surplus represents food in the granary and in household larders, livestock ready for slaughter, whisky that's ready to drink, fur that's ready to trade or be fashioned into garments. It's a resource that you accumulate, consume, and spend.

At the start of play, Stonetop holds 1 Surplus; there's no upper limit. The village generates Surplus each summer and autumn, and consumes Surplus each winter. You can gain more Surplus through trade, by going on an expedition to hunt big game, or as a good result when **Seasons Change** (page 84). You can spend Surplus to trade for other assets or to have folks **Pull Together** (page 83) on a project.

Resources & fortifications

Next to the steading's Prosperity, you'll see a list of resources (farming, hunting/ trapping, stone from the Old Wall, etc.).

Next to the steading's Defenses, you'll see a list of fortifications and other elements that help keep the village safe (the village militia, the Ringwall, etc.)

As you establish new resources, fortifications, or other defensive elements, you'll add them here. Should the village lose these resources temporarily, it will suffer debilities. Should it lose them permanently, its Prosperity and/or Defenses will go down.

Places of interest

The steading playbook includes a map of the village, noting key places like the Stone itself, the granary, the public house, and so forth.

As part of introducing your PCs, you'll add their homes to this map. You'll also add any additional places of interest, such as the Chronicle (if someone plays the Judge) and the homes of notable NPCs.

Steading improvements

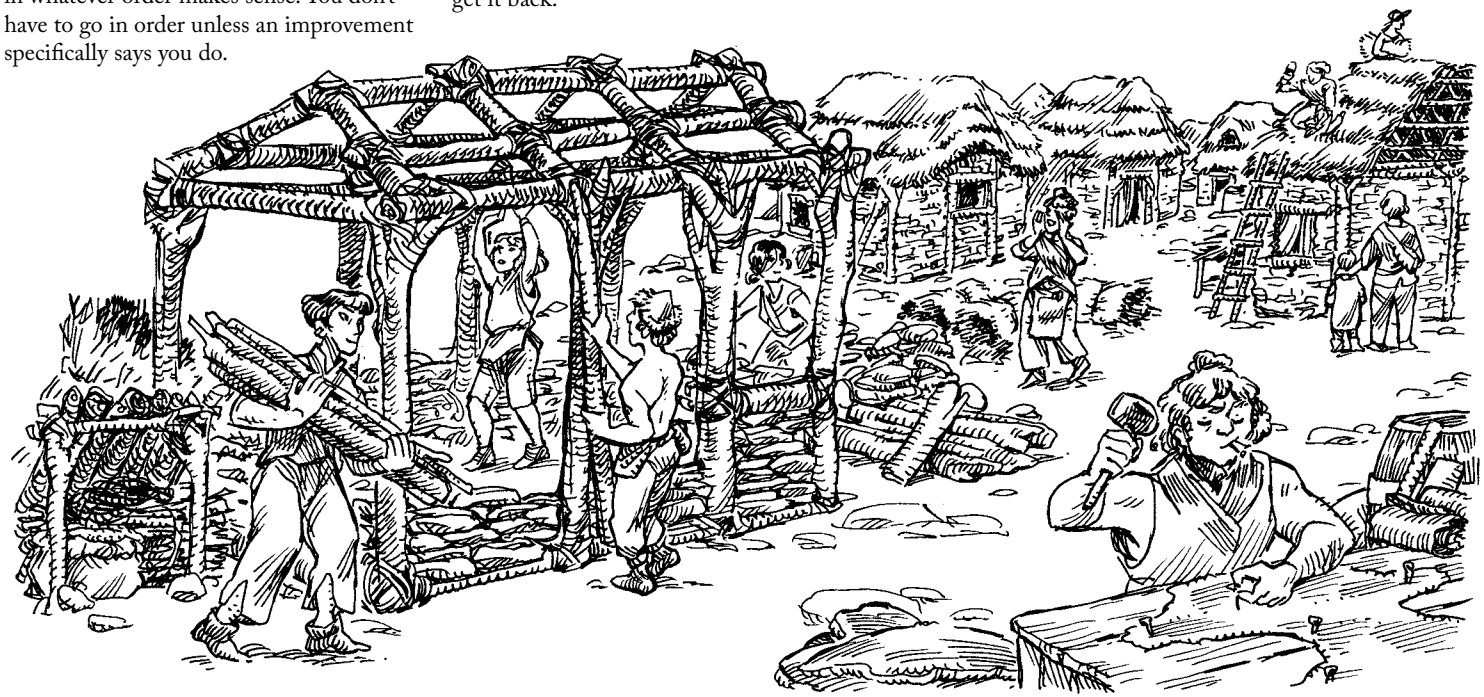
The steading playbook includes a number of potential **improvements** (page 156) that you can pursue. There are also spots for new improvements, which the GM might reveal to you in play.

Each steading improvement has a list of requirements, which you can complete in whatever order makes sense. You don't have to go in order unless an improvement specifically says you do.

Once you meet all the requirements for an improvement, the steading gains the listed benefit(s). Some improvements increase steading stats (like Fortunes, Prosperity, or Defenses). Some provide new moves. Some do both.

Some improvements incur ongoing costs. For example, the Weapons of War improvement requires 1 Surplus every spring to maintain. If you fail to pay that cost, you lose the improvement. **Make a Plan** (page 81) with the GM if you want to get it back.

The GM can threaten or harm steading improvements the same way they can threaten anything else you care about. If you don't do something to save it, it will be lost and you'll lose its benefits. Again, **Make a Plan** (page 81) if you want to get it back.



Assets

After the improvements, the steading playbook has a section for recording **assets** (page 161) that are owned by the residents of Stonetop in common: a pair of draft horses, a couple iron plows, a couple carts, a horse-drawn wagon, and anything else the village gains in play.

This section also includes boxes in which to record any silver or gold coins. These start blank, but should you acquire coins during play and turn them over to the village as a whole, you'd record them here. See page 93 for more on **coins**.

If you want to take any of these assets on an expedition, you must first **Requisition** them (page 77).

NPCs

Finally, the steading playbook has places to record notable non-player characters (NPCs). There's a section for **Residents of Stonetop** (page 162), and one for **Notable neighbors of Stonetop** (page 164).

Each time you establish a new NPC (during character introductions or in the course of play), give them a name and note their pronouns. Pick a name from the appropriate list in the steading playbook, or pick an unused name from the front of your playbook.

Note each NPC's occupation, and give each a notable, memorable trait. Pick one of the **NPC traits** (page 163) from the steading playbook, or make one up.

Also note any relationships that are important to understanding the NPC, like "Nolwen's sister" or "Urgben's mother (hates Trystan)."

Other ways to track NPCs

A game of *Stonetop* can easily involve dozens of NPCs, and space on the steading playbook is limited. Your group might opt to use a digital tool for tracking NPCs, such as:

- A relationship map, to visually organize PCs, NPCs, and their relationships.
- A matrix or spreadsheet, with a row for each PC or NPC, and columns for traits and relations.
- A wiki or database, with an entry for each PC or NPC and links between them all to record relationships.

The moves

The following moves are available to all PCs. They're organized based on the context in which they apply.

Remember, if a move calls for a roll and doesn't say what happens on a 6-, **mark XP** (page 53) **and prepare for the worst**.

Basic moves

These are the most commonly triggered moves, the ones that can come up in many different contexts.

AID
When you ***help someone who has not yet rolled***, the GM picks 1:

- They can accomplish more than they could alone
- They gain advantage on their roll.

Either way, you are exposed to any risk, cost, or consequence associated with their roll.

For more information, see page 212.

CLASH
When you ***fight in melee or close quarters***, roll +STR: **on a 10+**, your maneuver works as expected (deal your damage) and pick 1.

- Avoid, prevent, or counter your enemy's attack
- Strike hard and fast, for 1d6 extra damage, but suffer your enemy's attack

On a 7-9, your maneuver works, mostly (deal your damage) but you suffer your enemy's attack.

For more information, see page 214.

Playing the Game

DEFEND
When you ***take up a defensive stance*** or ***jump in to protect others***, roll +CON: **on a 10+**, hold 3 Readiness (or 4 if you bear a shield); **on a 7-9**, hold 1 Readiness (or 2 with a shield). You can spend Readiness 1-for-1 to:

- Suffer an attack's damage/effects instead of your ward
- Halve an attack's effect or damage
- Draw all attention from your ward to yourself
- Strike back at an attacker (deal your damage, with disadvantage)

When you ***go on the offense, cease to focus on defense, or the threat passes***, lose any Readiness that you hold.

For more information, see page 216.

DEFY DANGER
When ***danger looms, the stakes are high, and you do something chancy***, check if another move applies. If not, roll...

... +STR to power through or test your might
... +DEX to employ speed, agility, or finesse
... +CON to endure or hold steady
... +INT to apply expertise or enact a clever plan
... +WIS to exert willpower or rely on your senses
... +CHA to charm, bluff, impress, or fit in

On a 10+, you pull it off as well as one could hope; **on a 7-9**, you can do it, but the GM will present a lesser success, a cost, or a consequence (and maybe a choice between them, or a chance to back down).

For more information, see page 210.

INTERFERE
When you try to foil another PC's action and neither of you back down, roll...

... +STR to power through or test your might
... +DEX to employ speed, agility, or finesse
... +CON to endure or hold steady
... +INT to apply expertise or enact a clever plan
... +WIS to exert willpower or rely on your senses
... +CHA to charm, bluff, impress, or fit in

On a 10+, they pick 1 from the list below; **on a 7-9**, they pick 1 from the list below but you are left off-balance, exposed, or otherwise vulnerable.

- Do it anyway, but with disadvantage on their (next) roll
- Relent, change course, or otherwise allow their move to be foiled

For more information, see page 218.

KNOW THINGS
When you ***consult your accumulated knowledge***, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, the GM will tell you something interesting and useful about the topic at hand; **on a 7-9**, the GM will tell you something interesting—it's on you to make it useful; **either way**, the GM might ask "how do you know this?"

For more information, see page 220.

LET FLY
When you ***take an easy shot with a ranged weapon***, deal your damage. If ***the shot is tricky or you're under pressure***, first roll +DEX: **on a 10+**, you have a clear shot, deal your damage; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- Deal your damage, but deplete your ammo (mark the next status by your weapon; don't pick this if your weapon lacks such statuses)
- Hold steady and wait for a clear shot; when the moment arrives (GM's call), deal your damage
- Move to get a clear shot—exposing yourself to danger or giving up some advantage (GM says how)—then deal your damage
- Rush the shot and deal your damage, leading to a cost or complication of the GM's choice

For more information, see page 222.

PERSUADE (vs. NPCs)
When you ***press or entice an NPC***, say what you want them to do (or not do). If they ***have reason to resist***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, they either do as you want or reveal the easiest way to convince them; **on a 7-9**, they reveal something you can do to convince them, though it'll likely be costly, tricky, or distasteful.

For more information, see page 224.

PERSUADE (vs. PCs)
When you ***press or entice a PC and they resist***, ask their player: "Could I possibly get you to do this, yes or no?" If they say "no," let it drop.

If they say "yes," you can roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, they mark XP if they do what you want, and if they don't, they must say how you could convince them; **on a 7-9**, they mark XP if they do what you want (but can refuse or make a counter-offer if they like).

For more information, see page 226.

SEEK INSIGHT
When you ***study a situation or person***, looking to the GM for insight, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, ask the GM 3 questions from the list below; **on a 7-9**, ask 1; **either way**, take advantage on your next move to act on the answers.

- What happened here recently?
- What is about to happen?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- What here is useful or valuable to me?
- Who or what is really in control here?
- What here is not what it appears to be?

For more information, see page 228.

Special moves

These moves are always in play, but they either affect other moves or are triggered by very specific circumstances.

ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE
When you ***make a roll with advantage***, roll an extra die and discard the lowest result.

When you ***make a roll with disadvantage***, roll an extra die and discard the highest result.

When you ***make a roll with both advantage and disadvantage***, they cancel each other out.

If you ***have advantage/disadvantage on a damage roll***, roll the main die twice and discard the lower/higher result. Then add any bonus dice that apply.

For more information, see page 230.

BURN BRIGHTLY
When you ***have enough XP to Level Up*** (6 + twice your current level), you may spend 2 XP after any roll to add +1 to that roll (maximum +1 per roll).

For more information, see page 231.

END OF SESSION
When a ***session ends***, point out how you demonstrated or struggled with your instinct. If you can, mark XP.

Say how your relationship with or opinion of a PC, NPC, or group has changed. If you can, mark XP.

Answer these questions as a group. For each "yes," everyone marks XP.

- Did we learn more about the world or its history?
- Did we defeat a threat to Stonetop or the region?
- Did we improve our standing with our neighbors?
- Did we make a lasting improvement to Stonetop, or tangible progress towards doing so?

Praise something about the session (in the fiction or around the table) that you enjoyed or appreciated.

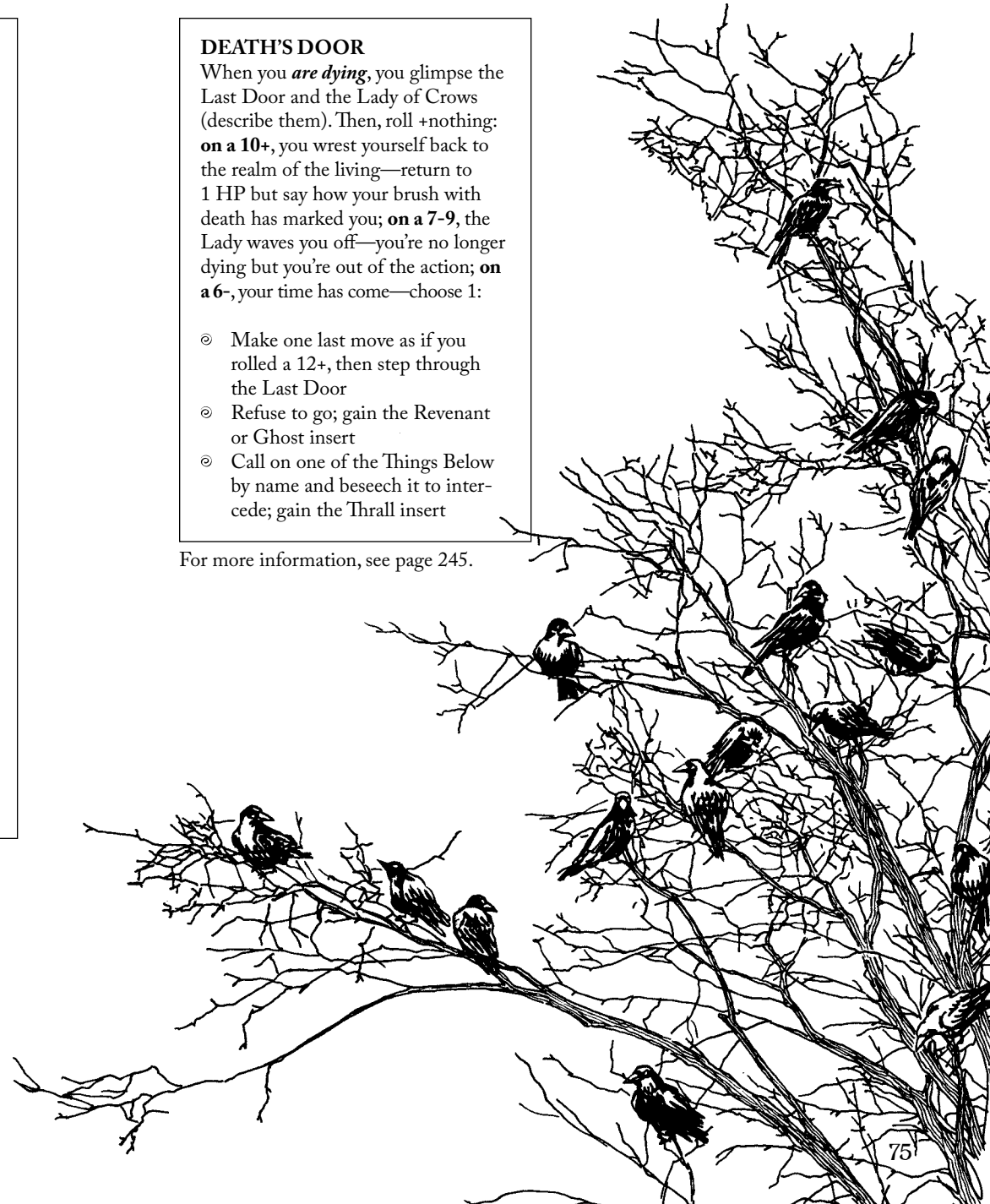
Finally, offer up a wish for future sessions: more __, less __, a chance to __, handling __ in a different way, etc. Wishes can be about what happens in the fiction or around the table. The GM will take notes.

For more information, see page 232.

DEATH'S DOOR
When you ***are dying***, you glimpse the Last Door and the Lady of Crows (describe them). Then, roll +nothing: **on a 10+**, you wrest yourself back to the realm of the living—return to 1 HP but say how your brush with death has marked you; **on a 7-9**, the Lady waves you off—you're no longer dying but you're out of the action; **on a 6-**, your time has come—choose 1:

- Make one last move as if you rolled a 12+, then step through the Last Door
- Refuse to go; gain the Revenant or Ghost insert
- Call on one of the Things Below by name and beseech it to intercede; gain the Thrall insert

For more information, see page 245.



Follower moves

These moves apply when you interact with your **followers** (page 64).

ORDER FOLLOWERS
When you ***direct your follower to do something that would trigger a player move***, and they do it, they trigger the move. If the move involves rolling, you roll for them. Instead of rolling +STAT, roll and…

… if they have at least one appropriate tag or move, add +1, or +2 if they're also *exceptional*;
… if they have no relevant tag or move, add +0; and
… if any of their tags would get in the way, roll with disadvantage.

When a follower is without orders or they act on their own initiative, the GM says what they do and decides how it goes.

For more information, see page 462.

STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND
When you ***pay your follower's cost***, and you haven't done so recently, they hold +1 Loyalty (max 3).

Spend your follower's Loyalty 1-for-1 to have them:

- Overcome their fear to do as you say
- Resist acting on their instinct/tags/traits
- Do something they don't want to do (as long as it's not abhorrent or suicidal)

When a follower is without orders or they act on their own initiative, the GM says what they do and decides how it goes.

For more information, see page 464.

Expedition moves

These moves apply when you prepare for, undertake, or return from an expedition.

CHART A COURSE
When you ***wish to travel to a distant place***, name or describe your destination ("Gordin's Delve," "the hagr's lair," or "wherever these tracks lead"). If the route is unclear, tell the GM how you intend to reach it. The GM will then tell you what's required, the risks, and how long it will likely take.

When you ***set out on the journey***, the GM will present each of the challenges one at a time—plus any surprises that you couldn't have seen coming—in whatever order makes the most sense. Address them all and reach your destination.

For more information, see page 302.

OUTFIT
When you ***prepare for an expedition in a friendly community***, mark as many ◇ on your Inventory insert as you wish to carry, either on specific items or in "undefined." Mark up to 3◇ for a *light* load (quick and quiet), 4-6◇ for a *normal* load, or 7-9 ◇ for *heavy* load (noisy, slow, quick to tire). Also, mark a number of ▢ in the **Small items** section equal to 4+Prosperity (on specific items in "undefined").

You can select...

- Items printed on the Inventory insert
- Other common, mundane items
- Any of your personal possessions
- Special items for which you Trade & Barter

Tell the GM what you're bringing, and answer their questions about your gear and where you got it.

For more information, see page 306.

REQUISITION
When you ***borrow some of the steading's assets for an expedition*** (like the horses or a plow), roll +Fortunes: on a 10+, go ahead, but bring it back safely; on a 7-9, you'll need to do some convincing; on a 6-, don't mark XP—you can take the asset with you if you want, but if you do, reduce Fortunes by 1.

For more information, see page 308.

HAVE WHAT YOU NEED
When you ***decide that you had something all along***, transfer a mark (or marks) from your "undefined" inventory to a specific item or a slot. If you mark a slot, fill it with a common mundane item or something from your personal possessions.

Alternately, you can expend a use of supplies to mark an additional small item/slot (▢).

Whatever you produce, it must be something you could have had all along. The GM or any player can veto unreasonable items.

For more information, see page 326.

RECOVER
When you ***take time to catch your breath and tend to what ails you***, expend 1 use of supplies and recover HP equal to 4+Prosperity. You can't gain this benefit again until you take more damage.

When you ***tend to a debility or a problematic wound***, say how. The GM will either say that it's taken care of or tell you what's required to do so (Defying Danger, expending supplies or some other resource, finding ___, Making Camp, etc.).

For more information, see page 328.

STRUGGLE AS ONE
When you ***Defy Danger as a group***, establish the party's approach and each roll +STAT (per Defy Danger): **on a 6-**, you find yourself in a spot, the GM will describe it or ask you to; **on a 7-9**, you pull your weight; **on a 10+**, you do well enough to get someone else out of a spot, if you can tell us how.

If you roll a 6- but someone saves you, don't mark XP.

For more information, see page 328.

KEEP COMPANY
When you ***spend a stretch of time together***, ask the others if they want to Keep Company. If they do, take turns asking a PC or NPC one of the following.

- What do you do that's annoying/endearing?
- What do I do that you find annoying/endearing?
- Who or what seems to be on your mind?
- What do we find ourselves talking about?
- How do you/we pass the time?
- What new thing do you reveal about yourself?

For more information, see page 332.

MAKE CAMP
When you ***settle in to rest in an unsafe area***, answer the GM's questions about your campsite. Each member of the party must consume 1 use of supplies or provisions; if you use a ◇ mess kit (*requires fire & water*), then 1 use can provide for up to four people.

If you ***eat and drink your fill***, and ***get at least a few hours of sleep***, pick 1.

- Regain HP equal to ½ your max
- Clear a debility

If ***your rest was particularly peaceful, comfortable, or enjoyable,*** you also gain advantage on your next roll.

For more information, see page 248 and page 334.

FORAGE
When you ***spend a few hours seeking food in the wild***, roll +WIS. In winter, you have disadvantage. **On a 10+**, pick 2; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- You acquire ◇ provisions (1d6 uses)
- You acquire an extra 1d6 uses of provisions
- You discover something interesting or useful
- You avoid danger or risk (else, there is some)

Provisions can substitute for supplies when you Make Camp, 1-for-1.

For more information, see page 336.

RETURN TRIUMPHANT
When you ***return home in triumph***, having saved your fellows, put down the threat, seized the opportunity, etc., then clear one of the steading's debilities (*diminished*, *lacking*, or *malcontent*). If the steading has no debilities marked, then increase Fortunes by 1.

For more information, see page 339.

Homefront moves

These moves apply during downtime, or when you're interacting with a steading's population and resources.

BOLSTER
When you ***prepare for what's coming or seek the favor of the gods***, say how and answer the GM's questions. Then, hold Preparation based on the amount of time you devote:

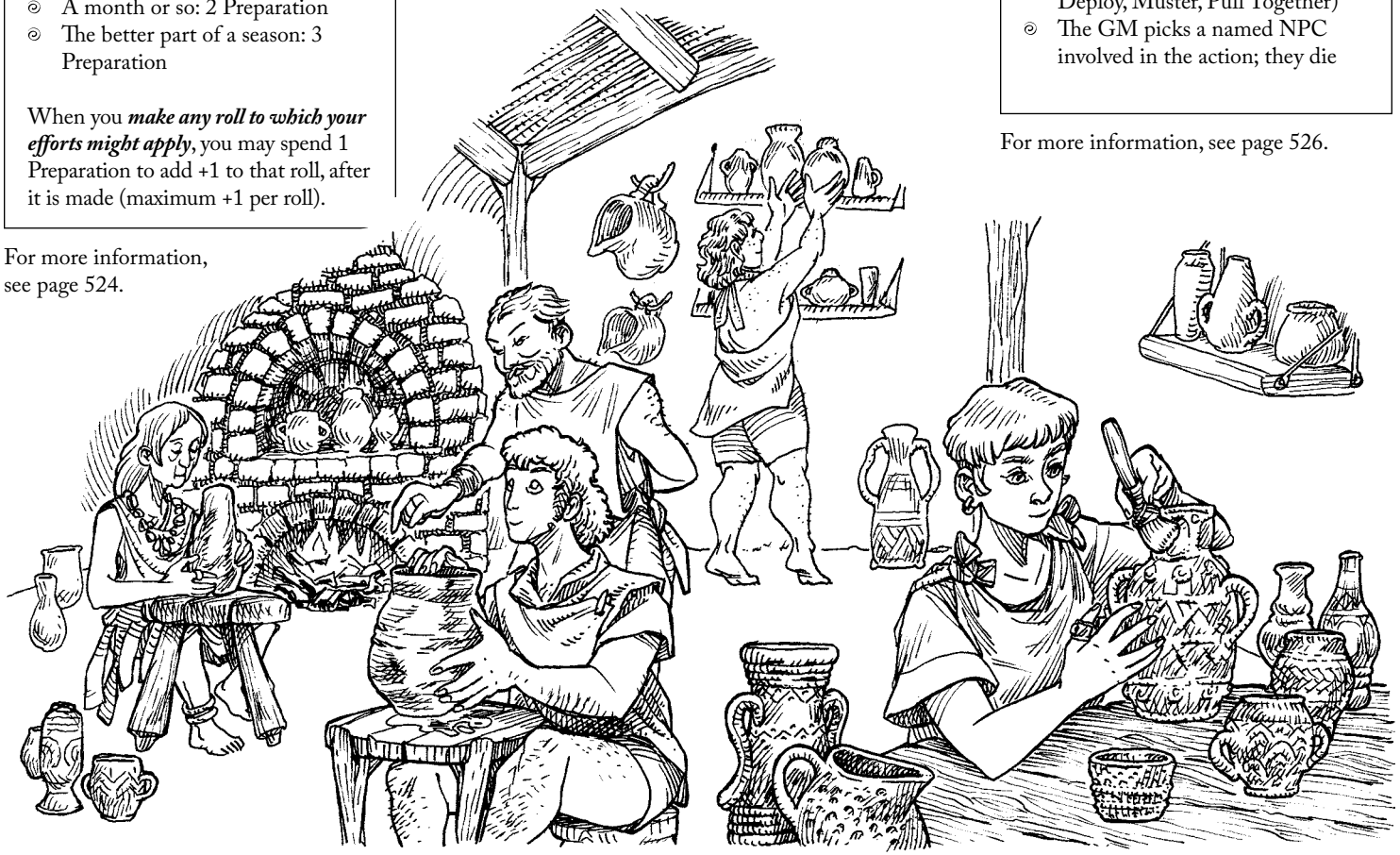
- A week or so: 1 Preparation
- A month or so: 2 Preparation
- The better part of a season: 3 Preparation

When you ***make any roll to which your efforts might apply***, you may spend 1 Preparation to add +1 to that roll, after it is made (maximum +1 per roll).

For more information, see page 524.

CONVALESCE
When you ***rest for a few days in safety and comfort,*** set your HP back to your max and clear all your debilities. When you ***rest for a few weeks under the care of a healer***, you heal any problematic wounds that can heal. If you ***have suffered a permanent injury or impairment***, either retire or Make a Plan to adapt to it.

For more information, see page 249.



DEPLOY
When you ***send a steading's people into danger or rally them against an attack***, roll +Defenses: **on a 10+**, it goes as well as can be expected; **on a 7-9**, it works but someone chooses 1 from the list below. If the steading is acting from a position of strength, you choose. Otherwise, the GM chooses.

- It's less effective than you expected
- Injuries abound; the steading marks *diminished* (disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, Pull Together)
- The GM picks a named NPC involved in the action; they die

For more information, see page 526.

LEVEL UP
When you ***have a quiet stretch of time at home and XP equal to (or greater than) 6 + twice your current level***, follow these steps:

1) Subtract 6 + twice your current level from your XP.
2) Increase your level by 1.
3) Choose a new move from your playbook, or an insert class that you've unlocked.
4) If you are the Blessed (or have a sacred pouch) and your new level is even, increase your max Stock by 1.
5) If you are the Lightbearer (or have Invoke the Sun God) and your new level is even, choose a new invocation.
6) Review your Instinct and Appearance (on the front of your playbook). Change anything that no longer applies. Feel free to make up new options.

For more information, see page 528.

MAKE A PLAN
When you ***wish to accomplish some project but aren't sure how to go about it***, tell the GM what you hope to achieve. They'll say what's required. If you're stumped on how to accomplish one of the requirements, tell the GM and Make a Plan for that.

For more information, see page 530.

MEET WITH DISASTER
When ***calamity befalls the steading*** or ***panic spreads***, reduce Fortunes by 1 (min -1).

If ***Fortunes would drop below -1 for any reason*** (not just calamity or panic), then the GM picks 1 instead:

- The steading marks *diminished* from injuries/sickness/doubt (disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, Pull Together)
- The steading marks *lacking* due to shortages/hoarding/distrust (treat Prosperity as 1 lower)
- The steading marks *malcontent* from fear/anger/despair (Fortunes reset to +0 each season, not +1; folks need Persuading more often than usual)
- Folks start to leave; reduce Population by 1

For more information, see page 532.

MUSTER
When you ***press every able body into the defense of a steading***, reduce Fortunes by 1 and roll +Population: **on a 7+**, the steading is alert and ready for action until the threat passes, the Seasons Change, or you cease to oversee the muster. **On a 10+**, also pick 2; **on a 7-9**, also pick 1.

- Everyone's willing to pitch in; don't reduce Fortunes after all
- The muster holds together even without your presence
- 1 or 2 individuals show real potential; ask the GM who and how

For more information, see page 534.

PULL TOGETHER
When you ***set a community to work on improvements, to secure new resources, or to make major repairs***, spend whatever the GM says is required (time, material, Surplus, etc.) and roll +Population: **on a 10+**, the job gets done; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- It gets done, but other work doesn't; reduce Fortunes by 1
- It gets done, but the work is shoddy, crude
- It gets done, but there's a consequence (bad blood, an injury, a threat unearthed, etc.)
- There's an unforeseen cost, requirement, or challenge; address it and the job gets done

For more information, see page 536.

TRADE & BARTER
When you ***wish to acquire or sell a commonly available item***, you can. When you ***seek to acquire or sell a special item***, roll +Prosperity and subtract the item's Value. In winter, you have disadvantage. **On a 10+**, you can get it or sell it for a fair price; **on a 7-9 when you're trying to buy**, the GM picks 1:

- You can get it, but it'll cost more than usual
- ___ has it, but they aren't keen to give it up
- You can get something close, but not quite right

On a 7-9 when you're looking to sell: you can sell it now, but you won't get its full worth.

On a 6- either way, don't mark XP. If you want to acquire/sell it, you'll need to travel to ___ or wait until next season.

For unique or truly exceptional items, don't Trade & Barter. Either get with the GM and Make a Plan or wait for a trade opportunity when Seasons Change.

For more information, see page 540.

SEASONS CHANGE

When ***spring bursts forth upon the land***, whoever is the most hopeful rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, pick 1 seasonal gain; **on a 7-9**, pick 1 seasonal gain, but a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse; **on a 6-**, threats abound (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, reset Fortunes to +1.

When ***the hot days of summer settle across the land***, whoever is most content rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, pick 2 seasonal gains; **on a 7-9**, pick 1 seasonal gain; **on a 6-**, a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, the steading generates 1d4-1 Surplus. Then, reset Fortunes to +1.

When ***autumn falls and the land is ripe for harvest***, whoever is most determined rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, pick 1 seasonal gain; **on a 7-9**, pick 1 seasonal gain, but a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse; **on a 6-**, threats abound (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, reset Fortunes to +1.

When ***the harvest is complete***, roll 1d4; the steading generates that much Surplus.

When ***winter grips the land***, whoever is weariest rolls 1d4+Population; the steading consumes that much Surplus. If there's not enough, reduce Surplus to 0 and Meet with Disaster. Then, pick 1:

- Reduce Population by 1 (min -1) due to death, decrepitude, and departure
- An important resource (one of the horses, the cistern, etc.) is lost or not maintained
- An important NPC dies, their role unfilled
- Your PC dies, leaves, or retires from play

Then, roll +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, the winter is relatively mild, and each player can name a local NPC with whom their relationship improves at least a little (work together to figure out how); **on a 7-9**, the steading must consume additional Surplus equal to 1d4+Population before winter ends or suffer the consequences as above; **on a 6-**, as a 7-9, but also threats abound (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, reset Fortunes to +1.

For more information, see page 516.

Seasonal gains

- **Population boom:** A number of youth come of age, and/or outsiders settle here. Increase Population by 1 (max +3).
- **Tor's blessing:** Fine weather abounds. Take +1 to Pull Together this season, and any time you roll the Die of Fate for weather, roll twice and take your pick.
- **Unexpected bounty:** A sudden influx of wild game, trade profits, or some other resource generates 1 Surplus, now.
- **Trade opportunity:** At some point this season, someone offers to trade something valuable at a good price or something unique/unusual at a reasonable price. Pay what they're asking and it's yours.
- **Interesting news:** There's an opportunity to improve your fortunes, knowledge, or relations, and/or to make progress towards a steading improvement.
- **Valuable insight:** You learn something that gives you a chance to address a threat that's been plaguing the steading.

Gear and possessions

You don't keep track of every item or possession that your PC owns. You and your family have a whole house full of belongings, and you're part of a tight-knit community that freely shares, gifts, and trades goods with each other. In general, you'll track only:

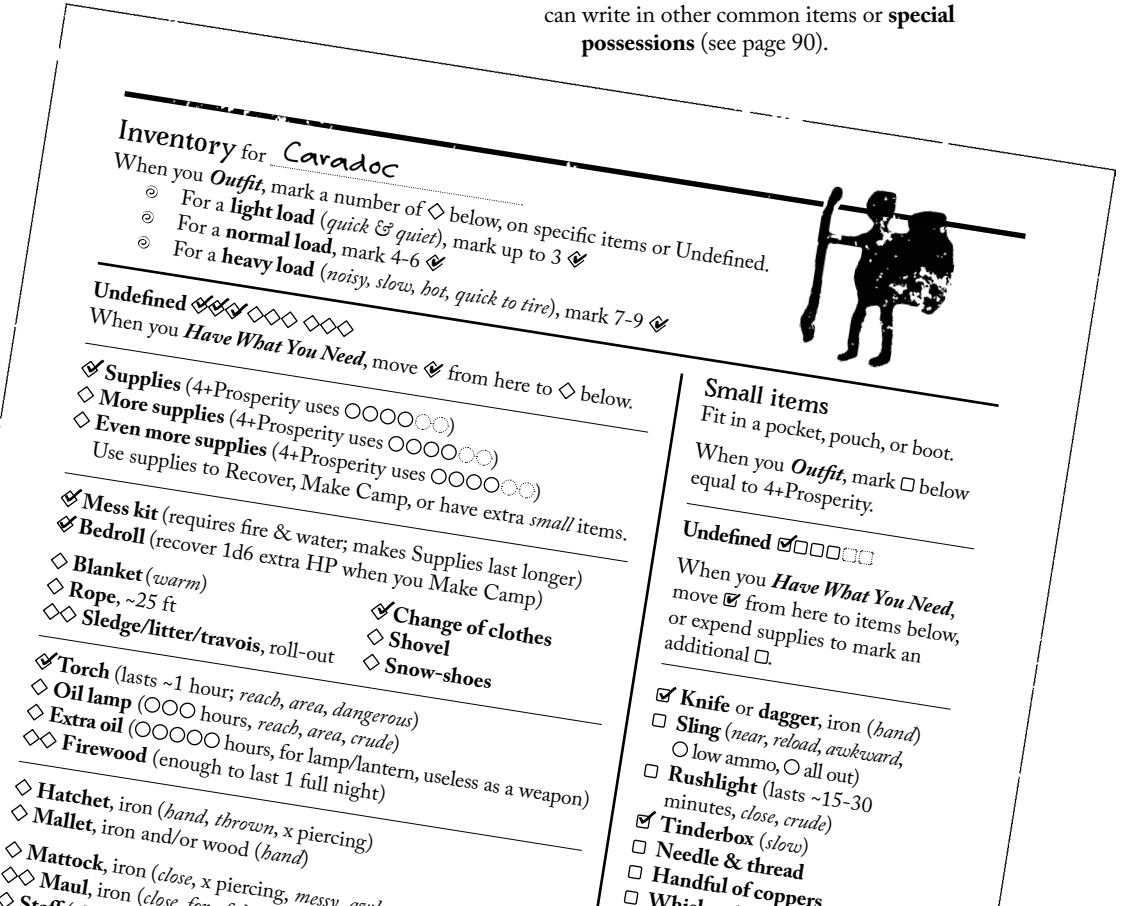
- Your current inventory (the stuff you have on your person right now)
- Your special possessions (the ones you start play with, and those that you acquire in play)

Inventory

When you **Outfit** for an expedition (page 77), you'll fill out your Inventory insert. Mark the ◇, ◇◇, or ☐ next to an item to indicate you are carrying it.

Every PC has the same Inventory insert. Items that are printed on the insert are commonly available in Stonetop, things that any PC has access to if they need it. You might not own a shovel yourself, but you know someone who does, someone willing to loan it to you or trade you for it. The GM might ask where you got it, but if it's printed on the insert, you can acquire it, no problem.

The insert also has blank spaces, where you can write in other common items or **special possessions** (see page 90).



Inventory for Caradoc

When you ***Outfit***, mark a number of ◇ below, on specific items or Undefined.

- For a **light load** (*quick & quiet*), mark up to 3 ✓
- For a **normal load**, mark 4-6 ✓
- For a **heavy load** (*noisy, slow, hot, quick to tire*), mark 7-9 ✓

Undefined ✓✓✓ ◇◇◇ ◇◇◇

When you ***Have What You Need***, move ✓ from here to ◇ below.

✓ **Supplies** (4+Prosperity uses ○○○○○○)
◇ **More supplies** (4+Prosperity uses ○○○○○○)
◇ **Even more supplies** (4+Prosperity uses ○○○○○○)
Use supplies to Recover, Make Camp, or have extra *small* items.

✓ **Mess kit** (requires fire & water; makes Supplies last longer)
✓ **Bedroll** (recover 1d6 extra HP when you Make Camp)
◇ **Blanket** (*warm*)
◇ **Rope**, ~25 ft
◇◇ **Sledge/litter/travois**, roll-out
✓ **Change of clothes**
◇ **Shovel**
◇ **Snow-shoes**

✓ **Torch** (lasts ~1 hour; *reach, area, dangerous*)
◇ **Oil lamp** (○○○ hours, *reach, area, crude*)
◇ **Extra oil** (○○○○○ hours, for lamp/lantern, useless as a weapon)
◇◇ **Firewood** (enough to last 1 full night)

◇ **Hatchet**, iron (*hand, thrown*, x piercing)
◇ **Mallet**, iron and/or wood (*hand*)
◇ **Mattock**, iron (*close*, x piercing, *messy*, *awk*
◇◇ **Maul**, iron (*close*, for
◇ **Staff**

Small items

Fit in a pocket, pouch, or boot.

When you ***Outfit***, mark ☐ below equal to 4+Prosperity.

Undefined ☑☐☐☐☐☐

When you ***Have What You Need***, move ☑ from here to items below, or expend supplies to mark an additional ☐.

☑ **Knife** or **dagger**, iron (*hand*)
☐ **Sling** (*near, reload, awkward*, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
☐ **Rushlight** (lasts ~15-30 minutes, *close, crude*)
☑ **Tinderbox** (*slow*)
☐ **Needle & thread**
☐ **Handful of coppers**
☐ **Whi**

Load

Items that have a ◇ or ◇◇ in front of them contribute to your load. Count the total number of ◇ that you have marked. If you have…

… up to 3 ✓, then you have a **light load**, able to move quick and quiet;
… 4 to 6 ✓, then you have a **normal load**;
… 7 to 9 ✓, then you have a **heavy load**—you're noisy, slow, hot, and quick to tire.

You (Caradoc, the apprentice tanner, impetuous youth, and Would-be Hero) Outfit for an expedition to the Ruined Tower, marking your Inventory as shown on the opposite page. You have 6 ✓, which means that you're carrying a normal load. You are traveling with Vahid (the Seeker, a different PC); he's also carrying a normal load (6 ✓), but he's carrying different items (of course).

Your load has no specific effect, but it's part of your **fictional positioning** (page 42). For example, the GM might say, "Vahid, you're carrying a heavy load, right? That seems like Defying Danger to me, the danger being that you exhaust yourself in this heat." Or, "Ooh, a 7? Well, you slip past without them getting spotted, but your gear jingles and one of them looks up, suspicious. She's coming to investigate. What do you do?"

If you carry 10 ✓ or more, or something very heavy or awkward, then not only do you have a heavy load but you risk exhaustion, accident, and injury. The GM will tell you the consequences and/or requirements of being overloaded.

If you use up or discard any items, or give them to someone else, then clear the ✓ next to them. They no longer count towards your load.

If you pick up any items in the field (like loot), or if an ally gives some of their gear to you, add it to your Inventory, marking the appropriate ◇. This might change your load!

You and Vahid arrive at the Ruined Tower that night, and you use up your ✓✓ firewood. You're down to 4 ✓ total, which is still a normal load.

The next morning, you leave your ✓ shovel with Vahid at the campsite and explore the upper levels of the ruin. You're now carrying only 3 ✓ total, so you have a light load and you're able to move about quietly.

You discover a ◇◇ half-buried plaque in the courtyard, made of bronze and etched with Maker-runes. The coast appears to be clear, so you go get Vahid and your ✓ shovel. You spend a few minutes digging the plaque out of the dirt. Vahid confirms that it's a valuable artifact, so you bring it with you. You add "✓✓ bronze plaque" to a blank line of your Inventory insert, and you're back up to 6 ✓ total.

All that digging, though, draws the attention of a beznpol—a great big armored stoat! After a quick but bloody fight, you kill it! Its scales sure seem valuable, so you skin the beast and add "✓ beznpol hide" to your Inventory. You're now at 7 ✓ total, which is a heavy load.

Small items

A small item is something that could fit in a pocket, pouch, or boot with room to spare. Small items do not contribute to your load. Track them on the right side of your Inventory insert, in the "Small items" section.

When you **Outfit** (page 77), you can mark a number of small items equal to 4 plus Stonetop's current Prosperity (+0 by default). If you want more small items, then bring ◇ **supplies** (page 89).

If you acquire a new small item on an expedition, add it to your Inventory in one of the blanks in the Small items section. There's no hard limit to the number of small items you can carry, but be reasonable. If you start stockpiling, the GM might say that your small items count as ⚒ or even ⚒⚒ in aggregate.

When you Outfitted for your trip to the Ruined Tower, you marked 4 small items (because Stonetop's Prosperity is currently +0).

As you explored the upper levels, you found a jagged shard of makerglass, sharp as anything and impossible to break. It's not much bigger than a coin, a small item. You pack it into your tinderbox, and add "☑ makerglass shard" to your Inventory insert.

Undefined items

You don't have to define your items up front. When you **Outfit** (page 77), you can put some or all of your marks in the "Undefined" areas of your Inventory insert. These represent items that your PC has on their person, but which you (the player) have not yet established in the fiction.

At any point, you can **Have What You Need** (page 78) and transfer marks from one of the two "Undefined" areas to a specific item. The specific item can be anything already printed on the Inventory insert, any common, mundane item, or any of your special possessions—but it must be something you could have had with you all along.

The idea is: **don't waste time at the table fretting over what specific items you might need to bring**. Mark only items that you know you want to bring, and then put all your other marks in "Undefined." Your PC is a competent person who knows about the world they live in, and what they might need for any given journey.

When you Outfitted, you marked ⚒ supplies, a ⚒ shovel, ⚒⚒ firewood, and undefined ⚒⚒. Under "Small items," you marked a ☑ dagger, a ☑ tinderbox, the ☑ locket with Morwenna's hair (a special possession), and undefined ☑.

As you explored the upper levels of the Ruined Tower, you turned your last undefined mark under "Small items" into chalk, leaving marks as you explored.

When the beznpol attacked, you turned one of your undefined ⚒ into a ⚒ spear.

Supplies

Near the top of your Inventory insert, you'll find "◇ Supplies" (and "◇ More supplies" and "◇ Even more supplies").

"Supplies" represent the essentials that you might bring with you on expedition: food, water, bandages, salves, whisky, additional small items, etc.

By default, one ◇ of supplies contains 4 uses, but you add Stonetop's current **Prosperity** (page 66) to that. So if Stonetop's Prosperity is currently +1, then each ◇ of supplies contains 5 uses instead of 4.

Use supplies to:

- **Recover** (page 78)
- **Make Camp** (page 79)
- **Have What You Need** (page 78) to produce additional small items
- Feed yourself as you travel.

By default, each person on an expedition consumes 1 use of supplies per day. But, if you have a ◇ mess kit (which requires water and fire), then 1 use of supplies can cover up to four people.

After your fight with the beznpol, you're bleeding from a few dozen cuts and scratches. You spend 1 use of supplies to Recover, regaining 4 HP. You've got 3 uses of supplies left.

"What's this look like?" asks the GM.

Vahid pipes in. "I'll clean your wounds with water and a little whisky, then wrap them up in bandages. And, here, drink what's left of the whisky. It will take the edge off the pain."

Provisions

If you're low on supplies, you can **Forage** (page 336) and acquire up to 2d6 uses of ⚒ provisions. You might also gain them incidentally (if, say, you fight an angry boar and harvest the meat).

Expend provisions in place of supplies when you Make Camp, or to feed yourself as you travel. Provisions, though, are more likely to spoil or attract beasts than supplies are.

*You've skinned the beznpol, and it seems wasteful to just leave the flesh. You **Know Things** (page 72) to see if they're good eating, and get a 7. "Well, you don't know about beznpol," says the GM, "but hunters will often eat the liver or heart of a beast fresh after the kill. That'd count as, oh, 3 uses of provisions. But you'll have to roll the Die of Fate to see if it makes you sick."*

You're an impetuous youth, and Vahid is curious to a fault, so you each eat a use of provisions when you Make Camp rather than using up supplies. You get a 6 on the Die of Fate, so, yeah, it's rather tasty and neither of you gets ill.

You've still got 1 use of provisions left, but it's not like raw liver or heart keeps well. You toss what's left to the crows instead of adding it to your Inventory.

Back home

When you return home, clear the marks from your Inventory insert; it rarely matters what you're carrying while you're in town. If it does matter, assume that you have a light load (up to 3 ⚒) and a handful of small items unless there's a good reason to think otherwise.

Special possessions

Your special possessions are the things that you own or have access to, but which others do *not*. A shield, spear, a cloak, a pair of snow shoes, a cookpot—every household has these, so they are common items. But few (if any) folks in town possess a sword, or parchment and ink, or an anvil, tongs, and bellows. Any of those would be special possessions.

You acquire special possessions by...

... choosing them when you create your character;
... naturally, through play (as loot, as a gift or reward, etc.); and
... **Trading & Bartering** (page 83).

Track your special possessions on your Inventory insert, in an appropriate blank. You can **Outfit** (page 77) with them, or **Have What You Need** (page 78) to mark them once you're in the field. Like any item, they count against your load (if they have a ◇ or ◇◇) and your starting number of small items.

If a special possession is something that you wouldn't carry on your person (like a herd of goats or an anvil), then record it at the bottom of your Inventory insert, under "Other things."

Initial special possessions

When you make your character, you'll choose special possessions from your playbook. Most of these choices include a list of items, which you own or have ready access to. Assume that you're proficient with these items.

Items listed in the plural ("thick gloves") or general ("lime") are things that you have a reasonable amount of, and can make or acquire more over time. An item listed in the singular (like "a ◇ boiled leather cuirass") is the only one you've got; if you lose it, it's gone until you replace it.

A special possession with a number of uses is a finite resource. Once expended, those uses are gone (even if the item itself remains). If you want more uses, **Make a Plan** (page 81) with the GM.

> *One of Vahid's special possessions is "Books & scrolls (○○○○○ uses): expend a use to consult your collection and turn a Know Things roll you just made into a 10+." After Vahid marks the fifth circle, he can no longer use his collection to change the results of a Know Things roll. He still has the books and scrolls, but they no longer modify a move.*

If you're a Seeker, add your arcana to your Inventory sheet, too! If they have a ◇ or ◇◇ on the front side, they count towards your load, as always. Otherwise, they're small items, or something that you wouldn't carry around with you.

Possessions gained in play

When you acquire a new item in play, add it to your Inventory insert in the appropriate spot. When you return home, leave it on your insert. It's now one of your special possessions; you can mark it when you Outfit or Have What You Need.

You can, of course, freely discard a new special possession, or give it away, or trade it to another PC. But if you want to sell it to an NPC, you must roll to **Trade & Barter** (page 83).

> *You and Vahid trudge home. You've still got that makerglass shard, the ◆◆ bronze plaque, and the ◆ beznpol hide.*
>
> *You keep the makerglass shard on your Inventory sheet (it's neat!), but give the bronze plaque (a minor arcanum) to Vahid. You erase it from your Inventory sheet; he adds it to his. You keep the beznpol hide on your insert for now, but you might try to trade it away later.*

Trade & Barter

Commonly available items—things on the Inventory insert, or that could be found in pretty much any Stonetop household—are readily available. Folks trade, loan, and gift these items all the time, and its not worth tracking them. See page 95 for a list of example **common items**.

To acquire or sell a special item, though, you must roll to **Trade & Barter** (page 83). The result tells you whether you can make the trade easily and fairly (on a 10+), or if there's a catch (on a 7-9), or if the trade just isn't going to happen here and now.

See page 96 for a list of **special items**. For items not on the list, the GM decides whether there's any chance of finding it (or finding a buyer for it). If not, don't roll to Trade & Barter; **Make a Plan** (page 81) with the GM instead.

Value

The world of *Stonetop* has no central government, no common currency, and no standard exchange rates. So, what constitutes a fair trade?

To help answer that question, items and services are given a Value from 0 to 4. Value is more of a logarithmic scale than linear. A single Value 2 item is worth maybe a dozen or so Value 1 items. Three individual Value 1 items don't add up to Value 3; they're just three Value 1 items.

When you roll a 10+ to Trade & Barter, "a fair price" means you're trading within the same Value, but the exchange might not be 1:1. It might be 2:1 or even 3:1 if you're trading some common, local resource for a desirable or imported good (or vice versa).

If you roll a 7-9 to Trade & Barter, you might have to pay more or settle for less than usual. That often means a better or worse exchange rate (2:1 instead of 1:1, for example), but it could mean trading across Value tiers.

Regardless: if you don't like the exchange rate that you're getting, you can try to Persuade the other party to change their minds. Good luck!

Sawyl the tanner (your boss) confirms that beznpol hide is indeed valuable. "It's Value 2," says the GM, "but with a pair of hides, Sawyl could craft a suit of magnificent armor worth Value 3."

You've no desire to tangle with another beznpol, so you look to trade the hide away. This triggers Trade & Barter. On a 10+, the GM might say that there's a merchant in town who offers a pouch of silvers (also Value 2). On a 7-9, that same merchant might offer only a Value 1 item (like a fine steel spear), as beznpol hide isn't a hot commodity.

Alas, you roll a 6-, so the GM says "No one here is interested, and no merchants are due until autumn. But you could go out to Titan Bones and talk to the Hillfolk. Their heroes wear beznpol armor. They wouldn't give you a grown horse—that's Value 3—but you could probably get a couple of Value 2 items."

Exchange rates are far from standard, but...

A Value 0 item is generally worth:
- A ◇ purse of copper coins
- A single silver coin
- A favor
- A few days of unskilled labor
- A common, mundane item

A Value 1 item is generally worth:
- A handful of silver coins
- A season (or so) of unskilled labor
- A few days of skilled labor
- A unit of trade goods* (sack of grain, ◇ pouch of salt, ◇◇ stack of pelts, etc.)
- A bit of finery (◇ richly embroidered cloak, a silk scarf, silver comb, etc.)

A Value 2 item is generally worth:
- A ◇ purse of silver coins
- A **Surplus** (page 67)
- A single gold coin
- A year (or so) of unskilled labor
- A season (or so) of skilled labor
- A cartload of trade goods*
- An item of luxury or status (gold ring, artful silver torc, gemstone, etc.)

A Value 3 item is generally worth:
- A handful of gold coins
- A year (or so) of skilled labor
- A good, trained horse or mule
- A precious item (ruby ring, gold torc, etc.)

A Value 4 item is generally worth:
- A ◇ purse of gold coins
- A dozen or so good horses
- A "priceless" item (huge flawless gemstone, ◇ gold statuette, ◇ bejeweled scepter, etc.)

* Exotic trade goods (like silks, spices, and the like) are +1 Value

Commonly available items are Value 0, as are some special items like a bronze spear, a lantern, or a writing slate. Such special items aren't really valuable, but they aren't common, either, so you must still roll to Trade & Barter to see if you can acquire one. If you can, you can (likely) trade some commonly available item or a favor for it, or just borrow it.

Coins

Stonetop doesn't mint coins, and folks don't use them day-to-day. The local economy runs on trade, gifts and favors, debt and honor. Coin is used almost exclusively when trading with outsiders.

Even then, coin is worth only what folks will trade for it. There's no government to set or enforce prices or exchange rates. Coins vary greatly in size, weight, and purity. Coins minted in Gordin's Delve might be worth more to locals than to outsiders. A Lygosi merchant might prefer southern currency to old Maker coins, but an antiquarian might consider those ancient coins to be priceless.

Stonetop abstracts coinage into individual coins, handfuls, and ◇ purses. Coins are most often copper, silver, or gold.

- **An individual coin** is quite small, ranging in size from a that of a modern penny to a silver dollar.
- **A handful of coins** contains about 10 individual coins.
- **A ◇ purse of coins** contains about 10 handfuls of coins, or around 100 individual coins.
- **One silver coin** is roughly worth a ◇ purse of coppers (around 100 copper coins, Value 0).
- **One gold coin** is roughly worth a ◇ purse of silvers (around 100 silver coins, or an absolute pile of coppers, Value 2).

Gear terms & tags

Many items appear with a list of terms after their name, in parentheses.

Terms in *italic* typeface are **tags**. They have no specific mechanical effect, but they are part of **fictional positioning** (page 42). The most common tags are listed here, but others are certainly possible.

Terms in regular typeface are mechanical, interacting with other rules or game elements. Again, the most common terms are listed below, but some items have unique rules associated with them.

◇ or ◇◇: it takes up one of these slots on your Inventory insert, and counts against your load.
area: affects everything in an area.
[*n*] armor: when you take damage, subtract *n*; doesn't stack.
+1 armor: increases your armor value by 1; stacks.
awkward: unwieldy, requires space, gets stuck.
crude: prone to break, wear out, stop working, etc.
cumbersome: you're noisy, slow, hot, and quick to tire while carrying it, even without a heavy load (and if you have a heavy load, it's worse).
+[*n*] damage: increase the damage you deal with that weapon by *n*.
dangerous: causes trouble and collateral damage if you aren't careful (and maybe if you are).
forceful: can knock someone around, maybe even off their feet.
fragile: easy to break/ruin; pack it carefully.
hours: it lasts about an hour for each ○; mark ○ to track time used.
immobile: you can't really carry it on your person; you need a beast or vehicle to transport it.
messy: does particularly destructive damage, ripping people and things apart.
[*n*] piercing: when you deal damage, ignore *n* points of the target's armor. For "*x* piercing" items, *x* = the steading's current Prosperity.
reload: after it's used, it takes time/effort to reset.
requires ___: if you don't meet the requirements, it works poorly or not at all.
slow: takes minutes or more to use; unlikely to be useful in a fight.
thrown: you can Let Fly with it (at *near* range).
uses: mark a ○ each time you use it; it's gone/useless when they're all marked.
warm: will keep you warm in cold weather, but it's uncomfortable and exhausting (and possibly dangerous) in hot weather.

Range Tags

These indicate the distance within which a weapon/light source is effective.

hand: tight quarters; up close and personal.
close: melee range, 1-2 steps away.
reach: 3-4 steps away.
near: up to 30 or so steps away.
far: quite the distance; up to 100 steps, maybe more.

Ammo

Many ranged weapons have one or more of these statuses:

○ plenty left, ○ low ammo, ○ all out

When you deplete your ammo (because a move tells you to, or the GM says so), mark the next available status (left to right). When you mark "☙ all out," you're out of ammo and can't use that weapon until you replenish your ammunition.

Common items

The following are commonly available, mundane items. You can **Outfit** (page 77) with them, or **Have What You Need** (page 78). You don't need to roll anything to acquire them, though the GM might ask where you got them.

WEAPONS	VALUE
◇ **Bow** & iron arrows (*near*, *x* piercing, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)	0
◇ **Extra arrows** (*x* piercing, ○ plenty left, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)	0
◇ **Hatchet**, iron (*hand*, *thrown*, *x* piercing)	0
◇ **Javelins**, a few, iron (*thrown*, *x* piercing, +1 damage, ○ all out)	0
Knife or **dagger**, iron (*hand*)	0
◇◇ **Long spear**, iron (*reach*, *x* piercing)	0
◇ **Mallet**, iron or wood (hand)	0
◇ **Mattock**, iron (*close*, *messy*, *x* piercing, *awkward*)	0
◇◇ **Maul**, iron (*close*, *forceful*, *awkward*)	0
Sling (*near*, *reload*, *awkward*, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)	0
◇ **Spear**, iron (*close*, *thrown*, *x* piercing)	0
◇ **Staff** (*close*)	0

ARMOR	VALUE
◇◇ **Shield** (+1 armor, +1 Readiness on a 7+ to Defend)	0
◇◇ **Thick hides** (1 armor, *warm*)	0

CLOTHING	VALUE
◇ **Change of clothes**	0
◇ **Cloak** (warm)	0
Extra socks	0
Gloves	0
Needle & thread	0

FIRE & LIGHT SOURCES	VALUE
◇ **Extra oil**, for lamp/lantern (○○○○○ hours, useless as a weapon)	0
◇◇ **Firewood** (enough for 1 full night, *reach*, *area*)	0
◇ **Oil lamp** (○○○ hours, *close*, *area*, *crude*)	0
Rushlight (lasts ~15-30 minutes, *hand*, *crude*)	0
Tinderbox (*slow*)	0
◇ **Torch** (lasts ~1 hour, *reach*, *area*, *dangerous*)	0

TRAVEL GEAR	VALUE
◇ **Bedroll** (recover 1d6 extra HP when you Make Camp)	0
◇ **Blanket** (*warm*)	0
Bowstring, spare	0
Handful of copper coins	0
◇ **Mess kit** (requires fire & water)	0
◇ **Rope**, ~25 feet	0
Sack (empty)	0
◇◇ **Sledge/litter/travois**, roll-out	0
◇ **Snowshoes**	0
◇ **Supplies** (see page 89)	0
Waterskin	0
Whetstone	0
Whisky, skin (○○ uses)	0
Whistle	0

HOUSEHOLD GOODS	VALUE
Awl	0
Chalk	0
Charcoal	0
Clay jar	0
Cloth/rag	0
Comb	0
Cup	0
Little box	0
Sawdust	0
◇ **Shovel**	0
Tallow	0
Twine/cord	0

Special items

If you want to acquire any of these items, you must roll to **Trade & Barter** (page 83), and on a 7+ you must trade something of appropriate Value (which might be a favor or a debt). The GM will tell you what the other party wants.

WEAPONS OF WAR	VALUE
◇ **Mace** or **flail**, iron (*close*, *forceful*)	1
◇ **Battleaxe**, iron (*close*, *messy*)	1*
◇ **Short sword**, iron (*hand*, *close*)	1*
◇ **Sword**, iron (*close*, +1 damage)	1*
◇ **Warhammer**, iron (*close*, 2 piercing)	1
◇ **Crossbow** (*far*, +1 damage, *x* piercing, *reload*, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)	1
◇ **Composite bow** (*far*, +1 damage, *x* piercing, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)	1*

*Value 2 to get 1 piercing or (maybe) 2 piercing

BRONZE WEAPONS*	VALUE
Common weapons (spears, daggers, etc.)	0
Weapons of war (see above)	1

*Bronze weapons do not have "*x* piercing"

ARMOR	VALUE
◇ **Cuirass**, boiled leather (1 armor)	1
◇◇ **Hauberk/cuirass/scale**, iron or bronze (2 armor, *warm, cumbersome*)	2
◇ **Vest**, brigandine, fancy (2 armor, *warm*)	3

LIGHT SOURCES	VALUE
Candle (lasts ~1 hour, *close*, *area*)	0
◇ **Lantern** (○○○○○ hours, *close, area*)	0
◇ **Bullseye lantern** (○○○○○ hours, *near*)	1

TOOLS & TRADES	VALUE
Small metal tool (chisel, file, shears, etc.)	0
Glass vial (*fragile*)	0
◇ **Block & tackle**	0
◇ **Instrument** (harp, lute, fiddle, etc.)	1
◇ **Metal tools** (drill, prybar, saw, etc.)	0
◇ **Mirror**, hand-held, polished bronze	1
Common trade tools (for pottery, weaving, distilling, etc.; *immobile*)	1
Uncommon trade tools (for carpentry, chandlery, beekeeping, etc.; *immobile*)	2
Specialized trade tools (for smithing, glassblowing, scribing, etc.; *immobile*)	3

WRITING IMPLEMENTS	VALUE
◇ **Slate and chalk**	0
◇ **Wax tablet and stylus**	0
Parchment, a few sheets (*fragile*)	1
Fine vellum, a few sheets (*fragile*)	2
Ink, vial and **quills**	1
◇ **Empty book, parchment** (*fragile*)	1
◇ **Empty book, fine vellum** (*fragile*)	2

TRANSPORT	VALUE
Wheelbarrow	1
Cart or **sleigh** (*requires* donkey/mule/horse)	2
Wagon (*requires* mule/horse)	3
Spare parts for wagon/cart/sleigh (axles, wheels, etc.; ○○○ uses, *immobile*)	2

EXOTIC STUFF	VALUE
Bendis root (fumes repel perversions of nature; lasts ~1 hour, *reach, area*)	1
Bezoar (swallow to cure any poison)	1
◇ **Naphtha** (burns hot & sticky; damage d8; ○○○ uses, *thrown*, *area*, *dangerous*, ignores armor)	1
◇ **Silver-alloy dagger** (*hand*)	2

TRADE GOODS	VALUE
Salt (a little box)	0
Skin of whisky, fine (○○ uses; share a use with someone to get advantage on Persuade)	0
◇ **Purse of coppers** (~10 handfuls)	0
◇◇ **Firkin of whisky**, fine	1
Handful of silvers	1
Barrel of whisky, common (*immobile*)	1
Barrel of whisky, fine (*immobile*)	2
◇ **Purse of silvers** (~10 handfuls)	2
1 Surplus of various trade goods (*immobile*)	2

LIVESTOCK & OTHER BEASTS	VALUE
Dog, follower (*keen-nosed*, pick 2 more) **HP** 6; **Damage** d6 (*hand*, *grabby*); **Instinct** to get distracted; **Cost** training	1
Goat (*sure-footed*, *curious*, *hungry*) **HP** 3; **Damage** d4 (*hand*); **Instinct** to explore; butcher for ◇ provisions (○○○○○○ uses)	1
Sheep (*timid*, *hardy*, *wooly*) **HP** 3; **Damage** d4 (*hand*); **Instinct** to follow the herd; butcher for ◇ provisions (○○○○○○ uses)	1
Pig (*keen-nosed*, *stubborn*, *gluttonous*, *clever*) **HP** 6; **Damage** d4 (*hand*); **Instinct** to eat anything; butcher for ◇ provisions (d6+10 uses)	1
Donkey (*hardy*, *sure-footed*, *cautious*, *slow*) **HP** 10; **Damage** d4+2 (*hand*, *forceful*); **Instinct** to be stubborn	2
Mule, follower? (*large*, *hardy*, *sure-footed*, *cautious*, *keen-nosed*, *sterile*) **HP** 14; **Damage** d6+1 (*hand*, *close*); **Instinct** to avoid danger; **Cost** care & grooming	3
Horse, follower? (*large*, *powerful*, *keen-nosed*, *swift* or *hardy*) **HP** 10; **Damage** d6+3 (*hand*, *close*, *forceful*); **Instinct** to panic; **Cost** care & grooming	3

If you want to...

Here are some things you might want to do, and how you might go about them.

...increase Fortunes

The main ways are:

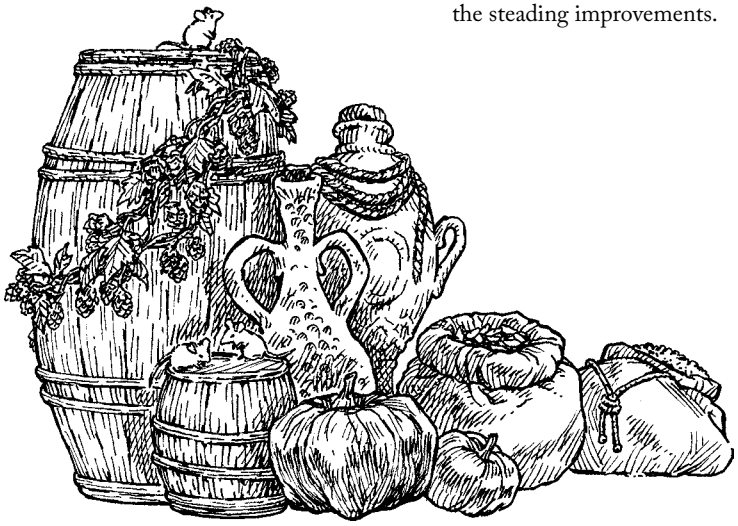
- Undertake an expedition on behalf of the village and **Return Triumphant** (page 79).
- Complete a steading improvement that increases Fortunes.

...gain Surplus

The village generates Surplus each summer and at the end of autumn when the harvest is complete. If you want more:

- Choose "unexpected bounty" when you get a **seasonal gain** (page 85).
- Choose "trade opportunity" when you get a seasonal gain, and suggest that you'd like to trade for extra Surplus.
- Undertake an expedition to hunt big game: elk, wisents, cave bears, ceirwmawr, etc.
- Buy some! Surplus isn't commonly available, so you'll need to **Trade & Barter** (page 83) to see if it's available from a passing merchant. If it's not, you'll need to travel to a neighboring steading. Surplus is Value 2, so expect to pay a purse of silvers, a donkey, a barrel of fine whisky, or so forth.

If you want to increase the amount of Surplus that the village generates, look to the steading improvements.



...improve Defenses

You can temporarily boost Defenses via the **Muster** move (page 82), but it will usually cost you Fortunes to do so. Other options include:

- Build a **Palisade** (page 158) or a **Stone Wall** (page 159). They grant advantage to Deploy rolls when you take advantage of them.
- Establish a **Standing Watch** (page 159). They add +1 to your Defenses when they're involved.
- Spend time drilling the villagers, turning them into a **Well-Trained Militia** (page 159). If you train the militia in 2 or more tactics, Defenses increases by 1.
- Furnish the village with **Weapons of War** (page 159) and teach folks to use them. This increases Defenses by 1 and gives PCs access to better weaponry.

...increase Population

Choose "population boon" when you get a **seasonal gain** (page 85).

Alternatively, go out and save or recruit or capture a bunch of people and bring them back to live in your village.

Careful: higher Population makes it easier to **Muster** (page 82) and **Pull Together** (page 83), but it also means more mouths to feed in winter when **Seasons Change** (page 84).

...improve Prosperity

Pursue the **Expanded Trades** (page 157) and/or the **Market** (page 158) improvement. Each of these increase Prosperity by 1, as long as they're maintained.

Also, the **Township** improvement (page 159) grants advantage when you **Trade & Barter** (page 83).

... unlock a steading improvement

Look at the requirements and choose one to pursue. If you don't know how to pursue it, **Know Things** (page 72) and/or **Make a Plan** (page 81).

If you want to make an improvement to the steading that isn't listed, tell the GM what you have in mind. They'll either Make a Plan with you or add it to the list of Other Improvements (along with the requirements and potential benefits), whichever is more appropriate.

... get some coin

You can **Outfit** (page 77) or **Have What You Need** (page 78) to produce a handful of coppers, but if you want more significant quantities, or any quantity of silver or gold coins, then you'll need to roll **Trade & Barter** (page 83) to see if they're even available. Even if they are, you'll need to trade something of an appropriate Value.

Other options include:

- If you need more coin than what's available in town, you can undertake a trade mission. Take some of the steading's Surplus to Marshedge, Gordin's Delve, or maybe the Hillfolk, and find someone to buy it. A purse or two of silvers is a fair trade for 1 Surplus (Value 2).

- Go explore the Ruined Tower or someplace like it and dig up some sweet loot. Then roll Trade & Barter to sell it to a passing merchant or head to Marshedge or Gordin's Delve and try to sell it there for more.

... find new arcana

Know Things (page 72)! Maybe you know where something like that might be found. If you don't, try something else:

- Ask around, dig through the Chronicle (if there is one), consult the spirits (if you can), pray for guidance (if that's your thing), eat some mushrooms and hope for a vision, etc.

- Explore dangerous, mysterious places: old Maker-ruins, barrow mounds, Fae circles, strange groves, caves, or lakes (if you dare).

- Put the word out. Let merchants and other contacts know that you're interested in that sort of thing, then choose "trade opportunity" or "interesting news" when you get a **seasonal gain** (page 85).

... unlock the mysteries of an arcanum

Do what the requirements say! If you're not sure how to meet a requirement, roll to **Know Things** (page 72) and/or talk to the GM and **Make a Plan** (page 81).

... recruit followers

If you have someone in mind, ask them to join you on an expedition. **Persuade** them if necessary (page 73).

If you don't have someone in mind, tell the GM what sort of follower you're looking for ("a skilled tracker," "a knowledgeable guide," "someone who can handle themselves in a fight," etc.). They'll either tell you who in town fits the bill, or ask you to make someone up, or suggest that you **Know Things** (page 72).

Alternatively:

- **Muster** (page 82) and pick "1 or 2 individuals show real potential." Let the GM know that you're hoping for a follower, and they'll probably work with you.

- Go to a bigger town and find a public place, like the Swap in Gordin's Delve or Edgemarket in Marshedge. Announce that you're looking to hire help. Say what the job is and what you're offering. Those towns each have a special player move for Recruiting.

Playbooks & Inserts

The Blessed
The Fox
The Heavy
The Judge
The Lightbearer
The Marshal
The Ranger
The Seeker
The Would-be Hero
Inserts
Ghost
Revenant
Thrall
Stonetop steading playbook

This chapter is addressed to players, but GMs should read it, too!

The contents of this chapter are available as PDFs in a downloadable playkit at www.lampblackandbrimstone.com. They are included here for reference, not for use during play.

Playbooks

When you create a PC for *Stonetop*, the first thing you'll do is pick your playbook. Each playbook contains a set of choices, prompts, and options that point towards a specific character archetype, while leaving room to make your character unique.

Your playbook also serves as a character sheet. You'll use it to track your PC's stats, debilities, current HP and XP, moves, and so forth. The playbooks are designed to be printed double-sided and folded down the middle, so that they form a little booklet.

The nine standard playbooks are:

- **The Blessed** (page 105)
- **The Fox** (page 109)
- **The Heavy** (page 113)
- **The Judge** (page 117)
- **The Lightbearer** (page 121)
- **The Marshal** (page 125)
- **The Ranger** (page 129)
- **The Seeker** (page 133)
- **The Would-be Hero** (page 137)

For an explanation of each component of a PC playbook, see **Your character** (page 50) in the previous chapter.

Each PC also has at least one **insert**. The standard inserts are also included in this chapter, starting on page 141.

The GM has a playbook, too

When you download the playkit from lampblackandbrimstone.com, you'll also find a PDF of the GM playbook, a collection of rules, maps, and tools for the GM to quickly reference during play and prep. It's a summary of content found elsewhere in this book and *Book II*, and thus is not included in this chapter.

When you have questions about particular moves or other elements of a playbook (how they work, what exactly __ means, what constitutes "a creature of darkness," etc.), talk it out with the GM and the other players. Consider what's already been established or implied, and work it out as a group.

Don't be surprised if the GM turns such questions back on you. "Well, what do *you* think constitutes a creature of darkness?" This isn't a trap or a trick! It's an invitation for you to **help author the world**. Answer with whatever seems obvious or interesting to you. Just be prepared for that answer to have lasting implications for how the move works in your game!

The Blessed

Danu, the Great Mother, provides. We need only learn her secrets: the names by which the trees call each other; the mark made with redberry juice to ward off impure spirits; the language of the wolves. A thousand such secrets Danu keeps, to share with only her true children. Her Blessed.

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **INITIATE**
Stonetop has long been home to a sacred order, keepers of the old ways and speakers for Danu. You are one such initiate, the most gifted in generations. You gain the Rites of the Land move.

There are other initiates in Stonetop, serving the goddess and the village. They aid you as followers—see the Initiates of Danu insert. Who are they? Choose 2 or 3:

☐ **Enfys**, your acolyte, beloved by birds
☐ **Afon**, strange and Fae-touched
☐ **Gwendyl**, your mentor, a talented healer
☐ **Olwin**, your anointed lover, seer of fates
☐ **Seren the Eldest**, wise and hard as winter

☐ **RAISED BY WOLVES**
Maybe not by *wolves*, but you grew up in the wild. Beasts of land and air were your siblings. The sighing wind taught you language. The trees and rocks were your home. Were you one of the Forest Folk? Abandoned or orphaned? Lured into the Wood?

Regardless, you get the Trackless Step move (go mark it now). Also, when you ***Forage***, you have advantage.

For some reason, you've made yourself known to Stonetop and perhaps you even call it home. But the ways of humans are still strange to you. Once per session, when ***your wild ways offend or alienate you from someone***, mark XP.

☐ **VESSEL**
A seed of Danu's power has taken root in your soul. Perhaps it has always been there and only recently sprouted. Or maybe it was planted in you during some portentous event.

Regardless, your dreams have been haunted by strange markings and symbols. You feel the mystic power in plants, stones, and soil. And you've felt the growing wrath of the Earth Mother as foul things begin to move about. Take the Danu's Grasp move (go mark it now).

Danu's power flows through you, but at great cost. When you ***would spend 1 Stock from your sacred pouch***, you may choose to lose 2d4 HP instead.

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **DELIGHT**
To find beauty, in even the most ugly thing.

☐ **DETACHMENT**
To remain unmoved, to be cold as winter.

☐ **NURTURE**
To help others grow, learn, or improve.

☐ **PRESERVATION**
To protect the natural world.

☐ **REVERENCE**
To demand sacrifice to the spirits and Danu.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ fresh-faced ☐ hale & hearty ☐ gray & wizened
☐ imperious voice ☐ raspy voice ☐ soothing voice
☐ curvy ☐ strapping ☐ rail-thin ☐ solid ☐ willowy
☐ ceremonial robes ☐ furs, leather ☐ work clothes

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

☐ **Stonetop**: Arwel, Blodwen, Brynmor, Celyn, Fflur, Gwynn, Tegwen, or Winned

☐ **Barrier Pass**: Alagh, Bora, Chambui, Enebish, Jalakai, Kamala, Sechen, or Todogen

☐ **The Steplands** (Hillfolk): Bejn, Decla, Franza, Irv, Ivet, Jak, Sibl, or Yez

☐ **The Wild**: mix and match 1-3 of these: Autumn, Badger, Big, Black, Bloody, Brave, Crow, Cub, Dark, Doe, Fang, Fierce, Flower, Gentle, Green, Grim, Hart, Leaf, Little, Lonely, Old, Owl, Pale, Pup, Quick, Quiet, Rain, Red, Sharp, Snake, Snow, Spring, Summer, Tall, Tree, Yellow, White, Wind, Winter, Wolf, Whisper

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d6				
Damage	HP (max 18)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions

(Pick 2, in addition to your sacred pouch)

- ☑ **Sacred pouch** (*magical*): see back page. Stock: ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○
- ☐ **Apiary**: beeswax, candles (*close*, *area*, lasts ~1 hr), honey, ◇ bee smokers, ◇ hat & veils, etc.
- ☐ **Collected offerings** (○○○ uses): Expend a use to produce something valuable to a spirit of the wild. Restore 1 use each season.
- ☐ **Goat herd**: milk, cheese, pelts, meat, blood, horn, wool, etc. Each season, 1 in 4 chance of having a bezoar (swallow it to cure poison).
- ☐ **Herb garden**: shears, mortars & pestles, herbs, seeds, remedies, mild poisons, ◇ spades, etc. Each spring, d4 uses of bendis root (*reach*, *area*, burns ~1 hr, fumes repel perversions of nature).
- ☐ **Mastiffs**, 2-3 followers (*alert*, *keen-nosed*, *fierce*, *overprotective*); HP 6; Damage d6 (*hand*, *grabby*); **Instinct** to bark & threaten; Cost: affection.
- ☐ ..... (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Spirit Tongue, Call the Spirits, 1 from your Background, and 1 of your choice.

☐ AMULETS & TALISMANS

When you ***craft a protective charm for someone***, spend 1 Stock and name a source of harm (fire, stabbing, etc.). When they ***would suffer such harm while bearing your charm***, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, they ignore the harm entirely; **on a 7-9**, they suffer only half the damage or effect; **on a 6-**, they suffer the harm normally. One can benefit from only 1 charm at a time, and it loses its potency after 1 use.

☐ BARKSKIN

When you ***are touching the earth***, you have 2 armor. When you ***mark another with 1 Stock***, they gain this benefit so long as the mark remains.

☐☐ BIG MAGIC

Each time you take this move, choose an additional remarkable trait for your sacred pouch and increase your max Stock by 2.

☐ DANU'S GRASP

When you ***call on the world itself to bind a spirit or a perversion of nature***, spend 1 Stock and roll +WIS: **on a 7-9**, roots, vines, and earth pull at them, and they pick 1; **on a 10+**, as a 7-9, but both apply.

- They're restrained, unable to act freely until your focus slips or they tear their way free
- They take 2d4 damage (ignores armor)

If this brings them to 0 HP, they are pulled into the earth and bound in rune-etched stone.

☐ HEALER'S ARTS

When ***someone Recovers under your care***, they recover (extra) HP equal to your WIS. If you ***also spend 1 Stock***, they heal an extra 5 HP and their wounds/injuries are stabilized.

☐ HEED MY WORDS

When you ***Persuade by talking sense or warning against foolishness***, you have advantage.

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐ INTO THE LION'S DEN

When you ***approach a beast calmly and show no fear***, it will not harm you (though it may threaten you and test your nerve). When you ***lay your hand gently upon a beast***, it calms to your touch.

☐ LIGHTNING ROD

When you ***Defend while touching the earth***, you can spend 1 Readiness to intercept a nearby magical attack and redirect it harmlessly into the ground.

☐ RITES OF THE LAND ○○○○

Once per season, when you ***oversee the sacred rites***, hold 1 Favor. If you also sacrifice 1 Surplus, hold 4 Favor instead. Spend Favor in lieu of Stock, 1-for-1.

When you ***publicly sacrifice something or someone much-loved***, either clear a steading debility or gain advantage when the steading next rolls +Fortunes.

☑ SPIRIT TONGUE

You can speak with beasts and spirits. You can always ask the GM, "What spirits are active here?" and get an honest answer.

☐ BORROW POWER

(Requires Spirit Tongue)

When ***a spirit or beast loans you power***, ask the GM for one of its tags or moves. Store it in your pouch in place of 1 Stock. When you ***use the borrowed tag or move***, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, you do it and can use the power again; **on a 7-9**, you do it, but lose the power.

☑ CALL THE SPIRITS

(Requires Spirit Tongue)

When you ***spend 1 Stock and perform a short rite***, the spirit(s) of a place or object manifest and hear you out. What they do next is up to them.

☐ TRACKLESS STEP

When you ***move through nature with care and patience***, you make no sound, leave no trace and can ignore any hindering or treacherous terrain (briars, mire, scree, etc.). When you ***spend 1 Stock and mark others***, they each gain this benefit so long as the mark remains. 1 Stock can mark a number of individuals up to your level+INT.

☐ VEIL

When you ***wrap yourself or another in a subtle veil***, spend 1 Stock and choose 1:

- A type of being you name (including "people") will tend to ignore your presence
- People will perceive you as someone else, though you must wear something of an individual's in order to impersonate them

When ***your deception comes under scrutiny***, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, the veil holds, and no one is the wiser; **on a 7-9**, the veil holds, but there is further scrutiny or a complication (GM's choice).

☐ WARDS & BINDINGS

When you ***mark a boundary with sacred signs***, spend 1 Stock and describe who or what they affect (using no more words than your level). Also, choose whether the affected beings are repelled or trapped by the signs.

When y***our wards or bindings are first tested***, roll +INT: **on 10+**, they will hold as long as the signs remain unmarred (and the affected creature can do nothing to affect them directly); **on a 7-9**, they hold for now but may be overcome through might or will.

☐☐ WILD SOUL

(Requires level 2+ and the Blessed)

Each time you take this move, gain a Ranger move of your choice for which you qualify. You can't pick Improved Stat or Superior Stat.

☐ NATURE'S WRATH

(Requires level 6+ and Danu's Grasp)

Danu's Grasp gains the *area* tag and can affect any creature. A mortal reduced to 0 HP is subdued or killed (your choice) rather than bound in stone.

☐ POTENT WORKINGS

(Requires level 6+ and Amulets & Talismans)

When you ***craft a protective charm***, you may spend 1 additional Stock to choose 1:

- Name an additional type of harm
- On a 10+, the charm retains its potency

☐ SHARED SOULS

(Requires level 6+ and Into the Lion's Den)

When you ***mark a beast with 1 Stock***, you can direct its actions and perceive through its senses no matter the distance between you. Treat it as a follower with 3 Loyalty; when you spend its last Loyalty, the effect ends.

☐ SUCK THE POISON OUT

(Requires level 6+ and Healer's Arts)

When you ***draw a malady from a patient's body, mind, or soul***, spend 1 Stock and roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, you remove the malady and can safely discard it or store it in your sacred pouch (taking the space of 1 Stock) to study or inflict on another; **on a 7-9**, you remove it, but choose 1:

- Your patient suffers lingering harm or trauma
- You suffer some of the malady's effects
- It will be harmful and dangerous to discard

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)

Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

☐ VOICE OF THE EARTH MOTHER

(Requires level 6+ and Spirit Tongue)

When you ***speak on behalf of Danu***, natural beasts and spirits of the wild respect your authority. All but the most headstrong will do as you command, even against their instincts.

Sacred pouch

Your sacred pouch (*magical*) doesn't take up space in your inventory. It can hold up to 3 Stock (sacred herbs, powders, stones, pigments, chalks, clay, and so forth). Each time you gain an even-numbered level, your pouch can hold +1 Stock. When ***anyone but you looks inside your sacred pouch and touches the materials therein***, the Stock is ruined.

When you ***have a few days of downtime in familiar terrain***, you may replenish your Stock.

When you ***Forage***, you can produce Stock instead of provisions.

Your sacred pouch is... (choose 1 on each line)

☐ an heirloom ☐ made just for you ☐ your own work
☐ fur ☐ drakescale ☐ leather ☐ woven ☐ demonflesh
☐ unadorned ☐ beadwork ☐ rich dyes ☐ runes

What remarkable trait does it possess? (choose 1)

- ☐ It cannot be cut, torn, or burned by any natural means.
- ☐ Unless someone is specifically searching for your pouch, they will ignore its presence.
- ☐ So long as the pouch is sealed, nothing within can be detected or found by magic, nor can anything within escape or affect the outside world.
- ☐ Unnatural and unclean creatures cannot bear to touch it.

The Earth Mother

Danu has long been revered by all peoples, though not always worshipped or served by priests. In Stonetop's Pavilion of the Gods, Danu's shrine is... (choose 1)

- ☐ ... loved, well-used, dripping with offerings and petitions.
- ☐ ... little more than a token of respect, for her holy places are anywhere but here.
- ☐ ... given wide berth by most, and approached only with care and propitiation.
- ☐ ... neglected and all but forgotten, except by a few.

What do the folk of Stonetop leave as offerings? (choose 2-3)

- ☐ fruits of harvest
- ☐ whisky/spirits
- ☐ pure rain water
- ☐ blood/burnt flesh
- ☐ figurines/effigies
- ☐ salt/crystals
- ☐ metal nails/tools
- ☐ incense/sage bark

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **describe your sacred pouch** and its remarkable trait. Then, **tell us about Danu's shrine** in Stonetop and how she is worshipped.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Whose heart & soul is entwined with yours?
- ☐ Who taught you the secret ways?
- ☐ Who is beloved by the goddess, your charge to nurture/guide/protect/heal?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you do the spirits whisper of?
- ☐ Which one of you has joined me in a sacred rite?
- ☐ Which of you has made a blood-oath with me?
- ☐ Which one of you doubts the power of Danu?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Fox

The elders tell a story about Fox, who knows lots of tricks, and Hedgehog, who knows one: how to curl up into a ball when there's danger. Fox can't eat Hedgehog when he's all curled up, so in the story Fox goes hungry. But you're not that Fox, and this is no story. You want that Hedgehog? Go get a knife.

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **THE NATURAL**
You grew up around here, and always picked things up quickly. Reading and numbers, sure, but more. Hide and seek. Throwing stones. Climbing. Fighting. Whatever you tried, you were good at it. As good as anyone else, if not better.

Sure, you've got a reputation for bending the rules. Playing dirty. But why play if you don't play to win, right? And who do they come to when there's a problem needs solving? You, that's who.

When you ***Seek Insight***, you may roll +INT instead of +WIS and add "What opportunity does no one else see?" to the list of possible questions.

☐ **A LIFE OF CRIME**
You're new to Stonetop, having left behind a... *colorful* past. How did you get into that life? Why and how did you get out? Who and what did you leave behind?

Regardless, these people have taken you in. Time to lead an honest life, right?

You start with either Burgle or Light Fingers (your choice) as an extra move, and either burglar tools or a hidden stash (your choice) as an additional special possession. Go mark them now.

☐ **THE PRODIGAL RETURNED**
You left long ago, travelling far and living by your wits. Why did you leave? What deeds do you boast of, and which do you regret?

You always longed to return to Stonetop, and return you have. You're a bit of a celebrity now, and you've got friends (or close enough) strewn about the known world.

When you ***declare that you know someone outside of Stonetop***, someone who can help, name them and roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, yeah, they can help (tell us why they're willing); **on a 7-9**, they can help but pick 1 from the list below; **on a 6-**, the GM chooses 1 and then some.

- They still hold a grudge
- They're going to need something from you first
- They swore off this sort of thing long ago
- You can't exactly, y'know, trust them

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **CONSCIENCE**
To feel guilty, to try to do right.

☐ **FREEDOM**
To chafe against rules, expectations, obligations.

☐ **COMFORT**
To enjoy yourself and avoid hardship.

☐ **PRESTIGE**
To impress others, to build a name for yourself.

☐ **TRICKERY**
To deceive, misdirect, outthink.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ young pup ☐ "responsible" adult ☐ cagey old-timer
☐ a pleasant voice ☐ sharp & nasally ☐ well-spoken
☐ lithe ☐ heavyset ☐ gangly ☐ like a whippin' stick
☐ a light step ☐ a brisk stride ☐ more like a strut

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Bran, Carwyn, Delyth, Elin, Fion, Geral, Mair, Rannon, Vaughn, or Wynn
- ☐ **Barrier Pass**: Anarba, Batu, Bugadai, Hujaghur, Jigur, Kete, Sarantuya, or Tebengri
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list.
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Comyna, Crevan, Fitz, Greagir, Maired, Nainsi, Naiclas, or Saraid
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south**: Amit, Baz, Dafna, Mahsa, Parviz, Sanaz, Tzofiya, Yaniv

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d8				
Damage	HP (max 16)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions (Pick 2)

- ☐ **Burglar's kit**: picks, files, snippers, wire, ◇ prybars, ◇ hacksaws, ◇ a lantern (○○○○○ hours, *close*, *area*), ◇ a grappling hook, etc.
- ☐ **Carpenter's tools**: chisels, files, nails, pitch, ◇ prybars, ◇ saws, ◇◇ firkins, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Distillery**: skins of fine whisky (○○ uses, grants advantage to Persuade), copper tubes, malt, ◇◇ firkins, stills, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Hidden stash** (○○○ uses): each use produces valuables worth a purse of silvers (Value 2)
- ☐ **Mummer's kit**: juggling balls, whirlybird seeds, motley, ribbons, bells, ◇ puppets, ◇ a fiddle, etc.
- ☐ **Scribe's tools**: parchment, ink, pigments, vials, quills, ◇ a notebook, etc.
- ☐ **Tannery** (or access to it): lime, acid, salts, thick gloves, ◇ a boiled leather cuirass (1 armor), etc.
- ☐ **Trade contacts**: small amounts of salt, glass, silk, spice, medicinal herbs, pigments, ivory, etc.
- ☐ ..... (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Ambush OR Skill at Arms; Danger Sense OR Perceptive; and 1 of your choice.

☐ ALL IN THE WRIST ○ *a few left* ○ *out*

Any knife or dagger gets the *thrown* tag in your hands. Also, you keep a few iron throwing blades (*near*) on you; they don't take up space in your inventory. Reset your ammo whenever you Outfit.

☐ AMBUSH

When you ***get the drop on a nearby foe***, you can deal your damage or opt to roll +DEX: **on a 10+**, deal your damage and pick 2; **on a 7-9**, deal damage and pick 1:

- Deal +1d4 damage
- Stop them from making noise/raising an alarm
- Slip away before they can react
- Create an opportunity; you or an ally gains advantage on the next move to act on it

☐ BURGLE

When you ***sneak off on your own into a dangerous place***, roll +INT: **on a 7+**, you make it back, and the GM says where you got to and what you learned. Then, **on a 10+**, also pick 2; **on a 7-9**, also pick 1:

- You got away clean, rousing no suspicion
- You swiped something valuable (GM's choice)
- You set something up to exploit on your return
- Ask a Seek Insight question about what you saw

On a 6-, you either make it back but with trouble in tow, or you're missing in action (your call).

☐ CATLIKE

When you ***carry a light load and act with care***, you move silently. When you ***hide in shadows or darkness***, you remain unseen until you draw attention to yourself, move positions, or attack.

☐☐☐ DABBLER

(Requires level 2+ and the Fox)
Each time you take this move, choose a move from the Heavy, Marshal, Ranger, or Seeker playbooks for which you otherwise qualify. (You can't take Improved Stat or Superior Stat.)

☐ DANGER SENSE

You can always ask the GM, "Is there an ambush or trap here?" If they say "yes," roll +INT: **on a 10+**, ask the GM both of the questions below; **on a 7-9**, ask 1; **either way**, gain advantage on your next roll to act on the answer(s).

- What will trigger the ambush or trap?
- What will happen once it's triggered?

On a 6-, don't mark XP; you know there's a trap or ambush, but nothing bad happens just yet.

☐ FREE RUNNING

When you ***carry a light load and move with speed and grace***, gain advantage on any move to surmount or bypass a physical obstacle.

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐ IRRESISTIBLE

When you ***interact with someone***, you can ask their player if they find you attractive and get an honest answer (usually "yes").

When you ***Persuade by using your considerable charms as leverage***, you have advantage.

☐ LAUGH AT DANGER

When you ***are about to roll +CON and you make a joke about the adversity you face***, you can roll +CHA instead.

☐ LIGHT FINGERS

When you ***perform sleight of hand on an unwary mark***, you succeed and no one's the wiser. If you're being watched, roll +DEX: **on a 10+**, you succeed and no one's the wiser; **on a 7-9**, you succeed OR no one's the wiser (your choice).

☐ PERCEPTIVE

When you ***Seek Insight***, you may ask 1 additional question. Even on a 6-, you can ask 1 question (though you might not like how you learn the answer).

☐ RAPIER WIT

When you ***pierce an NPC's pride with a well-placed quip***, they must do 1 (their choice):

- Attack, doing +1d4 damage if they hit but giving you advantage on your next roll against them
- Stoop to your level and respond in kind
- Spend a few moments fuming, sputtering, or controlling their temper

☐ SKILL AT ARMS

When you ***wield a weapon with speed and grace***, roll +DEX to Clash (instead of +STR).

☐ PARRY & RIPOSTE

(Requires Skill at Arms)
When you ***Defend with a weapon that you can wield quickly***, you can spend 1 Readiness to both halve an attack's effects/damage and strike back at the attacker (deal your damage with disadvantage), instead of spending 1 Readiness for each.

☐ SILVER TONGUED ○○○

When you ***use words to avoid suspicion or trouble***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, hold 3 Nerve; **on a 7-9**, hold 1 Nerve. You may spend Nerve, 1-for-1, to:

- Move about or maneuver unchallenged
- Withstand direct scrutiny or questioning
- Direct suspicion or attention elsewhere

☐ UNDER YOUR SKIN

When you ***engage an NPC in conversation***, you can ask the GM 1 of these and get an honest answer:

- What are they expecting me to do?
- What, in general, are they trying to hide?
- What do they want to happen?

☐ BATTLE DANCER

(Requires level 6+ and Skill at Arms)
When you ***roll +DEX to Clash***, **on a 12+** you deal your damage, avoid your enemy's attack, and impress/embarrass/overawe your foes.

☐ CHEAP SHOT

(Requires level 6+ and Ambush)
When you ***Ambush with a*** **hand** ***weapon***, you have advantage on your damage roll.

☐ EYE ON THE DOOR

(Requires level 6+)
When ***you and your allies need to get out of here***, name your escape route and roll +INT: **on a 10+**, you're gone; **on a 7-9**, you can stay or go, but if you go, it costs you—the GM will tell you what (or who) you leave behind or take with you.

☐ PANTS ON FIRE

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***Defy Danger, Persuade, or Interfere by being deceitful***, you have advantage.

When another move (like Seek Insight) allows a player to ask you a question, you can opt not to answer.

☐ SECOND INTENT

(Requires level 6+, Parry & Riposte, and Ambush)
When you ***Defend and spend 1 Readiness to Parry & Riposte***, also pick 1 option from the Ambush list.

☐ SLIPPERY

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***roll to escape being caught or controlled***, treat a 6- as a 7-9. On a 12+, say how you turn the tables or use the circumstances to your advantage.

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

Tall tales

Someone like you gets into all sorts of trouble, whether you mean to or not. Mix and match the following to come up with a couple of your more memorable adventures, and write them down in the space at the bottom of this column.

There was that time that you… (choose 1 per tale)

- ☐ … got lost in (choose 1) ☐ the Great Wood ☐ the Flats ☐ the Steplands ☐ Ferrier's Fen ☐ the Foothills ☐ the Huffel Peaks
- ☐ … were on watch when the crinwin raided
- ☐ … dared each other to explore the Ruined Tower
- ☐ … managed to rile up a small band of Hillfolk
- ☐ … braved the Labyrinth, just a little
- ☐ … stole that crazy old man's book
- ☐ … went poking about the old Barrow Mounds

And you ended up… (choose 1 or 2 per tale)

- ☐ … running for your life from _____
- ☐ … landing a well-placed blow
- ☐ … interrupting a strange, creepy gathering
- ☐ … stumbling on a beast, bigger'n anything
- ☐ … with a sack full of treasure
- ☐ … getting _____ to fight them for you
- ☐ … face to face with a ghost/Fae/demon
- ☐ … finding those strange old runes
- ☐ … getting to know that fine-looking fellow/lady/person/couple

But all you've got left to show for it is…

- ☐ … a story no one believes.
- ☐ … a nasty scar; wanna see?
- ☐ … the occasional nightmare.
- ☐ … this map with runes no one can read.
- ☐ … this key that opens who-knows-what.

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **tell us your tall tales**. Feel free to embellish and exaggerate to the other players, but always answer the GM truthfully.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Who holds the reins to your heart?
- ☐ Whose respect means the world to you?
- ☐ To whom do you owe a debt that cannot be repaid?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you joined me in my latest hijinx?
- ☐ Which one of you brings your problems to me?
- ☐ Which one of you saved my bacon, mor'n once?
- ☐ Which one of you trusts me not one bit?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Heavy

These are good people. Hard-working, honest. They look out for each other. But sometimes, looking out for each other ain't enough. Sometimes, good people need someone to stick up for them. Someone who's not afraid to get a little bloody. To get heavy. Yeah, someone like you.

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **SHERIFF**
You keep order in Stonetop and protect it from outside threats. It might not be anything official, but everyone knows you've got a cool head and the weight to back up your words.

When you ***bark an order or warning***, roll +CHA: **on a 7+**, they must choose 1:

- Do what you say
- Dig in/take cover/flee
- Attack you

On a 10+, you can sense which one they're about to do and act first if you like; gain advantage if you do.

☐ **BLOOD-SOAKED PAST**
You left behind a life of violence and a name mothers used to scare their children. For whatever reason, the people of Stonetop took you (back?) in and treat you like one of their own.

When you ***Persuade using violence or threats against someone who knows your black reputation***, you can roll +STR instead of +CHA. Also, if you take the Formidable move, you can choose to roll +CON instead of +CHA.

When you ***fight to kill without mercy or hesitation***, you deal +1d4 damage.

☐ **STORM-MARKED**
You've been touched by Tor (Rain-maker, Thunder-head, Slayer-of-Beasts!) and bear runic markings similar to those etched into the Stone. When did the marks manifest? Are they a symbol of your strength, speed, and courage? Or their source?

You start with the Storm Markings major arcanum. Mark one of the boxes on the front of the Storm Markings sheet, and describe here the time you were struck by lightning and walked away unharmed:

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **PEACE**
To avoid (further) bloodshed or violence.

☐ **PRIDE**
To maintain your dignity, to demand respect.

☐ **RECKLESSNESS**
To act without thought to the consequences.

☐ **TROUBLE**
To stick your nose in where it's unwelcome.

☐ **VIOLENCE**
To solve problems by force.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ young & brash ☐ in my prime ☐ old & leathery
☐ gravelly voice ☐ hearty voice ☐ soft-spoken
☐ giant frame ☐ just ripped ☐ stocky ☐ wiry
☐ distinctive scars ☐ oft-broken nose ☐ missing bits

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Aerona, Arthfael, Cadmor, Esyllt, Pedr, Rhonwen, Terrwen, or Trystan
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Aengus, Bairbre, Bronach, Flann, Laughn, Muirdoc, Quinn, or Treasa
- ☐ **The Steplands** (Hillfolk): Andr, Gabrl, Kaetl, Mael, Maela, Par, Ral, or Umbert
- ☐ **The Manmarch**: Bathhilde, Clothar, Ganter, Hiltrude, Ludig, Luise, Modd, or Wiland
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south**: Arihl, Akios, Bhadur, Seble, Shahnaz, Shay, Tisi, or Zubin

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d10				
Damage	HP (max 20)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions (Pick 2)

- ☐ **Distillery**: skins of fine whisky (○○ uses, grants advantage to Persuade), copper tubes, malt, ◇◇ firkins, stills, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Chirurgeon's tools**: catgut, straps, bandages, tubes, poultices, willow bark, ◇ bonesaws, etc.
- ☐ **Husbandry tools**: brushes, muzzles, collars, feed, ◇ whips, ◇ bridles, etc. Gain advantage to Persuade domestic beasts (livestock, dogs, etc.).
- ☐ **Smithy** (or access to it): iron goods, ingots, thick gloves, ◇ tongs, ◇ bellows, an anvil, etc.
- ☐ **Stoneworker's tools**: chisels, drills, ◇ prybars, ◇ spikes, ◇ block & tackles, wheelbarrow, etc.
- ☐ **Weapons of war**: choose up to 3 (now or later):
  - ☐ ◇ **Sword**, iron (*close*, +1 damage)
  - ☐ ◇ **Battleaxe**, iron (*close*, *messy*)
  - ☐ ◇ **Warhammer**, iron (*close*, 2 piercing)
  - ☐ ◇ **Mace** or **flail**, iron (*close*, *forceful*)
  - ☐ ◇ **Crossbow** (*far*, +1 damage, *reload*, *x* piercing, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
- ☐ ..... (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Dangerous, Hard to Kill, and either Armored OR Uncanny Reflexes.

☐ ARMORED

When you ***carry a shield***, mark only ⚒ (instead of ⚒⚒). Also, you can ignore the *cumbersome* tag on any armor you wear.

If you take this move at the start of play, add an ◇◇ iron hauberk, ◇◇ bronze cuirass, or ◇◇ scale coat to your inventory (all are 2 armor, *warm*, *cumbersome*).

☐ BATTLE JOY

When you ***spill blood—yours or another's—and lose yourself in battle***, you ignore fear, pain, mind-control, and the effects of debilities as long as you keep fighting.

When ***the action stops***, roll +CON: **on a 10+**, that was a rush, regain 1d4 HP; **on a 7-9**, you're winded and out of it, but you'll be fine with a few minutes' rest; **on a 6-**, mark a debility but don't mark XP.

☐ BERSERKER

(Requires Battle Joy)
While ***in your Battle Joy***, add the *area* tag to your melee attacks, lashing out at anyone nearby (friend and foe alike). Roll damage separately for each target.

☐ CARVED OUT OF WOOD

Increase your max HP by 4.

☑ DANGEROUS

(Requires the Heavy)
When you ***deal your damage***, you have advantage.

☐ FORMIDABLE

When you ***wade into battle***, you can choose to roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, both; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- Lesser foes will quail, hesitate, or flee before you.
- Doughty foes will focus on you, seeing you as the greatest threat.

On a 6-, pick 1 but ask the GM what you've missed.

☐ FROSTY

When you ***Defy Danger by keeping calm and carrying on***, **on a 10+** you can also ask the GM a question that you could ask when Seeking Insight. You have advantage on your next move to act on the answer.

☐ GUARDIAN

When you ***Defend***, hold 1 extra Readiness. Even on a 6-, hold 1 Readiness (plus whatever the GM says).

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐ INTIMIDATING

When you ***Persuade using violence or threats***, you have advantage.

☑ HARD TO KILL

When you ***are at Death's Door***, you can roll +CON or +nothing (your choice). **On a 7-9**, you can mark a debility of your choice to regain 1 HP.

☐ UNSTOPPABLE ○○○○○

(Requires Hard to Kill)
When you ***are reduced to 0 HP in battle***, you can keep fighting. Each time you take damage while at 0 HP, mark 1. If you would regain HP while fighting, clear one mark instead.

When you ***stop fighting***, roll for Death's Door with a -1 penalty for each circle marked. If you survive, clear all your circles.

☐ MUSCLEBOUND

(Requires Strength +2 or higher)
When you ***make a hand-to-hand or thrown attack***, it's *forceful* and *messy*. If it would already be *forceful* and/or *messy*, it's even more so.

☐ PAYBACK

When you ***deal damage to a foe that has harmed you or one of your allies***, deal +1d4 damage.

☐ RELENTLESS

When you ***Clash and your foe survives***, you gain advantage the next time you Clash with them.

☐☐☐ SEASONED WARRIOR

(Requires level 2+ and the Heavy)
Take a move from the Fox, Marshal, Ranger, or Seeker playbooks, for which you otherwise qualify. You can pick from a different playbook each time. (You can't pick Improved Stat or Superior Stat.)

☐ SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

When you ***Seek Insight***, add the following to the list of questions you can ask:

- Who or what here is the biggest threat?
- What is my enemy's true position?
- What here can I use as a weapon?

When ***a fight breaks out***, ask the GM 1 question that you could ask when Seeking Insight.

☐ UNCANNY REFLEXES

When you ***are unarmored and carrying a normal or light load***, you impose disadvantage on any damage you take that you could dodge or roll with.

☐ UNFETTERED

When you ***are subject to physical or mental restraint***, you may mark a debility to immediately break free of that restraint.

☐ TERROR ON THE FIELD

When you ***reduce a foe to 0 HP***, describe how you take them out. If you fell them in a particularly brutal or impressive manner, their allies are impressed, dismayed, or frightened and respond accordingly.

☐ BRINGER OF RUIN

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***roll a 12+ to Clash and your foe survives***, name something they possess (like their sword, their position, a limb, their dignity, etc.), but nothing that would kill them outright. Whatever you name, it is broken, shattered, lost. Tell us how.

☐ CUT FROM GRANITE

(Requires level 6+ and Carved Out of Wood)
Gain +1 armor (stacks with other sources) and increase your max HP by another 2 (+6 HP total).

☐ MIGHTY THEWS

(Requires level 6+ and Musclebound)
When you ***perform a feat of extraordinary strength*** (bursting chains, smashing through a wall, heaving a boulder, etc.), you do it (OH YEAH!) but pick 1:

- It takes a while
- You cause unwanted damage or harm
- It takes a toll (mark a debility)

☐ NEMESIS

(Requires level 6+ and Relentless)
When you ***Clash and your foe survives***, all of your future attacks against them do +1d6 damage.

☐ STEADFAST GUARDIAN

(Requires level 6+ and Guardian)
While you ***hold Readiness (from Defend)***, you can always suffer the damage/effects of an attack instead of your ward; no need to spend Readiness, you can just do it.

☐ STONE COLD

(Requires level 6+ and Frosty)
When you ***Defy Danger (or Struggle as One) by keeping calm and carrying on***, treat a 6- as a 7-9.

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

A history of violence

Just about everyone here talks about the time you… (pick 1 or 2)

- ☐ … drove off a thunder drake that got too close to town.
- ☐ … killed that hagr in the Foothills.
- ☐ … slew a dozen crinwin in one battle.
- ☐ … tossed those adventurers out of town.
- ☐ … bested Ivan, the scariest bandit in Brennan's gang, the Claws.
- ☐ … dragged yourself (and another?) into town, bleeding from a dozen wounds.
- ☐ … were struck by lightning and woke up covered in these marks.

But folks are less keen to discuss… (pick 1 or 2)

- ☐ … the look in your eye when you spilled all that blood.
- ☐ … those hard cases who showed up looking for you.
- ☐ … the shouting matches between you and your love.
- ☐ … the time you spent as one of Brennan's Claws.
- ☐ … what happened to Urbgen, even if he did have it coming.
- ☐ … your uncontrollable seizures, where you claw those weird marks in the dirt.

What keeps you up at night? (pick 1 or 2)

- ☐ That thrice-damned temper of yours.
- ☐ The worry that someone's coming after you.
- ☐ The feeling that the crinwin are getting bolder.
- ☐ Wondering what Brennan's up to, now that he's the marshal of Marshedge.
- ☐ Dark visions of things moving in the earth, restless, whispering, and hungry.
- ☐ The question of who'll look after your family when you get yourself killed.
- ☐ The worry that they'll all learn the truth about you, sooner or later.

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **tell us about your history of violence**, and what keeps you up at night.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Who is your lover/spouse/betrothed?
- ☐ Who most needs/deserves your protection?
- ☐ Whose forgiveness do you strive to earn?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you once dragged me home, bleeding and unconscious?
- ☐ Which one of you can I trust to always have my back?
- ☐ Which one of you has stayed my hand?
- ☐ Which one of you has traded blows with me?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Judge

Look here at this little town, this candleflame in the darkness. Its very existence is an act of courage and faith. And Aratis has charged you to keep it: to settle its disputes; to chronicle its tales; to defend it from darkness and ruin. Take up your hammer, Judge. Your town needs you.

Background Choose 1.

☐ **LEGACY**
You are the latest in a long line of Judges—born here, apprenticed to the prior Judge, and charged with the passing of the mantle. The Chronicle is a rich repository of lore, but there's no index, so good luck finding anything.

When you ***Know Things about the people or history of Stonetop***, you have advantage.

When you ***spend days, weeks, or months poring over the Chronicle***, ask the GM a question, and the GM will tell you what you learn in that time.

☐ **MISSIONARY**
You are part of a larger order of Judges, sent here to protect the flickering flame of civilization. The Chronicle is relatively new; your position in town is far from certain. Add these Judges to the Neighbors section of the steading playbook (pick 2 more):

- ☑ Devin (from Marshedge)
- ☑ Haeris (from Gordin's Delve)
- ☐ Isalde (from the Manmarch)
- ☐ Rahat (from Lygos)
- ☐ Tejisha (from Barrier Pass)
- ☐ Unz (from the Hillfolk)

When you ***call upon the Judge of another steading for aid or information***, they are oathbound to give it. You are likewise oathbound to support them.

You have an aviary in addition to your usual choice of special possessions (go mark it now). When you ***send a message via trained bird***, as is the way of the Judges of your order, the GM will tell you if and when you receive a response, and what it says.

☐ **PROPHET** ○○
The line of Judges was broken long ago, the Chronicle lost or fallen into ruin. Aratis has called you personally to her service though dreams, omens, and visions. Some in town resent the authority you've assumed.

When you ***spend a few days communing with Aratis about a threat facing Stonetop or civilization as a whole***, roll +WIS: **on a 7+**, Aratis reveals the course of action she would have you take; **on a 10+**, you also hold 2 Sanction. While ***acting on her orders***, spend 1 Sanction to add +1 to a roll you just made.

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **AMBITION**
To increase your status or influence.

☐ **DISPASSION**
To disregard emotion or sentiment.

☐ **HARMONY**
To seek a path that makes everyone happy.

☐ **ORTHODOXY**
To strictly adhere to rules and traditions.

☐ **ZEAL**
To judge quickly and without doubt.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ eager youth ☐ in my prime ☐ showing my years
☐ calm voice ☐ booming voice ☐ a voice that carries
☐ hard body ☐ powerful frame ☐ slim ☐ well-fed
☐ polished gear ☐ robes of office ☐ modest clothes

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Arianrhod, Caerwyn, Einion, Eleri, Magda, Nerys, Trahaern, or Trefor
- ☐ **Barrier Pass**: Arinasai, Bortachikhan, Khadagan, Khojin, Odval, Usun, Yesui, or Yul
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Briget, Comhall, Elnor, Liadain, Mirdach, Onghus, Somha, or Toal
- ☐ **Lygos or some other southern town**: Abrim, Cassander, Despina, Hypatta, Morecai, Nomika, Sofia, or Yose

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d6				
Damage	HP (max 20)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions

(Pick 1, in addition to your symbol of authority and scribe's kit)

- ☑ **Your symbol of authority** (pick 1):
  - ☐ ◇◇ **Black iron maul**, utterly immune to all magic (*close*, *forceful*, *awkward*, +1 damage)
  - ☐ ◇◇ **Makerglass shield**, etched with Aratis's symbol (*indestructible*, +1 armor, +1 Readiness on a Defend 7+)
  - ☐ ◇ **Helm** set with a dark ice "jewel." Grants advantage to resist mind-affecting magic.
- ☑ **Scribe's tools**: parchment, ink, pigments, vials, quills, ◇ a notebook, etc.
- ☐ **Aviary**: thick gloves, bird hoods, tethers, seed, ◇ messenger birds, ◇ birdcages, etc.
- ☐ **Carpenter's tools**: chisels, files, nails, pitch, ◇ prybars, ◇ saws, ◇◇ firkins, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Engineer's tools**: rulers, tapes, rods, plumb-bobs, ◇ tripods, ◇ block & tackles, wheelbarrow, etc.
- ☐ **Smithy** (or access to it): iron goods, ingots, thick gloves, ◇ tongs, ◇ bellows, an anvil, etc.
- ☐ _____ (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Censure, Chronicler of Stonetop, plus 2 more of your choice.

☐ AEGIS OF FAITH

When you ***wield a shield***, it can turn away spells, magical effects, and insubstantial attacks as if they were physical blows.

☐ ARMORED

When you ***carry a shield***, mark only ✓ (instead of ✓✓). Also, you can ignore the *cumbersome* tag on any armor you wear.

If you take this move at the start of play, add an ◇◇ iron hauberk, ◇◇ bronze cuirass, or ◇◇ scale coat to your inventory (all are 2 armor, *warm*, *cumbersome*).

☐ BEAR WITNESS

When you ***speak the truth with conviction and candor***, none can doubt you. They might deny what you say, but in their hearts they recognize the truth.

☐ BREAK BREAD

When you ***share a proper meal with someone and each of you eats their fill***, each of you recovers 1d8 (extra) HP.

☐ BULWARK

When you ***Defend***, you can spend 1 Readiness to stand fast, holding your position despite what befalls you.

☑ CENSURE

When you ***first denounce an individual in your presence as an agent of chaos or anathema to civilization***, they pick 1:

- They are ashamed, and act accordingly
- They are doubtful, and hesitate, pause
- They are afraid, and seek to escape
- They are enraged, and lash out predictably (the next roll against them has advantage)

☐ CASTIGATE

(Requires level 2+, Censure)
When you ***Censure someone***, your voice deals 1d4 damage to them (*near*, *loud*, ignores armor).

☑ CHRONICLER OF STONETOP ○○○

When you ***write up detailed session notes and share them with the other players***, hold +1 Diligence.

You can spend 1 Diligence at any time to add +1 to a roll that you or a fellow player just made.

☐ FOR THE GREATER GOOD

When you ***Persuade someone to act in defense of their community or civilization at large***, you have advantage.

☐ HOUND OF ARATIS

When you ***Seek Insight***, you can always ask "What here is tainted by chaos?" for free, even on a 6-.

☐ LIKE A DOG WITH A BONE

(Requires Hound of Aratis)
When you ***attack something you know to be tainted by chaos***, deal +1d6 damage.

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐ KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

When you ***roll 10+ to Know Things***, you or an ally gain advantage on the next roll to act on what you learn.

☐ MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

When you ***jump in to help another character who just rolled***, tell us how and ask the GM what else is required or what the consequences will be. If you accept, increase your ally's roll by +1.

☐ A BUNDLE OF STICKS UNBROKEN

(Requires Many Hands Make Light Work)
When you Struggle as One, you and one ally of your choice have advantage.

☐ THE HAMMER AND THE BOOK

When you ***strike a thing of supernatural chaos***, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, deal your damage and choose 1 from the list below; **on a 7-9**, deal damage and choose 1, but you also expose yourself to harm or unwanted attention.

- Deal +1d6 damage
- Ignore the thing's armor or other defenses
- Suppress one of its unnatural powers
- Force it from its host

☐ TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

When you ***look into someone's eyes and gaze upon their soul***, you can ask their player, "Are you lying or hiding something from me?" and get an honest answer. If the answer is "Yes," you have advantage on your next roll against them.

When you ***lie or otherwise deceive someone through words***, you have disadvantage on your next roll against them.

☐ BINDING ARBITRATION

(Requires Truth or Consequences)
When you ***bear witness to someone's promise or oath***, henceforth you may ask their player if they have kept their word. They must answer honestly. The character need not be present. If ***they have broken their word***, you gain advantage on all rolls against them until they admit their wrong and suffer an appropriate consequence (your call).

☐ VISION UNCLOUDED

When you ***Seek Insight***, you can always ask "What here is hidden by illusion or magic?" for free, even on a 6-.

☐ WELL-READ

When you ***name the source in which you read about the matter at hand***, roll +WIS to Know Things instead of +INT.

☐ A MIGHTY RAMPART

(Requires level 6+; replaces Bulwark)
When you ***hold Readiness*** (from Defend), you cannot be forced from your position. Also, you can spend 1 Readiness to completely ignore the effects/damage of an attack that you suffer.

☐ ARMISTICE

(Requires level 6+ and Bear Witness)
When you ***approach an enemy to negotiate in good faith***, they will at least hear you out. Even the most debased and savage foe will delay violence until you've had your say.

☐ CONDEMN

(Requires level 6+ and Censure)
When you ***Censure someone***, they are marked with a mystical brand that cannot be removed or hidden until you dismiss it. Any intelligent creature who sees the mark recognizes the bearer as an agent of chaos and anathema to civilization.

☐ PROCLAMATION

(Requires level 6+ and Condemn)
When you ***Censure***, you may denounce a group or faction as long as you can clearly identify them. Apply the effects of Censure to every member of that group, regardless of distance.

☐ MIRRORSHIELD

(Requires level 6+ and Aegis of Faith)
When you ***Defend with a shield***, you can spend 1 Readiness to intercept a magical force and redirect it to a different target (or none).

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

☐ THE TOWER ETERNAL

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***Defy Danger against magic***, treat a result of 6- as a 7-9.

The Chronicle

The Judge of Aratis is charged with maintaining the Chronicle, a history of the community, its people, their knowledge, and their traditions. The nature of the lore contained in the Chronicle depends on your Background, but it is more than a mere book; it is a physical place. Decide on its physical structure.

On the plus side, it… (choose 3)

- ☐ … is a sturdy vault from the time of the Makers.
- ☐ … has plenty of room to grow.
- ☐ … is hidden underground.
- ☐ … has but one entrance, magically sealed.
- ☐ … bears minor magics to preserve its contents.
- ☐ … is warded against spirits and magic.
- ☐ … includes your living quarters & office.

But alas, it… (choose 2)

- ☐ … sits on the outskirts, near the Old Wall.
- ☐ … is cramped, chaotic, and overflowing.
- ☐ … is little more than a crude cellar.
- ☐ … seems to be haunted.
- ☐ … contains a few dangerous artifacts.

Mark the location of the Chronicle on the Stonetop Playbook map.

The Lawkeeper

Her Judges say that Aratis has been with humanity since they first stacked one stone upon another and called it home.

In Stonetop's Pavillion of the Gods, Aratis's shrine is… (pick 1)

- ☐ … a hub of the community, a place of frequent rites, petitions, and celebrations
- ☐ … used only on high holidays, for each home keeps its own shrine above the hearth
- ☐ … neglected by most, tended only by you and a handful of believers
- ☐ … a grim place of judgement and punishment, shunned by all but her chosen
- ☐ … newly established, cramped and spare

Of her true disciples, Aratis demands… (choose 3)

- ☐ … truth, honesty, and forthrightness
- ☐ … hospitality, freely given to all who ask for it
- ☐ … the punishment of thieves & oathbreakers
- ☐ … adherence to strict rules of diet and dress
- ☐ … respect for authority, property, and rank

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, ***describe the Chronicle***. Then, ***tell us about Aratis and her shrine***, and what she demands of her true disciples.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Who is your lover/spouse/betrothed?
- ☐ Who is your apprentice?
- ☐ Who is the wisest of the town elders?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you is a true disciple of Aratis?
- ☐ Which one of you is my closest confidant?
- ☐ Which one of you has stood beside me in battle against unnatural chaos?
- ☐ Against which of you have I passed judgement?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Lightbearer

Imagine yourself and your kin in a cave lit by a single torch, entranced by shadow puppet stories. Imagine realizing there is a greater truth, and stepping out of the cave into the true Light of day. Would you not bring that Light back into the darkness, to set your people free?

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **AUSPICIOUS BIRTH** ○

You were born in Stonetop, and that birth was marked by the God of Light. You were born during an eclipse, perhaps, or under the light of a bright new star? Maybe you bear a sun-shaped birthmark?

Whatever the sign, your connection to Helior was clear early on. You've a place of honor in Stonetop, though it'd be a lie to say you don't make some uneasy.

When ***one of your moves has you mark a debility***, you may mark this background's circle instead, to no ill effect. Clear it when you Make Camp or Convalesce.

☐ **ITINERANT MYSTIC** ○○○

They think of you as a self-important kook who comes through now and again, speaking in riddles and playing tricks with the light. Sure, they know there's something holy about you, but it's not like you're a priest or anything. Priests talk sense.

When you ***go off a-wandering***, hold 1 Enigma if you're gone for days, 2 if you're gone for weeks, or 3 if you're gone for months. At the very start of play, hold 3 Enigma. Spend Enigma 1-for-1 to:

- ◎ Return from your wandering exactly when and where you are needed, fully Outfitted
- ◎ Know Things as if you rolled a 10+, drawing on what you learned while away
- ◎ Have What You Need to produce an oddly specific yet mundane item of Value 1 or less

☐ **SOUL ON FIRE**

You once led a wordly life, full of fear and doubt, base pleasures and petty grudges. But something happened. Injury, illness, a brush with death. Or just a moment of such profound misery and self-loathing that you thought you could fall no further.

There, in the dark, Helior's light shined upon you, igniting in your soul, lifting you and filling you with a profound sense of purpose.

When you ***Persuade a group by preaching charity, mercy, and hope and roll a 7+***, aside from the usual effect, choose 1:

- ◎ Your name and your message spread
- ◎ Someone approaches you, now or later, eager to know more

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **CHARITY**
To go without so that others are better off.

☐ **HOPE**
To inspire others in the face of adversity.

☐ **MERCY**
To bring relief or comfort, to give second chances.

☐ **PRAISE**
To spread the glory and worship of Helior.

☐ **RIGHTEOUSNESS**
To refuse to suffer an injustice or a lesser evil.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ a youthful glow ☐ well-weathered ☐ old & merry
☐ a lilting voice ☐ a melodious voice ☐ a soft voice
☐ beatific ☐ ethereal ☐ intense ☐ jovial ☐ serene
☐ fine robes ☐ threadbare cloak ☐ working clothes

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Dai, Eirian, Eurig, Haf, Haul, Hefin, Hulwen, or Tesni
- ☐ **Barrier Pass**: Alaqa, Bat, Dinget, Ghoa, Oyuun, Sidurgu, Temur, or Toragana
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Adfin, Callach, Conlad, Eadna, Fionntan, Niamh, Orlaith, or Sorsha
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south**: Arash, Azar, Hafiz, Murat, Roshan, Shideh, Zara, or Zohara

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d4				
Damage	HP (max 18)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions (Pick 2)

- ☐ **Apiary**: beeswax, candles (*close*, *area*, lasts ~1 hr), honey, ◇ bee smokers, ◇ hats & veils, etc.
- ☐ **Books & scrolls** (○○○○○ uses): expend a use to consult your collection and turn a Know Things roll you just made into a 10+.
- ☐ **Chandlery**: beeswax, candles (*close*, *area*, lasts ~1 hr), wicks, scented herbs, soap, lye, ash, etc.
- ☐ **Distillery**: skins of fine whisky (○○ uses, grants advantage to Persuade), copper tubes, malt, ◇◇ firkins, stills, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Glassworks**: vials, charms, lenses, sand, marbles, bellows, crucible, ◇ lanterns (○○○○○ hours, *close*, *area*), etc.
- ☐ **Holy relics** (○○○ uses): if you have one in inventory when you Invoke the Sun God, you can mark a use in lieu of choosing a consequence.
- ☐ **Luthier's tools**: chisels, files, catgut, various woods, stains, ◇ a lute, ◇ a fiddle, etc.
- ☐ _____ (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Consecrated Flame and Invoke the Sun God, plus 1 more of your choice.

☐ A CANDLE AGAINST THE DARK

When you ***wield a holy light but go otherwise unarmed***, you have 2 Armor.

☐ LUMINOUS SHIELD

(Requires A Candle Against the Dark)
When you ***brandish a holy light to turn aside an attack against body, mind, or soul***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, the attack is deflected and, if the attacker is in range of your light, they are briefly blinded; **on a 7-9**, the attack is deflected but your holy light flickers and dims, threatening to go out; **on a 6-**, your light snuffs out and the attack is unimpeded.

☐ ALL IS ILLUMINATED

When you ***look closely on another and see their soul laid bare***, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, ask their player 1 question from the list below, plus "And what would make them feel loved, beautiful, or worthy?"; **on a 7-9**, ask them 1 question from the list. In any case, they must answer truthfully.

- Of what are they most ashamed?
- What do they most desire or covet?
- What hope have they abandoned?
- Who or what is most precious to them?

☐ AND BEHOLD A PALE HORSE

When you ***spend the night gazing into a flame***, ask the GM to reveal an impending doom or grim portent that will come to pass unless you intervene, and how you might yet do so.

☑ CONSECRATED FLAME

When you ***whisper words of consecration to a flame***, the flame casts a holy light. Holy light is uncomfortable for creatures of darkness to look upon, but does no true harm. The holy light lasts until the flame goes out or until you consecrate another flame, whichever comes first.

☐ FIRE WITHIN

When you ***are in darkness***, you are able to see by the light of your inner fire. When you ***take damage from cold or fire***, reduce that damage by 2.

☐ GUIDING LIGHT

When you ***lead one or more NPCs through danger***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, you all make it through (Helior be praised); **on a 7-9**, the GM will tell you what's required to get everyone through safely.

☐ HELIOR'S UNBLINKING EYE

When you ***stare into the sun long enough to lose your vision***, name a person or place that you know and roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, you briefly glimpse your subject as if from a great height, and choose 2 from the list below; **on a 7-9**, you briefly glimpse your subject as if from a great height, and choose 1:

- The glimpse lasts as long as you wish
- Your point of view shifts to very close range
- You recover your vision quickly

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☑ INVOKE THE SUN GOD

When you ***imbue a holy light with Helior's power***, choose an Invocation you know and roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, it works as described but you must choose 1 consequence from the list below; **on a 7-9**, it works as described, but you and the GM each choose 1.

- The Invocation has its *reduced* effect
- The effort taxes you; mark a debility
- The light is snuffed out when the Invocation is complete, its fuel consumed
- You must bask in sunlight for an hour or so before using that Invocation again

See the **Invocations** insert for details.

☐ KEEP THE HOME-FIRES BURNING

When you ***build a camp fire and sprinkle it with ash from your own hearth***, anyone who Makes Camp with you is free from nightmares or bad dreams and recovers (extra) HP equal to your CHA.

☐ LAMPLIGHTER

When you ***whisper to a flammable object*** (a torch, a wick, kindling, etc.), it ignites in moments.

☐ PIETY ○

When you ***spend at least an hour in proper worship to Helior***, hold 1 Blessing. Other faithful PCs who partake in this worship also hold 1 Blessing. At any time, you can spend 1 Blessing to add +1 to a roll you just made in pursuit of a righteous cause.

☐ PURIFYING FLAMES

When you ***wield a holy light against a creature of darkness***, it counts as a weapon (d10 damage, *hand*, *close*, *area*, 2 piercing) and you can choose to roll +WIS to Clash.

☐ RADIANT COUNTENANCE

When you ***give someone your fond attention***, you can then Persuade them with advantage. If they are a follower, you can instead choose to Strengthen Your Bond (as if you paid their cost).

☐ RISE LIKE THE SUN

When you ***draw attention to yourself by word or deed***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, everyone turns and looks, and you hold their gaze as long as you keep giving them reason to look; **on a 7-9**, everyone turns and looks.

☐ SPRING'S FIRST THAW

When you ***spend time (an hour at least, maybe more) seeking to stir hope, kindness, or mercy in an NPC***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, you light a fire deep within them and affect a lasting change; **on a 7-9**, you kindle goodness in their heart for now, but they will eventually return to their old ways; **on a 6-**, their heart hardens and, whatever else the GM says, you can't use this move on them again.

☐ BURN TWICE AS BRIGHT

(Requires level 6+ and Invoke the Sun God)
When you ***Invoke the Sun God***, you may mark a debility to use 2 Invocations at once. Roll once, and apply any consequences to both Invocations.

☐ EMPOWERED INVOCATIONS

(Requires level 6+ and Invoke the Sun God)
When you Invoke the Sun God, you can choose an extra consequence before you roll. If you do, the Invocation has its *empowered* effect.

☐ GLORIOUS SERVANT

(Requires level 6+ and Invoke the Sun God)
When you ***Invoke the Sun God and roll a 10+***, you need not choose a consequence; **on a 7-9**, you choose a consequence but the GM does not.

☐ HUNGRY FLAMES

(Requires level 6+ and Purifying Flames)
When you ***deal damage with a holy light***, you deal +1d6 damage and your target is engulfed in holy light and flames.

☐ LIGHT, MORE LIGHT

(Requires level 6+ and Consecrated Flame)
When you ***consecrate a flame***, it burns brighter than normal. A rushlight or candle illuminates to *reach* range, an oil lamp, lantern, or torch out to *near* range, and a bullseye lantern out to *far* range.

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

☐ WIELDER OF THE WHITE FLAME

(Requires level 6+ and Invoke the Sun God)
When you ***channel Helior's essence into an object you carry***, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, it ignites with a white flame that casts a holy light (*reach*, *area*) and burns neither you nor the object, and you may Invoke the Sun God right now as if you rolled a 10+; **on a 7-9**, it ignites with a white flame that casts a holy light (*reach*, *area*) and burns neither you nor the object.

Praise the day

You are the appointed servant of Helior the Daybringer, god of the sun and light, beacon of hope and mercy.

The worship of Helior is… (choose 1)

- ☐ … ancient, widespread, and well-known
- ☐ … most common in Lygos and the south
- ☐ … a new thing, still unheard of by many
- ☐ … an old thing, forgotten by most
- ☐ … widely persecuted

He is worshipped through… (choose 1 or 2)

- ☐ … solemn hymns
- ☐ … serene meditation
- ☐ … joyful song
- ☐ … ascetic denial
- ☐ … fervent dancing
- ☐ … formal ceremonies
- ☐ … drugs & intoxicants
- ☐ … pain & sacrifice

In Stonetop's Pavilion of the Gods, Helior's shrine has… (choose 1)

- ☐ … the place of highest honor, even if Tor is more popular
- ☐ … been well-tended and given due respect
- ☐ … recently been restored/established, perhaps by you
- ☐ … seen better days, for certain

Your predecessor, the previous Lightbearer… (choose 2 or 3)

- ☐ … lived long ago, a figure of legend
- ☐ … was martyred for their faith
- ☐ … died facing a mighty sorcerer or demon
- ☐ … wrote many works of sublime beauty
- ☐ … faced one of the Things Below
- ☐ … died in their bed, peacefully
- ☐ … ascended bodily into the heavens
- ☐ … was reincarnated—as you

You came into your powers… (choose 1)

- ☐ … through years of study and devotion
- ☐ … when your predecessor passed them on
- ☐ … suddenly, at a moment of great need.
- ☐ … after a visitation from Helior or one of his servants
- ☐ … when you first laid eyes upon the _____

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **praise the day! Tell us of Helior**, his worship and his shrine. Tell us, too, of the prior Lightbearer and how you gained your powers.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Who fans the flames of your heart?
- ☐ Whose kindness and generosity warm your soul?
- ☐ Who needs Helior's light, badly?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you is an old and dear friend?
- ☐ Which one of you shares my faith?
- ☐ Which one of you scoffs at mercy and hope?
- ☐ Which one of you will need my guidance soon?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Marshal

Hoping for peace isn't enough. Trouble always comes knocking. And that's why we need you: to run the drills, to man the towers, to take charge when things get bad. To be cold enough to send your neighbors to a sure death in order to keep Stonetop safe. That's the job, Marshal. You up for it?

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **SCION**
You grew up here, descended from a long line. Some of the biggest names in Stonetop's past are perched in your family tree. Everyone in the village takes your authority as a given, and your crew is a well-established institution in town.

You start with the Veteran Crew move, in addition to your usual moves. Go mark it now.

When you ***create your Crew***, they automatically have the *respected* tag (in addition to your usual picks, and any you get from Veteran Crew).

☐ **PENITENT**
Before you came here, you led a band of ne'er-do-wells: bandits, raiders, or bloody-handed mercenaries. But something changed. A moment of truth led you and your followers—some of them at least—to leave that life behind. And for whatever reason, the people of Stonetop took you in.

When you ***draw on your bloody past to Know Things***, you may roll +STR instead of +INT. If you do, the GM will ask you who you wronged back then or who might still hold a grudge. Answer them now.

When you ***create your Crew***, they automatically have the *warriors* tag (in addition to your usual picks).

☐ **LUMINARY**
You're a natural leader—your words inspire, your plans win the day, your deeds are recounted far and wide. Are you touched by the gods? Does ancient blood flow in your veins? Or are you simply the champion that Stonetop needs in these trying times?

You start with the We Happy Few move, in addition to your usual moves. Go mark it now.

When you ***create your Crew***, they automatically have the *devoted* tag (in addition to your usual picks).

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **AUTHORITY**
To take charge and throw your weight around.

☐ **CAUTION**
To keep everyone safe, to agonize over decisions.

☐ **DRIVE**
To take on ever more responsibility.

☐ **HONOR**
To keep your word, to follow a moral code.

☐ **RUTHLESSNESS**
To do whatever it takes to win or survive.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ upstart youth ☐ experienced & sober ☐ grizzled
☐ clear voice ☐ resonant voice ☐ rumbling voice
☐ stern frown ☐ grim-set jaw ☐ knowing smirk
☐ badge of office ☐ spit & polish ☐ timeworn gear

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Bethan, Cadfael, Ffraid, Gwythyr, Llewelyn, Meredith, Rhianna, or Urien
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Brigh, Cathal, Conn, Donal, Fionna, Laith, Talulla, or Torin
- ☐ **Steplands** (Hillfolk): Adl, Aeln, Clotild, Judoc, Katrn, Mygl, Pirn, or Sera
- ☐ **The Manmarch**: Berkhard, Gerhild, Hartig, Hilde, Sabrinne, Ulrike, Urrsla, or Weillem
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south**: Ameer, Calixta, Hadar, Kelila, Sulaim, Ursa or Xandros

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength (STR)	Dexterity (DEX)	Intelligence (INT)	Wisdom (WIS)	Constitution (CON)	Charisma (CHA)

weakened — dazed — miserable

d8 Damage	HP (max 20)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions (Pick 2)

- ☐ **Chirurgeon's tools**: catgut, straps, bandages, tubes, poultice, willow bark, ◇ bonesaws, etc.
- ☐ **Distillery**: skins of fine whisky (○○ uses, grants advantage to Persuade), copper tubes, malt, ◇◇ firkins, stills, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Engineer's tools**: rulers, tapes, rods, plumb-bobs, ◇ tripods, ◇ block & tackles, wheelbarrow, etc.
- ☐ **Personal symbol** (a flag, crest, marking, etc.): when you ***display or reveal it in a dramatic fashion***, your crew holds +1 Loyalty (max 3).
- ☐ **Scribe's tools**: parchment, ink, pigments, vials, quills, ◇ a notebook, etc.
- ☐ **Weapons of war**: choose up to 3 (now or later):
  - ☐ ◇ Sword, iron (*close*, +1 damage)
  - ☐ ◇◇ Long spear, fine steel (*reach*, 2 piercing)
  - ☐ ◇ Battleaxe, iron (*close*, *messy*)
  - ☐ ◇ Composite bow (*far*, +1 damage, *x* piercing; ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
- ☐ _____ (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Crew, Logistics, any moves from your Background, and 1 move of your choice.

☐ ARMORED

When you ***carry a shield***, mark only ✓ (instead of ✓✓). Also, you can ignore the *cumbersome* tag on any armor you wear.

If you take this move at the start of play, add an ◇◇ iron hauberk, ◇◇ bronze cuirass, or ◇◇ scale coat to your inventory (all are 2 armor, *warm*, *cumbersome*).

☐☐ ARTS OF WAR

(Requires level 2+, the Marshal)
Take a move from the Fox, Heavy, Judge, Ranger, or Seeker playbooks, for which you otherwise qualify. You can pick from a different playbook each time. You can't take Improved Stat or Superior Stat.

☑ CREW

You've got a crew of stalwarts, six or so residents of Stonetop with some steel to them. See the Crew insert for details.

☐☐ VETERAN CREW

(Requires Crew)
Each time you take this move, pick 1. You can also choose to reselect their Instinct and Cost.

- ☐ Select 2 new tags for your Crew
- ☐ Increase their damage die from d6 to d8
- ☐ Increase their max HP by 2 each

☐ FRONT LINE LEADER ○○

When you ***lead your crew into battle***, hold 2 Presence. Spend Presence in lieu of your crew's Loyalty or as Readiness (as if you Defended them).

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☑ LOGISTICS

When you ***have a steading Muster or Pull Together***, or when you ***Requisition***, you have advantage.

☐ READ THE LAND

When you ***first take a moment to survey the terrain***, ask the GM one of the following; gain advantage on your next roll to act on the answer.

- What's the best way in, out, through, or past?
- Where's the best spot for a trap or an ambush?
- Where's the most defensible position?
- What here is out of place?

☐ PREPARE A WELCOME ○○

(Requires Read the Land)
When you ***have your allies fortify a position and lie in wait for battle***, hold 1 Surprise if you're rushed or 2 Surprises if you can take your time.

Once battle is joined, spend 1 Surprise to reveal a ploy, defense, or dirty trick you prepared in advance and roll +INT: **on a 10+**, it works as well as can be expected, and you've still got a few tricks up your sleeve—regain 1 Surprise; **on a 7-9**, it works as well as can be expected.

☐ SET-UP STRIKE

When you ***Clash and get a 7+***, you can choose to deal damage with disadvantage. If you do, you create an opening for ally to act on, as if you provided Aid. Describe it!

☐ SHAKE IT OFF

When you ***order an ally to overcome fear, pain, doubt, or delusion***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, they do it; **on a 7-9**, a PC gets advantage to do it; an NPC will do it, but they'll need time, they'll resent you, or they'll feel humiliated (GM decides).

☐ SHIELD WALL

When you ***have your crew form a shield wall***, they Defend with advantage and **on a 7+** they hold +2 Readiness (instead of the usual +1 for shields). ***As long as they maintain formation***, they can go on the offensive without losing Readiness.

☐ SIR, PERMISSION TO DIE, SIR

When ***one of your followers would die***, you can spend 1 of their Loyalty to have them survive (out of the action, but alive). If you let them go, mark XP.

☐ SPEAK SOFTLY

When you ***offer peace but your enemy refuses***, gain advantage on your next roll against them.

☐ STENTORIAN ○○

When you ***raise your voice***, it carries far and cuts through even the din of battle. When you ***go into battle***, hold 2 Command. Spend 1 Command to shout an order or warning and pick 1:

- PCs get advantage on their next roll to do as you say
- You have advantage to Order Followers or Deploy

☐ TAKE THE MEASURE

When you ***size someone up***, ask their player one of the questions below and get an honest answer. If they ***fear or respect you*** (their call), you can ask another question. You can't use this move on them again until your relationship significantly changes.

- Can I trust them (to _____)?
- What do they intend to do?
- How are they most useful/dangerous?
- What weakness of theirs can I exploit?

☐ WE HAPPY FEW

When you ***give an inspiring speech to your allies before facing a dire threat***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, each ally holds 2 Inspiration; **on a 7-9**, each ally holds 1 Inspiration; **on a 6-**, each ally holds 1, but you have disadvantage on all rolls until you share your nagging doubts with someone else.

Once battle is joined, your allies can spend their Inspiration at any time, 1-for-1 to do the following:

- Act fearlessly in the face of terror or overwhelming odds
- Keep 1 HP instead of being reduced to 0 HP
- Add 1d6 to a damage roll they just made

☐ BATTLEFIELD GRACE

(Requires level 6+ and Front Line Leader)
When you ***take damage while leading your allies in battle***, the damage roll has disadvantage.

☐☐ HEROES TO THE LAST

(Requires level 6+ and Veteran Crew)
Each time you take this move, pick 1:

- ☐ They are *exceptional* (and roll +2 instead of +1)
- ☐ They are inured to terror & horror
- ☐ Increase their max HP by 4 each
- ☐ Increase their damage die one size (max d10)

☐ FOCUS FIRE

(Requires level 6+, Stentorian)
You can spend 1 Command to order your allies to bring down a foe. If you do, each ally has advantage on their next damage roll against that foe.

☐ LIKE AN OPEN BOOK

(Requires level 6+ and Take the Measure)
When you ***Take the Measure of someone who fears or respects you***, your second question can be anything you want. The GM might ask how you could possibly know this; tell them or ask something else.

☐ NOBLE MIEN

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***lead an NPC through danger and return them to safety***, if they aren't part of your crew they will either offer to join your crew or pledge their future aid and support.

☐ PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

(Requires level 6+ and Speak Softly)
When you ***stand ready to fight alongside like-minded allies***, anything capable of fear recognizes you as a serious threat and treats you accordingly.

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

War stories

The last time the militia saw serious action, it was... (pick 1)

- ☐ ...to repel a nighttime raid by crinwin from the Great Wood.
- ☐ ...to drive off bandits who'd taken up near the Ruined Tower.
- ☐ ...to fend off Hillfolk pursuing a blood feud.
- ☐ ...against Brennan and his Claws, before they settled in Marshedge.
- ☐ ...to face a brutish hagr, come down from the Foothills to wreak havoc.
- ☐ ...to hunt down beasts (wolves, drakes, or bears maybe?) who'd been preying on the village.

Answer at least 3 of the following questions about that action:

- ☐ When exactly did it happen?
- ☐ Who lost their life, and who mourns them?
- ☐ Who from Stonetop was maimed, and how?
- ☐ Who saved the day, and how?
- ☐ How did the enemy get away, and whom do you still blame for it?
- ☐ Who comported themselves with honor?
- ☐ What's been bugging you about it ever since?
- ☐ What's got you even more worried now?

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **tell us the town's war stories**, plus the answers to the questions you chose.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Who is your lover/spouse/betrothed?
- ☐ Who is your lieutenant?
- ☐ Whose kin is dead because of your decisions?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you is or was part of my crew?
- ☐ Which one of you have I promised to keep safe?
- ☐ Which one of you do I still have doubts about?
- ☐ Which one of you ignored my orders and got someone killed?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Ranger

Your true home is out there. Away from the Old Roads, in the wild places, where you've faced storm and beast alike. But unknown forces are at work beyond the Ringwall, and you fear for your kith and kin. These are strange times. Guide them, ranger, and keep them safe when darkness falls.

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **MIGHTY HUNTER**
You are a hunter of the Great Wood, the best the town has seen in generations. You know every part of the Wood within a two-day march.

You start with both the Expert Tracker move and the Stalker move. Go mark them now.

☐ **WIDE WANDERER**
You have travelled much of the known world and perhaps parts beyond. Add each of the following to the Neighbors list in the Stonetop playbook, choosing 1 trait for each:

- **Ennis** (from Marshedge)
- **Shahar** (from Gordin's Delve)
- **Yannic** (from the Hillfolk)
- **Tovia** (from Lygos)
- **Sasca** (from the northern Manmarch)

You start with the Mental Map move. Mark it now.

When you ***Know Things about the wider world***, you can roll +WIS instead of +INT.

When you ***arrive somewhere you've visited before*** (your call), tell the GM when you were last here, and the GM will tell you how it's changed.

☐ **BEAST-BONDED**
You grew up civilized, but your soul is bound to a beast of the wild. You're closer to it than to any man or woman. How did this bond come about? How long ago? Regardless, you start with the Animal Companion move. Go mark it now.

When you ***focus on your animal companion for a few moments***, you can use any of the actions you've marked below, no matter the distance between you. Mark 1 action at 1st level, then another at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th.

- ☐ Gauge its distance and direction from you
- ☐ Call it back to your side
- ☐ Sense its emotional state
- ☐ Get a brief impression of what it senses
- ☐ Lend it your strength—lose 1d6 HP, and it regains an equal amount

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **ADVENTURE**
To test yourself, to experience new things.

☐ **INDEPENDENCE**
To refuse help and push others away.

☐ **STEWARDSHIP**
To value beasts and natural places over people.

☐ **TENACITY**
To be stubborn, to persist.

☐ **WONDER**
To marvel at beauty, magnificence, splendor.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ fledgling ☐ prime specimen ☐ long in the tooth
☐ barking voice ☐ growling voice ☐ sing-song voice
☐ compact & sturdy ☐ long & lean ☐ wolfish
☐ shaggy ☐ threadbare ☐ well-groomed

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Aran, Bledyn, Branwen, Deryn, Ifur, Meinir, Rhys or Teagan
- ☐ **Barrier Pass**: Anarba, Arslan, Bolormaa, Cirina, Nergui, Nomolun, Saran, or Shigi-Qutuqu
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Asling, Conar, Enna, Flannan, Macha, Mave, Proinsias, or Rowen
- ☐ **The Steplands** (Hillfolk): Bernd, Elown, Irn, Kani, Pol, Nol, Rozn, or Sterin
- ☐ **The Manmarch**: Alfher, Bertrim, Dagmar, Elfrida, Hramn, Meike, Swanhilde, or Wulfrim
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south:** Ari, Boriz, Dimitra, Gorhan, Nitza, Selen, Todora, or Vasil

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d8				
Damage	HP (max 18)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions

(Pick 2, in addition to your composite bow)

- ☑ ◇ **Composite bow** (*far*, +1 damage, *x* piercing; ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
- ☐ **Distillery**: skins of fine whisky (○○ uses, grants advantage to Persuade), copper tubes, malt, ◇◇ firkins, stills, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Hideouts** (○○○ uses): expend a use to have a well-stocked, safe shelter nearby; GM can veto.
- ☐ **Husbandry tools**: brushes, muzzles, collars, feed, ◇ whips, ◇ bridles, etc. Gain advantage to Persuade domestic beasts (livestock, dogs, etc.).
- ☐ **Hounds**, 2-3 followers (*trackers*, *keen-nosed*, *fast*); HP 6; Damage d6 (*hand*, *grabby*); **Instinct** to give chase; Cost: training.
- ☐ **Lay of the land** (○○○ uses): expend a use to know where to find ___, without having to Know Things; GM can veto.
- ☐ **Trapping gear**: snares, pelts, musk, bait, etc. When you ***Forage***, get +1 use of provisions.
- ☐ _____ (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Home on the Range, any moves from your Background, plus 1 of your choice.

☐ A SAFE PLACE ○○

When you ***select and prepare the party's camp site***, hold 1 Precaution, or 2 Precaution if you are well-versed with this area and its dangers.

If trouble finds your camp site, you can spend 1 Precaution to reveal a simple defense, warning, or trick that you prepared in advance. If you do, tell us how you knew to make that specific preparation.

☐ ANIMAL COMPANION

You are accompanied by a beast of uncommon loyalty and cleverness. See the Animal Companion insert for details.

☐☐ MAGNIFICENT SPECIMEN

(Requires Animal Companion)
Each time you take this move, your companion gains 2 additional options of your choice.

☐ BIG GAME HUNTER

When you ***strike at the weak spot of a*** **large** ***or*** **huge** ***creature***, you deal +2 damage.

☐ BLOT OUT THE SUN

When you ***Let Fly with a bow***, you can deplete your ammunition (mark the next ammo status after your weapon) before you roll. If you do, choose 1:

- Gain advantage on your damage roll
- Add the *area* tag to your attack; roll damage separately for each target

☐ CALL THE SHOT

When you ***take your time and calmly line up the perfect shot***, either deal your damage or roll +DEX: **on a 10+**, deal your damage and pick 2; **on a 7-9**, deal your damage and pick 1.

- Ignore armor or deal +1d4 damage (your call)
- Stun, hobble, or hinder them
- Make them trip or drop what they're holding
- Do no harm; don't deal your damage after all

☐ EXPERT TRACKER

When you ***Seek Insight by searching for or studying the signs left by passing creatures***, you can ask "What happened here recently?" for free, even on a 6-.

When you ***follow a creature's trail***, roll +WIS: **on a 7+** you follow it to a significant change in terrain or activity; **on a 10+**, you can ask the GM a reasonable question about your quarry and get a useful answer.

☑ HOME ON THE RANGE

When ***a journey requires you to Defy Danger or Struggle as One***, treat a 6- as a 7-9.

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐ MENTAL MAP

You can always retrace your steps and can accurately gauge distances and directions. You might not know the way forward but can always find your way back.

When you ***think back on a place you've been***, you can Seek Insight retroactively, as if you were still there.

☐ NATURALIST

When you ***Know Things about beasts, natural environs, or spirits of the wild***, you have advantage.

☐ ON THE HOOF

When you ***travel through the wilderness***, you can procure 1d6 uses of ◇ provisions each day (roll with disadvantage in winter or barren terrain). Provisions can substitute for supplies when you Make Camp.

☐ PACK HORSE

You can carry up to 4 with a light load, 7 with a normal load, and 10 with a heavy load.

☐ PATHFINDER

When you ***lead your people to Pull Together or Deploy beyond sight of home***, you have advantage.

☐ PREDATOR

When you ***Seek Insight***, add the following to the list of questions you can ask. When ***acting on the answer to either question***, deal an extra 1d4 damage.

- Who or what here is the easiest prey?
- How is _____ weak or vulnerable?

☐ SNIFF OUT CORRUPTION

When you ***Seek Insight***, you can ask, "What here stinks of the unnatural?" for free, even on a 6-.

☐ STALKER

When ***you carry a normal or light load and move with care***, you make no noise and leave no sign of your passing. When you ***hide yourself in a natural environment***, you remain unseen until you draw attention to yourself, move positions, or attack.

☐ SURVIVALIST

When you ***Forage***, pick 1 extra choice (even on a 6-, pick 1) and add "Find or fashion some useful item or supply (GM can veto)" to the list of options.

☐ WARDEN OF THE WILD

When you ***defeat a perversion of nature***, you can ask the GM 2 of the following and get a useful answer:

- Will it come back? If so, how can I stop it?
- Will its taint spread? If so, how can I contain it?
- What useful (but grisly) bits can I harvest?
- What else can I learn about it or its ilk ?

☐ WILD SPEECH

The grunts, barks, chirps, and calls of natural beasts are as a language to you. You can understand their intentions and communicate basic ideas. When you ***Persuade a beast***, you can choose to roll +WIS.

☐☐ WORLDLY

(Requires level 2+ and the Ranger)
Take a move from the Blessed, Fox, Heavy, Marshal, or Seeker playbooks, for which you otherwise qualify. You can pick from a different playbook each time. You can't pick Improved Stat or Superior Stat.

☐ ALPHA

(Requires level 6+, and Wild Speech or Spirit Tongue)
When you ***assert dominance over another (beast, spirit, Fae, or person)***, roll +WIS: **on a 7+**, they must pick 1 from the list below; **on a 10+**, you also have advantage on your next roll against them.

- Accept your authority, at least for now
- Slink away or flee, then avoid you
- Fight you for dominance

☐☐ BEAST OF LEGEND

(Requires level 6+ and Magnificent Specimen)
Each time you take this move, pick 1:

- They are *exceptional* (and roll +2 instead of +1)
- They get +4 HP and +1 armor
- They develop some unique ability or trait

☐ CONSTANT VIGILANCE

(Requires level 6+)
Unless you're *dazed*, you're never caught off guard—not even when asleep or if you roll a 6-. When you ***intercept a sudden threat*** (to yourself or an ally), you have advantage on whatever move you make.

☐ GIANT SLAYER

(Requires level 6+ and Big Game Hunter)
When you ***strike at a weak spot of a*** **large** ***or*** **huge** ***creature***, you deal another +2 damage (+4 total).

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

☐ TRAILBLAZER

(Requires level 6+; replaces Home on the Range)
When ***a journey causes you to Defy Danger or Struggle as One***, on a 10+ you also learn or discover something interesting and useful—ask the GM what.

☐ WALK IT OFF ○

(Requires level 6+)
When you'd ***mark a debility***, you can mark this move instead to no ill effect. Clear it as you would a debility.

Something wicked this way comes

You know firsthand that trouble is out there, and like it or not, one of these days the folk of Stonetop are going to have to face it. What is it that you're so worried about? (choose 1)

- ☐ A dark, unwholesome presence lurking in the Great Wood
- ☐ A strange, furtive figure seen near the Ruined Tower
- ☐ Something big & savage stalking the northern foothills
- ☐ Whatever's made the lizard-like suarachan of Ferrier's Fen so bold
- ☐ That of which the Hillfolk refuse to speak

Then, answer at least 3 of the following questions about this threat:

- ☐ What, exactly, do you think it is?
- ☐ What did you see, and how close did you have to get to see it?
- ☐ Whom or what have you lost to it?
- ☐ What did it leave behind?
- ☐ What do you think it wants?
- ☐ Who refuses to believe you?
- ☐ Who can tell you more, if you can only convince them?

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **tell us what you're worried about** (see "Something wicked this way comes").

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ To whom do you always return home?
- ☐ Who would be lost without you?
- ☐ Who has much to learn from you?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you fears the wider world?
- ☐ Which one of you has shown me great beauty?
- ☐ Which one of you have I caught sometimes staring out at the horizon?
- ☐ Which one of you lacked the stomach to put something out if its misery?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Seeker

Look at us. Huddling behind our walls, hearing evil in every passing noise. Cowards, all. All, but you. You fear not the unknown. You plunge into it, searching. Grasping at what has been lost. What will you find, o Seeker? Signs of a bright new age? Or signs of our doom?

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **PATRIOT**
These people are family. Chaos grows all around, but you'll be damned if you'll let your family come to harm. Damned indeed.

You have sought out and embraced dark power to protect that which you hold dear. Or perhaps that power fell upon you, and you took it up for the greater good. Either way, you seek more.

You start with the Let's Make a Deal move and are Well Versed in the Things Below (go mark them now). You've also acquired 1 major arcanum:

- ☐ ◇ The Hec'tumel Codex
- ☐ ◇ The Red Scepter
- ☐ ◇ The Staff of the Lidless Orb

☐ **ANTIQUARIAN**
The past has buried many secrets, and you are determined to dig them up. Years of study across the land have led you here, and you are convinced that this town holds the key to your greatest discoveries. What is it you hope to find? What is it that keeps you here?

In any case, your travels and studies mean that you start with the Polyglot move and that you are Well Versed in the Makers and their arts (go mark them now). You've also acquired 1 major arcanum:

- ☐ ◇ Noruba's Ice Sphere
- ☐ ◇ The Azure Hand
- ☐ ◇◇ The Mindgem

☐ **WITCH HUNTER**
You've dedicated your life to rooting out and destroying horrors and their servants. What set you down this path? What did you sacrifice to walk it? What led you to call Stonetop home?

Regardless, you start with the Everything Bleeds move and are Well Versed in (pick 1) the Fae, the Things Below, or the Last Door and what lies beyond (go mark them now). You've also acquired 1 major arcanum:

- ☐ ◇ The Demonhide Cloak
- ☐ The Redwood Effigy
- ☐ ◇◇ The Twisted Spear

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **CUNNING**
To scheme, manipulate, and plot.

☐ **CURIOSITY**
To seek answers that maybe you oughtn't.

☐ **HUBRIS**
To assume you know best, that you can't fail.

☐ **MYSTERY**
To avoid straight answers; to keep secrets.

☐ **VISION**
To think big and pursue grandiose goals.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ curiously young ☐ world-weary ☐ bent with years
☐ haunted voice ☐ rich voice ☐ whispery
☐ ink-stained fingers ☐ sinewy hands ☐ soft hands
☐ bony limbed ☐ lean & lanky ☐ short ☐ thick-set

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Alis, Dylan, Eilwen, Gerlt, Gwenda, Macsen, Mirgan, Owena, Taliesyn, or Twymor
- ☐ **Barrier Pass**: Bayanaganengri, Chakha, Jetei, Moog, Narengawa, Ogul, Ozbeg, or Solongo
- ☐ **The Steplands** (Hillfolk): Anook, Anxo, Dors, Jory, Mari, Padg, Pons, or Silf
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Aiden, Barrfind, Caolan, Ciara, Deirbhile, Moirin, Tiern, or Reamann
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south**: Dana, Eliana, Erez, Fikri, Isra, Persefoni, Spiro, or Vahid

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength	Dexterity	Intelligence	Wisdom	Constitution	Charisma
(STR)	(DEX)	(INT)	(WIS)	(CON)	(CHA)
weakened		*dazed*		*miserable*	

d6				
Damage	HP (max 16)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions

(Pick 2, in addition to your scribe's tools)

- ☑ **Scribe's tools**: parchment, ink, pigments, vials, quills, ◇ a notebook, etc.
- ☐ **Books & scrolls** (○○○○○ uses): expend a use to consult your collection and turn a Know Things roll you just made into a 10+.
- ☐ **Distillery**: skins of fine whisky (○○ uses, grants advantage to Persuade), copper tubes, malt, ◇◇ firkins, stills, barrels, etc.
- ☐ **Engineer's tools**: rulers, tapes, rods, plumb-bobs, ◇ tripods, ◇ block & tackles, wheelbarrow, etc.
- ☐ **Laboratory**: chemics, reagents, vials, measures, ◇ scales, ◇ decanters, etc. Every season, produce d4-1 uses of ◇ naphtha (*thrown*, *area*, *dangerous*, ignores armor).
- ☐ **Paraphernalia**: crystals, incense, talismans, blood, bone, horn, eye of newt, ◇ braziers, ◇◇ a cauldron, etc.
- ☐ **Trade contacts**: small amounts of salt, glass, silk, spice, medicinal herbs, pigments, ivory, etc.
- ☐ ..... (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Well Versed, Work With What You've Got, plus 1 from your Background.

☐ ATTUNED

When you ***Seek Insight***, you can always ask, "What here is infused with magic?" for free, even on a 6-.

☐ CONDUIT OF POWER ☐☐☐

When you ***would mark a Consequence from a major arcanum***, you can mark 1 box here instead, with no negative effect. (These marks never clear.)

☐ COUNTERMEASURES

When you ***witness a magical effect***, you may ask the GM, "how can this be countered or interrupted?" and get an honest answer. You or an ally gain advantage on your next roll to act on the answer.

☐ EVERYTHING BLEEDS

When you ***exploit an unnatural foe's specific weakness or vulnerability***, deal +1d6 damage.

☐ EVERYTHING BURNS

When you ***inspect a work of artifice or magic for a fatal flaw***, roll +INT: **on a 7+**, the GM will reveal the best way to destroy/sabotage it; **on a 10+**, you or an ally also gain advantage to act on the info.

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐☐☐ INITIATE OF THE SECRET ARTS

(Requires level 2+ and the Seeker)
You have a "Sacred Pouch" (3 Stock, *magical*), as per the Blessed, but with no remarkable traits. Each time you take this move, choose a Blessed move for which you otherwise qualify. (You can't take Improved Stat or Superior Stat.)

☐ LET'S MAKE A DEAL

When you ***Seek Insight***, add "What do they really want or need?" to the list of questions. When you ***Persuade by offering them something that you know they want or need***, treat a 7-9 as a 10+.

☐ LOGBOOK ○○

You have a logbook (2 uses, *slow*) that doesn't take up space in your inventory. When you (and only you) ***consult your logbook and expend a use***, you can ignore a Know Things roll you just made and treat the result as a 10+. When ***the Seasons Change***, reset your logbook to 2 uses.

☐ MAGPIE

When you ***Have What You Need***, you can produce something strange, specific, maybe even valuable or a little bit magical, but if you do, tell us where you got it and 2 of the following:

- How it's not quite right, but maybe it'll do?
- The trouble you caused back home by getting it
- Why using it will draw unwanted attention
- That it's the only thing like this that you've got, and why it'll only work the one time

☐ NEVER AT A LOSS

When you ***Know Things and roll a 6-***, you may choose to not mark XP. If you don't mark XP, the worst that happens is that the GM tells you nothing interesting or useful about the subject, but instead tells you how you could learn more.

☐ POLYGLOT

When you ***first encounter a living language in play***, describe your proficiency with it (if any) and how you came to acquire it.

When you ***Know Things about any script, text, runes or symbols that you encounter***, you have advantage.

☐ CRYPTOLOGIST

(Requires Polyglot)
When you ***study encoded, forgotten, or arcane marks or writing***, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, you can fully decipher them in just a few minutes; **on a 7-9**, you get the gist in a few minutes, but fully deciphering them will take you an hour or so.

☐ QUICK STUDY

When you ***study something magical that should take months to understand***, it instead takes mere weeks. If it should take weeks, it takes days. If it should take days, it takes only a few hours.

☐ SAFETY FIRST ○○

When you ***spend an hour or so preparing your mystical defenses***, hold 2 Protection. When you ***are affected by harmful magic***, spend 1 Protection either to gain advantage on any roll to resist it or to halve its damage/effects.

☐ SAGE ADVICE

When ***another PC asks you for guidance***, they get advantage on their next roll to follow your advice.

☑☐☐ WELL VERSED

Mark 1 topic, in addition to the one noted in your Background. Each additional time you take this move, mark 2 more topics.

- ☐ The Last Door, death, and the undead
- ☐ The civilizations of humanity
- ☐ The Fae and their strange ways
- ☐ The Makers and their arts
- ☐ The primordial powers
- ☐ The Things Below
- ☐ The wild world and its spirits

When you ***Know Things about one of your topics***, you can ask the GM a follow-up question of your choice (even on a 6-).

☑ WORK WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT

When you ***cleverly use your environment to harm or impede your foe(s)***, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, pick 2; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- Interrupt or thwart their action(s)
- Create an opportunity that grants you or an ally advantage on the next roll to exploit it
- Deal damage appropriate to the source (d4 for bruises/scrapes, d6 for bloodshed, d8 if it'd break bones, d10 if it'd kill a common person)

☐ ARCANE ADEPT

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***wish to invent a spell or magical effect***, detail its workings with the GM and Make a Plan to invent it. If you like, pick one requirement and ask the GM to provide an alternative (for example "first you must ____" could become "first you must ____, or it will take months").

☐ DEEP INSIGHT

(Requires level 6+ and Attuned)
When you ***Seek Insight about something magical***, you may ask one additional question,, not limited to the list. Even on a 6-, you get to ask this question.

☐ IMPROVISE

(Requires level 6+ and Quick Study)
When you ***wish to use an arcanum's move or option without having unlocked it***, ask the GM what fool risk(s) it requires and/or what consequence(s) you'll incur. If you go for it, roll +INT: **on a 7+**, you get it to work this once—trigger the move or use the option as if you'd unlocked it; and **on a 10+**, also mark one step towards unlocking the arcanum's mysteries.

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires level 6+)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

☐ MIND OVER MAGIC

(Requires level 6+)
When you ***roll to study or use an arcanum***, you can roll +INT instead of the stat you'd normally roll.

☐ OVERCHANNEL

(Requires level 6+ and Conduit of Power)
When you ***would mark a Consequence from a major arcanum***, you may mark a debility instead.

☐ PROOF AGAINST DETECTION

(Requires level 6+ and Safety First)
When you ***hold Protection***, you can't be scried upon or sensed by magical means, and have advantage to Defy Danger by being stealthy.

Collection

In your travels and investigations you have acquired arcana—artifacts of power and mystery.

MAJOR ARCANA

Your Background grants you 1 major arcanum. Answer at least 2 questions about it:

- ☐ Where did you acquire it?
- ☐ From whose grasp did you wrest it?
- ☐ Who else wants it?
- ☐ What did it cost you?

You've begun to unlock the mysteries of your major arcanum; mark 1 ☐ or ○ on the front of its insert.

When and how did that happen?

MINOR ARCANA

Ask the GM for the Minor Arcana cards. Draw 3 at random and review both sides.

Choose one whose secrets you have unlocked. If it's portable, you either keep it on your person or hidden away somewhere safe. Where is it now? How did you come to master it?

Choose another, which you have not yet mastered. It is either in your possession or in a secret place known only to you. Where is it? How did you find it?

The third you have not yet found, but you have a lead on it. Give the card back to the GM, but make note of it below. During play, ask the GM what you know about it.

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **describe your major arcana**. Tell us your answers to the questions you chose. Then, **tell us about your minor arcana**, too.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Who is your closest kin?
- ☐ Who is your spouse/lover/betrothed?
- ☐ Whom do you trust, even more than yourself?
- ☐ Whom do you secretly watch over, and why?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you led me to a key discovery?
- ☐ Which one of you has been at my side the entire way?
- ☐ Which one of you most fears the path I tread?
- ☐ Which one of you is keeping secrets from me?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring burst forth!

The Would-be Hero

Most people hope for a quiet life. They spend their days a-worrying: about a leaky roof, a sick child, their crops. But you aren't like most people—you're on a different path. A path to adventure! There's greatness in you. Let's hope you live long enough for everyone else to see it.

Background (Choose 1)

☐ **IMPETUOUS YOUTH**

Stonetop has always been home, but you chafe at the demands of mundane life and have always longed for more. Excitement! Danger!

When you ***make a move and come up short***, you can give it your all and turn a 6- into a 7-9, a 7-9 into a 10+, and (if it matters), a 10-11 into a 12+. But if you do, pick 1 (the GM will fill in the details):

- You get hurt (2d4 damage and an actual injury)
- You cause collateral damage, endanger others, or otherwise escalate the situation
- Something on your person is lost or breaks

☐ **DRIVEN**

You once led a simple life, but something happened. Something changed you, burdened you with terrible purpose. What was it? Choose 1:

- ☐ A loved one was killed or abducted
- ☐ Someone gave their life to save you
- ☐ Your idol sacrificed themselves to save many
- ☐ You stumbled upon a dark mystery
- ☐ You must make amends for a terrible mistake

You always have the option of Burning Brightly; you can spend 2 XP after you roll to add +1, even if you don't have enough XP to level.

☐ **DESTINED** ○○○

Fate has laid her hand upon you. Choose 3-4 of the items below to describe your destiny:

☐ anointed ☐ marked at birth ☐ your coming foretold
☐ destroy ☐ discover ☐ free ☐ protect ☐ restore
☐ unify ☐ blood ☐ civilization ☐ darkness
☐ earth & stone ☐ fire ☐ ice ☐ light ☐ life ☐ storms
☐ war ☐ water ☐ the Fae ☐ the gods ☐ the Makers
☐ the Stone ☐ the Things Below

At the ***start of a session***, roll +Omens: **on a 7+**, lose all Omens and the GM will describe a vision or portent that points toward your fate and/or clarifies your current situation; also, **on a 10+**, ask the GM a follow-up question and get a clear, helpful answer; ***on a 6-***, don't mark XP, hold +1 Omen, and tell us of your recent nightmares or a troubling vision, and how your fears play into them.

Until your destiny is fulfilled, treat a 6- on Death's Door as a 7-9, and a 7-9 as a 10+.

Instinct (Choose 1)

☐ **DEFIANCE**

To refuse to back down, give up, give in.

☐ **DOUBT**

To question yourself, your actions, your worth.

☐ **EARNESTNESS**

To prove yourself, to yourself and others.

☐ **OPTIMISM**

To assume the best, and that things are simple.

☐ **SACRIFICE**

To put the needs/wants of others above your own.

☐

Appearance

Choose 1 on each line, or make something up:

☐ still a child ☐ young & beautiful ☐ all grown up
☐ confident voice ☐ earnest voice ☐ quiet voice
☐ big ☐ scrawny ☐ sinewy ☐ slender ☐ thick
☐ back unbowed ☐ jaw firmly set ☐ soulful eyes

Place of origin and name

Stonetop is your home, or close enough, but where are you (or your family) from originally? Pick 1 and a name to match (or make up something similar).

- ☐ **Stonetop**: Anwen, Caradoc, Dafyd, Glenys, Madoc, Morwenna, Siwan, or Wynfor
- ☐ **Barrier Pass**: Bala, Cotota, Ganzorig, Gerelma, Ibahka, Jungshoi, Mukhali, or Taichu
- ☐ **Steplands** (Hillfolk): Annic, Cosette, Denl, Hugenne, Jag, Marc, Oanz, or Sandre
- ☐ **Gordin's Delve**: Pick a name from any list
- ☐ **Marshedge**: Bridin, Clian, Engis, Fearghul, Lan, Neasa, Nill, or Una
- ☐ **Lygos or some other point south**: Chara, Davud, Korina, Omid, Parvaneh, Tamir, Takish, or Yannis

I am
called...

Stats

Assign these scores: +1, +0, +0, +0, +0, -1. When a debility is marked, you roll with disadvantage.

Strength (STR)	Dexterity (DEX)	Intelligence (INT)	Wisdom (WIS)	Constitution (CON)	Charisma (CHA)

weakened — *dazed* — *miserable*

d6 Damage	HP (max 16)	Armor	XP	Level

Special possessions (Pick 2)

- ☐ **A heap of expectations**: of little use
- ☐ **A good dog**, follower (☐ *retriever* or ☐ *herder*, *keen-nosed*, *clever*); HP 6; Damage d6 (*hand*, *grabby*); **Instinct** to play; Cost: affection.
- ☐ **Husbandry tools**: brushes, muzzles, collars, feed, ◇ whips, ◇ bridles, etc. Gain advantage to Persuade domestic beasts (livestock, dogs, etc.).
- ☐ **Smithy** (or access to it): iron goods, ingots, thick gloves, ◇ tongs, ◇ bellows, an anvil, etc.
- ☐ **Stoneworker's tools**: chisels, drills, ◇ prybars, ◇ spikes, ◇ block & tackles, wheelbarrow, etc.
- ☐ **Personal token, fraught with meaning**: (pick 1)
  - ☐ ◇◇ A shield, bearing ___'s crest
  - ☐ ◇ A wool cloak, woven just for you by ___
  - ☐ A letter, spattered with tears & blood
  - ☐ A flute, a gift from someone you loved
  - ☐ A fine locket, holding a strand of hair
  - ☐ A tinderbox, lovingly engraved
- ☐ **Tannery** (or access to it): lime, acid, salts, thick gloves, ◇ a boiled leather cuirass (1 armor), etc.
- ☐ ..... (discuss with GM)

Moves

You start with Anger is a Gift, Potential for Greatness, and 2 other moves of your choice.

☑ ANGER IS A GIFT ○○

When you ***burn with righteous anger*** (see Fear & Anger on back of playbook), hold 2 Resolve. You can spend your Resolve 1-for-1 to:

- Set aside fear and doubt to do what must be done
- Act suddenly, catching them off-guard
- Inspire allies or bystanders to follow your lead
- Strike hard (+1d4 damage, *forceful*)
- Keep your footing, position, and/or your course despite what befalls you

☐ SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

(Requires Anger is a Gift)
When you ***demand that someone does what is clearly good and right***, you have advantage to Persuade. If they refuse, gain +1 Resolve.

☐ BETTER PART OF VALOR

When you ***are outnumbered or facing a foe bigger than you***, you have advantage to hide from, escape from, or sneak past them.

☐ I GET KNOCKED DOWN

When you ***take damage despite your best efforts to avoid it***, you can choose to halve the damage but pick 1 of the following:

- You lose something (footing, grip, etc.)
- Something on your person breaks
- You're out of it for a moment

Whatever you choose, the GM will describe the details.

☐ BUT I GET UP AGAIN

(Requires I Get Knocked Down)
When you ***use I Get Knocked Down***, you have advantage on your next roll against whatever dealt the damage and your next blow against them does +1d4 damage.

☐☐☐ IMPROVED STAT

Each time you take this move, increase one of your stats by 1 (to a max of +2).

☐ IN OVER YOUR HEAD

When ***another PC rescues you from danger***, mark XP.

☐ IRON WILL

When you ***are subject to mind control or magic that affects your feelings***, you can take 1d4 damage (ignoring armor) to disregard its influence.

☐ INQUIRING MINDS

When you ***seek out and receive honest advice***, gain advantage on your next roll to follow that advice.

☐ NEVER GONNA KEEP ME DOWN ○

When you ***have 5 or fewer current HP***, you impose disadvantage on any damage you take.

Once per session, when you are at Death's Door, don't roll. You get a 10+.

☑ POTENTIAL FOR GREATNESS

(Requires the Would-be Hero)
Once per level, ***when you roll a stat and get a 10+***, mark one of the following (note the level during which you marked it). You don't have to mark them in order.

- ☐ Increase the stat you rolled by 1, to a max of +2 (at level ___)
- ☐ Increase the stat you rolled by 1, to a max of +2 (at level ___)
- ☐ Increase the stat you rolled by 1, to a max of +2 (at level ___)
- ☐ Increase the stat you rolled by 1, to a max of +2 (at level ___)
- ☐ Increase your max HP by 4 (at level ___)
- ☐ Increase your damage die to a d8 (at level ___)

☐ RESOURCEFUL

When you ***Defy Danger and roll a 6-***, ask the GM a question from Seek Insight after they describe what happens. Gain advantage on your next roll to act on the answer.

☐ SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY

When you ***spend Readiness (from Defend) to strike back at an attacker***, you deal +1d4 damage and scar, mark, or diminish them in some way (the GM will say how, or ask you to).

☐ TOUGH LOVE

When you ***honestly think another PC is in the wrong and call them on it***, they have disadvantage on any rolls against you until you two work it out.

☐ UNDERESTIMATED

As long as you ***avoid overt hostility***, no enemy will consider you a threat.

When you ***first make your move against an enemy who underestimates you***, you have advantage.

☐ UP WITH PEOPLE ○○|○

When you ***converse with someone*** (PC or NPC) you can hold 2 Rapport with them. If you do, they hold 1 Rapport with you. During the conversation, either of you can spend 1 Rapport to ask the other player one of the following and get an honest answer.

- What weighs you down or holds you back?
- What drives you forward?
- What lesson would you have me learn?
- What do you think of me, truly?

☐☐☐☐ VERSATILE

(Requires level 2+, the Would-be Hero)
Choose a move from any other playbook, as long as you meet its requirements. You can pick from a different playbook each time. You can't take Improved Stat or Superior Stat.

☐ A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH*

(Requires level 6+; replaces Underestimated)
Any intelligent creature who looks you in the eye or hears the steel in your voice instinctively knows that you are a force to be reckoned with, and treats you appropriately.

When you ***Defy Danger against something trying to harm or constrain you***, on a 12+ you turn the tables on them (the GM will say how, or ask you to).

☐ BIG DAMN HERO*

(Requires level 6+; replaces In Over Your Head)
When you ***first leap into danger to protect someone***, don't roll to Defend. Instead, treat it as though you rolled a 10+.

When you ***Defend***, you can spend 1 Readiness to lock eyes with an attacker; they have disadvantage on damage rolls against you and your ward for the rest of the fight.

☐ SUPERIOR STAT

(Requires all 6 marks in Potential for Greatness)
Increase one of your stats by +1 (to a max of +3).

☐ UNDAUNTED*

(Requires level 6+; replaces Better Part of Valor)
When you ***are outnumbered or facing a foe bigger than you***, you get +1 armor and deal +1d6 damage.

☐ VOICE OF EXPERIENCE*

(Requires level 6+; replaces Inquiring Minds)
When ***another PC comes to you for advice and you tell them what you think is best***, they have advantage on their first roll to follow your advice.

When you ***Seek Insight***, you can always ask, "What is about to happen?" for free, even on a 6-.

* The first time you use any move marked with an asterisk (*), cross off "Would-be" on the front page.

Fear & anger

What do you fear most? (choose 1, maybe 2)

- ☐ Fire, burning, the smell of charred flesh
- ☐ That they won't take you seriously
- ☐ That you really aren't cut out for this
- ☐ The death of your family or loved ones
- ☐ Being alone and helpless
- ☐ Violence, bloodshed, and pain
- ☐ Monsters
- ☐ What you're capable of
- ☐ What you must do

What makes you burn with righteous anger? (choose 2, maybe 3)

- ☐ Bullying, slavery, and oppression
- ☐ Wanton cruelty and unnecessary suffering
- ☐ Injustice and inequality
- ☐ Cowardice, treachery, and selfishness
- ☐ The despoiling of beauty and innocence
- ☐ Threats to your loved ones
- ☐ Violence to children, animals, the innocent
- ☐ Perversions of nature

When did your fear or anger last cause you trouble?

What did you do?

How did it turn out?

Introductions

Wait here for everyone else. When everyone's ready, take turns introducing your characters. When ***someone reveals something and you want to know more***, ask them about it. When ***someone asks you a question***, answer it truthfully.

1 On your first turn, **introduce yourself** by name, pronouns, background, origin, and appearance.

2 On your second turn, **describe your special possessions** and how you contribute to the village (beyond working the fields).

3 On your third turn, **tell us of your fear & anger**, and of the last time they caused you trouble.

4 On your next turn, **answer one of the following**, naming one or more NPCs who live in Stonetop.

- ☐ Whose heart do you hope to win?
- ☐ Who is counting on you?
- ☐ Who quietly understands the path you are on?
- ☐ Who do you intend to prove wrong?

5 Go around again. Answer another question from 4, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

6 On your next turn, **ask your fellow PCs one of these**. When others ask you, answer as you like.

- ☐ Which one of you is my closest, truest friend?
- ☐ Which one of you believes in me, despite it all?
- ☐ Which one of you has promised to teach me?
- ☐ Which one of you have I hurt, through what I have done or what I've failed to do?

7 Go around again. Ask another question from 6, or pass. When everyone has passed, go on.

8 Add your home to the steading playbook. When everyone is done, let spring break forth!

Inserts

Your PC will have at least one insert, a double-sided half-page sheet that you can slip inside your folded playbook. PDFs are included in the playkit on the Lampblack & Brimstone website, but the inserts are also included in this chapter for reference.

Every PC gets the **Inventory** sheet (page 142). See **Gear and possessions** on page 86 for an explanation on how this insert is used. The back of the insert will vary based on your playbook and choices made.

If you are…

… **the Ranger with the animal companion move**, then you get the **Animal Companion** insert (page 143), of course;
… **the Marshal**, then you get the **Crew** insert (page 144);
… **the Blessed with the Initiate background**, then you get the **Initiates of Danu** insert (page 145);
… **the Lightbearer**, then you get the **Invocations** insert (page 146);

Otherwise, you get a **generic** insert (page 147) with space for tracking followers and a summary of your player agenda, principles, and rules.

The PDF in the playkit is set up to print with the Inventory sheet on one page and the playbook-specific (or generic follower/agenda sheets) on the back. Only one copy of each sheet is included in this chapter.

There are also three inserts that can be gained as a result of the Death's Door move and bad decision-making: the **Ghost** (page 148), the **Revenant** (page 150), and the **Thrall** (page 152). These inserts are normally printed out double-sided on a half-sheet of paper. You take one of them only when it becomes relevant.

In addition to the inserts presented in this chapter, you might also get an insert that represents a **major arcanum** (page 60). The Seeker starts play with a major arcanum as indicated by their background; and if you take the Heavy playbook with the "Storm-marked" background, you start play with the Storm Markings major arcanum. You'll find these in Appendix D: Major Arcana (*Book II*, page 540).

Inventory for _____

When you ***Outfit***, mark a number of ◇ below, on specific items or Undefined.

- For a **light load** (*quick & quiet*), mark up to 3 ✓
- For a **normal load**, mark 4-6 ✓
- For a **heavy load** (*noisy, slow, hot, quick to tire*), mark 7-9 ✓

Undefined ◇◇◇ ◇◇◇ ◇◇◇

When you ***Have What You Need***, move ✓ from here to ◇ below.

◇ **Supplies** (4+Prosperity uses ○○○○○○)
◇ **More supplies** (4+Prosperity uses ○○○○○○)
◇ **Even more supplies** (4+Prosperity uses ○○○○○○)
Use supplies to Recover, Make Camp, or have extra *small* items.

◇ **Mess kit** (requires fire & water; makes Supplies last longer)
◇ **Bedroll** (recover 1d6 extra HP when you Make Camp)

◇ **Blanket** (*warm*)
◇ **Rope**, ~25 ft
◇◇ **Sledge/litter/travois**, roll-out
◇ **Change of clothes**
◇ **Shovel**
◇ **Snow-shoes**

◇ **Torch** (lasts ~1 hour; *reach*, *area*, *dangerous*)
◇ **Oil lamp** (○○○ hours, *close*, *area*, *crude*)
◇ **Extra oil** (○○○○○ hours, for lamp/lantern, useless as a weapon)
◇◇ **Firewood** (enough to last 1 full night, *reach*, *area*)

◇ **Hatchet**, iron (*hand*, *thrown*, *x* piercing)
◇ **Mallet**, iron and/or wood (*hand*)

◇ **Mattock**, iron (*close*, *x* piercing, *messy*, *awkward*)
◇◇ **Maul**, iron (*close*, *forceful*, *awkward*)
◇ **Staff** (*close*)

◇ **Spear**, iron (*close*, *thrown*, *x* piercing)
◇◇ **Long spear**, iron (*reach*, *x* piercing)

◇ **Bow & iron arrows** (*near*, *x* piercing, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
◇ **Extra arrows** (*x* piercing, ○ plenty left, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
◇ **Javelins**, a few, iron (*thrown*, *x* piercing, +1 damage, ○ all out)

◇◇ **Shield** (+1 armor, +1 Readiness on a 7+ to Defend)
◇◇ **Thick hides** (1 armor, *warm*)
◇ **Cloak** (*warm*)

Possessions, items, loot

◇ _____ ◇◇ _____
◇ _____ ◇◇ _____
◇ _____ ◇◇ _____
◇◇ _____
◇◇ _____

Other things (animals, kits, stashed items, etc.)

Small items

Fit in a pocket, pouch, or boot.

When you ***Outfit***, mark ☐ below equal to 4+Prosperity.

Undefined ☐☐☐☐☐☐

When you ***Have What You Need***, move ☑ from here to items below, or expend supplies to mark an additional ☐.

☐ **Knife** or **dagger**, iron (*hand*)
☐ **Sling** (*near*, *reload*, *awkward*, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
☐ **Rushlight** (lasts ~15-30 minutes, *close*, *crude*)
☐ **Tinderbox** (*slow*)
☐ **Needle & thread**
☐ **Handful of coppers**
☐ **Whisky**, skin (○○ uses)

☐ **Awl**
☐ **Chalk**
☐ **Clay jar**
☐ **Comb**
☐ **Extra socks**
☐ **Little box**
☐ **Sawdust**
☐ **Twine/cord**
☐ **Whetstone**
☐ **Bowstring**
☐ **Charcoal**
☐ **Cloth/rag**
☐ **Cup**
☐ **Gloves**
☐ **Sack** (empty)
☐ **Tallow**
☐ **Waterskin**
☐ **Whistle**

☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____

Prosperity

☐ -1 Gear is *crude*
☐ +0
☐ +1 *x* =1 piercing
☐ +2 *x* =2 piercing

Animal Companion

Ranger, you are accompanied by a beast, with whom you have bonded deeply and communicate without words. Treat it as a follower.

HP Max. [ ]
Armor See Type
Damage See Type

Name _____

Damage tags _____

Type Pick 1.

☐ **Bird** (falcon, eagle, owl, buzzard, magpie, _____)
HP 5; **Armor** 1 (size); **Damage** d4 (*hand*)

Pick 4 more: ☐ Improved damage die (d6)
☐ +4 HP ☐ +1 armor (agility) ☐ *attack-bird*
☐ *cautious* ☐ *clever* ☐ *fast* ☐ *mimic* ☐ *sharp-eyed*
☐ *stealthy* ☐ *thieving* ☑ *tiny* ☐ *tireless*
☐ _____

☐ **Critter** (cat, fox, possum, raccoon, weasel, _____)
HP 5; **Armor** 1 (size); **Damage** d4 (*hand*)

Pick 5 more: ☐ +4 HP ☐ +1 armor (agility)
☐ *agile* ☐ *adorable* ☐ *annoying* ☐ *burrowing*
☐ *cautious* ☐ *clever* ☐ *climber* ☐ *dextrous*
☐ *keen-eared* ☐ *keen-eyed* ☐ *keen-nosed* ☐ *quick*
☐ *stealthy* ☐ *stinky* ☑ *tiny* ☐ *thieving*
☐ _____

☐ **Brute** (bear, boar, wolverine, aurochs, drake, _____)
HP 12; **Armor** 0; **Damage** d6 (*hand*)

Pick 3 more: ☐ +1 armor (hide, scales, etc.)
☐ Damage is +2 damage, *forceful*
☐ Damage is *messy*, 1 piercing
☐ *large* (+4 HP, +1 damage, +*close*) ☐ *easy-going*
☐ *fearless* ☐ *gluttonous* ☐ *keen-nosed* ☐ *powerful*
☐ *protective* ☐ *quick* ☐ *terrifying* ☑ *tough*
☐ _____

☐ **Predator** (hound, wolf, cougar, drake, _____)
HP 8; **Armor** 0; **Damage** d8 (*hand, grabby*)

Pick 3 more: ☐ +4 HP ☐ +1 armor (hide)
☐ Damage is *messy*, 1 piercing ☐ *agile* ☐ *climber*
☐ *clever* ☐ *enduring* ☐ *fast* ☑ *fierce* ☐ *keen-eared*
☐ *keen-eyed* ☐ *pack-hunter* ☐ *keen-nosed*
☐ *patient* ☐ *powerful* ☐ *stealthy* ☐ *terrifying*
☐ _____

☐ **Steed** (horse, mule, _____)
HP 12; **Armor** 0; **Damage** d6+1 (*hand*, *close*)

Pick 4 more: ☐ +4 HP ☐ +1 armor (hide)
☐ Damage is +2 damage, *forceful* ☐ *aggressive*
☐ *agile* ☐ *beautiful* ☐ *calm* ☐ *clever* ☐ *hardy*
☐ *keen-nosed* ☑ *large* ☐ *powerful* ☐ *swift*
☐ _____

Instinct Pick 1.

☐ To bully and threaten
☐ To fill its belly
☐ To get distracted
☐ To give chase
☐ To make mischief
☐ To startle and panic
☐ To run rampant
☐ _____

Cost Pick 1.

Loyalty ○○○

☐ Play, grooming, training, affection
☐ Time off on its own, free to roam
☐ Cozy quarters, comfort, ample food
☐ _____

Each time you take Beast of Legend, pick 1:

☐ They are *exceptional* (see Order Followers below)
☐ They get +4 HP and +1 armor
☐ They develop a unique ability or trait

ORDER FOLLOWERS

When you ***direct them to make a move and they do so,*** roll +1 instead of +STAT if any of their tags apply (or +2 if they're also *exceptional*). If no tags apply, roll +0. If any of their tags would get in the way, roll with disadvantage.

When they ***are without orders*** or they ***act on their own initiative***, the GM says what they do and how it goes.

STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND

When you ***pay their cost*** and you haven't done so recently, they hold +1 Loyalty (max 3).

Spend their Loyalty 1-for-1 to have them:

- Overcome their fear to do as you say
- Resist acting on their instinct/tags/traits
- Do something they don't want to do (as long as it's not abhorrent or suicidal)

LOYAL TO THE END

When ***your companion is at 0 HP***, roll +0, with advantage if it holds Loyalty: **on a 10+**, it'll be fine once it regains any HP; **on a 7-9**, it gets the *injured* tag; **on a 6-**, it's injured and will die soon unless someone saves it.

Crew Marshal, your Crew is a half-dozen strong by default. Treat them as a follower with the *group* tag. All starting values here are subject to change in play.

HP Starts at 6 ea. **Armor** Starts at 0 **Damage** Starts at d6

Tags Your crew starts with *group*, a tag granted by your background, plus 2 more of your choice.

☐ *archers* ☐ *athletic* ☐ *brave* ☐ *cunning* ☐ *devoted*
☑ *group* ☐ *hardy* ☐ *intimidating* ☐ *observant*
☐ *patient* ☐ *respected* ☐ *stealthy* ☐ *warriors*
☐ ..... ☐ ..... ☐ .....
☐ *exceptional* (requires Heroes to the Last)

Instinct Pick 1.

- ☐ To bicker, infight, and hold grudges
- ☐ To hew to tradition and superstition
- ☐ To indulge their baser instincts
- ☐ To lord over others
- ☐ To take needless risks
- ☐ To take things too far
- ☐ .....

Cost Pick 1. **Loyalty** ○○○

- ☐ Merry-making, as a group
- ☐ Public recognition and respect, honor
- ☐ Risks taken, by you, to help them
- ☐ Victories won against worthy foes
- ☐ Wealth gained for themselves or Stonetop
- ☐ .....

Inventory 3 ✓ or fewer is a light load; 4-6 ✓ is a normal load; 7-9 ✓ is a heavy load.

◇ **Hatchet**, iron (*hand*, *thrown*, *x* piercing)
◇ **Spear**, iron (*close*, *thrown*, *x* piercing)
◇ **Bow & iron arrows** (*near*, *x* piercing, ○ low ammo, ○ all out)
◇◇ **Shield** (+1 armor, +1 Readiness on a 7+ to Defend)
◇◇ **Thick hides** (1 armor, *warm*)
◇ **Cloak** (*warm*)
◇ **Supplies** (4+Prosperity uses per crew member)
○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○
○○○○○○ ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○
◇ ..... ◇◇ .....
◇ ..... ◇◇ .....
◇ ..... ◇◇ .....

Individuals When one stands out, give them a name, a tag, and one or more traits.

Names: Aled, Culhwich, Eira, Gerat, Glaw, Harri, Lowri, Mervyn, Nesta

Tags: *animal-lover, big, bully, cynical, drunkard, eager, gambler, greedy, grumpy, gullible, heartthrob, honest, kind, lewd, little, naive, old, popular, proud, rookie, reckless, shameless, sharp-eyed, short-tempered*

Traits: __'s kid/sibling/parent/cousin/__, bald, crush on __, grudge against __, hates __, idolizes __, jokes, messy, missing eye/finger/hand/__, misses their kids, nightmares, recently married, religious, scars, skinny, sharp-tongued, sings, snores, tells tall tales, too serious, troubles at home, whistles, whittler

ORDER FOLLOWERS
When you ***direct them to make a move and they do so,*** roll +1 instead of +STAT if any of their tags apply (or +2 if they're also *exceptional*). If no tags apply, roll +0. If any of their tags would get in the way, roll with disadvantage.

When they ***are without orders*** or they ***act on their own initiative***, the GM says what they do and how it goes.

STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND
When you ***pay their cost*** and you haven't done so recently, they hold +1 Loyalty (max 3).

Spend their Loyalty 1-for-1 to have them:

- Overcome their fear to do as you say
- Resist acting on their instinct/tags/traits
- Do something they don't want to do (as long as it's not abhorrent or suicidal)

Initiates of Danu Blessed, if you took the Initiate background, then you chose 2 or 3 of the following as your fellow initiates. Mark those you picked and treat them as followers. Cross off the others.

☐ Enfys, the acolyte
Bird-wise, innocent, magical, well-informed

HP 6; **Armor** 0 — **HP** Max. 6
Damage bronze knife d4 (*hand*)
Instinct to get distracted
- Speak with birds
- Ask a difficult question
- Wander off

Cost knowledge, secret lore; **Loyalty** ○○○

Pick 1 on each line: ☐ he ☐ she ☐ they ☐ .....
☐ just a child ☐ on the cusp ☐ a young adult
☐ carefully chosen ☐ marked by Danu ☐ orphaned
☐ carefree ☐ curious ☐ moody ☐ secretive

☐ Olwin, your anointed lover
Fates-wise, beautiful, passionate, magical

HP 6; **Armor** 1 (shield) — **HP** Max. 6
Damage iron spear d6 (*close*, *thrown*)
Instinct to lack discretion
- Perform a divination
- Speak a (dire) prophecy
- Make a big deal about something

Cost tenderness, respect; **Loyalty** ○○○

Pick 1 on each line: ☐ he ☐ she ☐ they ☐ .....
☐ betrothed ☐ true love ☐ ceremonial ☐ complicated
☐ contary ☐ dramatic ☐ passionate ☐ tormented
rites of... ☐ blood ☐ fire ☐ sacred union

☐ Afon, a fellow initiate
Fae-wise, devious, magical, self-sufficient, stealthy

HP 8; **Armor** 2 (0 vs. iron) — **HP** Max. 8
Damage bronze hatchet d6 (*hand*)
Instinct to act impulsively
- Weave a minor glamor
- Appear or disappear unexpectedly
- Speak an uncomfortable truth

Cost wonder, joy; **Loyalty** ○○○

Pick 1 on each line: ☐ he ☐ she ☐ they ☐ .....
☐ comes and goes ☐ in the Wood ☐ a hut near town
☐ aloof ☐ bawdy and lewd ☐ unnerving
rites of... ☐ ecstasy ☐ intoxication ☐ moonlight

☐ Seren the Eldest
Exceptional, story-wise, insightful, frail, magical

HP 3; **Armor** 0 — **HP** Max. 3
Damage walking stick d4 (*close*)
Instinct to hew to tradition
- Consult the spirits, or abjure them
- Spin a tale to make a point
- Use shame and guilt as leverage

Cost deference, good sense shown; **Loyalty** ○○○

Pick 1 on each line: ☐ he ☐ she ☐ they ☐ .....
☐ dismissed ☐ pitied ☐ feared ☐ venerated
☐ cagey ☐ friendly but firm ☐ imperious
rites of... ☐ iron ☐ secret naming ☐ winter

☐ Gwendyl, your mentor
Herb-wise, gossipy, tireless, healer, magical

HP 6; **Armor** 0 — **HP** Max. 6
Damage iron knife d6 (*hand*)
Instinct to take offense
- Tend to the sick, injured, women in labor
- Weave a talisman of fertility or good luck
- Point out a flaw in a person or plan

Cost consideration, affection; **Loyalty** ○○○

Pick 1 on each line: ☐ he ☐ she ☐ they ☐ .....
☐ a big family ☐ has taken you in ☐ lives alone
☐ blunt ☐ demanding ☐ put upon ☐ suffers no fools
rites of... ☐ earth & soil ☐ mourning ☐ petition

ORDER FOLLOWERS
When you ***direct them to make a move and they do so,*** roll +1 instead of +STAT if any of their tags apply (or +2 if they're also *exceptional*). If no tags apply, roll +0. If any of their tags would get in the way, roll with disadvantage.

When they ***are without orders*** or they ***act on their own initiative***, the GM says what they do and how it goes.

STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND
When you ***pay their cost*** and you haven't done so recently, they hold +1 Loyalty (max 3).

Spend their Loyalty 1-for-1 to have them:

- Overcome their fear to do as you say
- Resist acting on their instinct/tags/traits
- Do something they don't want to do (as long as it's not abhorrent or suicidal)

Invocations

Lightbearer, you start knowing 2 Invocations.
Each time you reach an even-numbered level, learn 1 new Invocation.

While one Invocation is *ongoing*, you can't use another. You can end an Invocation whenever you wish, and it will end immediately if your holy light is extinguished. An invocation's range is equal to that of its light source.

☐ BATH OF HEALING LIGHT

Cup your hands around your light and focus it. Your patient... (pick 2):

- Regains 5 HP (can pick this twice)
- Clears a debility (can pick this twice)
- Has one of their problematic wounds stabilized
- Recovers from a minor condition (drunk, etc.)

Reduced: pick only 1 (instead of 2).

Empowered: add these to your possible choices:

- Regains 10 HP (can pick this twice)
- Fully recovers from a problematic wound
- Is cured of a dire affliction, poison, or disease

☐ BLINDING LIGHT (*ongoing*)

Your light blazes. Any in range who look at it are temporarily blinded. Those not looking at it directly must avert their eyes. You are unaffected.

Reduced: the light flares only for a moment.

Empowered: if you wish, your allies are unaffected.

☐ CLEANSING LIGHT

Your light flares, dispelling magical effects within range. Potent, lasting magics are merely suppressed, and slowly return to power once removed from your light.

Reduced: potent, lasting magics are unaffected; other magical effects are merely suppressed.

Empowered: the invocation is *ongoing*; while it lasts, any magical effects created in or brought into range are dispelled/suppressed.

☐ COLD LIGHT OF DAY (*ongoing*)

All in your light appears as it really is, without the benefit of illusion, shapeshifting, or disguise.

Reduced: it lasts only a few moments, just long enough to glimpse the truth.

Empowered: illusions in the light are dispelled and shapeshifters in the light are momentarily stunned.

☐ DANCING LIGHT (*ongoing*)

Your light takes to the air, floating as you direct it, untethered from its fuel. You can move it anywhere that you can see it, and even change its shape or color.

Reduced: it dims, reducing its range by one step.

Empowered: you can use another Invocation through the Dancing Light while it is *ongoing*.

☐ GO BACK TO THE SHADOW

Spirits of darkness in your light take 2d8 damage (ignores armor). Roll damage for each spirit separately. A spirit reduced to 0 HP is either banished from this world or back to whatever tethers it here.

Reduced: affected spirits take only 1d8 damage.

Empowered: a spirit reduced to 0 HP is either utterly destroyed OR it's banished from the world and anything tethering it here is destroyed (GM's choice).

☐ HOLD BACK THE DARKNESS (*ongoing*)

Spirits and creatures of darkness are repelled by your light and cannot approach. The cowardly or mindless flee outright. Those forced into range of your light deal damage with disadvantage.

Reduced: you must maintain an unbroken litany of prayers in order to maintain the effect.

Empowered: affected entities that are forced into range of your light are vulnerable to mundane weapons, their supernatural defenses suppressed.

☐ MOTH TO A FLAME (*ongoing*)

Name an individual or type of mortal creature. They gaze raptly at your light and will follow it, slowly. The effect ends if they take damage.

Reduced: it lasts only briefly OR only some of the named creatures are affected (GM's choice).

Empowered: the effect continues for a few moments after they first take damage. Taking damage a second time ends the effect immediately.

☐ TERRIBLE AS THE DAWN (*ongoing*)

Name an individual or type of mortal creature. Your light fills them with dread, causing them to recoil and back away. The cowardly flee outright.

Reduced: all mortal creatures but you are affected, including your allies.

Empowered: even the brave must cower or flee.

☐ WARMTH OF THE SUN (*ongoing*)

While in your light, you and your allies are free of fear and doubt, and unharmed by extreme cold.

Reduced: only one person in the light is protected.

Empowered: the light also protects from necromantic and life-draining effects.

Followers

Name ..... **HP**
Tags .....

☐ *exceptional* ☐ *group*

Max. HP ..... **Armor** .....
Damage .....
Instinct .....
Moves ➤ .....
➤ .....
➤ .....
Cost ..... **Loyalty** ○○○
Gear
◇ ..... ◇ .....
◇ ..... ◇ .....
◇ ..... ◇ .....
Notes

Name ..... **HP**
Tags .....

☐ *exceptional* ☐ *group*

Max. HP ..... **Armor** .....
Damage .....
Instinct .....
Moves ➤ .....
➤ .....
➤ .....
Cost ..... **Loyalty** ○○○
Gear
◇ ..... ◇ .....
◇ ..... ◇ .....
◇ ..... ◇ .....
Notes

Player's Agenda

- Portray a compelling character
- Engage with the fictional world
- Play to find out what happens

Player's Principles

- Begin and end with the fiction
- Connect with the other PCs
- Show us what's important to you
- Have goals and pursue them
- Be bold, take risks
- Embrace difficulty, setback, and failure
- Participate in worldbuilding
- Build on what others have said
- Give others a chance to shine
- Participate in the conversation

When in doubt...

- Visualize the situation
- Ask the GM for clarification
- What do you want? What's your goal?
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses
- Look to others for ideas
- Go with the obvious choice, the interesting choice, the meaningful choice... not always the "right" choice (remember, you get XP on a miss!)

Triggering moves

If you want to do it, then do it in the fiction. Tell us how you do it, what it looks like. Be specific.

But remember: if you do it in the fiction, then you have to do it. "I rush past the hagr to grab the glowing sword" and the GM says that's Defy Danger with DEX. It's okay to say, "Oh, really? I guess I don't do that." But if you want to rush past the hagr, make with the dice.

Hold and spend

When a move says, "hold X Currency (until/while/so long as __)," then note the Currency you hold and spend it as described by the move. Spending held Currency usually means you just do it, no roll required.

Sometimes, though, spending held Currency will allow you to trigger a move (and thus roll) when otherwise you just couldn't have done it.

Ghost

When you ***die but your soul lingers***, refusing to pass through the Last Door, you gain this insert, and choose 1 Consequence (see reverse).

Instinct

Lose the Instinct from your playbook, and replace it with one of these (your choice):

☐ **DENIAL**
To refuse to accept that you are dead.

☐ **OBSESSION**
To pursue your Terrible Purpose no matter what.

☐ **ENNUI**
To bemoan your condition, to wish for release.

Moves

You gain all of the following:

☑ **UNLIVING**
You do not breathe. You need not eat nor drink nor sleep. You do not heal normally. You gain no benefit from magical healing, Make Camp, Recover or Convalesce.

☑ **DISEMBODIED**
Your body is dead and gone, but you persist as a spirit. You can be harmed only by silver, salt, or that which harms spirits or ghosts.

You normally go unseen, with the barest influence on the material world and a dim, distorted sense of reality. When you ***manifest a ghostly presence in shadows or darkness***, the world becomes clear and pick 1. For each additional option you pick, lose 1d4 HP:

- You appear solid and whole, much as you did in life
- You can speak clearly and intelligibly
- Your touch (or ghostly weapons) can harm the living (ignores armor)

You remain manifest for as long as you concentrate; pain or shock or direct sunlight threaten your concentration, for sure.

☑ **TETHERED**
Choose something to which you are bound: your mortal remains, the place where you died, an object of personal significance, etc.

When you ***are reduced to 0 HP***, mark a consequence (see reverse) and your essence disperses until the next sunset. You reform near your tether with half your max HP. If your tether has been destroyed, mark the Final Consequence.

Terrible Purpose

Choose 1:

☐ **LONGING**
Name the person or persons you refuse to let go of.

When you ***spend the night watching them***, regain all your HP or clear all your debilities.

When they ***genuinely return your affections***, free of fear or horror, either regain all your HP and clear your debilities, or clear a consequence (see reverse).

When ***they rebuff you or recoil from you***, mark a consequence (see reverse).

When they ***die peacefully and pass through the Last Door***, so do you.

Should they be ***taken from you violently***, mark the Final Consequence (see reverse).

☐ **VENGEANCE**
Name the person or persons who must pay.

When you ***spend the night wailing, howling, and raging in a lonely place***, regain all your HP or clear all your debilities.

When you ***make one of them pay and ensure that they know why***, either regain all your HP and clear your debilities, or clear a consequence (see reverse).

When they ***defeat or escape you***, mark a consequence (see reverse).

When you ***kill the last of them***, pass through the Last Door.

Should they ***die before you're finished with them***, mark the Final Consequence (see reverse).

☐ **DUTY**
Name the task you refuse to leave undone.

When you ***spend the night working on your task***, regain all your HP or clear all your debilities.

When you ***achieve a significant milestone towards your task***, either regain all your HP and clear your debilities, or clear a consequence (see reverse).

When you ***fail to perform your task or suffer a material setback***, mark a consequence (see reverse).

When the ***task is finally complete***, pass through the Last Door.

Should the ***task become impossible to perform***, mark the Final Consequence (see reverse).

Ghost · Consequences

When you first take this insert, choose 1.
Choose another whenever a move tells you to do so.

☐ **BODYSNATCHER**
When you ***possess an unconscious or willing person***, lose 1d4 HP and control their actions. Use your stats and moves for any actions they take while under your control.

When you ***force your host to do something contrary to their instinct or something that they find abhorrent***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, they do it anyway; **on a 7-9**, they pick 1:

- They resist that action, and you'll never be able to force them to do it or anything similar, but you otherwise remain in control
- They do it, but it costs you—lose 2d4 HP

On a 6-, they force you from their body and you mark a consequence. You'll never be able to possess them again.

When ***your host takes damage***, you lose an equal amount of HP. If your host dies while you still have HP, you can keep them alive until your possession ends.

☐ **BREAKDOWN**
You lash out in an unthinking, unfeeling rage that lasts until the next sunrise. Ask the GM what snippets you remember.

☐ **UNSTABLE**
(Requires Breakdown)
You are prone to episodes of unthinking, unfeeling rage (as per Breakdown). When you ***roll a 6-***, the GM can choose to have you enter such a rage.

☐ **DISTURBING**
Your presence (even unseen) disturbs beasts and children. The air around you is notably cooler, especially when you manifest. When you ***use intimidation and your disturbing presence to Persuade***, you have advantage.

☐ **OTHERWORLDLY**
When you ***manifest a ghostly form***, strange things happen: statues weep, rocks bleed, plants wither, water pools on ceilings, etc.

☐ **POLTERGEIST** ○○○○
When you ***get angry***, lose 1d4 HP and hold that much Fury. Spend Fury, 1-for-1, to:

- Shatter, break, or destroy a number of small mundane objects, or one big object.
- Hurl an object at someone and roll +DEX: **on a 10+**, deal your damage (*forceful*); **on a 7-9**, deal your damage (*forceful*) but lose 1d4 HP.
- Attack someone with telekinetic force and roll +INT: **on a 10+**, fling them to a place you can see and pin them there, spending 1 HP each time they make a committed effort to break free; **on a 7-9**, as 10+, but you also lose 1d4 HP.

☐ **QUARRY**
The Pale Hunter has caught your scent. Expect a visit, soon.

☐ **SPECTER**
When you ***terrify a living person, someone who is unconnected to your Terrible Purpose***, regain 1d8 HP or clear a debility of your choice.

☐ **The Final Consequence**
Your tenuous connection to humanity is lost and you become a monster under the GM's control.

Revenant

When you ***die but cling stubbornly to your body***, refusing to pass through the Last Door, you gain this insert, and choose 1 Consequence (see reverse).

Instinct

Lose the Instinct from your playbook, and replace it with one of these (your choice):

☐ **DENIAL**
To refuse to accept that you are dead.

☐ **OBSESSION**
To pursue your Terrible Purpose no matter what.

☐ **ENNUI**
To bemoan your condition, to wish for release.

Moves

You gain all of the following:

☑ **UNLIVING**
You do not breathe. You need not eat nor drink nor sleep. You do not heal normally. You gain no benefit from magical healing, Make Camp, Recover or Convalesce.

☑ **UNDYING**
Neither poison nor disease do you harm. You feel little pain. When you ***take damage from cutting, stabbing, or crushing***, take half damage (after armor, rounded up).

When you ***are reduced to 0 HP***, roll +CON: **on a 10+**, regain half your max HP and choose 1; **on a 7-9**, regain half your max HP and choose 2; **on a 6-**, either regain 1 HP and all 3 apply, or give up this insert and gain the Ghost insert instead.

- Mark a consequence (see reverse)
- You're out of the action until the next sunset
- Your body is permanently maimed in some way of the GM's choosing

If ***your body is completely destroyed*** (burnt to ash, ground to jelly, etc.), treat it as if you were reduced to 0 HP and rolled a 6-.

☑ **IMPLACABLE**
When you ***push the limits of your undead body***, lose 1d4 HP and choose 1:

- Perform a feat of inhuman strength
- Act with uncanny speed and grace
- Refuse to be moved, held back, or knocked off course

Terrible Purpose

Choose 1:

☐ **LONGING**
Name the person or persons you refuse to let go of.

When you ***spend the night watching them***, regain all your HP or clear all your debilities.

When they ***genuinely return your affections***, free of fear or horror, either regain all your HP and clear your debilities, or clear a consequence (see reverse).

When ***they rebuff you or recoil from you***, mark a consequence (see reverse).

When they ***die peacefully and pass through the Last Door***, so do you.

Should they be ***taken from you violently***, mark the Final Consequence (see reverse).

☐ **VENGEANCE**
Name the person or persons who must pay.

When you ***spend the night wailing, howling, and raging in a lonely place***, regain all your HP or clear all your debilities.

When you ***make one of them pay and ensure that they know why***, either regain all your HP and clear your debilities, or clear a consequence (see reverse).

When they ***defeat or escape you***, mark a consequence (see reverse).

When you ***kill the last of them***, pass through the Last Door.

Should they ***die before you're finished with them***, mark the Final Consequence (see reverse).

☐ **DUTY**
Name the task you refuse to leave undone.

When you ***spend the night working on your task***, regain all your HP or clear all your debilities.

When you ***achieve a significant milestone towards your task***, either regain all your HP and clear your debilities, or clear a consequence (see reverse).

When you ***fail to perform your task or suffer a material setback***, mark a consequence (see reverse).

When the ***task is finally complete***, pass through the Last Door.

Should the ***task become impossible to perform***, mark the Final Consequence (see reverse).

Revenant · Consequences

When you first take this insert, choose 1.
Choose another whenever a move tells you to do so.

☐ **BREAKDOWN**
You lash out in an unthinking, unfeeling rage that lasts until the next sunrise. Ask the GM what snippets you remember.

☐ **UNSTABLE**
(Requires Breakdown)
You are prone to episodes of unthinking, unfeeling rage (as per Breakdown). When you ***roll a 6-***, the GM can choose to have you enter such a rage.

☐ **CARRION STENCH**
You are followed always by a horrible odor. Natural beasts will shun you; even predators will avoid you and your companions.

☐ **DEATHLY VISAGE**
It's clear to all who look upon you that you are dead. When you ***use intimidation and your sinister appearance to Persuade***, you have advantage.

☐ **HOME TO VERMIN**
Bugs, moths, and other vermin have taken up residence in your corpse. They will do you favors if you ask. Treat them as followers: *group*, *tiny*, *gross*, *meek*, *stealthy*; HP 1 each; **Instinct** to get distracted; Cost: genuine affection.

☐ **NIGHTKIN**
You can see clearly in even absolute darkness, though you see only in black and white and red. Sunlight, alas, blinds you, and direct sunlight burns your skin.

☐ **QUARRY**
The Pale Hunter has caught your scent. Expect a visit, soon.

☐ **STRANGE APPETITES**
Pick 1:

☐ still-warm blood ☐ dying breaths ☐ brains
☐ bone & marrow ☐ rotting meat ☐ eyes

When you ***consume your special fare***, heal damage equal to half your max HP or clear a debility.

☐ **INSATIABLE**
(Requires Strange Appetites)
When you ***have the opportunity to indulge your Strange Appetites***, gain advantage on your next roll if you choose to do so, or Defy Danger if you choose not to (the danger being your overwhelming desires).

☐ **The Final Consequence**
Your tenuous connection to humanity is lost and you become a monster under the GM's control.

Thrall

When you ***die but call on one of the Things Below by name and beseech them to intercede***, they do. Death is averted, but you gain this insert and 1 Mark (see reverse).

Your master

The Thing Below that you called upon? The one that plucked your soul from the Last Door and hides you from the Pale Hunter? It owns you now.

Name your master here, along with any titles that you know:

Impulse

Ask the GM to choose 1, to represent your master's nature and will:

- ☐ Stoke conflict, confusion, distrust
- ☐ Erode hope/faith/honor/self-image
- ☐ Hide/bury/smother things or ideas
- ☐ Deprive others of what they need
- ☐ Inflict harm, cruelly and unnecessarily
- ☐ Desecrate/mutilate/ruin things of value
- ☐ Shock/terrify/horrify others
- ☐ .....

Instinct

Lose the Instinct from your playbook, and replace it with one of these (your choice):

☐ **FASCINATION**
To explore your powers, your master, your new existence.

☐ **RESISTANCE**
To struggle against your master and cling to your humanity.

☐ **SHAME**
To hide and deny your true nature.

Moves

You gain all of the following:

☑ **FAVOR** ○○○
Your Favor starts at 0 and can go no higher than 3. When you ***have 3 Favor and would gain another***, reduce your Favor to 0 and choose 1:

- Ask a question of your master and gain advantage on your next roll to act on the answer.
- Gain a new Mark of your choice. Then ask the GM to choose a Mark that you don't have, and cross it off—you can never gain it.

☑ **URGES**
When ***the GM compels you to act on your impulse***, gain 1 Favor if you act as bidden. If you resist, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, your actions are your own; **on a 7-9**, choose 1:

- Struggle for control until something/one snaps you out of it
- Start acting as compelled, putting yourself or an ally in a spot before you regain control
- Harm yourself (d6 damage, ignores armor) to regain control

On a 6-, you come to your senses later, having done gods-know-what.

When you ***act on your impulse without being compelled to do so***, and your actions cause you or your allies trouble, gain 1 Favor.

☑ **DARK SUCCOR**
When you ***are dying or killed outright,*** your master intercedes on your behalf. You will recover, here and now or at a time and place of the GM's choosing. Then, roll +Favor: **on a 10+**, choose 1; **on a 7-9**, choose 2; **on a 6-**, all 3 apply.

- Gain a new Mark of the GM's choice
- Cross off a Mark that you don't have—you can never gain it
- Your master gives you a task; until you complete it, your Favor stays at 0.

Regardless, reset your Favor to 0.

☑ **UNHOLY VESSEL**
When you ***would gain a Mark but there are none left to gain***, your humanity is utterly lost. You become a threat in the GM's control. Make a new character.

Thrall · Marks

When you first gain this insert, the GM will choose 1 Mark for you, based on your master's nature. Gain more when a move tells you.

☐ **A FESTERING ROT**
You are unharmed by poison, disease, caustic substances, and vermin bites. Things in your presence rot, crack, corrode, and spoil.

When you ***roll doubles***, something on your person is ruined. The GM will tell you what, and how.

☐ **CHILD OF THE DEEPS**
Reduce your max HP by 2.

You can breathe water and suffer no harm from cold or pressure. Your skin becomes squamous. When you ***go a day without bathing***, mark a debility.

While near a body of water, you can spend 1 Favor to call forth a slimy tentacle to do your bidding. Treat it as a follower: *stealthy*, *relentless*; HP 6; Damage d10 (*reach*, *forceful*, *grabby*); **Instinct** to squeeze the life from things; Cost: lives drowned.

☐ **DEATH MASK**
You find or craft a horrid mask. When you ***do not wear your mask***, you have disadvantage on all rolls.

When you ***wear your mask***, undead treat as one of their own.

When you ***wear your mask***, you can spend 1 Favor to fill any living thing that sees you with dread. They must choose: flee, cower, or stand fast. If they stand fast, you have advantage on your first roll against them.

☐ **QUICKSILVER DREAMS**
Reduce your max HP by 2.

When ***you Make Camp***, everyone with you suffers nightmares and has disadvantage on their next roll.

You can spend 1 Favor to inflict false sensations upon someone, as long you can see them.

☐ **RAVENOUS**
You are filled with unending hunger. Gain an extra impulse: "Wantonly devour flesh."

When you ***Make Camp***, consume an extra 1d4 provisions or uses of supplies.

You can spend 1 Favor to:

- Touch something. For as long as you hold it, everyone who sees it desires it.
- Gain a horrid, iron-rending maw (*hand*, 3 piercing, *messy*) for as long as you wish, and with it the ability to eat and digest anything.

☐ **RED WRATH**
Reduce your max HP by 2.

When ***the GM compels you to violence***, you have disadvantage to resist.

When ***you let your fury fly and lash out at someone*** (*hand*, *close*), spend 1-3 Favor and roll +Favor spent: **on a 10+**, deal 2d8 damage (*messy*, *forceful*) and shock, terrify, or impress any onlookers; **on a 7-9**, as a 10+ but you keep attacking your victim (or their corpse) in an unthinking rage, heedless of other danger.

☐ **SHADOW'S COLD EMBRACE**
Reduce your max HP by 2. You cast no shadow and no reflection.

When you are ***exposed to sunlight or holy light***, you cannot spend Favor (for any reason).

Otherwise you can spend 1 Favor to:

- Remain unnoticed, even when under scrutiny or after doing something to draw attention.
- Leave no trace of your comings or goings
- Pass off a lie as an obvious, evident truth

☐ **SPEAK TRUTH, WHISPER SECRETS**
Reduce your max HP by 2. Your tongue grows unusually long and your teeth become stained and jagged.

You can spend 1 Favor to look someone in the eye and learn (pick 1):

- What do they desire above all else?
- What secret shame do they bear?
- What is their greatest fear?
- What is their worst memory?

When you ***use the answer against them***, you have advantage.

☐ **TORMENT'S BLESSING**
Your wounds are slow to heal. When you recover HP, recover only half the amount that you should. But, you never need to Defy Danger due to pain, blood loss, and weakness due to wounds.

When you ***speak a word of torment***, name someone nearby, spend 1-3 Favor, and roll +Favor spent: **on a 10+**, they take 2d4 damage and are wracked with pain—lesser victims are incapacitated, and mighty foes are momentarily stunned; **on a 7-9**, they take 1d6 damage (ignores armor) and lesser victims are momentarily stunned.

Stonetop

Fortunes
Starts at +1

- ☐ -1
- ☐ +0
- ☐ +1
- ☐ +2
- ☐ +3

Surplus
Starts at 1

Size
Starts at *village*

- ☐ *hamlet* (<50 people)
- ☐ *village* (150-350)
- ☐ *town* (500-1500)
- ☐ *city* (2500+)

Population
Starts at +0

- ☐ -1
- ☐ +0
- ☐ +1
- ☐ +2
- ☐ +3

Prosperity
Starts at +0

- ☐ -1
- ☐ +0
- ☐ +1
- ☐ +2
- ☐ +3

Resources

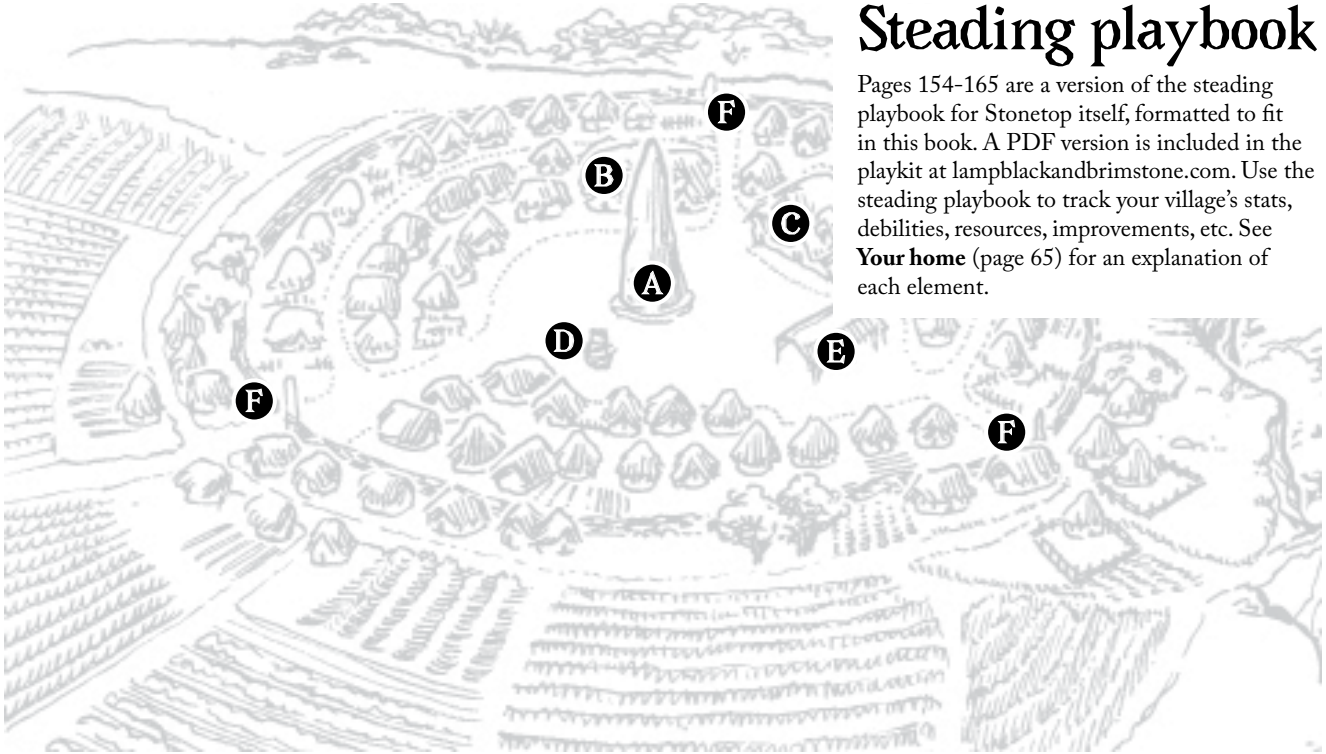
- Farming (beans, potatoes, oats, barley)
- Hunting/trapping (fur, meat, hides)
- Distilling (whisky)
- Stone (collected from the Old Wall)
- Cistern (filled with rain, snow)
- Tradesfolk (midwife, potter, publican, smith, tanner)
- Trade: Gordin's Delve (metal, tools)
- Trade: Marshedge (textiles, herbs, glass)
- .....
- .....
- .....

Defenses
Starts at +0

- ☐ -1 *feeble*
- ☐ +0 *mediocre*
- ☐ +1 *strong*
- ☐ +2 *formidable*
- ☐ +3 *legendary*

Fortifications, etc.

- Village militia
- The Ringwall (low, stone)
- 3 watchtowers
- Spears & shields in every home
- Some bows
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



Steading playbook

Pages 154-165 are a version of the steading playbook for Stonetop itself, formatted to fit in this book. A PDF version is included in the playkit at lampblackandbrimstone.com. Use the steading playbook to track your village's stats, debilities, resources, improvements, etc. See **Your home** (page 65) for an explanation of each element.

Debilities

- ○ *diminished*, by injury/sickness/doubt (disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, or Pull Together)
- ○ *lacking*, due to shortages/hoarding/distrust (treat Prosperity as if it's 1 lower than it is)
- ○ *malcontent*, from fear/anger/despair (Fortunes reset to +0 each season, not +1; folks need Persuading more often than usual)

Places of interest

- **A** The Stone
- **B** The Granary
- **C** Public House & Stables
- **D** Cistern
- **E** Pavilion of the Gods
- **F** Watchtowers
- **G** .....
- **H** .....
- **I** .....
- **J** .....
- **K** .....
- **L** .....
- **M** .....
- **N** .....
- **O** .....
- **P** .....
- **Q** .....
- **R** .....

Notes

Content

Keep this in sync with the GM playbook. Review it at the start of each session.

When ***anyone calls "time out,"*** play stops. Step out of character, check in with each other, maybe take a break. Discuss what's wrong, player-to-player.

If ***content was included that shouldn't have been***, acknowledge the mistake, fix the fiction, and move on.

If ***someone realizes they need content to be excluded, veiled, or handled in a particular way***, then update the lists. Clarify specifics, now or later, but don't ask reasons. Fix the fiction. Check in with the player(s). When everyone is ready, move on.

Excluded content

(Not part of the game, on-camera or off)

Veiled content

(Part of the fiction, but only off-camera)

Special handling

Steading Improvements

Known, available improvements you can make to Stonetop. The GM may present others.

☐ ADDITIONAL HOUSING

It's getting crowded! We need more room to live.

Requires either one of these:

- ☐ An *exceptional* engineer/foreman, to design much roomier houses on the current land
- ☐ Building on parts of the fields, resulting in -1 Surplus generated with each autumn's harvest

And then:

☐☐☐☐☐ Pulling together 5 times, each requiring 1 season, 1 Surplus, and a wagonload of timber and other supplies (Value 2), to (re) build homes.

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1 and add any new homes to the map.

Henceforth, when ***when you consume Surplus in winter***, consider Population to be 1 lower than it is.

☐ AUROCHS HUNTING

Large herds form on the Flats in spring. The Hillfolk hunt them, but Stonetop has never learned to do so.

Requires 2 of the following:

- ☐ A Herd of Horses (and hunters to ride them)
- ☐ Cooperating with the Hillfolk
- ☐ A cunning plan

And then:

- ☐ A successful first hunt (played out in detail)

When you ***meet the requirements***, add "Aurochs hunting (meat, hide, horn)" to the Resources list.

Henceforth, when you ***lead the aurochs hunt in spring***, roll +Defenses: **on a 10+**, gain 1d4 Surplus; **on a 7-9**, gain 1d4 Surplus but pick 1 from the list below; **on a 6-**, pick 1 from the list below, or pick 2 and gain 1d4 Surplus.

- ◎ 1d4 of the town's horses are lamed or killed
- ◎ A number of locals are injured; the steading marks *diminished* (disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, or Pull Together)
- ◎ The GM picks an NPC present for the hunt; they are killed
- ◎ The Hillfolk are somehow offended
- ◎ The herd is weak; if you hunt next year they'll be wiped out

☐ EXPANDED TRADES

Specialization is the key to prosperity!

Requires one of the following improvements, to free up enough time to support more tradesfolk:

- ☐ Harnessing the Stream
- ☐ Raincatching
- ☐ Mill

And establishing at least 3 of the following:

- ☐ A chandler with extensive tools and supplies (Value 3)
- ☐ A glassblower with a full glassworks (Value 3)
- ☐ An *exceptional* weaver with good tools (Value 2) and a reliable supply of Whitefang wool
- ☐ An *exceptional* potter with good tools (Value 2) and a reliable source of excellent clay
- ☐ An *exceptional* smith with a newer, hotter forge (Value 3)
- ☐ Some other *exceptional* tradesperson, with the appropriate tools and supplies (Value 2 or 3)

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Prosperity by 1. If you ***cease to meet the requirements***, decrease Prosperity by 1.

☐ GREATER HARVEST

Beyond the Old Wall, the prairie grass of the Flats chokes out any crops we try to grow.

Requires 1 of the following:

- ☐ Doubling the yield of crops inside the Old Wall
- ☐ Clearing/taming new fields beyond the Old Wall

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1.

Henceforth, when ***the autumn harvest is complete***, gain +1d4 Surplus.

☐ HARNESSING THE STREAM

A shallow creek flows just below the town. If only it could be harnessed!

Requires 2 of the following:

- ☐ Some method of making water flow uphill
- ☐ A series of aqueducts, from the stream's source back to Stonetop
- ☐ A reservoir to contain the diverted water

When you ***meet the requirements***, add them to the Resources list and increase Fortunes by 1.

Henceforth, you ***when spring breaks forth and you roll a 7+ with Fortunes***, the steading generates 1 Surplus.

☐ HERD OF HORSES

Imagine what we could do with a dozen fine steeds.

Requires all of the following:

- ☐ A site for a proper stable and corral
- ☐ Pulling Together to build the stable and corral, which requires a month and a wagonload of timber (Value 2). Add them to the map.
- ☐ Someone skilled in riding and training horses
- ☐ Acquiring a small herd of horses, about a dozen (through trade or by catching wild ones)
- ☐ Training/breaking them to the saddle and plow
- ☐ Additional saddles, harness, plows, etc. (Value 2)
- ☐ Pulling Together to have a couple dozen villagers learn to ride, requiring a season and 1 Surplus.
- ☐ Someone to mind the herd and stable, full time

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1 and replace "a pair of sturdy draft horses" with "a herd of horses" on the Assets list. Make a note of its size. Henceforth:

When you ***leverage the horses to Pull Together***, it takes half as long and costs half as much.

When you ***Requisition half the herd or less***, treat a 6- as a 7-9.

When the ***Seasons Change to summer***, any yearlings become horses (Value 3 once trained), any foals become yearlings (Value 2), and the herd gains foals (Value 1) equal to 1d4+Fortunes (min 0).

When ***winter grips the land***, the herd consumes 1 Surplus per 6 grown or yearling horses. For every Surplus not consumed, 1d6 horses are lost.

☐ HEROIC REPUTATION

Few have heard of Stonetop's heroes. Yet.

Requires any 3 of the following:

- ☐ Impressing a band of Hillfolk
- ☐ Braving a lake and coming back with proof
- ☐ Saving many Marshedge residents' lives
- ☐ Saving many Gordin's Delve residents' lives
- ☐ Saving someone from beyond Marshedge
- ☐ Hiring a minstrel to tell your tales (Value 2)

When you ***meet the requirements***, gain the following move:

When you ***first meet someone from beyond Stonetop***, roll +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, say what they've heard about you or Stonetop, and gain advantage on your next move against them; **on a 7-9**, say what they've heard; **on a 6-**, the GM decides what they've heard.

More Steading Improvements

Known, available improvements you can make to Stonetop. The GM may present others in the course of play.

☐ INN

The public house offers a common room and shelter for a few horses, but it's hardly a proper inn.

Requires all of the following, in order:

- ☐ A designated building site
- ☐ A competent engineer/foreman
- ☐ Furnishings, equipment, and material (Value 3)
- ☐☐ Pulling Together 2 times, each requiring 1 season, 1 Surplus, and timber/supplies (Value 2)
- ☐ A small, devoted staff (innkeep, cook, ostler, etc.)

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1. Name the inn, add it to both the Resources list and map.

Henceforth, when ***the seasons change***, whoever is friendliest rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, ask the GM 3 questions about the wider world; **on a 7-9,** ask 1 question; **on a 6-**, ask 1 question, but the GM describes some trouble that stems from the inn or its guests.

Once per season, when you ***expend 1 Surplus and bring folks together at the inn*** (to talk, to celebrate, to recuperate), clear one of the steading's debilities.

☐ MARKET

Stonetop is at most an afterthought for traders in the region. We need to change that.

Requires 1 of the following:

- ☐ A compelling good/service, exclusive to Stonetop
- ☐ Establishing some other reason to visit Stonetop (place of pilgrimage, etc.)

and these:

- ☐ A dedicated market site (add it to the map)
- ☐ A trusted arbiter, able to enforce their own rulings on matters of trade
- ☐☐☐☐ Four seasons in operation without notable incidents of violence, banditry, theft, etc.

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Prosperity by 1. If you ***cease to meet the requirements***, decrease Prosperity by 1.

When the ***Seasons Change to spring, summer, or autumn and the market is active***, and Population is +1 or better, the Market generates 1 Surplus.

☐ MILL

We've got our pick of millstones. With a mill, we'd have better bread and more time for other crafts.

Requires all of the following:

- ☐ An *exceptional* engineer/foreman
- ☐ A convenient, consistent power source (wind on a hill, a waterwheel, a Herd of Horses, magic, etc.)
- ☐ A building site able to harness that power source
- ☐☐ Pulling Together 2 times, each requiring a season, 1 Surplus, a wagonload of timber (Value 2), and a bunch of rope and supplies (Value 2)
- ☐ A full-time miller

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1, add "Mill" to the Resources list and draw it on the map.

Henceforth, when ***the autumn harvest is complete***, the steading generates +1 Surplus. Also, when you ***Outfit from Stonetop or Have What You Need after doing so***, each ◇ of supplies has 1 extra use.

☐ PALISADE

A wall of sharpened logs, 10' tall, to keep evil at bay.

Requires all of the following, in order:

- ☐ Lots of timber (~20-25 wagonloads, Value 3)
- ☐ A competent engineer/foreman
- ☐ Lots of rope, nails, pitch, etc. (Value 2)
- ☐ Pulling Together, costing a month and 1 Surplus

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1, add "Palisade" to the Fortifications list and draw it on the map.

Henceforth, when you ***take advantage of the palisade***, you have advantage to Deploy.

☐ RAINCATCHING

Filling the cistern takes so much work. Surely, we can do better!

Requires all of the following, in order:

- ☐ An *exceptional* engineer/foreman, to design a cunning system of roofs, gutters, and conduits
- ☐ Enough slate/terracotta to roof all the buildings and construct the gutters and conduits (Value 3)
- ☐☐☐ Pulling Together 3 times, each requiring 1 season and 1 Surplus

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Fortunes by 1, add "Raincatching" to the Resources list. Henceforth, when ***summer comes and you roll a 7+ with Fortunes***, the steading generates 1 Surplus.

☐ STANDING WATCH

Some full-time warriors would make us all safer, no?

Requires all of the following:

- ☐ A veteran warrior, able to command a crowd
- ☐ At least 6 warriors, well-equiped and willing
- ☐ The village leaders agreeing to support warriors who train and keep watch full-time

When you ***meet the requirements***, add "standing watch" to the Fortifications list. ***At the start of each season***, the watch consumes 1 Surplus or it disbands.

When you ***specifically involve the watch in a move***, treat Defenses as 1 higher than they are.

☐ STONE WALL

No mere palisade of wood, but a mighty rampart. We have the stone, after all...

Requires all of the following, in order:

- ☐ An *exceptional* engineer/foreman
- ☐ A stonecutter with an able crew
- ☐ Equipment, tools, and material (Value 3)
- ☐☐☐☐ Pulling Together 4 times, each costing 1 season, 1 Surplus, and supplies (Value 2)

When you ***meet the requirements***, add "Stone Wall" to the Fortifications list (erase "Palisade" if you had it) and draw it on the map. Henceforth:

When you ***take advantage of the stone wall***, you have advantage to Deploy.

When ***winter grips the land***, the steading consumes 1 less Surplus than normal.

☐ TOWNSHIP

Will this ever be more than a backwater village?

Requires all of the following:

- ☐☐☐☐ Population +3 for 4 consecutive seasons
- ☐ Additional Housing
- ☐ Raincatching OR Diverting the Stream
- ☐☐☐☐ At least 4 other improvements
- ☐ A formal government of some sort

When you ***mark all of the requirements***, change Size to *town* and its Population to +0. Henceforth:

When you ***Muster, Pull Together***, or ***Trade & Barter***, you have advantage.

When ***the seasons change to spring or summer***, the town generates Surplus equal to Population+1. But, when ***winter grips the land***, roll 2d6+Population to consume Surplus instead of 1d4+Population.

☐ WEAPONS OF WAR

Spears are great, but how about axes, picks, swords?

Requires either this:

- ☐ Acquiring a few dozen good swords, battleaxes, maces, flails, warhammers, etc. (Value 3)

Or all of these:

- ☐ A smith, with a full staff and upgraded tools (Value 2)
- ☐ A cartload of good iron ore (Value 2)
- ☐☐☐☐ 4 seasons of work by the smith

And then:

- ☐ A veteran warrior, able to command a crowd
- ☐ Pulling Together to train the militia with these new weapons, requiring a season and 1 Surplus

When you ***meet the requirements***, increase Defenses by 1 and add "Weapons of War" to the Fortifications list. ***Each spring***, the village must expend 1 Surplus to maintain and replace the town's weapons.

Henceforth, when you ***Outfit from Stonetop or Have What You Need after doing so***, you can treat maces, flails, battleaxes, warhammers, and all types of swords as common items, as if they were already on the inventory inserts. Battleaxes and swords have "x piercing," where x is the steading's current Prosperity.

☐ WELL-TRAINED MILITIA

Everyone can use a spear and shield, but some hard drilling could make us a force to be reckoned with.

Requires one of the following:

- ☐ A veteran warrior, able to command a crowd

For each tactic below, you must then Pull Together, requiring a season of drills and 1 Surplus.

- ☐ Archery: barrages, ranged ambushes, sniping, etc.
- ☐ Cavalry (requires a Herd of Horses): fighting from horseback, charges
- ☐ Formations: shield walls, wedges, phalanx, etc.
- ☐ Readiness: patrolling, reacting quickly to alarms
- ☐ Skirmishing: ambushes, harrassing, hit-and-run

When you ***Deploy using one of the militia's trained tactics***, you are likely acting from a position of strength (you pick the consequence on a 7-9, not the GM).

When the ***militia has trained in 2+ tactics***, increase Defenses by 1.

Each summer, the militia must spend 1 Surplus and a week or so practicing or else lose its training in 1 tactic.

Other Improvements

Additional possible Improvements, revealed by the GM.

☐ **IMPROVEMENT** **Summary** **Requirements** **Effects**	☐ **IMPROVEMENT** **Summary** **Requirements** **Effects**
☐ **IMPROVEMENT** **Summary** **Requirements** **Effects**	☐ **IMPROVEMENT** **Summary** **Requirements** **Effects**
☐ **IMPROVEMENT** **Summary** **Requirements** **Effects**	☐ **IMPROVEMENT** **Summary** **Requirements** **Effects**

Assets

Owned by the residents of Stonetop in common. To take them on an expedition or otherwise put them at risk, you must Requisition.

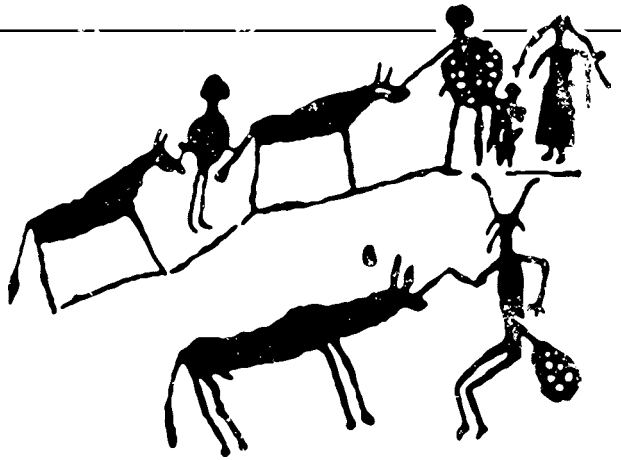
- A pair of hardy draft horses, followers (*large*, *powerful*, *keen-nosed*, *hardy*): HP 10 each; Damage d6+3 (*hand*, *close*, *forceful*); Instinct: to panic; Cost: care & grooming.
- A pair of horse-drawn plows, iron
- A pair of carts (plus horse harness)
- A wagon (plus horse harness)
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Silver

Purses	Handfuls	Coins

Gold

Purses	Handfuls	Coins



Residents of Stonetop

Add each NPC that is named during introductions or play.
Give each an occupation (even if just farmer or homemaker) and at least 1 trait.

name (pronouns)	occupation	traits, relations, etc.
	publican	
	smith	
	tanner	
	potter	
	midwife	

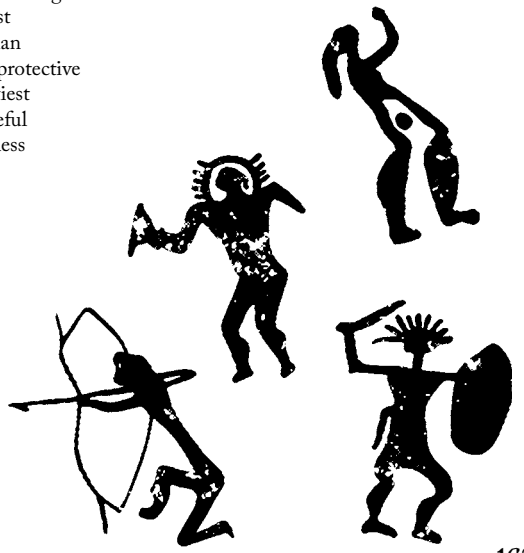
NAMES

Aderyn, Aeronwen, Afanen, Afon, Alun, Andras, Aneirin, Awstin, Bedwyr, Berwyn, Betrys, Braith, Briallen, Bronwen, Bryn, Cadi, Cadoc, Cadwygan, Caron, Cefin, Ceinwen, Ceridwyn, Cerys, Colwyn, Deiniol, Dilwen, Dylis, Eifion, Eirlys, Eluned, Emrys, Enfys, Eurwen, Gaenor, Garet, Gethin, Glyndir, Heledd, Hywel, Ifan, Iorwerth, Iwan, Lewela, Leuca, Linos, Mado, Maldwyn, Malon, Mared, Marged, Martyn, Meirion, Menwen, Mererid, Neirin, Nia, Ofydd, Olwyn, Owain, Padrig, Parry, Pryce, Pryder, Rheinal, Rhisiart, Rhosyn, Rydderch, Sawyl, Siana, Sioned, Talfryn, Tegid, Tiwlip, Tomos, Tudyr, Winifred, Yorath

NPC traits

Assign as needed; choose from this list or make up your own.

all thumbs
ambitious
beloved by everyone
beautiful singing voice
best cook
best weaver
blind
braved the Ruined Tower
cautious
cheery
chronic cough
complains too much
cowardly
craves recognition
curious
dallied with the Fae years ago
deaf
desperately wants a child
distills the best whisky
doesn't pull their weight
drunkard
eagle-eye
fearless
foundling
gathers herbs from the Wood
gets the best deals
gifted storyteller
gods-fearing
good with children
happy-go-lucky
has a beef with Marshedge
has a good heart
has a lot of backbone
has a wandering eye
has a way with animals
has Fae blood in their veins
has just terrible luck
has lost their nerve
has no respect for their elders
has terrible nightmares
has the most children
has their head in the clouds
hates the Hillfolk
hears voices
humorless
immaculate appearance
jealous
just got married
keeps to themselves
knows all the gossip
lame
likes to hurt things
lived among the Forest Folk
lost all their children
lovesick
loves their dogs
loyal friend
most handsome
moved here recently
must approve any marriages
mute
not afraid of deep water
not too bright
oldest
orphan
overprotective
prettiest
prideful
reckless
refuses to marry
resents their lot in life
runs everywhere
sensitive
simpleton
slew many crinwin
stoic
stubborn
suffers from fits
swears they met the Pale Hunter
tells the best jokes
tender-hearted
tends the Gods' Pavilion
tends to the sick & injured
touched
very strong
wants to have kids
well-read
well-traveled
widowed
will eat anything



Notable neighbors of Stonetop

Add NPCs from neighboring areas when instructed by a playbook, or as needed.

NAME (PRONOUNS)	HOME	OCCUPATION	TRAITS, RELATIONS, ETC.

Marshedge

NOTES

NAMES
Abben, Ailen, Brin, Brogan, Catlin, Coln, Daedre, Dermos, Ennin, Finnen, Gilor, Isbeal, Kiran, Lile, Lim, Mathuin, Mirne, Noren, Owan, Ragan, Renan, Seadha, Seann, Tierney, Ulliam

Gordin's Delve

NOTES

NAMES
Choose from other lists; everyone comes to Gordin's Delve from somewhere else.

The Steplands (Hillfolk)

NOTES

NAMES
Adm, Blej, Cirl, Davth, Elst, Gwilm, Gwenl, Henri, Ines, Jenfir, Jown, Juda, Kiln, Laurl, Loic, Merrn, Maikl, Nanzl, Nolwn, Quent, Reegn, Ropr, Sabi, Stren, Yanz

Lygos (and other points south)

NOTES

NAMES
Agatte, Aref, Alix, Baraz, Canan, Darya, Demetra, Elene, Elios, Fotios, Faruza, Golza, Iasos, Iona, Kyriakos, Marika, Maayan, Osher, Natasa, Nivola, Rinat, Stamat, Thecla, Zhaleh

Other places (Barrier Pass, the Manmarch, etc.)

NOTES

Running the Game

Your agenda
The core loop
The spotlight
Scenes and loose play
Your GM moves
Example of play
Your principles
Other things to do
GMing is a practice
Prep

There are dozens of ways to GM a role-playing game. There's a particular way to run *Stonetop*. This is how. The rest of the game is built on this approach.

Remember: **the game is a conversation**. You'll say things, the other players will say things. You'll ask each other questions, interrupt, talk over each other. The game's rules kick in at particular moments and show us where the conversation goes.

As the GM, you have a special role in the conversation. **It's your job to describe the world, say what happens, and portray monsters and NPCs**. You'll facilitate and make rulings. You'll ask for input. You'll frame scenes and point the spotlight. The game invests you, the GM, with a lot of power—and a lot of responsibility.

Your agenda

These are your goals when running *Stonetop*:

- Portray a rich and mysterious world
- Punctuate the characters' lives with adventure
- Play to find out what happens

Everything you say and do as the GM is meant to support these three goals, and no others. It's *not* your agenda (for example) to challenge the players' skill, or to provide "fair" fights, or to punish the characters. It's absolutely not your agenda to control the players or force "your" story to go the way you think it should. When in doubt, ask yourself: **this thing you're considering doing, which of these three goals does it support?** If the answer is "none of them," then don't do it. Do something else.

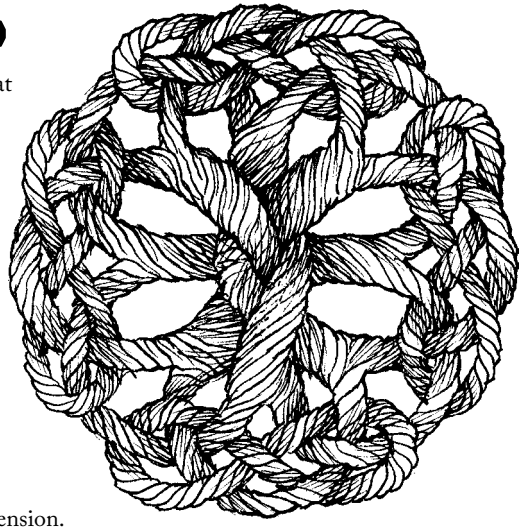
Your first goal is to **portray a rich and mysterious world**: alive and breathing, filled with detail and humanity and depth. Mundane concerns—crops, trade, weather, the opinions of your neighbors—are important. Fantastic elements are important, too, but they are strange and scary and poorly understood. The past sleeps unquietly. Questions abound.

Your second goal is to **punctuate the characters' lives with adventure**. The PCs have lives to live, homes to take care of, families to feed. They have demands on their time. Your job is to make that stuff matter, but also to interrupt it with threats and opportunities that only the PCs can (or will) address. Adventures will occupy the bulk of the *players'* time, but they shouldn't occupy the bulk of the *characters'* time.

Finally, most importantly, **play to find out what happens**. It's your job to portray a rich and mysterious world, to threaten that which the PCs care about or dangle opportunities, and then to see where things go from there. You'll make plans, yes. You'll make preparations. But once play begins, it's your job to follow where the players lead, where the dice lead, and where the fiction leads.

And the reward is this: to be genuinely surprised by the story that—naturally, organically, magically—unfolds. A tale you could never weave by yourself.

The core loop



When you run this game, this is what you *do*. There's more to it, of course, but this is the underlying structure of the conversation between you and the players.

1) **Establish the situation**
   - Frame the action
   - Describe the environment
   - Give details and specifics
   - Ask questions, ask for input
   - Portray NPCs and monsters
   - Answer questions, clarify

2) **Make a soft GM move**
   Provoke action and/or increase tension.

3) **Ask "What do you do?"**

4) **Resolve their actions**
   - If they trigger a player move, do what the move says.
   - If they roll a 6- or they ignore trouble, make a hard GM move (establish badness).
   - Otherwise, say what happens.

5) **Repeat**
   - Is the situation clear and compelling? Can the PCs act? Back to step 3.
   - Is the situation clear, but escalating before the PCs act? Back to step 2.
   - Is the situation clear, but needs a nudge? Back to step 2.
   - Is the situation unclear? Does it need recapping or updating? Back to step 1.
   - Is the current scene or situation over? Wrap up, look for the next one. Back to step 1.

In practice, the conversation is fluid, messy, and chaotic. It'll be interrupted by questions about rules and fictional details. Players will kibitz and joke, discuss options, or play out scenes with each other in-character. You'll often juggle two or more "loops" of conversation at a time, jumping between players whose characters are each up to their own thing.

But beneath it all is this structure, this loop. If you ever feel lost, and you aren't sure what to do or say next, then figure out where you are in this loop and go from there.

Now, let's look at each step in detail.

1 Establish the situation

It's your job to establish the situations that the PCs find themselves in. Do any or all of the following, as needed, in whatever order makes sense.

Frame the action

Determine **who, where, and when**. Address one or more of the PCs and say (or ask) where they are. Say (or ask) who else is there. Say (or ask) when this is happening (the season, the time of day, how long after the last scene or situation).

Describe the environment

For a place you haven't seen "on camera" before, say (or ask) what it's like. For a place that you've seen before, say (or ask) how it's changed (if at all).

Include up to 3 strong impressions from different senses—the shocking red of blood on snow, the crackling fire in the hearth, the smell of rain and wet earth. Sometimes include emotional impressions (the tension in the room, the grief on their faces) or moral impressions (the dirty, desperate beggars contrasted with the finely-dressed, well-fed gentry).

Focus on what matters. If they're at the public house, focus on the people there, the noise, and the *feel*. If they're exploring a ruin, focus on space, footing, sight, and sound. Keep it short, no more than 3 impressions to start. Players will zone out if you give them too much, and they'll ask for more detail where they need or want it. You want punchy and evocative, not flowery. Hemingway, not Tolkien.

Give details and specifics

Say (or ask) what's happening. Who's doing what? Where is everyone relative to each other? What can the characters see, hear, and sense?

Again, focus on what matters. In a social situation, focus on people: who's there, how they look, how they're acting. If they're exploring a ruin, focus on the environment. In an action scene, focus on the terrain and the combatants, their position, and their momentum.

Include the occasional non-essential detail. In a social scene, mention how the food tastes or how the room feels. In a fight scene, throw in a smell or something that an enemy is wearing. This sort of extra detail can add real texture to the situation.

Use maps, props, and comparisons to convey space and relationships. Sketch the room. Use tokens or meeples. Refer to real-world spaces ("He's about where Bob is, relative to you."). Similes and metaphors are your friends!

Improvisation & prep

Yes, you're making all this stuff up (or asking the players to). You'll do some **prep** in advance (see page 204) or pull from the setting guide, but during play you improvise many of the specifics.

Once a detail is established, treat it like it's been true all along. Build and riff on it. Look for connections. Ask yourself the obvious questions and decide on the (probably obvious) answers. Weave it all together into a rich, mysterious world.

Ask questions

You don't have to provide all the details yourself. One of your principles (page 192) is to **ask questions and build on the answers**. Invite the players to contribute to the scene by asking their characters about stuff that they know, feel, or have experienced. "Caradoc, what's the most overwhelming smell in the tannery?" Or "Vahid, you've been to this pool before. What's it look like? Describe it for us."

Ask questions, too, about what the characters are currently experiencing. Don't ask them to make up the key details, but maybe prompt them for a detail that fits a theme. "Rhianna, what feature jumps out at you about this bandit? Like, what sets him apart from the others?" Or "Blodwen, what here makes this place feel cozy and safe?"

Ask questions about what they're doing and what they're up to, about how they spend their time and who they hang out with, etc. When they're on an expedition, ask for their marching order. When they Make Camp, ask them what they're eating, what the campsite is like, who takes which watch, etc.

Ask questions about what they're thinking and what they're feeling. "Vahid, what's on your mind?" "Rhianna, what's got you the most worried right now?"

Portray NPCs and monsters

If there are non-player characters (NPCs) involved, describe them. Say what they're doing. If the PCs interact with them, say how the NPCs respond. Speak in their voice and say what they say. If that's daunting for you, or you just want to cut to the chase, then *describe* what they say rather than actually saying it.

If the situation includes monsters—beasts, spirits, crinwin, and the like—then portray them, too. Describe them: how big they are, how they move, what they sound and smell like. Say what they do, what they're focused on. Say how they respond to the PCs.

Answer questions, clarify

The players will interrupt you and ask questions. Be honest and generous with truth and detail. If the answer wouldn't be clear to the PCs, say so and tell them what it'd take to figure that out. Your job is to **portray a rich and mysterious world**, not to make them jump through hoops and figure out what you're thinking.

Sometimes, the players will say something that indicates a misunderstanding of the situation. "I slice the back of his leg," the Fox says, when you pictured the violence happening on the other side of the public room with the PCs watching. When that sort of thing happens, **clarify the situation with the players**. Explain how you see things, but also be willing to adjust your sense of the situation to match theirs. "Huh? No, this is happening on the other side of the pub. I don't think you'd have let it get to this point if you were right there, do you?"

2 Make a soft GM move

The situation is clear? Good. Now, make a soft GM move—say something to provoke action and/or increase tension. Pick one of your **GM moves** (page 178) and do that.

To provoke action: say that something bad is about to happen, or is in the process of happening, but **give the PCs a chance to do something about it**. "As your hand finds your knife-hilt, the crinwin is like 'hiissssss' and leaps, fingers going for your throat, what do you do?"

You can also provoke action by **offering them an opportunity**, or by presenting options and **prompting them to pick**. "Okay, it tumbled past you. It's surprised and you've got a moment. You could jump on its back and try to stab it. Or get out of there. What do you do?"

In a social scene, your NPCs might ask for something or demand something. They might say something vulnerable or emotional and then look at the PC, expecting them to react.

Soft moves don't always provoke action. Sometimes, they **just crank up the tension**. You might use up their stuff, foreshadow trouble, or add trouble to a scene in a way that can't be acted on right away. "You've been down here for a while, your torches are starting to get low." Or "There's another tremor. A bit of dirt falls from the ceiling. What do you do?"

3 "What do you do?"

After you make a soft GM move, ask **"What do you do?"** This hands the conversation back to the player(s) and prompts them to say something.

You don't have to literally say, "What do you do?" Sometimes, your move will include a question. When portraying an NPC, you might make your move and just look at the players expectantly. But if you're unsure, ask: "What do you do?"

If they say something that doesn't make sense—something you think is impossible, invalid, or unreasonable—then tell them that. Clarify the fiction. If they persist, **tell them the consequences and/or requirements**. Ask if they still want to do it.

If they ask questions, answer them. If the answers aren't obvious, **tell them the requirements**. "You'll have to poke around a bit and Seek Insight." Then put the ball back in their court: "What do you do?"

Players jumping in

Players might seize the initiative and declare an action before you ask "What do you do?" or even before you've made a soft GM move. Great! It means they're engaged, and the situation is compelling enough that they want to act on it. You can jump straight to resolving their action.

With that said: don't let players dominate the conversation. If you're in the middle of making a move, or think that something would happen before they could act, or want to give someone else a chance to act, then tell them to hold their horses!

4 Resolve their action

The player says what their character does. Establish how the situation changes, and/or what their action reveals about the situation.

Did they trigger a player move? If so, which one? Resolve that move. If you aren't sure whether they triggered a move, or you need more info before resolving it, ask questions. Clarify their intent and/or how they're going about it. Discuss with the table.

When a player triggers a move, then **follow the move's procedures**. Reveal whatever information the move entitles them to. Work with the player to establish how the situation has changed. (See **Player Moves**, page 207, for more detail.)

When a player's move prompts you to add something to the fiction, and you're not sure what to say, then **look to your GM moves for inspiration** (page 178).

If they trigger a move and roll a 6-, then they mark XP and you make a hard GM move (unless the move specifically says otherwise).

If they do something that doesn't trigger a player move, then they're looking to you to see what happens. **Did they ignore a threat or trouble** that you warned about previously? Make a hard GM move.

Otherwise, say what happens and how that changes the situation. Maybe just say "Okay" and then either shift the **spotlight** (page 175) or say "Then what do you do?"

Hard GM moves

Make a hard GM move when a PC...

... ignores a threat or trouble entirely; or
... triggers a move but rolls a 6- (and the move doesn't say otherwise).

Making a hard GM move means that you **establish badness**. Describe the consequences of the PC's actions. Say how things go wrong. Make the situation significantly worse. Pick a **GM move** from your lists (page 178) or just say the obvious bad thing. "Ooh, a 5, huh? It's too fast! Before your knife clears the sheath, it's on you, WHOOMP, take a d6 damage and you're on your back, one of its claws is on your throat and the other is pinning your knife-hand by the wrist, what do you do?"

When they roll a 6-, your hard move will often involve the PC's action failing. Say (or ask) how it goes wrong and/or what the consequences are. **But a 6- doesn't always mean that the PC's action fails**. It means you establish badness. Maybe something bad happens before they can do their thing; maybe they do what they set out to do, but that causes (or reveals) something very bad indeed. The badness might not even be directly connected to the action they took—it could simply follow directly on its heels.

A hard move should always establish badness, but **you decide just how bad it is**. Use the situation, the fiction, the description of the player's actions, and so forth to inform your hard moves. Sometimes, a hard move isn't much worse than a soft one.

5 Repeat

You've resolved the PC's action. The situation is changed, or further revealed, and play snowballs from there.

If the situation is clear and compelling, and one or more PCs are in position to act, then jump straight back to step 3 and ask them, "What do you do?"

If the situation is clear, but things will escalate before the PCs are able to act, then jump back to step 2. Make a soft GM move to show how things are changing. Then ask, "What do you do?"

Likewise, **if the situation is clear but kind of static**, and the players need a nudge, then jump back to step 2. Make a soft GM move and ask, "What do you do?"

If the situation is unclear, or if it needs recapping or updating, then go back to step 1. Re-establish the situation. Then make a soft GM move and ask, "What do you do?"

If the current scene or situation is over, then wrap things up. Take care of logistics, bookkeeping, and other metagame stuff. Figure out with the players what the next situation or scene should be. If that's not clear, ask questions until it is.

Go back to step 1. Establish the (new) situation, make a soft GM move, and ask, "What do you do?" Resolve their actions. See how the situation changes. Repeat. This is the core loop of the game.

The spotlight

As you play the game, you'll change who you're addressing, moment to moment. Whoever you're talking to right now is in **the spotlight**.

Sometimes you'll keep the spotlight unfocused and address the group as a whole. Often, you'll focus it on just one character. When lots of action is happening simultaneously, you swing it back and forth between individuals and groups.

There's no formal process for managing the spotlight. **The most obvious time to move the spotlight is after you resolve a PC's action**. Address a different character and describe the situation *to them*. Make a soft move *at them*. Ask *them*, "What do you do?"

You can, however, move the spotlight whenever it makes sense. For example, if you ask "What do you do?" and...

… **the player freezes or stalls**, then shift to someone else, giving the first player time to think. Come back to them later; or...

… **the PC does something that will take time**, then shift to someone else. Come back to the first PC as they finish (or as something interrupts them); or...

… **they make a move and you're not sure how to resolve it**, then buy yourself time to think by shifting to someone else. Come back to resolve the first player's move later.

Use the spotlight to be a good facilitator. Keep everyone involved. Make sure everyone gets some good screen time and has a chance to contribute.

It's okay if players interrupt each other, or kibitz, or have their characters act "out of order." Some moves (like Defend) give them explicit permission to do so!

With that said: don't be afraid to shut down an overly eager or aggressive player with a polite-yet-firm reprimand. "Andrew, you're being rude. I'm talking to Jamie right now."

Split the party

It's going to happen. The PCs will split up—intentionally or because you **separate them** or **capture someone**—and now you've got two smaller groups. It's okay. Splitting the party can be a lot of fun.

Splitting the party means that you're juggling multiple conversations and scenes at once. Move the spotlight back-and-forth between the different scenes, the way a film editor smash-cuts between scenes in a movie.

Don't linger too long on one group. Try to keep everyone involved and interested in what's going on in the other scenes. You might cut between scenes on every "action" or player move, or resolve a few "loops" of conversation between each cut. There's a rhythm and an art to this, and different types of scenes benefit from different approaches. Exploration and dialogue benefit from longer cuts. High-tension, high-action scenes work well with short, quick cuts and lots of cliffhangers.

Scenes and loose play

During play, the conversation will naturally shift between scenes and loose play. This isn't a formal distinction, or even always a conscious one. You'll often shift between them naturally and instinctively.

Scenes are zoomed-in. They feature specific characters in a particular place at a particular time. You follow the action moment-to-moment. Details are plentiful and specific. Players speak in character, and you portray NPCs in-character as well. Even if you and the players don't actually speak in your characters' voices, you still talk about the conversation at a zoomed-in, detailed level.

During a scene, you might describe the clearing in the woods where the PCs find themselves, the sound of the rushing stream and how the bear sniffs and twitches its ears and scans the treeline for danger. "Rhianna, you don't think it's spotted you yet, what do you do?"

Scenes are cinematic and immersive, sometimes tense, often exciting. Players might lose themselves in their characters and feel real emotions about what's happening.

Good scenes have a purpose. There's a reason you framed this scene with these characters in this place, right? What are the PCs trying to accomplish? What are you trying to convey? What question are you hoping to answer? What conflict is being resolved? Knowing the purpose of a scene helps you focus your details, descriptions, and GM moves. And if you can't identify a scene's purpose, then maybe you don't need the scene!

When the scene's purpose is addressed, or the scene fizzles out, then wrap it up. Transition into the next obvious scene ("You enter the next room and see...") or shift into loose play.

Loose play is what happens between scenes. You still follow the core loop, but it's zoomed out. Instead of describing what happens here and now, you'll talk about what happens over minutes, hours, days, or weeks. You summarize and compress, skip minutiae and gloss over stretches of time. You do more *talking about* the characters than *portraying* the characters.

During loose play, you might describe the PCs moving through the Great Wood, the quiet tension as they try to avoid notice, the heat and biting insects getting worse as the day goes on. You might ask questions like, "Caradoc, what does your mind keep wandering to?" or, "Rhianna, how long do you plan on going before making camp?"

Player moves still work during loose play, but on a zoomed-out scale. They might Struggle as One to reach home before nightfall, or Seek Insight by watching the newcomers over the course of a few days.

Time tends to be fluid during loose play. "Okay, y'all head out and by noon you've reached the crossroads." "Oh, hey. Before we left, can we say that I Traded & Bartered for some bendis root?" Sure we can.

Loose play is more relaxed, less intense. **Take care of bookkeeping and logistics** between scenes. Check your notes, make updates, and maybe roll up a random **discovery** (page 421). **Have meta-discussions**. Talk about the characters' plans and goals ("What are we trying to accomplish again?"). See if the players have any requests ("I'd like to have a scene with Andras"). **Take breaks**, talk about real-life stuff, and enjoy each other's company.

A lot of in-fiction time passes during loose play, especially while the PCs travel or spend time at home between adventures. But you want the bulk of the real-world time to be in scenes. Scene-based play is much more visceral, rich, and exciting. **Push loose play towards scenes**. As soon as the next scene suggests itself, frame it and zoom back in on detailed, moment-to-moment play.

Your GM moves

When it's time to make a GM move and you're not sure what to say, pick one of these and do it. **These are your basic GM moves**:

- Announce trouble (future or offscreen)
- Reveal an unwelcome truth
- Ask a provocative question
- Put someone in a spot
- Use up their resources
- Turn their move back on them
- Demonstrate a downside
- Hurt someone
- Separate them
- Capture someone
- Offer an opportunity (with or without a cost)
- Tell them the consequences/ requirements (then ask)
- Advance towards impending doom

These aren't technical terms. When you **reveal an unwelcome truth**, you just *do that*. You establish something in the fiction that the characters wish wasn't true. When you **hurt someone**, you say how someone gets hurt.

Your GM moves should inspire and empower you; they shouldn't constrain you. Use them when you're unsure of what to do, or when you're in a rut and want to change things up. Don't stress yourself making sure that every move you make matches something from this list.

Making Your Move

Whenever the situation is clear and **you want to push the action along**, make a soft move. Say something that prompts the PCs to act and/or increases the tension. Make soft moves all the time, as part of the core loop of the game.

When the PCs **ignore trouble** that you've previously established, or when they **roll a 6- on a player move**, then make a hard GM move. Establish badness. Make something happen that the PCs don't want, or make something that the PCs want no longer possible.

You can also make a GM move **when a player's move prompts you to add something to the fiction**. For example, when they Defy Danger and roll a 7-9, you're told to present a lesser success, a cost, or a consequence. You might **use up their resources** as a cost ("You can do it, but you'll have to drop your supplies.") or **put them in a spot** as a consequence ("You make it, but the ground shifts as you land and starts to give way."), or **demonstrate a downside** as a lesser success ("You get clear, but Andras is still limping and falls behind, the creature's closing in!").

Always **make a move that follows from the established situation and/or your prep**. If they're tracking crinwin through the woods and they roll a 6-, it'd be a perfectly fine move to reveal that they're lost. But it'd be weird and uncool to say "Rocks fall out of the sky and smash you, everyone take 1d10 damage!"

Along the same lines, **your moves should reflect the specifics of the situation**. Say that a PC faces a charging aurochs, triggers Clash, and rolls a 6-. If the PC is a mighty-thewed Heavy who braced his spear against the charge, then your hard move would look very different than if the PC was a willowy Fox who tried to dodge the charge and stab it like a matador.

Don't say the name of your move, just say what happens in the fiction. Don't say, "You rolled a 4 so I'm separating you." Say "Rhianna, you wake up and realize that Caradoc's not on watch. He doesn't come back anytime soon. His blanket is discarded by the edge of the firelight."

Other GM moves

You have other lists of GM moves available to you, too.

Use your **exploration moves** when the PCs are on an **expedition** (page 317) or **exploring a site** (see page 352).

Use **threat moves** to bring a threat or its influence into a scene, or when it's already involved (page 284).

Use **homefront moves** when the PCs are at home or spending time in another steading, to make interesting stuff happen there (see page 502).

Use moves specific to a **danger** (pages 386, 401), or an **NPC** (page 449) when those elements are in play.

Examples of GM moves

➤ Announce trouble (future or offscreen)

This is one of your most versatile moves. Trouble almost always provokes a reaction, or at least gets folks worrying and cranks up the tension.

As a hard move, you can turn a previously peaceful scene into a fight or conflict, or maybe make it clear that the PCs' actions will have consequences later.

> *"WHOOMP WHOOMP WHOOMP! Rhianna, there's a banging at your door, waking you up from that much-needed sleep. Lowri's calling your name and you hear the watch-bells clanging. What do you do?"*
>
> *"As Caradoc and Blodwen leave, this nasty piece of work watches them go. He's got a face full of scars, a cruel sneer, and a knife at his hip. He nudges the guy next to him, nods at the door, and they get up and go. What do you do?"*
>
> *"Glenys gives you a hard stare for a few moments, then she's like, 'FINE.' And she huffs and stomps off. She's out of your hair for now, but you just know that you're going to have to deal with that later."*

➤ Reveal an unwelcome truth

Establish something as true, something that they really wish wasn't. Maybe it was true all along but you're just revealing it now. Or maybe (especially as a hard move) you're deciding right now that this bad thing is true and letting them know. Both ways work.

This is a great move to use when they Know Things or Seek Insight. On a 7+, you owe them honest answers or interesting (maybe useful) information, but there's no reason they have to be happy about what they learn. And on a 6-, you can really twist the screws.

> *"Vvvasil? Heavvvens, no. Vvvassil leffft town thhhis past autumn. Back down to Lygos, I heard.' He smiles, and it's like he has too many teeth. "But ssssurely we can make some sort offff… arrangement?'"*
>
> *"What happened here recently? Well, there's like a dozen sets of prints in the mud, all churned up like there was a fight. A few splashes of blood, too, on the foliage. It's pretty clear Lowri got jumped by the crinwin."*
>
> *"Oof, a 6-? Well, you search the hills for the rest of the day and... I guess you don't find her? No, wait. You know what? You do find Cadi. Maybe half a mile from the logging camp, you find her body. Something stabbed her, impaled her right through the gut."*

➤ Ask a provocative question

Ask a question that spurs a decision or response, even if it's just an emotional response or a decision not to act. You can ask the question yourself or put it in the mouth of one of your NPCs. Alternately: ask a question that asserts badness but that gives the player a chance to author it.

> *"Rhianna, Eira's looking grim, and she's like: 'Garet's losing a lot of blood. I don't think he's gonna make it, and he's gonna slow us down something frightful. You want me to do the necessary?"*
>
> *"Caradoc, you come in at the very end of all this, I think. You saw that cloud of smoke billowing out of Vahid's mouth. And there's Vahid, just acting totally normal about everything. What's going through your head right now?"*
>
> *"Oof, a 4? Well, I think you manage to offend her, like really hurt her feelings. What do you say or do that does that?"*

➤ Put someone in a spot

This is a more aggressive version of **announcing trouble**—they've got to do something, now, or it'll get ugly.

"Someone" can be a PC or an NPC, and you can play with the spotlight. Maybe the person you put in the spot isn't the one that does something about it.

> *"So close! You make the jump, but smack into the bough. You slip, just barely grabbing on. You're hanging from that bough like this, gasping for air, like 80 feet up, and your grip is starting to go. What do you do?"*
>
> *"The big guy stands and glares down at you. 'What'd you call me, you skinny little rat?' Rhianna, you see this happen and notice like three other guys, burly miner types, standing up too, not a smile among them. What do you do?"*
>
> *"So, it's like you said, the drake calms as you place your hand on its snout, and it's like a mewling kitten. But Caradoc, you're watching from the brush, and as Blodwen's calming that one, you spy another drake, behind her to her right, slinking up. It's about to pounce on her, you're sure of it, what do you do?"*

➤ Use up their resources

Something happens that whittles away at their stuff, or that takes it away from them entirely. "Resources" here can be...

... **concrete and specific** (their shield, their torch, their lamp oil);
... **concrete but abstract** (supplies, ammo);
... **intangible** (their reputation, someone's trust); and/or
... **entirely mechanical abstractions** (HP, Fortunes, Loyalty, etc.).

When they lose something abstract, intangible, or purely mechanical, you should always bring that back to the fiction and show how it manifests. "He glares a little, then shakes his head, disillusioned. If he held any Loyalty, he's got 1 less now."

As a soft move, use this move to ratchet up the tension. Those 4 HP might not mean much now, but after a couple more blows the player is going to start getting *nervous*.

When you use up a specific resource, the loss can be temporary ("he swats the knife out of your hand, it goes flying across the room") or permanent ("the blow shatters your shield").

You'll often find yourself making this move along with other moves, and that's okay. HP, in particular, get used up part and parcel with other moves (see the **Dealing Damage and Inflicting Debilities** sidebar, page 185.)

"It's been like an hour since you came down here. I think your torch is getting low. Like, you've got maybe ten minutes of light left? What do you do?"

"Yeah, so your grip slips and down you tumble, smacking against branches all the way, WAM WACK WHOOMP. You land flat on your back, and you're pretty sure you felt something break in your pack. Lose 2 uses of supplies and take 1d6 of damage, ignoring armor. What do you do?"

"Yup, he was totally standing right behind you as you said that last bit. You look back and he's just beet red, on the verge of crying or yelling, you're not sure. But he just turns and stomps off into the fields. I think he just lost any Loyalty he was holding. What do you do?"

➤ Demonstrate a downside

Show the limits of their moves, or the baggage that comes with being (e.g.) the Heavy. Show them just how a *crude* weapon fares against an iron sword or shield. Show them why wearing *warm* armor in the blazing sun is a bad idea. Show them why it's hard to be short, or tall, or young, or old, or whatever.

"Caradoc, Rhianna, as you're watching the crinwin from the brush, you hear this, ka-chunk ka-chunk ka-chunk. Vahid's pack, for sure, and the crinwin hear it too. What do you do?"

"Caradoc, the second time you try to interject, Brennan's like 'Grown-ups are talking, boy.' And he turns back to Rhianna. 'Now, you were saying…?'"

"Your spear jabs in, and the aurochs bellows, but then it rears and twists and the spear's shaft snaps off. You're left holding half of a stick."

➤ Turn their move back on them

This is a good one to use on a 6-. Take the move they were making, and flip it somehow. Maybe you give the advantage to their foes, maybe you have them come up with something bad for you to work with, maybe their move constrains their options instead of expanding them. Get creative.

"Oh, I think you know all about this evil quicksilver, Vahid. Why don't you tell us about the horrible encounter you had with it back down south, and how it's left you shaken to this day."

"A miss, huh? Tell you what, ask one of the Seek Insight questions anyhow, but you'll have disadvantage to do anything BUT act on the answer."

"Yeah, she's just not buying it. There's no way you're going to convince her to squeal on Mutra. In fact, she starts twisting the conversation around, asking you questions, tripping you up, getting you flustered. What do you think it'd take for her to get you to spill the beans on where Vahid has the Heart hidden?"

➤ Hurt someone

Inflict a specific, problematic injury or wound on a PC or an NPC they care about. Something more than just losing HP. Something painful, bloody, consequential, or all three.

Using this move definitely means the victim takes damage, and against a PC it might also mean that they mark a debility. It *definitely* means that they've now got a **problematic wound** (see page 243). It's a part of the fiction, something they have to deal with and something you can use as a basis for your GM moves.

How badly you hurt them depends on the fiction, whether the harm came from a 7+ or a 6-, the damage rolled, and the tags on the damage (*messy*, *forceful*, etc.). When you hurt them because they rolled a 7-9 to Clash with a guy with a club, and they only take 2 damage, that's going to look a lot different than a 6- against a rage drake dealing 12 *messy* damage.

Feel free to describe the general nature of the wound ("He stabs you in the thigh and you feel your leg buckle."), then have the player roll damage ("Take d6+2 damage.") and modulate the injury based on the damage dealt ("3 damage? Okay, I think you drop to one knee and your leg is like on fire, but it'll still hold your weight," versus "Yikes, 8 damage? You still up? Well, your leg gives out under you and it's just gushing blood.")

As a rule, only inflict a permanent, disabling injury if you've warned them it's possible (explicitly or by telegraphing/demonstrating the danger), and either they rolled a 6- or they knowingly ignored the danger. Don't spring that stuff on them.

For example: if you say, "that thing has 6-inch long teeth and jaws that can crush trees… if it gets you, you'll be missing bits, you sure you want to just stand there and swing at it?" and they reply "Yeah, no guts no glory!" and then roll a 7-9 to Clash… well, you warned them. Say goodbye to that arm and hello to a fountain of blood.

On the other hand, if you've presented this thing as a threat but not, like, an *arm-chomping-off* threat, on a 7-9 you might say "It chomps down, there's blood everywhere, and it starts to shake you around. There's this weird, calm part of your brain that's like 'Oh my arm is about to get torn off,' but the rest of you just AAAGH. Take a d10+3 damage and mark *weakened*. What do you do?" Still a pretty hard move, I'd say, but one they might recover from. Taking their arm without warning? Not cool.

With that said: feel free to hurt NPCs more aggressively and brutally than you hurt the PCs. Taking a *follower's* arm (for example) is a great way to show that this thing's attacks are *messy* and terrible, raising the stakes without deprotagonizing the PCs. (Word of advice, though: don't brutalize an animal companion without warning; players get super precious with their pets.)

Once inflicted, a wound or injury is part of the fiction. It might cause the PC to Defy Danger to attempt something that wouldn't otherwise be dangerous. It might be the fictional justification for another move you make. It might prompt you to make moves that escalate the injury.

For more about HP, damage, debilities, and problematic wounds, see the **Harm and Healing** chapter (page 237).

"It like reaches out towards Eira, its hand expanding like mist and clutching her chest, and she just starts moaning and convulsing and you see bits of her skin blackening. She takes 1d12 damage, ignoring armor. Is she still up? No? Okay, well it drops her and she just slumps to the ground. What do you do?"

"It just SQUEEZES and you can't breathe, can't move, then SNAP you feel a rib go and HOLY CRAP this hurts. Take a d8+3 damage, ignoring armor, and mark weakened. *Vahid, you finish lighting the naphtha as this happens, see Caradoc turning blue in its coils. What do you do?"*

"Oh dear. 9 damage? And you're still up? Yeah, um... I think as you try to wrench your arm free, it, um… crap, I think it just chomps down hard and there's just this searing pain and you go staggering back. You're free, but you look down and your right arm is just gone. Blood is spurting, you feel cold, and you think you might faint. What do you do?"

Dealing damage and inflicting debilities

"Dealing damage" isn't a GM move by itself; it's a thing that happens as part of another GM move. When you make a move that involves a character getting banged up, hurt, knocked around, or injured, then deal damage to them as part of that move. Tell the player how much damage they take (usually a die roll, based on the monster that inflicted it or the circumstances surrounding it). They lose that many HP. If they're reduced to 0, they're out of the action and quite likely at Death's Door.

Likewise, you don't have a move for "inflict a debility." You can inflict a debility when you **hurt someone** or **use up their resources**, when you make any other move that would result in them being *weakened*, *dazed*, or *miserable* ("You realize that your hands are shaking, your legs wobbling… mark *weakened*").

For more on damage and debilities, see the **Harm and Healing** chapter (page 237).

➤ Separate them

Split the party. Put foes or obstacles between them. Have someone fall behind. Have a follower or other NPC go missing. Send someone tumbling down the slope, taking them out of the fight. That sort of thing.

This move often pairs well with **put them in a spot**. Because what's worse than being in a spot? Being *alone* in a spot.

"Blodwen, after maybe twenty minutes of pushing through the tall grass, you all get a little spread out and you realize you can't see anyone else. At first you can hear them so no big deal, but then the sound of them moving through the grass is lost in the constant wind. What do you do?"

"Oof. Yeah, as you give her your spiel she's kind of stone-faced, no response. Then there's this pause, and she sorta gasps and sobs and then come the waterworks. 'Dammit, Caradoc.' And she turns and slams the door and you can hear her weeping. What do you do?"

"Okay, cool, so Vahid you're a bit further down the hall, right? With Lowri holding the lantern for you? Well, as you start to make out the runes—something about 'portal' or 'doorway' or maybe 'road'—there's this CUH-CLUNK that you feel in your chest, everyone does, and then a screeching metal-on-metal sound and this steel curtain drops from the ceiling, cutting off the hallway. BOOM. Vahid, you and Lowri are on the far side of it, by yourselves, dust billowing all over. What do you do?"

➤ Capture someone

On a soft version of this move, capture them but stay in the scene, giving them a chance to escape (or others a chance to rescue them). On a hard version, maybe cut straight to the next scene—captured, bound, dragged off who knows where—and just gloss over the details of how they got there.

"Brennan whistles and Ragan, calm and quick as anything, he just grabs Blodwen and spins her around, knife to her throat. Brennan sighs, steps back behind them. 'I'd hoped it wouldn't come to this, but you don't leave me much choice. We'll be going, and I'm sure the young lass here would appreciate it if you all kept your hands where I can see them.' They start backing away, what do you do?"

"Caradoc, you touch the sphere it's like WHOOSH. You're floating in space, looking down over your body. The world is gray and hazy and washed out, and you can't really feel your feet. Vahid, you come home a couple hours later and find Caradoc just slumped over the ice-sphere, his fingers touching it and all blue. He's not responding. What do you do?"

"Yeah, Vahid, Lowri is like waving the torch around in the dark and you're both peering out, looking for whatever made that noise, and we the audience see this shadowy form loom up behind you with these long, spindly fingers. Those fingers clamp down over your mouth, Vahid, and another shape grabs Lowri. There's a brief struggle and then the camera like pans down to the lantern on the floor, on its side, cracked and flickering. We hear sounds of you two getting dragged away. Rhianna, while this is happening…"

➤ Offer an opportunity (with or without a cost)

Give them an opening, a chance to act. The opportunity can be specific ("If you act now, you'll have the drop on them.") or general ("They don't seem to have spotted you, what do you do?"). It can come with a definite cost ("...but it'll make a bunch of noise and raise the alarm.") or a potential cost ("...but you'll have to hurry to make it in time") or no cost at all.

You'll often make this move without realizing it. When you just hand a player the initiative—when there's a tense, active situation and you ask "What do you do?" without first **announcing trouble** or **putting them in a spot** or otherwise making them react—you're offering them an opportunity.

"3 damage? With his armor, that's not enough to drop him. I think he jerks back and you just like score a slice down his cheek. But he's on his heels, what do you do?"

"They're not taking the bait, Rhianna. But if you made a show of heading out of camp and leaving Andras and Blodwen there alone? That'd do it. What do you do?"

"What here is useful or valuable to you? That glowing blue crystal set in the wall. If you smash it, it'll unleash all sorts of chaos, just the distraction you need."

➤ Tell them the consequences/ requirements (then ask)

Use this move as an interrupt, as a way to clarify the fiction and set the stakes when they say they want to do a thing. "If you do that, you realize that __, right?"

Use this move, also, to give them a path forward when the way is otherwise blocked. Use it to force a meaningful decision. Use it to make them pay (in time, resources, opportunity, etc.) if they want to follow a course of action.

"What about Garet's body, Rhianna? If you leave it, the rest of the crew is going to grumble—you know how superstitious they are. You could burn it, but that'll take time and give away your position. What do you do?"

"If you do that, cool, but you won't have a chance to get clear. You'll be caught in the blast for sure. You do it?"

"Yeah, no. Your hands are shaking, your mouth is dry, you can't think about anything but that baleful, hateful eye. You want to take a shot, you're going to have to get it together first. What do you do?"

"Vahid, you can't make heads or tails of these runes, not right now at least. Maybe if you took a rubbing and had time to study them back home, with all your books and notes and everything. But not out here. What do you do?"

"That thing is made of solid stone. Your arrows aren't going to do squat, Rhianna. You want to hurt this thing, or even slow it down, you're going to need to hit it with something big and heavy."

➤ Advance towards impending doom

Threats (page 277) and **hazards** (page 381) might have impending dooms, each with a series of grim portents leading up to them. When you make this move, you decide that one of those grim portents has come to pass, and show it to the characters.

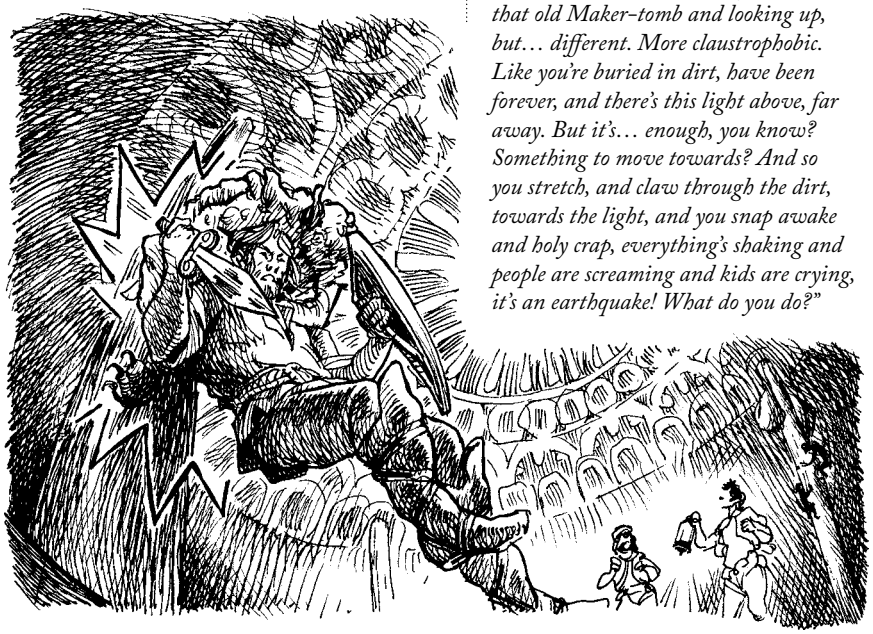
In practice, this move almost always manifests as another move. You **announce trouble** or **reveal an unwelcome truth** or **put someone in a spot** (etc.) in a way that demonstrates that the grim portent has come to pass.

Rarely, you might chuckle evilly and tick a box, and say that they've got a bad feeling or that a cold wind blows, without actually revealing the portent just yet. When you do this, be sure to commit to the portent having come to pass offscreen. If you don't, you haven't really made a move at all.

"You find Nia in that collapsed house on the edge of town. You've got to squeeze in there, and your eyes have to adjust to the dark, but when they do, your stomach drops. There're chalk drawings of spiders all over the walls, and… an altar? With this mass of sticks, fur, and web that you realize is an idol of a big spider. Nia's all smiling and like 'Hi Blodwen, do you like my drawings?' What do you do?"

"So, you're stabbing at it over your shoulder, but stumbling around as you do. And I think, yeah, you kill it, but you end up staggering back into one of the old columns. There's this loud CRACK and some creaking and dust starts to pour down from the ceiling. Vahid, you see this happen, what do you do?"

"Caradoc, as you drift off to sleep, you find yourself dreaming. A really weird, vivid dream. It's like when you were in that old Maker-tomb and looking up, but… different. More claustrophobic. Like you're buried in dirt, have been forever, and there's this light above, far away. But it's… enough, you know? Something to move towards? And so you stretch, and claw through the dirt, towards the light, and you snap awake and holy crap, everything's shaking and people are screaming and kids are crying, it's an earthquake! What do you do?"



Example of play

Everyone's arrived. We've chatted, gotten comfortable, and we're ready to get started. The session starts in ***loose play****. I ask if anyone wants to recap. Rhianna's player does.*

"We sent a logging crew to the Foothills. But some sort of goat-demon spooked them, and it—or something—wounded Andras. They sent him back. We've gone up to investigate. Did we get anything useful out of Andras before we left?"

Blodwen says "He was pretty out of it. We got him stable, but he kept moaning 'that eye!' And I think he made a pass at me."

"Right, right! You'd already outfitted and started up to the Foothills," I say.

I ***ask some questions*** *to help us warm up. "But before we start—Caradoc, who do you think gave you guff about going on yet another adventure? And Vahid, why are you so happy to get out of town for a bit?"*

We learn how Sawyl the Tanner's been looking for a new apprentice and how Caradoc feels all sorts of guilty about it. We also learn that Vahid needs a break from the widow Maire, who's been cramping his "confirmed bachelor" style. I take some notes!

Okay, let's do this. I ***frame the action*** *and then* ***describe the environment****. "The four of you enter the Foothills in the afternoon of the second day out. The hills rise out of the Flats, and the road wends between them. Young, thin trees dot the slopes, getting bigger and older as you press farther into the hills. As the sun dips low, you finally get some blessed shade." (Some of those details are from the almanac; the rest I made up).*

It's the first time we've seen the Foothills in-game, so I ***ask questions*** *like "What striking difference do you notice between these hills and the Great Wood?"*

After they answer my questions, I zoom in and frame an actual scene, ***giving details and specifics****. "You reach camp just after sunset. It's on the wayside, but even so, they've set up felled logs like a barricade. They're all huddled round a feeble cooking fire. Everyone's quiet, tense, gripping their hatchets. They spook a bit when you show up, but when they realize that it's you four, there's a murmur of relief. 'It's Rhianna,' and "the Blessed,' and 'Thank Tor.'" (Notice how I'm focusing on feelings and behaviors more than the tactical layout, because those are the details that matter. I'm also* ***portraying my NPCs****.) "Hey, Rhianna, who'd you put in charge?' (Asking more questions!)*

"Huh. Elios, I guess."

I make my soft move and ***ask a provocative question****. "Cool. He's like, 'Just the four of you? So, what, we're done? We can go home?' Others nod, hopeful.* ***What do you do?****"*

Rhianna asks me, player-to-GM, "Wait, hold up. Is my crew here?" I ***answer her question****, tell her that they aren't, then ask her again what she does.*

Rhianna replies (in that stern voice of hers), "Where's my crew at, Elios?" Time to ***resolve her action****. She's pressing Elios (Persuade, maybe?) but there's no reason for him to resist and so the move doesn't trigger. I just say what happens and reply in Elios's voice. "They're still out. Hunting.'"*

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

*The situation's clear but could use a nudge, so I keep talking as Elios and make another soft move (**announce trouble**). "'You know, they should've been back by now.' What do you do?"*

*The PCs discuss searching for the crew, but opt to stay put and get more info. They still aren't triggering any moves (they're asking questions that the loggers would willingly answer) so I just **portray my NPC**. Elios and Terrwyn say how they both saw the demon a week ago, before Andras was attacked. "Like a big goat, with a human skull, three eyes, and a huge horn."*

*I was going to **offer an opportunity** but Vahid jumps in. "Have I ever heard of something like this?" That triggers Know Things, so he rolls +INT and gets an 8.*

*I know from my prep that this demon-goat is actually a guardian spirit, and that the real threat is a hagr, so I use one of my exploration moves and **hint at more than meets the eye**. "Sounds like a shaksa, a spirit or demon the folks up north believe in. Like a guardian of graveyards? Or maybe that's a metaphor and it's like the lord of the dead? How do you know this?"*

"Oh, from a religious text of theirs, I read it in a library down south. I'll keep it to myself for now."

*I update the situation. "It's full night now and the crew still isn't back." I focus the spotlight and **offer an opportunity**. "Hey, Caradoc, while they talked to Elios and Terrwyn, you noticed some glances between the others. Like, they're scared. But maybe hiding something, too? What do you do?"*

"Ooh, I watch carefully and try to figure out what's up. Seek Insight?" Alas, he rolls a 4. Time for a hard move!

*I **announce trouble**. "You're sure that Iwan and Cadi know more than they're saying, but before you can act on that, there's this horrible roar and crashing sound from up in the hills, then smaller shouts—like people fighting. You all hear it. What do you do?"*

They ask questions and I clarify the situation a bit (its dark, the fight sounds pretty close, none of them know these hills well). Then Rhianna says "Let's go. Into the hills."

That ends the scene! There's a bit of loose play as we talk logistics. Vahid and Blodwen each bring a torch, lit from the cooking fire. "You head out?" I ask. They do.

*I zoom out and describe the situation in general: "It's dark, the hills are steep and wooded, and you're navigating by sound, following the sounds of battle." I make my soft move and **tell them the requirements**. "If you're trying to get there quickly, that'll trigger Struggle as One—the danger being that you get lost or separated or hurt on the way. If you take your time and move carefully, you won't trigger a move—but you probably won't get there in time to help with the fight. What do you do?"*

They decide to Struggle as One. We resolve the move and they each roll well, and so we transition to the next scene. "It's a desperate, half-blind run through the woods, but then you pop out into a clearing. In your flickering torch light, you see Eira and Lowri facing off against this huge, hulking brute, like 12 feet tall and half as wide."

*I barely take a breath before making my soft move (**put someone in a spot**): "It hoists a small tree like a club and roars, about to smash them both, and they're both just staring at this thing, gaping." I've been addressing the group, the spotlight unfocused, so now I tighten it up. "Rhianna, Blodwen, you got here first—what do you do?"*

Rhianna's player doesn't hesitate. "I shoot it. In the head. Let Fly?" Yes, but I tell her to wait until we see what Blodwen's doing.

Blodwen asks questions. "So this is like a person? Just really big?" Yup. "And it hasn't noticed us?" Yup, for now, they just got there. "Do I recognize it? Like is it maybe one of our loggers, mutated or something?"

"Eh," I tell her. "I doubt you could tell at a quick glance in torchlight. You could take a moment and Seek Insight. Do you?"

"No. Could I like yell and wave the torch and distract it?" she asks. Caradoc's player notes that this sounds like the trigger for Defend ("jump in to protect others") and we all agree. But we also agree that Rhianna would get her shot off before that happens.

Rhianna gets an 8 to Let Fly, and chooses to move to get a clear shot. She only does 3 damage, less 1 armor. It's barely hurt, and Rhianna just exposed herself to danger.

"I think you've got to step into the clearing to get the shot, yeah? You clip it in the shoulder, and—good news—it checks its swing, snarls and turns your way, leaves Eira and Lowri alone. Bad news, though, is that it fixes you with its big, bulging, horrible eye and your mind just goes blank, your knees start to wobble, you can't even think."

*That resolves Rhianna's move, so I shift the spotlight and **offer an opportunity**. "Blodwen, do you still want to Defend?"*

She does, and rolls a 9. She immediately spends her Readiness to draw all attention from her ward (Rhianna, now) to herself. "Cool, what does this look like?" I ask.

"I step in front of Rhianna, waving my torch and yelling, like 'YAAAAAA!'"

It works, of course. I say how the hagr turns its eye on her, filling her with that same feeling of dread that Rhianna had.

*I shift the spotlight to Caradoc and Vahid. I tell them that they just arrived, quickly recap the situation, then **offer an opportunity**. "It's focused on Blodwen right now, what do you do?"*

Vahid takes the situation in by Seeking Insight. We decide to resolve that later, because Caradoc rushes in, shield up and spear stabbing low. Blodwen had its attention, so we agree that Caradoc can get close enough to attack, but it's still very able and willing to fight back. This triggers Clash, but Caradoc gets a 4.

I need to make a hard move, and the obvious thing is to hurt him. "I guess it sees you coming, Caradoc, and swings that tree branch before you can close in. you get smacked in the head and everything's just white and your ears are ringing and what is even going on? Take a d10+3 damage and mark dazed. *Rhianna, you snap out of it and see it club Caradoc in the head, he just went flying and landed in a heap. What do you do?"*

And we go from there.

Your principles

These principles are your guidelines, your best practices, your rules of behavior for running *Stonetop*. Strive to follow them. They are the surest way to achieve your agenda.

- Follow the rules
- Begin and end with the fiction
- Address the characters, not the players
- Ask questions and build on the answers
- Be a fan of the player characters
- Embrace the fantastic and the mundane
- Exploit the setting guide
- Respect your prep
- Give your characters life
- Think offscreen, too
- Bring it home
- Let things breathe
- Let things burn

Following your principles isn't always easy. Sometimes it's unclear what a given principle looks like in the moment. Sometimes, the principles will conflict. A big part of your job is to interpret these principles and apply them as you think best. You'll often do this instinctively, and how exactly you follow your principles is a big part of your own personal style of GMing.

Follow the rules

There are many rules, especially in the form of player moves: basic moves and follower moves, special moves, exploration moves, and steading moves. Each playbook has moves. Inserts have moves. Arcana have moves. Dangers, discoveries, threats, and locations can all have player-facing moves.

Hopefully this is obvious, but: **when a move is triggered, follow the procedures in the move and say what the move requires of you**. The rules are there to push the conversation and the fiction in certain directions, and to clarify what happens in moments of uncertainty.

Give the players the full benefits of their moves and their rolls. Challenge their ability to trigger those moves, sure, and temper the results based on the established fiction and your prep. But don't fudge the results of a move because you think things should go a particular way, or because you're worried that things will be "too easy" or "too hard." That's not your job. You're **playing to find out what happens**, right?

You don't get to invoke a player move unless its trigger is actually met. You *don't* get to say, "The crinwin attacks you, roll +DEX to Defy Danger!" Gods, no. You say that the crinwin leaps at them and ask, "What do you do?" If they do something that triggers a move, *then* you do *that*.

It's okay if, in service of your other principles, you suggest something in the spirit of the rules instead of following their exact letter, but be up front about it and get consent. "You got a 7-9 to Clash? Roll your damage. 9!? Yikes. So, I know it says you expose yourself to your enemy's attack but I'm thinking the 'attack' in this case is that your axe gets wedged into his skull and it's gonna take a bit to get it free. That okay with you?"

Begin and end with the fiction

Remember: "the fiction" is the shared, imagined space that you and the players establish through conversation, and the various characters' actions and relative positions within that imaginary space.

When rules are invoked—when a player triggers a move or rolls damage or spends a resource or whatever—ground the rules in the fiction. If you can't picture what the character is actually doing or how they're doing it, then ask questions and clarify the fiction before going to the dice. After the dice are rolled, and the rules say what happens, describe what that looks like in the fiction (or ask the player to). **Fiction, then rules, then back to fiction.** Always.

Likewise, when you make a GM move, make a move that flows from the fiction as established. Don't say the name of the move—keep that to yourself—but describe how it manifests in the fiction. Show, don't tell.

Beginning and ending with the fiction is a crucial part of **portraying a rich and mysterious world**. If you skimp on the fiction and just focus on the mechanics, you'll find that your world is bland, boring, and anemic.

Bad: *"You attack the hagr? Cool, roll to Clash. A 10? Do you evade its attack or deal extra damage? Okay, roll your damage +1d6. 7 damage? It's still up and hits you back for 1d10+3* forceful, *knocking you down. It's coming at you again, what do you do?"*

Good: *"You attack the hagr? Cool, what's that look like? Stabbing up into its gut? Yeah, sure, roll Clash. A 10? Do you evade its attack or deal extra damage? Okay, roll your damage +1d6. 7 damage? So like you said, you stab it in its gut and the hagr doubles over, howling in pain, but before you can get away it just uncoils and backhands you across the face. Take d10+3 damage as you go flying and land in a heap, head spinning. You hear it lumbering towards you, grunting in pain and anger. What do you do?"*

Address the characters, not the players

Ask the *characters* what they do. Tell the *characters* what they see and hear. Tell the *characters* what's obvious to them. Don't say, "Brian, what is Vahid doing to keep awake?" Say instead: "Vahid, what are you doing to keep awake?" Don't tell Jamie, "Rhianna can tell that he's lying." Say (in Iwan's whiny voice) "No way, Rhianna, you know I'd never do that," and then (in your own voice), "But he looks away and you can just tell he's full of crap."

By speaking this way, you keep the game focused on the fiction. You push the players to think, speak, and respond as their characters. You establish fiction as the characters perceive it, because that's who you're addressing.

Ask questions and build on the answers

Ask questions all the time, all over the place.

Ask questions **to establish intent**. "Before you all head out in the morning, is there anything else anyone wants to do?"

Ask questions **to clarify intent** and get yourself on the same page as the players. "Yeah, I guess you can get around him. But what are you hoping to accomplish here?"

Ask questions **to clarify the fiction**. "Sure, you can Seek Insight. What does that look like?"

Ask the characters **what they're thinking or feeling**. "Caradoc, you're standing there, bleeding from where Wynfor stabbed you, and the look in his eye—you barely recognize him. What's going through your head right now?"

Ask the characters **about their past or their day-to-day lives**. "Rhianna, who taught you how to hunt and track?" "Blodwen, you live with your mother, right? Any other siblings? What's the place look like inside?"

Ask the characters **about things they would know**. "Rhianna, you've met Brennan before. What's his most distinguishing feature?"

Ask the characters **about things they've heard or what they believe**, where their answers might not be entirely true. "Blodwen, what stories have you heard about the Quiet Twins and how they came to haunt the Stream? What do you think the truth is?"

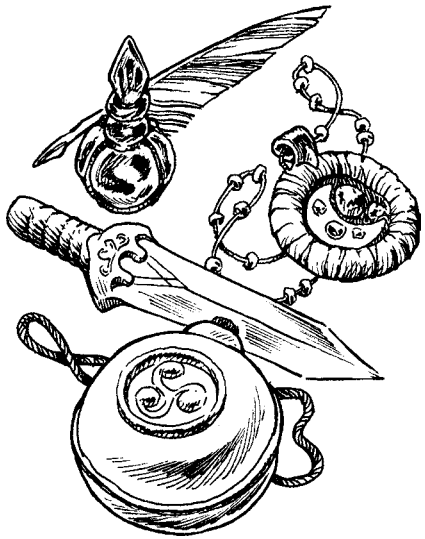
Ask questions **that assert details while asking for input**. "Vahid, what have you noticed that all the missing children have in common?" "Rhianna, what little ritual do folks always do when crossing the Stream?"

Ask the characters **to paint the scene for you**, by asking them for details on a theme. "What here tells each of you that this is a place touched by the Fae?" "What do you see here that you've seen a thousand times before?" "What's the most striking thing about the Flats in early spring?"

Ask questions **that do more than one of the above.** "Caradoc, when you all got back to town, whose reaction surprised you the most? How did they react, and how did you feel about it?"

Reincorporate their answers into the fiction, right away or later on. Don't shut down their answers unless it's to point out a contradiction. Ask follow-up questions. Think about what their answers imply and extrapolate from there. Their answers might surprise you—that's part of the fun—but carry on as if that answer has always been a true and obvious part of the established world.

When you ask your players to contribute to the fiction, it helps you **play to find out what happens**. Your players will always come up with details that you wouldn't, and that makes the world you're all creating a little more surprising. When you build on the details that players have established, it helps you **portray a rich and mysterious world**. People are often more invested in things they helped create, and when you bring up a character or a detail that they introduced four sessions back, and it matters, that really brings the world to life.



Be a fan of the player characters

The PCs are the protagonists of the story. Keep the focus of the game on them. Root for them. Celebrate their victories. Lament their losses. Let yourself wonder things about them, and then find ways to get the answers through play. Care about them. Be their fans.

Being a fan of the player characters doesn't mean letting them do whatever they want. You're the author of their adversity. You need to **punctuate their lives with adventure**. Threaten them. Hurt them. Go after the things they care about. Give them all sorts of difficult choices.

But also: give them opportunities, both to shine in the moment and to make things better in the long run. Let them enjoy the things they work for.

Stonetop gives the player characters lots of agency. Respect that. Don't shortchange them out of their moves or their rolls. See what they do with their power, status, and competence. **Play to find out what happens.**

The Line

In *Stonetop* and games like it, there's a line between what the players are responsible for and what you as the GM are responsible for. The players are in charge of their characters: what they do and say; what they feel and think; how they live; their past experiences. As the GM, you're in charge of the world: the environment, the NPCs, the dangers and the discoveries.

Some of the questions described here blur the Line. When you ask Vahid what the missing children all have in common, you're really asking Vahid's player to do something that's generally the responsibility of the GM: make up details about the world.

The trick is to **address the characters, not the players**. Don't ask the player to make up what they find in the next room or how an NPC reacts or how the trap hurts them. Ask the *character* about something they know, something they have heard, something they have experienced. This puts the request back on their side of the Line. It's a sleight of mind, but it's an effective one.

Even so, blurring the Line can be uncomfortable or off-putting for some players. Some players are totally fine with making up details about the world, but others will find that it takes away from their sense of immersion or makes the world feel hollow and made up. Adjust the questions you ask, and how you ask them, to fit your and your players' preferences.

Embrace the fantastic and the mundane

The world is filled with fantastic elements: spirits, monsters, fickle Fae, the ancient works of the Makers, the darkness of the Things Below. Play up these elements. Use them to make the world mysterious.

But at the same time, ground the game in human concerns: the turn of seasons, the coming harvest, friends and neighbors. Threaten the PCs with real-world dangers: harsh weather, wild beasts, starvation, exposure. Ask about the provisions they brought or how they got that cloak. Make the world rich with mundane detail.

Contrast the fantastic and the mundane against each other. If an adventure revolves around a supernatural threat or opportunity, then be sure to include perfectly mundane challenges, dangers, and discoveries. If a session involves mostly mundane concerns (like a trade mission to Marshedge or an aurochs hunt), sprinkle in some fantastic elements. The interplay between the two makes the world that much richer and more mysterious.

Exploit the setting guide

Stonetop comes with a lot of established setting, but it leaves a lot of blanks for you and your players to fill in during play. The setting is intended to serve as a springboard for your creativity. It helps set a tone and gives you all a common starting point. It provides details to riff on. It hints at answers but doesn't always give them. Use the established setting to **portray a rich and mysterious world**.

Use the setting guide to inspire, but don't feel beholden to it. If your players give you something that contradicts the established setting, don't negate their input just because the book says so. The book isn't the authority, it's a resource for you to exploit.

With that said: **be thoughtful about what you change or discard**. It's safer to change specific details than to change broad themes. If the Fox says that Brennan used to run a gang in Marshedge and killed his way to power (as opposed to the setting guide's story about how he was a bandit who the council hired as their marshal), then no big deal. But if you and the Seeker decide that the Makers were gnome-sized tinkers instead of inscrutable titans, then you'll need to rethink all sorts of setting details (the size of the roads, the scale of the Ruined Tower, the themes associated with each type of Maker, and so forth).

Respect your prep

Between sessions, you'll make preparations (i.e. "prep"). You'll write up threats and NPCs. You'll create or choose dangers and discoveries. You'll think of encounters and design locations to explore.

Some prep involves possibilities: things that the PCs *might* discover, dangers that they *could* face, problems that *might* arise. This sort of prep lives in a quantum state; until you actually use these ideas and introduce them to the fiction, these ideas aren't true. They're just ideas—ideas that help you **punctuate the characters' lives with adventure**.

A lot of your prep, though, involves making decisions—real, binding decisions about how the world *is*. This includes stuff like a monster's instinct, moves, and HP, or how a location got to be the way that it is, or who killed the widow Maire. It might include decisions about what *will* happen if the PCs don't intervene, or how an NPC would react to X or Y. This type of prep is part of the fiction already, even if you haven't yet revealed it to the players.

Make these decisions carefully and thoughtfully. Take your time. Follow the guidelines in the upcoming chapters.

Then, during play, **respect your prep**. Treat it as fictional truth. Describe the world, portray your characters, and make GM moves with these decisions in mind. If you've done your prep well, you'll find that sticking to it not only helps you **portray a rich and mysterious world**, it also (paradoxically) helps you **play to find out what happens**.

See page 204 for more on **prep**.

Give your characters life

Name your NPCs. Give them distinct personalities. Wants, needs, and quirks. Opinions and beliefs. If you can manage it, portray them with distinct voices or mannerisms. Bring them to life and play them as if they were real people.

Describe your NPCs with memorable traits. Players often have a hard time remembering that the smith is named Taliesen, but they'll remember that the smith is a big loud guy with a shock of white hair.

Don't let PCs walk all over your NPCs. **Be a fan of the player characters**, sure, but that doesn't mean you should have your NPCs just do whatever the PCs want. If it feels like the PCs are pressuring or enticing your NPCs into doing something that they wouldn't want to do, well, that's what the Persuade move is for.

Give your non-human characters life, too. Describe how they look, of course, but also how they move, what they sound and smell like, how they act.

Beasts, spirits, even the utterly alien Things Below—they've all got personalities. Develop a sense of their motives and how they act under pressure. For beasts, think about their ecologies. For the undead, what keeps them from passing through the Last Door? For magical entities, think about the strange rules they follow. For all of the above: put those details on screen, or at least hint at them. It goes a long way towards **portraying a rich and mysterious world**.

Think offscreen, too

When you establish the situation, answer questions, or make moves, think about events off-screen. What are your NPCs and monsters doing? What have they done? What traces did they leave? What have they been up to that becomes evident? What are they doing now that might become relevant later? Weave the answers into what you say.

Think, too, about what the PCs are doing and how it would shape off-screen events. If they make a lot of noise moving through the Great Wood, who hears them coming and how do they react? If they make an alliance with Gordin's Delve, how do the Hillfolk—who have a beef with the Delvers—respond? If they told the town that they'd be gone for five days and they're gone for two weeks, who assumes that they're dead? Who steps up and tries to take charge? Who takes the opportunity to do what they want?

Thinking offscreen helps you **portray a rich and mysterious world**, because the world will feel larger than the PCs. It helps you **punctuate the characters' lives with adventure**, because off-screen threats and opportunities quickly become things for the PCs to deal with. And it helps you **play to find out what happens**, because it gets you thinking about consequences and cause/effect on a broader scale.

Bring it home

Make the village of Stonetop itself the foundation of your game, the beginning and end of the PCs' adventures. Threaten the town, its livelihood, or its citizens. Give them chances to make progress towards improvements, or to finally put down lingering threats.

When the PCs set off on an adventure, show how their neighbors react. Who turns out to see them off? Who is sick with worry that they won't return? Who grumbles that this is folly? Who gives them something to take, because it's dangerous to go alone?

During adventures, ask questions that tie back to the PCs' lives in Stonetop. Who taught you how to hunt? Who came here with you all those years back, and what happened to them? Which old-timer once had a run-in with these creatures? Whose life would be most changed by this treasure? Whose smile do you find yourself thinking about, out here, under the stars?

When the PCs return home, consider what has happened while they were gone and describe how the townsfolk greet them. Who is happiest? Who resents their return? Who blames them for stirring up all this trouble anyhow, never mind that they've put things right?

Between adventures, ask the characters about their day-to-day lives and relationships. Show how the town changes in response to its troubles and the opportunities the PCs have seized. Describe NPCs growing older, having children, aspiring to more, settling for less. Show how they've been affected by the PCs' adventures. Bring it home.

Let things breathe

Allow stretches of time to pass between adventures, or even between individual moves. It's a big world out there, and the PCs have mundane, daily tasks to attend to. Avoid the temptation to follow the PCs lives from day to day, hour to hour. Have weeks or months go by with a single statement: "The next three weeks keep you all occupied with the harvest, and then..."

When a threat looms, it need not be immediate and dire. You can show signs of it stirring but keep it distant and remote. Ask the PCs what they do about it, but you can resolve their response over days or weeks. Zoom in and frame a scene only when the fiction calls for immediate, specific action; zoom back out as soon as that's over. Let the threat simmer until it boils over and becomes something the PCs have to deal with.

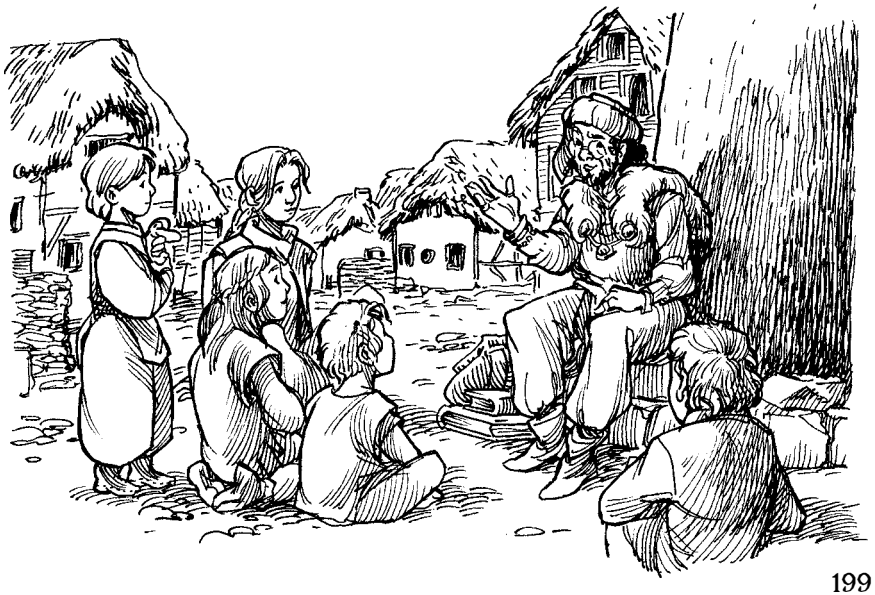
Let things burn

As much as you like your plans, as much as you come to love some of your NPCs, as much as the players will grow attached: protect no one and nothing.

Many GMs have a tendency, a very natural tendency, to coddle the PCs and to shield the NPCs that they care about. To preserve the status quo. To save their villains for a future confrontation, even when the PCs' moves and rolls and bold action should rightly put them in the ground.

That tendency? Burn it away. Then let everything else burn, too. You're not playing to preserve your darlings. You're **playing to find out what happens**.

This doesn't mean that you should go out of your way to destroy the things that the characters love. It does mean that you should threaten those things, and that if the characters fail to save them, you should follow through. Be okay with hard, irrevocable consequences. Play with fire. Let things burn.



Other things to do

Take notes. You'll end up generating lots of details, and it can be hard to keep track of it all. You'll need to figure out the best tool and the level of detail that works for you, but things you might want to write down include:

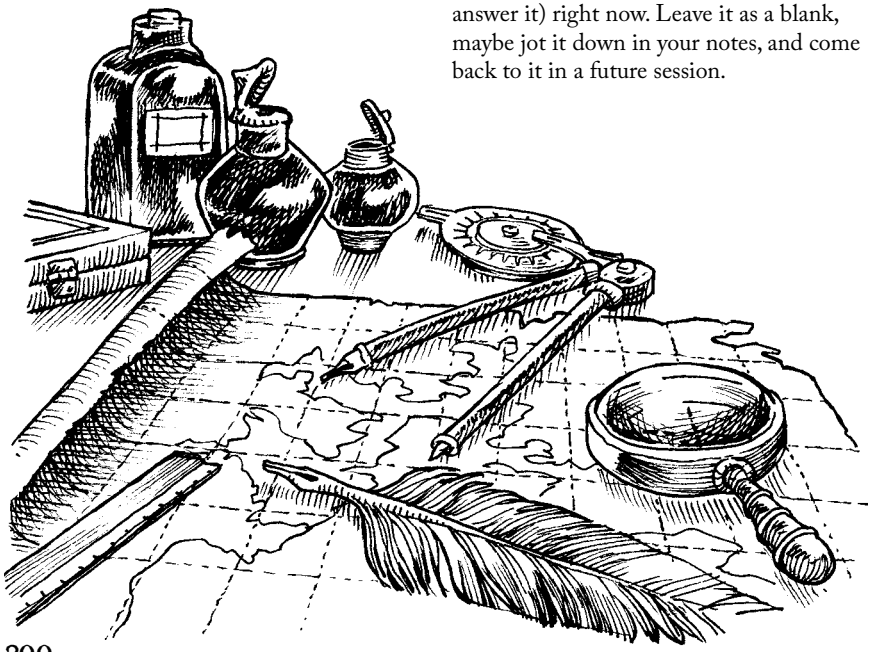
- NPC names (and traits, and relevant relationships)
- Historical events that you and players establish (and when/where/who)
- Interesting details that you don't want to forget
- A summary of events each session

You can write up formal session recaps to share with your players, but mostly these notes are for you. Write only as much as you'll find useful.

Draw maps. Lots of maps. Not just as part of your prep, but as a prop or a point of reference during play. When a fight breaks out and there's a lot going on, throw a quick sketch of the terrain on a whiteboard or a piece of paper (or throw out some minis if you have them). When they explore a ruin, draw a rough map (or encourage them to) to help establish the physical space. When they go to a new steading, give them a map of the different districts and parts of town.

Add to existing maps, too. Put the PCs' homes on the steading map. Add points of interest that come up during play. Draw the course of their journey on the Vicinity or World's End maps.

Leave blanks in your maps and in your prep, to be filled in during play or at a later time. Leave yourself things to wonder about. If a question occurs to you, you don't have to answer it (or ask the players to answer it) right now. Leave it as a blank, maybe jot it down in your notes, and come back to it in a future session.



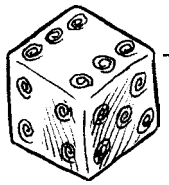
Keep things moving. Don't let the momentum of the game sputter out. Frame scenes aggressively, zooming in and out to match the level of interest (yours and the players'). When nothing's happening, either make a GM move or skip ahead in time to where something interesting *is* happening.

Involve everyone. Keep moving the spotlight around the table. Make sure everyone gets some good screen time. Be explicit about who you're addressing, and don't be afraid to make interrupting players wait. "Blodwen, you see… Brian, hold on, I'm talking to Hobbes."

Take breaks. They let everyone reflect on what's happened and think about what they want to do next. They let you—the real-world people hanging out—get to know each other better or catch up on real-world stuff or just joke around. That stuff's important, too.

Engage your players in world-building, and make sure they realize the setting is theirs as much as it is yours. When they ask you something about the world, and you don't have an answer at the ready, turn it back on them. "Good question. Blodwen, what DO the people of Stonetop do with their dead?"

Sometimes, disclaim decision making. Put an outcome in the character's hands ("He's a bloody mess, but not dead. You can still save him. Do you?"). Discuss an outcome with the players ("What do you think? Is Andras alive or dead?"). Let the dice decide ("You know what, roll Death's Door for him."). Let your NPCs decide, based on their instincts, their wants and needs, your notes, and your own sense of their internal logic. ("No, he's not the type to come back as a ghost, so… yeah, he's dead.")



The Die of Fate

One way to disclaim decision making is to let the dice decide. Often, that means letting the results of a player's move determine what happens. But you can also use the Die of Fate.

The Die of Fate is just a die roll, usually a d6, with a lower result meaning bad and a higher result meaning good. Have a player roll the Die of Fate when you don't have a particular opinion on what should happen or how something should go, and/or when it's just a matter of luck. How's the weather today? What do they encounter en route? How many uses of supplies can they loot? In general, a 1-2 is bad, a 3-4 is neutral or mixed, and 5-6 is pretty good.

Sometimes, you'll prep a set of results for the Die of Fate. For example, what happens when they make camp?

1 Crinwin attack camp!
2-3 Crinwin try to lure someone out of camp.
4-5 They're out there, just watching you.
6 You avoid their notice.

Don't feel limited to a d6, especially not when you've got a table of results set up in advance. If you've got 12 interesting outcomes, have them roll a d12.

What not to do

Don't plan a storyline or a plot. Don't plan the PCs' character arcs. Don't plan dramatic moments, where the PCs arrive *just* as this particular thing happens (regardless of how long they took to get there or what they did before). Don't assume the PCs will take a certain course of action, or that they'll succeed or fail at a particular task. All of that flies in the face of **playing to find out what happens**. That's you deciding what will happen, in advance, by yourself. Absolutely not what you're here to do.

Instead: prep situations, and possible encounters, and places to explore. Prep threats and NPCs with good actionable instincts, maybe some grim portents and impending dooms. See the **Prep** section (page 204) for how to do this.

Don't tell them what to roll before they've told you what they're doing. You do *not* get to say crap like "the bandit attacks, Defy Danger with DEX." Because 1) That's not how it works and 2) What if they don't act quickly or with finesse (the trigger for Defying Danger with DEX)? What if they knock his attack aside and bash him with their shield? What if they take the blow and run him through? What if they toss dirt in his eyes and kick his groin? When you tell the players to make a move, without them first telling you that they've done something to trigger the move, you're taking control of their characters and dictating what they do. You're breaking the rules of the game.

Instead: make your soft GM move and ask, "What do you do?" Then, based on the answer, decide together whether they triggered a move and which move they triggered. Then they roll that move, and you resolve it from there.

Don't make them roll "just because," or because "maybe they wouldn't notice," or any of that garbage. Like, you know how in other games, you'll decide that a monster is sneaking up on camp and ask the PC for a perception check? That's not a thing in *Stonetop*.

Instead, you just make a soft GM move, like **announce trouble**, that hints at the monster's presence. "You realize that the crickets have all gone quiet. And then, maybe it's just your imagination. But you thought you heard something… laughing? Out in the woods. What do you do?" And maybe they wake the others or maybe they call out or maybe they peer carefully out into the woods and cock their head, triggering Seek Insight. However they respond, you run the game from there.

Don't stop making GM moves, especially when the players roll 10+. You'll describe what happens, yeah, and you'll give them the success that they earned. Sometimes a player will just grab the initiative and follow up (and that's cool, run with it). But usually, the players will still be looking at you to see what happens. The fiction churns along and bad guys keep doing bad things.

So when the Heavy rolls a 10+ to Clash and deals her damage and the foe's still standing and there are like two other baddies nearby, don't just go, "Cool, he's still standing, what do you do?"

Instead: think about how the first foe responds to getting hit, and what the other two foes are doing. Make a move that takes all that into account, and *then* ask "What do you do?"

GMing is a practice

Running any RPG is a practice, like yoga or music or martial arts. It's not something that you master. There's always room for improvement, always something to learn.

Running *Stonetop* specifically is its own skill, its own practice. Even if you've got experience running similar games (like *Dungeon World* or *Apocalypse World*), there's a learning curve. Stonetop is easier to pick up if you've run other games, but that experience can work against you, too! You'll have to unlearn habits and adjust to new approaches, and that can be hard.

The point is: running *Stonetop* isn't exactly easy, but **you get better at it by doing it, by reflecting on how things went, and by trying to do better next time**.

During the first adventure, focus on your **agenda** (page 168), on following the **core loop** (page 169), and on recognizing the triggers of the **basic player moves** (page 208). Lean on your prep—that's what it's for—and take your time. Expect things to be a little rocky as you and your players learn the rules. Don't worry about punchy descriptions or voicing NPCs or sticking to every single principle.

After the first "in character" session, ask your players for feedback. What did they enjoy? What felt rocky? What do they want to see more of in future sessions? Ask for clarification if you need it, but don't get defensive and don't try to explain yourself. Try to be humble and receptive.

When you've got some time, review the session in light of your agenda. Did you **portray a rich and mysterious world**, or did the world feel flat, hollow, arbitrary? Did you **punctuate their lives with adventure**, or did you let things drag? Did you **play to find out what happens**, or did you force things down the path that you thought they should go? If you didn't pursue your agenda, ask yourself: "What would pursuing my agenda have looked like?" Next time, do *that*.

Look over your principles. Did you ever fail to follow them? How did it impact the game? What would following the principle have looked like instead?

Think about moments where you were stumped, unsure what to do. Then look at the core loop. Where were you in the loop when you got stuck? What could you have done differently? What sort of prep might have helped? Maybe prep something like that before the next session.

Review the player moves (basic, special, expedition, etc.) Did you miss any moves getting triggered? Did you call for a player move, even though its trigger wasn't really met? For moves that were used, did you follow their procedures correctly?

Next session, try to do better. Write down 2-3 things you want to do or focus on. Put them somewhere you can see them. During the session, try to do them.

Repeat the process. Ask for feedback. Review the session in light of your agenda, your principles, the rules, and the core loop. Prep to shore up your weaknesses. Set goals. Try again. Repeat.

Get good. Then get better. Then get great.

Prep

Prep is what you do between sessions, the lonely fun (or for some, the stressful work) of getting ready for the next game. Prep involves reviewing your notes from previous sessions, thinking about what might happen in the next session, and doing stuff that you don't want to do during play.

Why prep? A few reasons:

To give you **interesting stuff** to say.

To **speed up play**, and not make everyone wait while you decide what happens, or stat up a monster, or draw a map.

To **shore up your weaknesses**. If you, say, always forget about the PCs' followers and let them fade into the background, maybe prep some interesting things for those followers to say or do.

To **hone your craft**. Some stuff is better when you have time to think about it—it's more consistent or thematic, it flows better, it builds on stuff that came up earlier, etc.

To **give yourself permission** to play hard and inflict badness on the PCs. If you've got a tendency to pull punches (and don't we all?), it can really help to have an impending doom established or to give your bad guys a move like "tear an arm off."

Prep only as much as you find useful and valuable. Unless you're making something for other GMs to use, there's no point in writing down details that are self-evident to you. Don't write down what Nia looks like unless you think you'll forget or it's something you specifically want to call attention to in play.

Consider prepping some or all of the following:

Threats

The ongoing, recurring problems that cause trouble for the PCs. Things that are going to get worse if left unchecked, or complicated relationships that you want to explore more in play. There's a whole chapter on prepping and using **threats** (page 277).

Hooks

When you want to push the PCs into the field with a threat or an opportunity, it pays to prepare a hook. A hook involves: setup questions, a plan for framing initial scenes, some specific GM moves you plan to make, and some possible reactions. See the **First Adventure** chapter (page 251) for guidelines on preparing a hook.

Expeditions

If you know (or suspect) that the PCs will leave town, you might prepare your choices for the **Chart a Course** move (page 302). Consider drawing a map, prepping points of interest, and roughly imagining a few encounters that they might have en route. See the "**What to prep**" section of the Expeditions chapter (page 340) for details.

Sites

Think about each important place you expect the PCs to explore or encounter during a session. What's it like? How will you describe it? What questions will you ask about it? What's its story? Do you need a map or a visual aid? Are there dangers or discoveries within? See page 345 for ideas.

Dangers

The hazards and monsters and hostile NPCs that the PCs might encounter. Find entries in the setting guide to use, or make your own. You can do this on the fly, of course, but it takes up table time and it's best to have it done in advance. See the chapter on **Dangers** (page 379) for guidelines.

Discoveries

Puzzles, clues, mysteries, treasures, arcana… these are all discoveries. Some of them you'll just wing on the fly. Some you'll want to make a few notes on. Some (especially arcana) you'll want to write up in detail. See page 421 for more.

NPCs

If there are NPCs that you expect they'll encounter in play, think about their names, the questions you'll ask about them, their defining traits, how you'll describe them and portray them. Maybe give them an instinct, connections, and motivations. If an NPC might end up as a follower, consider writing down their stats, tags, moves, cost, and instinct before play. See page 449 for guidelines.

All this prep might seem like it goes against **playing to find out what happens**, but it really doesn't. You're not prepping a story, or a plot, or an inevitable series of scenes that follow one after the other. You're prepping things that give you interesting stuff to say, that speed up play, that shore up your weaknesses and hone your craft, and that give you permission to play hard. Good prep doesn't involve scripting everything out; it involves laying a groundwork to help you improvise.

Player Moves

Basic Moves

DEFY DANGER
AID
CLASH
DEFEND
INTERFERE
KNOW THINGS
LET FLY
PERSUADE (vs. NPCs)
PERSUADE (vs. PCs)
SEEK INSIGHT

Special Moves

ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE
BURN BRIGHTLY
END OF SESSION
DEATH'S DOOR

Basic Moves

The basic moves are the ones that every player and PC can use, the ones that get used most often, and the ones that drive most of the game.

Each move has a **trigger**, which tells us when the move kicks in. The trigger is almost always fictional; the player declares that their character does something that meets the trigger, and the rest of the move tells us how to resolve that course of action.

Players might trigger a move intentionally, describing actions that they know meet the trigger. Or, they might also say "I want to Clash" or "I Defend." That's fine. But when they do, it's your job to draw the fiction out of them. "Cool, what do you do?" "Okay, great, what's that look like?" If you can't picture it, ask for more detail. **To do it, they have to do it.**

The opposite is also true: **if they do it, they have to do it**. When they say that they run past the crinwin and you deem it dangerous, high-stakes, and chancy, they're Defying Danger. They can back out ("Oh, I didn't realize, I don't want to do that"), but if they carry on, the move triggers and they need to roll.

It's everyone's job to watch for moves getting triggered, even if it's usually you who makes the call. Any player can, at any time, say "isn't that Defend?" and if the table agrees, then the triggering player makes with the dice. If there's disagreement about whether a move is getting triggered, or which move is getting triggered, talk it out, ask questions, and remember to follow your principles and pursue your agenda.

When a move says to "roll +[STAT]," that means: roll 2d6 and add whichever stat is indicated (STR, DEX, etc.). A result of a 10+ is a strong hit; a 7-9 is a weak hit (but still a hit). The basic moves all say what happens on a 10+ or a 7-9.

On a 6 or less, it's a miss. That means:

- They mark XP
- You make a **hard GM move** (page 178)

Your hard move might reflect the PC screwing up, but it could also reflect something preventing them from succeeding or even attempting the action they declared. It could even reflect them doing what they set out to do, but with terrible consequences.

The basic moves don't say what happens on a 6-; this is just how they work.

Advantage and disadvantage

When a player ***has advantage on a roll***, they roll an extra die and discard the lowest. On most moves, that means rolling 3d6 and totaling the two highest dice.

When a player ***has disadvantage on a roll***, they roll an extra die and discard the highest. On most moves, that means rolling 3d6 and totaling the two lowest dice.

When a player ***has both advantage and disadvantage on a roll***, they cancel each other out.

See page 230 for a full explanation of advantage and disadvantage.

DEFY DANGER
When ***danger looms, the stakes are high, and you do something chancy***, check if another move applies. If not, roll...

... +STR to power through or test your might
... +DEX to employ speed, agility, or finesse
... +CON to endure or hold steady
... +INT to apply expertise or enact a clever plan
... +WIS to exert willpower or rely on your senses
... +CHA to charm, bluff, impress, or fit in

On a 10+, you pull it off as well as one could hope; **on a 7-9**, you can do it, but the GM will present a lesser success, a cost, or a consequence (and maybe a choice between them, or a chance to back down).

If a PC's action could trigger both Defy Danger and another move (like swinging a hatchet at the drake that's chewing on their leg), then the other move takes precedence (in this case, Clash).

Don't call for Defy Danger just because you think "they should have to roll." If a character does something chancy, but there's no looming danger or the stakes just aren't that high, then don't roll. Just make a call and say what happens, following your principles and agenda.

When you call for Defy Danger, say what the danger and/or the stakes are. "That sounds like Defy Danger, the danger is that it'll notice before you can stab it." Or "I think that's Defy Danger, and on a miss, you'll freeze up with fear." If you can't articulate the danger or the stakes, they're not Defying Danger.

If it's unclear which stat they're using, ask questions until it is. If it could go either way, say what you're thinking and let the player pick. "That could either be testing your might or enduring, so STR or CON, your choice."

Don't suffer nonsense. If you say "an arrow is flying at you, what do you do?" and they reply with something like "I flash a smile at the arrow and charm it into missing me," they aren't Defying Danger—they're taking an arrow in the face. **Tell them the consequences and ask** if they still want to do that.

On a 10+, they do it as well as one could hope. Describe what happens (or ask them to). Often, you'll give them an opportunity to act. But if the danger was particularly dire or their action particular desperate (or reckless), then maybe the best one could hope for is simply avoiding the worst of it.

On a 7-9, present a lesser success, cost, or consequence. There should be something obvious, or else they wouldn't be Defying Danger.

- **Lesser success**: they get most of what they wanted but not all of it. "You leap across the pit, but end up hanging half-off. It'll take time to pull yourself up."
- **Cost**: they do it, but they lose or suffer something in the process. "You leap across the pit, but land badly and twist your ankle."
- **Consequence**: they do it, but with an unwelcome outcome. "You leap across the pit, but the platform crumbles as you jump. No going back that way!"

Consider giving them a choice between two or more lesser successes/costs/consequences, and/or the chance to back down and not do the thing after all. Players often feel better about adversity that they choose than they feel about adversity imposed upon them. Just be sure to make the bad options proportional.

Remember: a 7-9 is still fundamentally a success. Don't make the lesser success, cost, or consequence so bad that they'd have been better off doing nothing.

On a 6-, though? Go nuts. The danger comes to bear before they can act, or as they act. Or, their action is successful but things get much worse as a result. Do something that flows naturally from the fiction and your prep. **Let things burn.**

Caradoc is hanging from a tree, his grip slipping. He swings his legs up around the bough, then pulls himself up. "Yeah, that's Defying Danger—the danger is that you fall like 80 feet. Sounds like testing your might, so +STR?"

"Sounds right," he says, and rolls. On a 7-9, I'll go with a cost and have him mark weakened *from fear and fatigue. But, no, he rolls a 10, so I say "Cool, you do it, just like you said." Then* ***I offer an opportunity****. "It takes a moment to catch your breath, but from here it's an easy climb up to the nest. What do you do?"*

Blodwen freezes, hearing the trills of drakes as they encircle her in the grass. She pulls out a clay pot, then tosses it, hoping to distract them.

"Clever! Sounds like Defying Danger with INT." She rolls a 7 and I give her a choice: "They take the bait, but you're not free and clear yet. You can either mark off 2 more uses of supplies and huck more stuff past them, to draw them away. Or you can try to slip away now, Defying Danger with DEX. What do you do?"

Rhianna rushes past the crinwin. "I think you're Defying Danger here, with DEX to rely on speed." On a 10+ she'll get past them, no problem, and make it to the mouth of the cave.

But she gets a 9 and I opt for a consequence: "As you rush past them, a couple turn and tackle you." Rhianna's player calls shenanigans—a 7-9 should still be fundamentally successful. "Oh, right!" I say. "You get to the mouth of the cave, but two crinwin are bounding after you, hot on your tail, what do you do?"

AID
When you ***help someone who has not yet rolled***, the GM picks 1:

- They can accomplish more than they could alone
- They gain advantage on their roll.

Either way, you are exposed to any risk, cost, or consequence associated with their roll.

Invoke this move when one PC triggers a move and another PC (or follower) assists, or if two or more characters make the same move at once.

As with any move: to do it, they have to do it. If a player says something vague like "yeah, I'll Aid!" or "can I help?" then say "sure, how do you help?" If they can't come up with something plausible, then Aid doesn't trigger.

Choose "they can accomplish more than they could alone" if the main move would be impossible without help, or if you think the Aid makes the main move take less time or have greater effect. Choose "they gain advantage on their roll" if the first PC *could* do it alone but the Aid makes it easier. Clarify the player's intent and approach if you're unsure which option applies.

Involve both characters in any negative results of the move. Even on a 10+ with no obvious consequence, consider making a soft move at the Aiding character to show how their Aid put them at risk.

Optional technique: when Aid grants advantage, have the helping player roll the extra d6. It makes them feel more involved!

The PCs are investigating the clearing where Pryder and Rheinal were attacked. Vahid pokes around, looking for clues. "Sounds like you're Seeking Insight," I say.

Rhianna says she'll have her crew look around, too. "Especially Lowri, he's the best tracker. Should I Seek Insight, too?"

"No, let's say that he's Aiding Vahid," I say. "Are y'all splitting up the clearing, to work more quickly? Or, like working together, kicking ideas around, giving him advantage?"

"How much time could we save?" Rhianna asks. I tell her that it'd save maybe half an hour. "Hmm. No, let's be thorough. I'll have Lowri back Vahid up and advise."

"Okay! Vahid, roll to Seek Insight with advantage."

Caradoc is pinned by a nailadd—a giant spider—and it's about to bite him with those venomous jaws. He twists and shoves it, trying to get free, and we've all agreed that this is Defying Danger with STR.

"Can I help?" asks Blodwen.

"Sure, what do you do to help?"

"I'll move in and start yelling at it, poking it with my staff. I don't want to hurt it, though!" (Blodwen's got a soft spot for critters.)

"Riiight, no hurting the giant spider. Roll with advantage, Caradoc." He gets an 8, and I pick a cost that involves Blodwen. "Caradoc, you hear yelling and feel the thing shift, and manage to roll free. But as you do, you see it knock Blodwen's staff from her grip. It's about to pounce on her. What do you do?"

Rhianna yells "bring it down!" and she, Garet, and Eira (her crew members) start peppering the drake with arrows. That's Let Fly with her crew providing Aid. Rhianna absolutely could make the move on her own, so gets to roll with advantage.

Alas, she still gets a 6. "Roll damage anyhow," I say, "but even if you bring it down, it rushes in and bashes you with its bony crest for d8+2 forceful *damage, tossing you aside, and then it claws either Eira or Garet for another d8+2,* messy *and 1 piercing. Who does it get?"*

"I have to pick?"

"Yup."

Blodwen has called up a wind spirit and is asking it to scout the crumbling ruins. "You're going to have to roll +CHA for Persuade," I say.

"Can I help? asks Vahid. I ask him how he does it. "Maybe I know something about these spirits, like what motivates them?" But that's not Aiding, that's Knowing Things. Maybe he does Know Things and uses what I tell him to Aid, but he's not Aiding now!

The chamber collapses, pinning Blodwen under a pile of debris and timber. Caradoc staggers over and pries up one of the timbers. "You're still stuck under a bunch of rubble, though, Blodwen. If you want to dig free, that'd be Defying Danger with STR. The danger is that you can't get free before Caradoc's strength gives out."

Caradoc asks if he's Aiding. "You are!" I say. "You're giving her the chance to try to get free. But she's not going to get advantage, if that's what you mean."

CLASH
When you ***fight in melee or close quarters***, roll +STR: **on a 10+**, your maneuver works as expected (deal your damage) and pick 1:

- Avoid, prevent, or counter your enemy's attack
- Strike hard and fast, for 1d6 extra damage, but suffer your enemy's attack

On a 7-9, your maneuver works, mostly (deal your damage), but you suffer your enemy's attack.

This move covers an exchange of hand-to-hand combat: a PC tries to hurt or subdue a foe, and the foe is either actively trying to hurt/subdue them back, or is able and willing to start. If the foe can't or won't fight back, it's not Clash—the PC just deals damage (or murders them outright).

If you announce an attack ("it leaps at you, what do you do?") and the character reacts by both defending themselves and striking back, then that's Clash. They don't usually need to Defy Danger first, unless they were already in a precarious position.

If a player says something like "I attack" or "I stab it," probe for more detail. It's easier to resolve this move when you can picture their maneuver and understand its intent.

If their attack just wouldn't work, then Clash doesn't trigger. Instead, **tell them the requirements** ("you need to get inside his guard first") or **reveal an unwelcome truth** ("your spear goes right through, it's like stabbing mist") or **put them in a spot** ("it swats your spear aside and jabs at your throat, what do you do?").

On a 7+, their maneuver works (or mostly works, on a 7-9) and they've got a chance to hurt their foe—the damage roll tells us how much. Even if they don't drop their foe (or get through its armor), their maneuver still basically works. The fictional situation should change to reflect that!

"Suffer your enemy's attack," doesn't just mean taking damage. It means that you use the enemy to make an aggressive, hard GM move against the character. You can **hurt them** ("it smashes your helmet and the world is spinning—take 1d8+3 damage and mark *dazed*"), but you can also **put them in a spot** ("you stab it, but it smashes you against the railing for 1d6 damage, and the railing cracks and starts to give"), or **use up their resources** ("you stab it, but it bucks and twists and your spear goes flying"), or make any other GM move that makes sense—especially one of the monster's moves! If the move would potentially hurt the PC, rough them up, or take them out, then deal damage as part of the move.

When a PC deals damage and suffers an enemy's attack, have the player roll damage before you decide what the enemy's attack looks like. If you know you're going to do something that deals damage to the PC, you can roll (or have the player roll) the monster's damage before deciding on your move. Let the damage dealt (plus armor, tags, and whether each combatant is left standing) inform the move that you make.

On a 6-, the obvious result is that the player's maneuver fails and they suffer the enemy's attack. But you can make any move that follows your principles. Maybe they strike a killing blow, but the monster falls and crushes a follower! Maybe they cut down this foe but the next one clocks them on the head and the PC is captured.

When a character's attack could feasibly hurt multiple foes—because of the *area* tag, because they describe it in a way that makes sense, etc.—then they roll to Clash just once for the whole group, but they roll damage separately for each individual foe.

When multiple PCs and/or followers attack a foe at once, one of them Clashes while the others Aid.

When multiple combatants deal damage to a single foe, roll one combatant's damage (usually the best one) and add +1 damage for each capable attacker after the first. Apply tags from all attackers as they make sense.

See also **Running combat** (page 406), especially **Foes they can't hurt** (page 412), **Multiple combatants** (page 414), and **Keeping fights interesting** (page 417).

The nailadd lets Caradoc go and pounces on Blodwen, biting her with paralytic venom. Caradoc's like "I attack! Clash?"

"Probably, yeah. What's this look like?"

"I roll to my feet, pick up my shield and rush in to bash it off her."

Blodwen asks if it's even Clash, since it's focused on her. "Yeah," I say, "it just poisoned you, and it's super quick. I think it's able to defend itself from Caradoc."

So Caradoc rolls +STR and gets an 11, wisely choosing to avoid the enemy's attack. Alas, his damage is only a 2, not enough to get past the spider's armor. "So, nothing happens?" he asks.

"It doesn't take damage, but your maneuver works. You bash it clear off of Blodwen, and it flops on its back, flailing for a bit while it tries to right itself. What do you do?"

The crinwin has Rhianna pinned, making these weird cooing noises as it tries to choke her. "I push it back with one hand and pull my knife with the other. Stab stab." That's fighting in close quarters, so she rolls +STR to Clash. She gets a 12!

*"Do you avoid its attack? Or do extra damage?" She opts for the extra damage and rolls a d8 (her damage die) plus a d6, for 7 damage total. That's enough to drop it, but she also suffers the crinwin's attack. I consider having it **hurt her**, bashing her head with a rock while she stabs it, but decide to **reveal an unwelcome truth** instead.*

"So, you stab it like five or six times, its cold black blood pouring over you. But crinwin are cowardly, right? A good stab should have sent this thing running. This one? It keeps choking you, making those coo-cooing noises, not blinking or flinching until it bleeds out. Take a d6 damage, and what's going through your head right now?"

The swyn locked eyes with Vahid and tried to crush his will, but Vahid resisted and has successfully pretended otherwise. "It slithers closer," I tell him. "It hisses, 'Commme with meee,' and turns to go, what do you do?"

"I've got my lantern out, right? I smash it in the face. Clash?"

The swyn thought Vahid was under its sway and is not expecting an attack. "No, no Clash. Just deal your damage!"

DEFEND
When you ***take up a defensive stance*** or ***jump in to protect others***, roll +CON: **on a 10+**, hold 3 Readiness (or 4 if you bear a shield); **on a 7-9**, hold 1 Readiness (or 2 with a shield). You can spend Readiness 1-for-1 to:

- Suffer an attack's damage/effects instead of your ward
- Halve an attack's effect or damage
- Draw all attention from your ward to yourself
- Strike back at an attacker (deal your damage, with disadvantage)

When you ***go on the offense, cease to focus on defense, or the threat passes***, lose any Readiness that you hold.

This move can trigger proactively or reactively.

Proactively: there's danger afoot but no imminent, in-process attack. They ready themselves to receive and repel danger: planting their feet, raising shield and spear, eyes sharp, etc. Maybe they step near/in front of the person they mean to Defend. Maybe they dig in to hold a position or protect some valuable item. Maybe they're just Defending themselves.

Reactively: you've made a move that establishes a specific, imminent attack against one character, and another character's player says something like "I step in front of them!" or "I tackle them out of the way." This version only works when they protect someone (or maybe something) else. If they're reactively protecting themselves, that's Defy Danger or maybe Clash.

A character *can* jump in to Defend another after you've already described an attack landing, as long as everyone agrees that, yeah, they could have done that.

On a 7+, the player holds Readiness and can spend it to do one of the listed options, no roll required. Players can spend Readiness multiple times in response to a single attack, but can only pick each option once against any given attack. Remember to **begin and end with the fiction**—ask the player what it looks like when they spend their Readiness.

Players can spend Readiness only in ways that make sense. They can't interrupt an attack that they can't perceive, or strike back at a foe that's out of reach.

Halving an attack's damage/effects reduces the damage before applying armor. Work with the player to determine what halving the effect means. Maybe they stagger instead of falling, or maybe the tentacle grabs just one arm instead of fully ensnaring them.

If they strike back at an attacker, any tags on their damage (like *forceful* or *messy*) apply. This option won't, by itself, stop or prevent the attack, even if they drop the attacker. They're spending Readiness in *response* to the attack, not before it.

Players can trigger other moves while they hold Readiness, and spend it in response to those moves' outcomes. That's the point! But if they get aggressive or give up their defensive stance, the Readiness is lost.

When someone Defends proactively and rolls a 6-, escalate the situation aggressively. If they Defend *reactively* and get a 6-, well, your hard move will probably be pretty obvious.

Rheinal (an NPC) gets pounced on by a nailadd, and Vahid tries to save him. "I grab him and pull him behind me." That's Defend! Vahid rolls an 8, and spends his 1 Readiness immediately.

"It's going to tackle him, do 1d8 damage, and pump him full of poison," I say. "If you want to save him, you could either take the blow, or halve the damage/effect." He asks if he can roll the damage before deciding and I'm like "Of course!" He rolls a 5, and chooses to suffer the attack in Rheinal's place, poison and all.

Caradoc trips while running from a drake, and Rhianna turns and starts yelling at it, getting between them. "Sounds like you're Defending Caradoc, yeah?"

"Yup. I promised his ma I'd bring him home safe." She rolls a 7, spending her Readiness to draw attention from her ward to herself. "I'm yelling, clanging my spear and knife, and circling so it's not looking at Caradoc."

"Cool! Caradoc, that drake was right on you, but it just turned to hiss at Rhianna. You're able to get to your feet, what do you do?" He, of course, decides to stab it (and Rhianna curses under her breath).

Blodwen approaches Wynfor, who's got this creepy, beatific look on his face. Vahid's hanging back, guarding the door. He rolled Defend, and is holding 1 Readiness.

When Wynfor stabs Blodwen out of the blue, Vahid is like, "I spend Readiness to halve the damage!" But I don't think so. He's by the door, 3 or 4 paces away, and Wynfor knifed Blodwen with no warning. "Keep your Readiness," I say, "but you weren't in position to protect Blodwen from Wynfor at all."

Blodwen is tending to Pryder's wounds when Caradoc hears a strange motley of animal noises approaching—crinwin! He gulps, moves to the entrance, and hoists his shield and spear. That's a defensive position, for sure, so he rolls +CON to Defend. He gets a 10+, and holds 3 Readiness, +1 for his shield.

"The first two crinwin rush you, one bounding at your face and the other going low! What do you do?"

He holds his ground, shield up, stabbing as they get near. That's fighting in melee, so a Clash. "Do I keep my Readiness?" he asks, and yeah, I think he does—he's fighting, but defensively. (If he'd rushed out to meet them, then no, his Readiness would be gone).

*Alas, he rolls a 4 to Clash so I **put him a spot**, and hard: "The first one bowls you over while the second grabs your leg and bites down, hard! That'll be d6+1 damage." He rolls 5 damage, but spends 1 Readiness to halve the attack's damage and effects. That becomes 3 damage, less 1 for his armor. "What's this look like, then?" I ask "How are the effects halved?"*

"I think I keep my feet, but the first one is hanging on my shield while the other one chomps my ankle. And, yeah, I'll spend one more Readiness to strike back, bashing the one on my shield the against door frame. Cool?"

Very cool. He deals his damage (with disadvantage), and he's still got 2 Readiness left.

"Okay, Blodwen, while this is going on..."

INTERFERE
When you try to foil another PC's action and neither of you back down, roll...

... +STR to power through or test your might
... +DEX to employ speed, agility, or finesse
... +CON to endure or hold steady
... +INT to apply expertise or enact a clever plan
... +WIS to exert willpower or rely on your senses
... +CHA to charm, bluff, impress, or fit in

On a 10+, they pick 1 from the list below; **on a 7-9**, they pick 1 from the list below but you are left off-balance, exposed, or otherwise vulnerable.

- Do it anyway, but with disadvantage on their (next) roll
- Relent, change course, or otherwise allow their move to be foiled

Invoke this move when a PC acts, another PC tries to stop them, and the first PC persists. Stop and discuss the situation, giving both players the chance to back off. Either player can relent without going to the dice.

On a 7+, the initial player (the one being interfered with) chooses: act anyway with disadvantage on their next roll, or relent. If they choose to act, but doing so doesn't trigger a move, then they take disadvantage on their next roll—even if that roll is unrelated. Ask the acting player why the disadvantage lingers. Maybe they're angry or distracted, or doubting themselves.

On a 7-9, the Interfering character is off-balance, exposed, or vulnerable. Give the other PC an opportunity to retaliate. If that's impossible or unlikely, put the Interfering character in a spot and/or shift the spotlight to someone else.

On a 6-, the obvious outcome is that they fail to prevent the initial PC's action. The initial PC does what they started doing, and either that triggers a player move or you say what happens. Don't let the initial PC back down now! They committed, or else Interfere wouldn't have been rolled.

Technically, though, a 6- to Interfere means you get to make a hard GM move. Maybe the Interfering PC foils the initial action after all, but doing so makes things much, much worse.

To be clear: Interfere doesn't apply against monsters or most NPCs. It might apply against followers, when they're acting on another PC's orders, but you'll need to figure that out case-by-case.

Wynfor just stabbed Blodwen, to everyone's surprise, and Rhianna reacts: "Oh screw this. I shoot him. In the leg."

Even though Blodwen just got stabbed by the glassy-eyed boy, she says, "RHIANNA, NO!" and puts her hand up to stop her. I ask Rhianna if she shoots. If she does, Blodwen will be Interfering.

But Rhianna holds her shot. "I've still got my bow drawn, though. 'Back off, kid, and drop the knife. I'd rather not have to explain a hole in your leg to your ma.'"

Caradoc is still hearing the swyn's voice, hissing bad ideas in his head, and Rhianna just gave him a dressing down. I lean in and say "Sssseee? Contempt! Shhhow her what you're made ovvv." I offer him an XP if he attacks Rhianna, and he goes for it.

"I growl and swing my shield at her, like SHUT UP! Clash?"

"Probably, but hold on. Rhianna, Caradoc is attacking you, what do you do?"

"What? No. I step back, dodging that shield and kicking his leg out from under him."

Caradoc doesn't back down and neither does Rhianna, so she rolls +DEX to Interfere. She gets a 7. Caradoc can either Clash with disadvantage or let his attack be foiled. He lets it be foiled, but Rhianna's off-balance and/or vulnerable.

"Rhianna, you kick Caradoc's leg out but he tumbles into you. You both fall, him on top. Caradoc, you're on your back, Rhianna under you, her face right by your elbow, and that voice hissing 'ssstrike her!' What do you do?"

Rhianna falls back and walks with Vahid for a bit. "Vahid, what's up with you and Eira? You're creeping her out." Vahid is evasive and Rhianna's like "Yeah, I stop and peer through your enigmatic old man routine. Seek Insight?"

"Sure," I say. Vahid asks if there's anything he can do about that. "You can Interfere. But tell us what that looks like."

"I smile awkwardly and say something about being a lonely old man looking at a pretty younger woman, even though that's not what's going on at all." Interesting! We agree that he's Interfering and rolls +CHA. He rolls a 4.

*I consider **turning his move back on him** and giving Rhianna advantage to Seek Insight. But I'd rather let this issue simmer, so I **announce trouble** and cut the conversation short. "Rhianna, he gives you that bogus line but before you can process it, Garet yells 'DRAKES!' and there's a snarl and shouting up ahead, what do you do?"*

Thornthumb offers Blodwen a pretty flower, and she goes to take it. Vahid Interferes, trying to slap it from the spriggan's hand. He gets a 10, but Blodwen decides to take the flower anyhow. "I think he knocks it out of my hand, and I'm like 'Vahid! Apologize!'" Vahid clenches his jaw and apologizes, then stomps off. Thornthumb grins as he goes.

Because she acted despite Vahid's 10+ to Interfere, Blodwen has disadvantage on her next roll. I ask her why she thinks that is.

"I'm disturbed," she says. "I'm telling myself that the flower was just a sweet gesture, but I keep thinking about Thornthumb's grin and wondering if Vahid was right."

KNOW THINGS
When you ***consult your accumulated knowledge***, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, the GM will tell you something interesting and useful about the topic at hand; **on a 7-9**, the GM will tell you something interesting—it's on you to make it useful; **either way**, the GM might ask "how do you know this?"

When a player asks you what/if they know about something, ask them if they want to Know Things. You can also prompt them: "You might know about this as a tanner's apprentice, want to Know Things?"

Don't have players Know Things to recall common knowledge (like the fact that the roads are relatively safe) or to remember details that they've simply forgotten (like how Seren told everyone in session 2 that Fae can't abide the touch of iron). Just remind them of the truth and move on.

If it's unclear what they're Knowing Things about, or what they hope to learn, then ask! It'll make the move much easier to resolve.

Players don't have to explain how they'd know about a topic before rolling. They can roll, and then you tell them something interesting and/or useful and ask them "how do you know this?" The stories your players come up with can be pure gold.

If there's really no way a character would know about a topic, then say so. "No, this is just beyond your experience." But do so sparingly! The game is better when players Know Things freely, even if it's a stretch.

On a 10+, tell them something interesting and useful (and true) about the subject. It should suggest a clear course of action, or rule one out, or both. It can help to start with "the interesting thing is ____" (giving some background info) "and the useful thing is ____" (adding that extra, useful detail). If you're unsure whether you've given them something useful, ask!

On a 7-9, you owe them something interesting, but it's on them to make it useful. If you're stuck for ideas, try one of these:

- **Think of something useful/actionable**, but tell them something that only *hints* at that info without spelling it out.
- **Reveal two useful but contradictory things**, without deciding which one is true until put to the test. When the PCs act on the info, look to the Die of Fate or the results of their moves to decide which one is true.
- **Tell them something useful that they can't easily act on**. "Their plumage is quite valuable to southern merchants, and live young even more so! But this one's rushing at you right now. What do you do?"

Feel free to ask players for input on the answers, especially on topics you haven't prepped. "Sure, you tell me. How *do* these drakes hunt, and how can you use that to your advantage?"

If multiple players want to Know Things on the same topic, then have one player roll while another Aids. Discourage players from Knowing Things on the same topic multiple times. If they try, use a GM move to push the scene along.

On a 6-, you might **put them in a spot** while they ponder, or **introduce a danger** (suddenly: hagrs!). You might **reveal an unwelcome truth**, or ask the player to do so. You might **offer an opportunity** with a significant (maybe unseen) cost. You might **demonstrate a downside** to their sheltered upbringing and say they just don't know, or **tell them the requirements** ("you'll need to talk to Seren about this").

You can, on a 6-, **turn their move back on them** and tell them something that they believe to be true but that will get them into trouble if they act on it. This only works if the players are all on board, because the players know that they rolled a miss. Be careful, and don't overdo it. You can almost always do something more interesting than lie.

The PCs have been following the trail for a few hours. Rhianna asks "Is there anything out this way? My crew and I are hunters, we know the Woods pretty well."

"You're not far from the Red Grove," I say, because that's common knowledge. She asks if there's anything else. "Sounds like Knowing Things. Are you looking for more info about the Red Grove, or what?" She wants to know about other points of interest: ruins, lairs, that sort of thing. "Cool, roll +INT."

On a 6-, I'd probably have the feathered drakes from my notes show up. But she gets an 11, so I make with the info. "There's a big Maker-ruin, maybe another day's march this direction. It's mostly buried, and it'd be a long way for crinwin to drag a boy as big as Pryder. But it's the most notable landmark you can think of. And it's big enough to hold a crinwin nest and some human captives. Is that sufficiently useful?" I ask.

"Yeah. Definitely." says Rhianna. "That's probably where they're headed, then."

"How do you know about the ruin?" I ask.

"Oh, I think pa and I tracked a rabid wolf this way when I was a kid. Found it dead, near the ruin, but we got spooked and left."

Vahid Knows Things about this plant-man they just caught stealing from their camp. On a 10+, I plan on telling him that this is a Fae, and that Fae are bound to keep their word and repay debts.

*Alas, Vahid gets a 6. I decide to tell him something interesting anyway, **asking a provocative question** as I do. "Oh, yeah, you've met this jerk before, not long after you got to Stonetop. He's a Fae, a thief named Thornthumb. How did he trick you that one time, and what did he steal?"*

Blodwen is wondering how they can free Wynfor's mind from the swyn's influence. She Knows Things and gets a 9.

"There's an herb," I say, "uh… moonwort. It clears the mind of enchantment. Or is that silverwort? Shoot, one clears the mind, the other makes you see things, but you can't recall which is which. How'd you learn this?"

"Oh, from Gwendyl. But she's not the best teacher, and I haven't had a reason to use either herb. I can use supplies to have some, right? I've got an herb garden back home."

"Sure," I say. "But which one?" And unless she does something clever, I'll wait until she gives some to Wynfor, then have her roll the Die of Fate. On a 4+, she guesses right!

LET FLY
When you ***take an easy shot with a ranged weapon***, deal your damage. If ***the shot is tricky or you're under pressure***, first roll +DEX: **on a 10+**, you have a clear shot, deal your damage; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- Deal your damage, but deplete your ammo (mark the next status by your weapon; don't pick this if your weapon lacks such statuses)
- Hold steady and wait for a clear shot; when the moment arrives (GM's call), deal your damage
- Move to get a clear shot—exposing yourself to danger or giving up some advantage (GM says how)—then deal your damage
- Rush the shot and deal your damage, leading to a cost or complication of the GM's choice

What counts as an "easy" shot varies based on the character and the situation. A dead-eye Ranger can just roll damage to shoot a clueless foe from cover. But a Seeker who's never killed would be "under pressure" and need to roll +DEX.

Like Clash, Let Fly triggers only if there's a real chance of harming the target. If there isn't, and they shoot anyway, then **reveal an unwelcome truth**, **tell them the consequences**, or **put them in a spot**.

If a shot is feasible but really hard, then **tell them the requirements** ("you'll need time to line it up") and/or **the consequences** ("and on a 6-, you'll hit the hostage").

Should a PC manage to attack multiple foes at once, they roll to Let Fly one time but roll damage separately for each target.

The roll +DEX tells us whether the PC gets a clear shot or what's required to get one. The damage roll (and the foe's armor and HP) tells us how effective the shot is. If the damage is negligible, it's just a graze. If the damage is negated, then it bounces off armor or the target evades it.

Regardless of the damage dealt, say how the foe reacts. Do they howl in pain? Dive for cover? Often, you'll **offer an opportunity** to the PC(s) as a result. Some foes, though, are too tough to flinch (even when they take a solid hit), and that's a nice, scary twist.

On a 7-9, figure out what their choice looks like in the fiction. If you can't make it make sense, ask them to pick a different option.

- **Deplete your ammo**: They take a few shots, or just find that they're running low. The ammo can't be easily recovered.
- **Hold steady and wait**: Move the spotlight and resolve the actions of one or more other PCs. When it feels right, cut back to this player with something like "he steps clear, deal your damage!" But if things change and the shot no longer makes sense, that's the risk of waiting!
- **Move to get a clear shot**: Say where they need to go, and make it matter. Follow up with a soft GM move that highlights the danger they're now in or the positions they just gave up.
- **Rush the shot**: Make a GM move that flows from their attack. **Use up their resources** (the spear breaks), **announce trouble** (the target drops a torch, fires start), **put someone in a spot** (the shot startles an ally, a foe attacks them), **show a downside** of rushing (they roll damage with disadvantage), etc.

Warn the player if you think that their choice would involve them Defying Danger before they deal damage (for example, because they'd need to dodge past foes or hold steady while under fire), or if their choice would lead to unavoidable consequences (a hard GM move). Give them a chance to change their mind.

On a 6-, you get to decide what happens and it's almost certainly bad. Don't assume that their shot misses! They might get interrupted before taking the shot, or they might take the shot (and even hit) but something bad happens as a result. If an ally or bystander was nearby, they might get hit instead.

Rhianna rolls to her knees and sees that the feathered drake has just sliced Garet open. "I nock, draw, and shoot it," she says.

"Vahid's right there," I say. "You miss, you'll hit him. You still take the shot?" I'm ***telling the consequences and asking****. She shoots, and gets a 10, but does only 2 damage. With the drake's 1 armor, it's just a scratch. "But the good news is that you got its attention. It looks up from Garet and hisses. Vahid, you're right there, what do you do?"*

The nailadd is about to pounce on Vahid, but Caradoc asks if he can throw his spear at it. "Sure," I say. "But it's a tricky shot, you'll have to roll to Let Fly."

Caradoc rolls a 7. "I can't use up ammo. I don't have time to wait. Can I move to get the shot?" Sure he can, but the thing will have pounced on Vahid by then. "I guess I'll rush it, then." He rolls 4 damage, enough to hurt the spider but not drop it.

"Okay, cool, your spear knocks it out of the air. Vahid, it lands in a tumble to your right, the spear sticking out of it, and it's struggling to right itself. But I think when Caradoc threw his spear, it went right in front of Eira as she was running and she, like, skidded, stumbled, and fell. And oh crap, here comes another one bounding after her. Vahid, what do you do?"

Blodwen fishes out a broken road-stone. "These things can hurt evil spirits, right? I huck it!" Her target is a flitting, intangible shadow in bad lighting, so I ***tell her the requirements****: she'll need to get closer to even have a chance. "Sure," she says. She moves in and gets an 8 to Let Fly. "Hmm.. Guess I'll hold steady and wait for my shot. Maybe it like darts away as I'm about to throw?"*

"Totally! Your eyes are darting around, looking for it, when Caradoc, it lunges out of the darkness at you, what do you do?" He scrambles back, Defying Danger and getting a 10. "Blodwen, there it is, take your shot!"

"Okay! Do I need to roll +DEX again?" Nope, she already did that. Her shot is now clear, so she can just throw the stone and roll her damage.

Rhianna and her crew have snuck up on the dig site. The three crinwin haven't noticed them, and she signals her crew to shoot. "Cool, since there's like six of you, you can get all three of them for sure. Roll to Let Fly once for the whole volley."

"Do we even need to roll?" she asks. "We're professional hunters, and they don't know we're here. Seems like easy shooting to me."

"Huh. I suppose. Yeah, just roll your crew's damage then, once per crinwin. And add +1 for outnumbering them."

PERSUADE (vs. NPCs)
When you ***press or entice an NPC***, say what you want them to do (or not do). If they ***have reason to resist***, roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, they either do as you want or reveal the easiest way to convince them; **on a 7-9**, they reveal something you can do to convince them, though it'll likely be costly, tricky, or distasteful.

This version of Persuade triggers when a PC tries to convince an NPC to do something. If you, as the NPC, put up resistance and the PC persists, it's Persuade. Clarify what they want the NPC to do/not do, and challenge their approach if it doesn't make sense. "How would she know you want her to do that? Do you, like, ask?"

Once the goal is set, decide if the NPC has reason to resist. Consider their instinct, personality, background, wants, needs, fears, etc. If they've no reason to resist, they do it. But if the NPC has a reason (even an irrational one), then call for the roll.

On a 10+, weigh the PC's approach against the NPC's resistance. If the resistance was weak or the PC's approach is strong, just have the NPC do it. But if you don't think the PC's approach would cut it, reveal the easiest way the PC could convince them.

On a 7-9, the NPC isn't convinced yet but they'll reveal a way they could be. You don't *have* to make the requirement tricky, costly, or distasteful, but its more fun if you do.

Things that might convince an NPC include:

- A promise/oath/vow
- A chance to do it safely/freely/discreetly
- Appeasing or appealing to their ego/honor/conscience/fears
- A convincing deception
- A better/fair/excessive offer
- Helping them/doing it with them
- Violence (or a credible threat thereof)
- Something they want or need (coin/food/booze/etc.)
- Assurance/proof/corroboration
- Pressure/permission/help from ____
- Or anything else that makes sense

Reveal how the NPC can be convinced via their words or reactions, and/or as insights that occur to the PC. It doesn't have to be easy, or even plausible, but the revelation has to be true.

It's okay to offer two or more alternatives on how the NPC could be convinced. "He's waiting for a bribe; a few coppers would do it. Or you could rough him up a bit, you're pretty sure that'd work, too."

On a 6-, you might make it clear that the NPC won't be swayed, interrupt the conversation, and/or end the scene. Or, you might have the NPC comply but with complications (treachery, overzealousness, misunderstanding, etc.). Or maybe the whole interaction offends someone else, upsets the social order, or otherwise generates chaos. Your **threat** (page 284) and **homefront** moves (page 502) will be helpful here.

The PCs just killed a bunch of crinwin, only to see more pale, unblinking eyes staring down at them. "Ugh," says Rhianna, "we barely took care of this lot. I try to scare them off. Persuade?"

"Cool. What do you do, exactly?"

"I hoist the nearest crinwin corpse by its head. Glare out at the other crinwin. Then I'll saw its head off, start yelling, and chuck the head into the woods. And keep yelling."

Yikes! And yet, the crinwin outnumber them and the PCs are pretty beaten-up, so I think they have reason to resist. Rhianna rolls +CHA and gets an 11. I think that little display was plenty, so I say "They scamper right off and you're left standing there, covered in black blood. Caradoc, how are you feeling about Rhianna right now?"

Caradoc is keeping watch with Garet, and he pries a bit. "'You've been with Rhianna's crew for a long time, right? You ever seen anything like… uh, like that?' I'm trying to get him talking, maybe learn something about Rhianna's past. Persuade?"

I consider making him roll, but I realize that Garet's got no real reason to resist. "Sure, but don't bother rolling, he's happy to talk. Rhianna, what's a good story for him to tell Caradoc? Like, a time you did something bloody and ruthless?"

Blodwen crouches down to eye-level with Nia, keeping her distance and holding out some flatbread. "Hey. Hey, are you hungry?"

I'm sure she's enticing the girl to do something, but I'm not sure what. "Are you, like, trying to get her to come out from the corner?"

"More like I'm trying to get her to trust me and start talking." Nia is terrified, which is cause to resist, so Blodwen rolls. She gets a 10, and I think about Nia and look at the list of things that could convince her. I think appeasing her fears would do it.

"Her eyes lock on the flatbread, and she swallows, but then her eyes dart to Caradoc, then Rhianna, then her crew. She's scared of the warriors. You bet she'd calm down if they were gone." Blodwen asks the others to step outside, and they agree. "Cool. As soon as they leave, the girl snatches the bread and wolfs it down, staring at you. Then she gulps, and says 'More?' What do you do?"

Vahid is up in Gordin's Delve, selling a sphere of silver filigree. Mutra the Teeth has offered two handfuls of silver for it. "Why, this is worth a purse of silver at least," says Vahid. "I could get two handfuls just by melting it down."

"Sounds like you're pressing him into giving you more coin for it, yeah? He's definitely got reason to resist, so roll to Persuade." On a 10+, I think Mutra would ask for more info about the sphere's provenance, and give up the silver for the truth or a convincing lie. And on a miss, I think I'd ***reveal an unwelcome truth****, saying that Mutra says no deal but Vahid suspects that he'll send thugs to try and steal the sphere later.*

But Vahid gets an 8, and I go for something distasteful. "Fah! You'd barely get a single handful if you melted thhhis down. But I tell you what… I'll pay two handfuls now, and if you show my man Gunthhher where you found thhhis beauty, I'll givvve you the rest of a purse of silver on his safe return." He smiles with his too-sharp teeth. "Do we havvve a deal?"

PERSUADE (vs. PCs)
When you ***press or entice a PC and they resist***, ask their player: "Could I possibly get you to do this, yes or no?" If they say "no," let it drop.

If they say "yes," you can roll +CHA: **on a 10+**, they mark XP if they do what you want, and if they don't, they must say how you could convince them; **on a 7-9**, they mark XP if they do what you want (but can refuse or make a counter-offer if they like).

When one PC wants another PC to do something, and the other PC is putting up resistance, invoke this move.

The first part of the move—where the first player asks if they could possibly convince the other player's character—is crucial. It prevents the mechanics from pressuring a player into doing something that they don't think their character would do.

If the answer is "no," ask the target player how the first character can tell. Is it clear in their eyes? Do they say something? Do they walk away? "What's this look like?" If the first character keeps pressuring them, call a time out and tell their player that they need to let it drop—they're being rude, not respecting their fellow player, and ignoring the rules of the game.

If the answer is "yes," then ask the first player (the one whose character is doing the pressing/enticing) if they want to roll. If they roll, cool. If they don't roll, they need to let it drop.

On a 10+, the target player marks XP if they do what's being asked of them without any further convincing. If they refuse, they must reveal how they could be convinced. They can make this revelation in-character ("I'll do this, Rhianna, but only if you promise that no one gets killed") or described as insight ("My eyes dart to Vahid, and I think you'd realize that I won't answer with him in the room") or discussed player-to-player ("I'll agree to stay, but only if you promise to bring that thing's corpse home for me to study").

On a 7-9, the target player marks XP if they do what's being asked of them without any further convincing. They don't mark XP if they make a counter-offer (even if they eventually agree to it).

On a 6-, you might **turn their move back on them** and let the targeted player ask how they could get the Persuading character to do something. Or you could interrupt the conversation with some other move, like **introducing a threat** or **changing the environment**. Don't presume actions or reactions from either player, and don't tell them how they feel. If you're stumped, query the table (particularly the targeted player) for ideas.

Persuade or Interfere?

Use Persuade when one PC tries to get another PC to *agree* to a course of action. Use Interfere when one PC has *initiated* a course of action, and another PC tries to stop or foil them.

If one PC Persuades another, the other PC can Interfere with that attempt at persuasion (by exercising willpower, bluffing, etc.).

The swyn is dead, the children rescued, and they're getting ready to head home. But Vahid doesn't want to go. "There's so much here to learn! We can't just leave!"

Rhianna is resisting, so I direct Vahid's player to this move. He asks her player if he could possibly convince her.

Rhianna's player very quickly says "No." I ask what that looks like, how Vahid can tell she won't budge. "Oh I lose it. 'Dammit it, Vahid. We're going and that's final!"

Vahid replies with "Fine. Leave then. But I'm staying. I can make my own way home."

Rhianna sighs, pinches the bridge of her nose, and very calmly says. "No, Vahid. You won't. You will get lost. And die. Please come with us." So now she *is pressing* him.

But Vahid doesn't cave. "You could convince me," he says, "But you'll have to roll. And I'll Interfere by being stubborn as hell." Rhianna says she'll roll Persuade, and Vahid rolls to Interfere (with WIS, for willpower). He gets an 11, and Rhianna decides to keep pressuring him and roll with disadvantage. "I Aid," says Blodwen. "I step up behind Rhianna and give him the doe eyes. 'Vahid. Please.'" We agree that this would help, and the advantage from her Aid cancels out the disadvantage from Vahid Interfering.

"Okay, so I'm rolling +CHA, then? That's it?" It is, and she gets a 10. If Vahid agrees to come now, with no more discussion, he'll mark XP. But if he refuses, he has to reveal how they could convince him.

"Okay, okay…I'll come. But only if you let me put sanctifying marks on the entrances. And promise me that we'll come back to explore this place. And don't tell anyone else about it. Deal?"

I clarify that he's revealing how they can convince him, rather than agreeing outright. If he wants the XP, he has to just agree without those caveats. "Yup!" he says.

"Fine," sighs Rhianna. "You've got ten minutes. Go make your marks. Blodwen, keep an eye on him."

SEEK INSIGHT
When you ***study a situation or person***, looking to the GM for insight, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, ask the GM 3 questions from the list below; **on a 7-9**, ask 1; **either way**, take advantage on your next move to act on the answers.

- What happened here recently?
- What is about to happen?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- What here is useful or valuable to me?
- Who or what is really in control here?
- What here is not what it appears to be?

Seek Insight triggers when a character does something to gain *insight*. Don't call for the move just because a player asks what they see or hear. Call for it when they look to you to put the pieces together, or to reveal more than what's obvious.

The PC must actually ***study a situation or person***. If the player just says that they Seek Insight, ask what that looks like. It could be subtle ("I scan his office while they talk") or overt ("I toss the room—taking books off shelves, looking in those pots, tapping the walls, etc."), but it has to be *something*.

On a 7+, the player asks one or more questions from the list. The list drives players to ask meaningful questions, ones that grant insight rather than just detail. No need to be a stickler about it, though. If they ask a good question that's not on the list, feel free to answer it. Or, accept their question but *answer* a question from the list.

Answer honestly, generously, and helpfully. Rely on your prep and sense of the fiction to guide you. You'll often need to make up details on the fly. These details become true parts of the fiction!

If you're unsure how to answer, ask the player for guidance. "Well, the old coins are obviously valuable, but what sort of thing were you looking for?"

Begin and end with the fiction! Don't just say that Siowan is about to betray them; describe how Siowan's acting nervous, glancing at the door like someone's about to burst in. Alternately: give them a direct, simple answer and then ask *them* what details led them to that conclusion.

Adjust your answers to reflect the fiction. The move isn't magic; it doesn't let PCs know things that they couldn't. A quick scan of the room from the entrance should give less-specific and less-useful insights than if they get in there and interact.

The best answer is often the obvious one. "What's valuable? The coins. Everything else is junk." Sometimes, the only honest answer is "nothing." "There's nothing to be on the lookout for. This place is quite safe." "No one's in control. It's a damn free-for-all." Such answers remove doubt and clarify the situation (and the PC still gets advantage to act on the answer).

On a 10+, the player gets advantage on only one roll, the first one that acts on any of the answers. If they ask three questions, they get advantage once, not thrice.

On a 6- during a tense, dangerous scene, your move will often involve the character getting interrupted or surprised as they study the situation.

When they get a 6- to Seek Insight in a "safe" situation, you might use your move to **announce trouble** that wasn't there before. You might **reveal an unwelcome truth** or **advance towards impending doom**, deciding that something bad happened off-camera before they got here. Or you might **use up their resources** and say how they learn nothing but their torches are running low.

Don't remove a player's agency on a 6-. You might **turn their move back on them** and feed them false information or a bad idea, but only do so if the player is onboard and enjoys the dramatic irony. Likewise, don't presume that the PC acts contrary to how the player triggered the move. If they said they were scanning the room, don't say that they stepped inside and sprung a trap.

The PCs are staring up at a crinwin nest. They ask about its size ("big as a house"), the tree it's in ("like a sequoia redwood") and if there's movement in the nest ("nope"). Then Rhianna asks "Any recent activity? We'll look for tracks and whatnot." That seems like Seek Insight to me. Rhianna agrees.

She rolls +WIS (with advantage from her crew Aiding) and gets a 10. "Is the nest still active? Any signs of recent activity?" she asks. I direct her to ask a question from the list.

"Oh, yeah. Um, what should I be on the lookout for? Like, are any crinwin still around?" I say no, nothing to be on the lookout for. The nest is unoccupied, damaged even. Garet (from her crew) calls her over and shows her the crinwin bodies he found, rotting away in the brush.

"Whoa. Uh… what happened here recently?"

They find more crinwin corpses, and some that look like they killed each other. "A few months old, at least. But not enough corpses for a full nest. And you find signs of crinwin dragging off other crinwin, in the same general direction they carried off Pryder."

"What the hell?" spits Rhianna. "Um… who or what is really in control here? Like, who or what is behind this?"

I know that Sajra the swyn (a giant, hypnotic, monkey-headed snake) is behind the attack, but I don't see how Rhianna could deduce that. I give her as useful of an answer as I think the evidence could allow: "Down the path, you find a… drake scale? But bigger, flatter, with a golden shimmer to it."

She asks if she recognizes it. "I don't know," I say, "sounds like you're Knowing Things?" And she agrees, and rolls with advantage for following up on an answer.

A Fae named Thornthumb is telling them about the swyn's lair, but his eyes linger on Vahid's pack (where the Mindgem is). Vahid doesn't like that one bit. "I size him up, trying to figure out what he's up to." That's Seeking Insight, but he gets a 3.

*I **turn his move back on him**, revealing something valuable to the Fae. "You, like, go to pick up your pack, but drop it and the Mindgem falls out!" But Vahid's player isn't having it. He wasn't touching his pack, and the Mindgem is packed at the very bottom.*

"Shoot, you're right. How about this? Before you can get a read on him, he like bounds off through the brush, beckoning you to follow. 'Show you the way, safe and secret,' he says!" But something about his smile still unnerves you, Vahid. What do you all do?"

Special moves

These moves are always in play, but they either affect other moves or are triggered by very specific circumstances.

ADVANTAGE/DISADVANTAGE
When you ***make a roll with advantage***, roll an extra die and discard the lowest result.

When you ***make a roll with disadvantage***, roll an extra die and discard the highest result.

When you ***make a roll with both advantage and disadvantage***, they cancel each other out.

If you ***have advantage/disadvantage on a damage roll***, roll the main die twice and discard the lower/higher result. Then add any bonus dice that apply.

Advantage usually means: roll 3d6 and keep the two highest dice. Disadvantage usually means: roll 3d6 and keeping the two lowest dice. If there's a tie for lowest or highest, discard one of them; it doesn't matter which.

For damage rolls, advantage/disadvantage apply only to the "main" die. If a player gets any bonus damage dice, those dice get added after you pick the highest/lowest die. For example, the Heavy (who has advantage when they deal damage) rolls a 10+ to Clash, and chooses to strike hard and fast for +1d6 damage. They roll 2d10, deal damage equal to the highest of those two dice, and deal +1d6 damage on top of that.

Advantage/disadvantage don't "stack." They're binary—either you have them, or you don't. For example, if someone Seeks Insight and gets a 7+, they get advantage on their next roll to act on the answer. If someone also Aids them on that roll, they can't get advantage again. They roll 3d6 and discard the lowest die.

If someone has both advantage and disadvantage on the same roll, the two cancel each other out and the roll is made normally. By default, it doesn't matter if you have multiple sources of advantage vs. a single source of disadvantage (or vice versa). But if you and your players really want to get into counting how many instances of advantage or disadvantage a player has, you can. It won't break the game, but it might slow it down.

Players might have advantage on a roll because...

... a move (like Aid or Seek Insight) says they do;
... some sort of equipment or arcana gives them advantage; or
... you **offer an opportunity** to make a particular roll with advantage (but see the sidebar on the opposite page).

Players might have disadvantage on a roll because...

... a move (like Interfere) says they do;
... they have marked a **debility** (page 241) and roll one of the affected stats;
... some sort of equipment or arcana imposes disadvantage; or
... you **reveal a downside** or **tell them the consequences**, and it involves rolling with disadvantage (but see the sidebar on the opposite page).

Adjusting difficulty

In many RPGs, the GM routinely applies bonuses or penalties to player rolls to reflect the difficulty or ease of their tasks. In *Stonetop*, you can apply advantage or disadvantage "on the fly" to do the same thing, but do so sparingly—it undercuts the impact of moves, arcana, and debilities that specifically grant advantage or disadvantage.

If a character's action seems particularly easy or difficult, consider these instead of advantage or disadvantage:

Are they even triggering a move? Can you just say that they do it, or know it, or figure it out? "No, don't Clash, just deal damage." Or, can you just say "no" and **tell them the requirements** for making it work? "You can't make that jump with all your gear, you'll need to drop down to a light load first."

Can you adjust the risks? If they have a strong position, make it clear that the risks are less. "Suffering his attack just means that he'll get inside your guard." If they're in a desperate position, tell them just how bad it could get. "On a 7-9, you'll have one last chance to catch the ledge, but on a 6- you're rolling Death's Door."

Can you adjust the scope? If things are easy for the PC, let a single roll accomplish more, or reveal more, etc. If things are hard, break the action down into smaller moves, each of which can only accomplish part of their goal.

BURN BRIGHTLY
When you ***have enough XP to Level Up*** (6 + twice your current level), you may spend 2 XP after any roll you make to add +1 to that roll (max +1 per roll).

PCs can't **Level Up** (page 528) while on an expedition, which means they might end up accumulating surplus XP. This move lets them spend some of that XP to ensure success.

The fact that PCs can Burn Brightly helps slow the rate at which PCs can level up, and it helps prevent "double-leveling." It also subtly tips things in the players' favor once they've been in the field for a long time and suffered a number of setbacks.

Keep an eye out for players rolling 6s or 9s, and ask the player if they have enough XP to Burn Brightly. If they have enough, they'll probably do it.

Players will most often Burn Brightly when they roll 2d6 for a move, but they can use it on any roll—including damage rolls or even the Die of Fate.

A player can Burn Brightly only on a roll they make themselves; they can't spend their surplus XP to improve another player's roll.

END OF SESSION
When a ***session ends***, point out how you demonstrated or struggled with your instinct. If you can, mark XP.

Say how your relationship with or opinion of a PC, NPC, or group has changed. If you can, mark XP.

Answer these questions as a group. For each "yes," everyone marks XP.

- Did we learn more about the world or its history?
- Did we defeat a threat to Stonetop or the region?
- Did we improve our standing with our neighbors?
- Did we make a lasting improvement to Stonetop, or tangible progress towards doing so?

Praise something about the session (in the fiction or around the table) that you enjoyed or appreciated.

Finally, offer up a wish for future sessions: more __, less __, a chance to __, handling __ in a different way, etc. Wishes can be about what happens in the fiction or around the table. The GM will take notes.

The End of Session move is a ritual. It helps your group reflect on the session and improve your game.

Players can point out any moment where their PC's instinct was reflected in play, for good or for ill, intentionally or not. If no one objects, the player marks XP. (Max 1 XP per session, even if their instinct came up more than once.)

Each player can then note how things have changed between them and someone else. The change need not be reciprocal, or even rational, but it should feel genuine. If no one objects, the player marks XP. (Max 1 XP per session, even if multiple relations changed.)

Other players can offer suggestions, ask questions, or challenge assertions. The goal is for everyone to reflect on the session, and to reward players for getting into character; the goal isn't to wheedle for XP.

For the four questions, discuss them as a group. Everyone (including you, the GM) has to agree that a question is answered "yes." If anyone dissents, no XP for that question. It's good to ask for specific examples of each "yes," just to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

After answering the questions, each player (including you, the GM) should point out something they liked: a player's clever idea, a bit of roleplaying, the lack of fights, learning where the Forest Folk went, when Bob called "time out" and checked in with everyone, etc.

Lastly, each player (including you) should offer a wish for future sessions. Wishes might express...

... a player's hopes for what happens ("I'd like a chance to take down Iwan");
... a request for specific scenes ("I'd love to see Caradoc and Andras bond a bit");
... a desire to do things differently ("Can we try to speak in-character more?");
... feedback on your GMing ("I'd like more detail about our surroundings when fights break out"); and/or
... anything else about the game, really.

Take notes, ask for clarification, and do your best to make those wishes come true.

DEATH'S DOOR
When you ***are dying***, you glimpse the Last Door and the Lady of Crows (describe them). Then, roll +nothing: **on a 10+**, you wrest yourself back to the realm of the living—return to 1 HP but say how your brush with death has marked you; **on a 7-9**, the Lady waves you off—you're no longer dying but you're out of the action; **on a 6-**, your time has come—choose 1:

- Make one last move as if you rolled a 12+, then step through the Last Door
- Refuse to go; gain the Revenant or Ghost insert
- Call on one of the Things Below by name and beseech it to intercede; gain the Thrall insert

This move is discussed in detail on page 245, in the **Harm and Healing** chapter.

Other player moves

Other player moves are discussed in detail elsewhere:

Follower moves

- Order Followers 462
- Strengthen Your Bond 464

Expedition moves

- Chart a Course 302
- Outfit 306
- Requisition 308
- Have What You Need 326
- Recover 328
- Forage 336
- Keep Company 332
- Make Camp 334
- Struggle as One 328
- Return Triumphant 339

Homefront moves

- Bolster 524
- Convalesce 249
- Deploy 526
- Level Up 528
- Make a Plan 530
- Meet With Disaster 532
- Muster 534
- Pull Together 536
- Seasons Change 517
- Trade & Barter 540

If a character does something that could meet the trigger for more than one player move, use whichever one seems most applicable to the current situation. In general, a more-specific move takes precedence over a more-general move, and everything takes precedence over Defy Danger. Discuss it with your players and come to a consensus if you can, or make a call if you can't.

Custom moves

Book II: The Wider World and Other Wonders contains dozens of custom moves that you can use in your game. These moves apply only to specific game or setting elements, and only if you choose to use them.

Most custom moves are unnamed; they're simply presented as part of a setting element's description.

For example, the **Makers' Roads** (*Book II*, page 270) have a few custom moves. Here's one, related to their wards against violence:

> When you ***attempt to commit violence upon the road***, or to harm the road or anything upon it, you hesitate. If you will yourself to continue, lose 1d4 HP and roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, go for it; **on a 7-9**, you act but have disadvantage on any rolls to commit violence (including damage); **on a 6-**, you fail to act and mark *dazed*.

This is an example of a custom move that establishes how something works. It says what happens if a PC tries to fight on the roads, and what the possible outcomes are. And while a custom move like this doesn't directly apply to NPCs or monsters, you can use it as a guide for how they might be affected. Most folks will fail to fight on the roads, but a strong-willed NPC might force themselves to do so.

Note that a PC can **Order Followers** (page 462) to trigger a custom move. As usual, the PC's player rolls for the move and makes any decisions on the follower's behalf.

Here's another custom move related to the roads, specifically to the Crossroads. This one establishes that something is possible (calling up the dead), as well as some of the stakes, risks, and potential benefits or consequences.

> When you ***stand at the Crossroads under the new moon and call the departed by name***, roll and add…
>
> … +1 if you are tied to them by blood;
> … +1 if you bear a possession of theirs; and/or
> … +1 if you offer food or drink that they loved in life.
>
> **On a 10+**, their shade appears but pick 1; **on a 7-9**, their shade appears but pick 2:
>
> - They are deranged, confused, muddled, unreasonable
> - They have no intention of returning peacefully to their rest
> - Something slips through the Last Door with them—a dool spirit, a gwyllgi, an unbound wraith, etc.

If a custom move doesn't say what happens on a 6-, it follows the standard rules: the player marks XP and you make a hard GM move, that fits the established situation.

Here's another a custom move, associated with an artifact. There's no 2d6 roll on this one; the move just says what happens!

> When you ***strike an entity of darkness, chaos, or death with a shattered roadstone*** (*hand*, *thrown*, *crude*), it takes 1d8 damage (ignores armor) but the stone then crumbles to dust.

And here's one last example of a custom move, this one associated with a danger—the mysterious nosgalau that lure travelers from the roads at night:

> When you ***hear the call of the nosgalau***, say whose voice you hear on the wind and why you feel compelled to join them. Then, roll +WIS: **on a 10+**, say how you see through the deception, and you'll never hear their call again; **on a 7-9**, either mark XP and follow the call, or tell us how you detect the lie this one time; **on a 6-**, you heed the call and go to the nosgalau, unless your allies restrain you.

Notice how this move is reactive. The players don't choose to trigger it, you do! You make a GM move like **announce trouble** ("You've been watching the lights far out in the Flats, when the wind shifts and you hear a faint whispering…"), and that triggers the move. Most custom moves that work like this are related to dangers, and reflect a particularly nasty or subtle effect.

Also notice how the move above resolves a situation in a specific, thematic way. You don't have to try to lure the PCs off the road and hope the players play along. The move asserts that the PC is compelled to leave the road, and asks their player to tell us how and why. The roll then tells us whether the PC sees through the deception or not. It ensures that even the wariest player's PC might fall prey to the nosgalau, while inviting them to reveal something about their character in the process. Pretty neat, huh?

Reveal a custom move's text to the players as soon as it's relevant to them. Players should know that the move is in play and how it works, so that they can choose to engage with it (or avoid it). Toss a copy of the move onto the table or into the group chat, and ask a player to read it aloud. Or just read it aloud yourself.

"As soon as it's relevant" will vary from case to case. You probably want to share the "When you ***attempt to commit violence upon the road***…" move as soon as the PCs set out, and remind them of it when they encounter a monster or NPC. But you might not reveal "When you ***hear the call of the nosgalau***…" until it gets triggered.

If you don't think that the workings of a custom move would be apparent to the PCs, then don't reveal it to them right away. Maybe just **hint at more than meets the eye** or otherwise suggest that there's more to learn, and see what they do.

> *Vahid and Caradoc have stopped at the Crossroads. I mention the nearby dool trees and the uncanny feeling about the place, and sure enough, Vahid decides to Know Things. On a 10+, I'd give him the full custom move from the previous page. But he gets a 7, so I just tell him the trigger. "You've heard stories that one can summon a dead soul by calling their name at the Crossroads, under the new moon," I say. "But if you want to know more about how that works, you'll need to do some research. Or try it out. There is a new moon tonight…"*

For guidance on **writing your own custom moves**, see page 551.

Harm & Healing

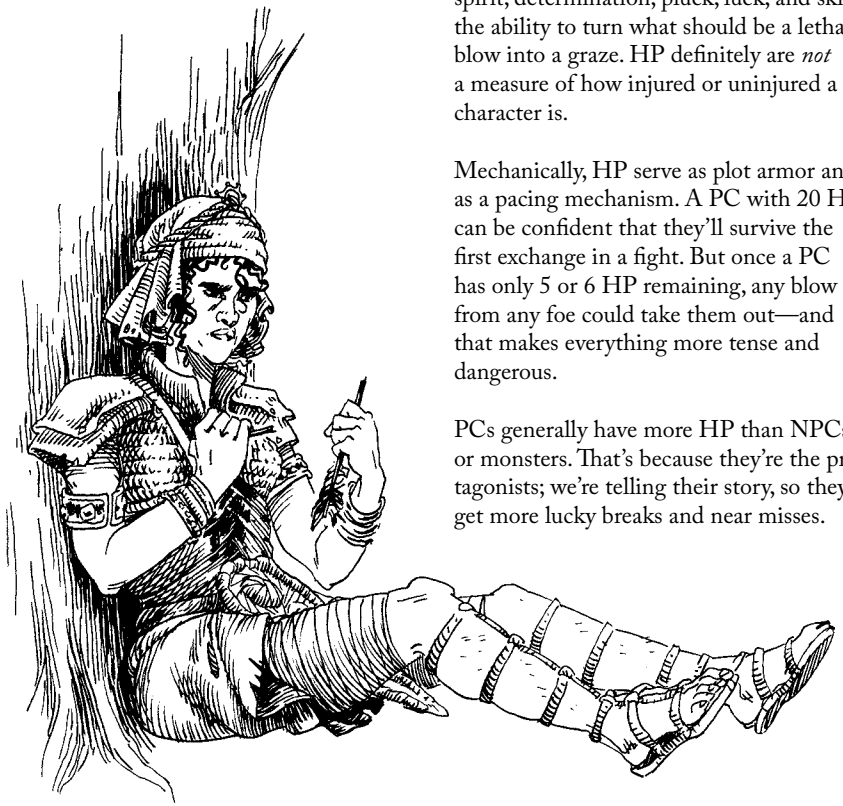
Hit points and damage
Debilities
Problematic wounds
Death and dying
Healing and recovery

Player characters and their followers often find themselves in danger, exposed to injury and harm. Seeing them get hurt and then seeing how they deal with it is a big part of **playing to find out what happens**.

There are basically four types of harm that a character can suffer:

- Damage to their Hit Points (HP)
- Debilities
- Fictionally problematic wounds
- Death or a lethal wound

Any time a character (PC or NPC) is hurt in the fiction, they suffer some or all of these types of harm. Each affects a character in different ways.



Hit points and damage

Every character (PC, NPC, and monster) has Hit Points (HP). When a character gets hurt, knocked around, roughed up, or otherwise takes abuse, they lose HP. This is called "taking damage;" when you do it to someone else, it's called "dealing damage." When someone is reduced to 0 HP, they are out of the action and quite possibly dead or dying.

HP are a game element: they don't represent any one particular thing in the fiction. They're a combination of fighting spirit, determination, pluck, luck, and skill; the ability to turn what should be a lethal blow into a graze. HP definitely are *not* a measure of how injured or uninjured a character is.

Mechanically, HP serve as plot armor and as a pacing mechanism. A PC with 20 HP can be confident that they'll survive the first exchange in a fight. But once a PC has only 5 or 6 HP remaining, any blow from any foe could take them out—and that makes everything more tense and dangerous.

PCs generally have more HP than NPCs or monsters. That's because they're the protagonists; we're telling their story, so they get more lucky breaks and near misses.

Damage

Taking damage means losing HP, potentially being taken out of the action. A character takes damage when...

… a player-facing move specifically says that they do;
… you **hurt them** (they take damage along with the fictional hurt);
… you **use up their resources**, and HP are the resource you use up; or
… you make any GM move that involves them getting hit, knocked around, roughed up, suffering pain, etc.

If you make a GM move and that move could theoretically kill, disable, or knock out a normal person, then deal damage as well. Dealing damage should almost never be your move, but it will often be *part* of your move.

How much damage?

If the source of the damage is a prepared **danger** (page 379), use the danger's stats. For example, if your move is to have a hagr pluck a PC up from the ground and start choking them, then you'd deal the hagr's 1d10+3 damage.

When multiple combatants deal damage at the same time, roll the single highest damage die among them and add +1 for each additional combatant. The tags from all the combatants apply. So if six coedwig (thorn-spirits, dealing d6 damage, 1 piercing) and a birdwraig (tree spirit, d8+3 damage, *forceful*) all pound on the Heavy at once, the Heavy is taking d8+9 damage (1 piercing, *forceful*)—and probably having a very bad day.

If the damage isn't associated with a prepared danger, then ask yourself what it could likely do to a normal person. If the worst it's likely to do is…

… cause bruises and scrapes, pain, or light burns, it inflicts d4 damage.
… cause nasty flesh wounds, bruises, or burns, it inflicts d6 damage.
… break bones, cause deep/wide burns, or debilitate with pain, it inflicts d8 damage.
… cause death or dismemberment, it inflicts d10 damage.

Armor

Subtract the victim's armor rating from the damage they take. This can reduce the damage to 0, meaning they don't lose any HP. Good for them! They still got hit/tossed around/whatever, but it hasn't used up any of their vitality, luck, or plot armor.

If the attack has the "[*n*] piercing" tag, ignore [*n*] points of armor for that attack. So, if you deal 5 damage (1 piercing) and the target has 2 armor, their armor is effectively only 1 for that attack; they lose 4 HP (but their armor value is still 2 against future attacks).

If the attack "ignores armor," then the armor doesn't apply. They take the full damage. Apply this tag on the fly when the fiction dictates: chainmail doesn't help when you're engulfed in flames, and no amount of physical armor protects you from a psychic assault.

A handful of player-facing moves tell the player to "lose [*n*] HP" (as opposed to "take [*n*] damage"). Armor never applies to this sort of HP loss.

Taking damage

When a character takes damage, they reduce their current HP by that amount. If they are reduced to 0 HP, then they are out of the action.

When a player character is reduced to 0 HP and the source of the damage was potentially lethal, then the PC is at Death's Door and makes that move accordingly (see page 245). **If the source of damage isn't likely to kill anyone**, then the PC is simply out of the action: unconscious, gasping for breath, panicking, trapped, etc. Consider asking the player how or why they're taken out. A character disabled this way can't save themselves; they remain disabled until someone helps them, or until you say otherwise.

When an NPC or monster is reduced to 0 HP, their fate is in your hands. If the source of damage was potentially lethal, then they're probably dead or will be soon. Otherwise, they're out of the action and no longer in the fight, but you get to say how. Remember, though: it's not your job to protect your NPCs or monsters. **Let things burn.**

Followers (page 460) are NPCs, so you get to decide what happens to them at 0 HP. You can, however, choose to have the player roll Death's Door for them.

If you **hurt them**, then the lost HP are part of the fictional harm. Otherwise, taking damage means scratches and bruises, sore muscles, rattled teeth, cut lips and bleeding noses, loss of breath, dizziness, pain and weariness and fatigue. It's the wear and tear that grinds someone down but doesn't take them out of a fight.

Regaining hit points

A PC or follower regains HP when...

… they **Recover** (page 328);
… they **Make Camp** (page 334), and choose to regain HP;
… they're at **Death's Door** (page 245) and roll a 10+;
… they have a few days of downtime and **Convalesce** (page 249);
… another move says that they do; or
… you **offer them an opportunity** to regain HP and they take it.

Non-follower NPCs and monsters regain HP when you decide that they do. Use the player moves as guidelines: a few minutes of rest and access to supplies will restore 3-5 HP; a night's rest will restore HP equal to half their maximum; a few days of rest and recovery will restore them to full HP. The fiction, of course, takes precedence. A supernaturally tough and resilient creature might restore its HP more quickly; a magical construct might not regain HP unless someone or something repairs or recharges it.

Remember, HP aren't "meat points." Regaining HP doesn't mean that wounds have closed or bones have knitted; it means they've grown accustomed to the pain, gotten the bleeding to stop, caught their breath. The injuries are still there until they heal. It's just that the character has more fight back in them, and is once again further away from a lethal blow.

Debilities

Player characters can suffer up to three different debilities:

- ***Weakened***: the character is fatigued, tired, sluggish, shaky. They suffer disadvantage when rolling +STR or +DEX.
- ***Dazed***: the character is out of it, befuddled, not thinking clearly. They suffer disadvantage when rolling +INT or +WIS.
- ***Miserable***: the character is greatly distressed, grumpy or angry, unwell, in pain. They suffer disadvantage when rolling +CON or +CHA.

In addition to the mechanical penalty, debilities have fictional consequences. A *miserable* character is miserable, and you should weave that into your descriptions and your GM moves. A debility might mean that someone has to Defy Danger when they otherwise wouldn't need to.

Marking Debilities

Players mark debilities on the character sheets to indicate that their character suffers from them. Player characters might mark a debility because...

… they trigger a player move, and that move says that they mark a debility;
… you hurt them, and the harm you inflict includes them marking a debility;
… you demonstrate a downside, or offer an opportunity with a cost, or tell them the consequences, and the downside/cost/consequence is them marking a debility; or
… you make any other GM move that involves them becoming *weakened*, *dazed*, or *miserable*, and have them mark that debility.

In other words: marking debilities is both prescriptive and descriptive. Prescriptive: a move says they mark the debility, and they then suffer that condition in the fiction. Descriptive: something happens in the fiction that would leave the character *weakened*, or *dazed*, or *miserable*, and thus the character marks the debility and suffers the mechanical penalty.

If a move tells the player to "mark a debility," they can choose the debility to mark. Ask them what that looks like in the fiction. The Lightbearer's invocation leaves them *miserable*? Why that debility? What are the symptoms? What does this look like to everyone else?

If a move causes a player to mark a specific debility, and it's already marked, then they caught a break. Maybe the condition gets a little worse in the fiction, but the mechanical penalty stays the same. If marking the specific debility is an optional choice, and it's already marked, then they can't choose that option.

If a move requires that a PC marks a debility as part of its trigger, and the debility is already marked, then they can't trigger the move. For example, if the Heavy already has all three debilities marked, they can't trigger Unfettered.

Clearing debilities

A player character can clear a debility when...

… they **Recover** (page 246), and explain how they're treating the debility;
… they **Make Camp** (page 248), and choose to clear a debility;
… they have a few days of downtime to **Convalesce** (page 249);
… another move says that they do; or
… you **offer them an opportunity** to clear a debility, and they take it.

Clearing a debility means: they erase the mark on their character sheet, they no longer take the mechanical penalty, and their character is no longer actively distressed by the effects in the fiction.

Clearing a debility doesn't mean that any accompanying injury is healed—it means they've treated it as best they can and it's no longer actively hindering them. If they marked *weakened* because of a torn bicep, clearing the debility probably means it's bandaged and the arm is in a sling. It'll still take time to fully heal.

NPCs, monsters, and debilities

Monsters and NPCs don't mark debilities, and player-facing moves never allow PCs to inflict them on NPCs or monsters. Monsters and most NPCs don't roll for moves, so suffering disadvantage on two stats doesn't make any sense.

So: if a monster suffers an effect that would leave them weakened, they don't mark *weakened*—you just describe them as being slower or shaky. Maybe you **offer the PCs an opportunity** as a result?

Followers (page 460) can trigger player moves. If you want, assign a debility to a follower as a temporary tag (*weakened*, *dazed*, or *miserable*), imposing disadvantage on any relevant rolls. But mostly, you should reflect a follower's current state in how you portray them, and how they act, and what they're capable of or willing to do.

Problematic wounds

A problematic wound is one with lasting fictional consequences. Characters suffer them when you **hurt them** or make another GM move that involves a character getting hurt in a specific, consequential way. Simply describe the wound in the fiction. It's now true! A twisted ankle can't bear weight. A blow to the head leaves them staggering and dizzy. A severed hand is severed, and they're probably bleeding out (and in shock). These sorts of problematic wounds should be particularly common when *messy* attacks are involved.

Problematic wounds often involve PCs marking debilities and always involve taking damage (i.e. losing HP). If an NPC breaks a PC's fingers, the PC can't make a fist, is probably *weakened* or *dazed* or *miserable* from the pain, and is going to take 1d8 damage (ignores armor). The damage won't kill them if they drop to 0 HP, but it could take them out of the action.

How do you decide?

The PCs have just suffered an attack, ignored a threat, or rolled a 6- and you think you're going to do harm. Do you deal damage? Do you have them mark a debility? Do you inflict a problematic wound and if so, how bad do you make it?

There's no hard-and-fast rule, but you should follow your principles and make a GM move that flows from the fiction. Often, you'll pick a GM move (like **put them in a spot** or a monster move like **bash prey to the ground, senseless**), and the specific fiction of your move means that they also take damage or mark a debility.

Other times, you'll know that you want to do something harmful, but won't have a specific move in mind. In that case, have the player roll the damage taken and let that inform the nature and severity of your move. See page 184 for more guidance.

Keep in mind the tags of the attacks involved. *Messy* attacks are especially destructive, and should often **hurt them** or **use up their resources** (destroying shields, weapons, or gear). *Forceful* attacks knock victims around; even if they do no damage, they should still change the momentum or positioning of the fight.

When the PCs or followers deal damage to monsters, use the description of their attack, the amount of damage dealt, how many HP the foe has left, and the tags on the attack to inform the fictional results.

Problematic wounds in play

Incorporate problematic wounds into the fiction and into your GM moves. When a player rolls a 7-9 or a 6-, maybe use the problematic wound to justify the result. Use your moves to bring an injury to the forefront of the story or to have it complicate the situation.

Announce trouble (future or offscreen): *"Andras is white as a sheet, and that snake bite is red and swollen and you see angry red lines following his veins up his arm. What do you do?"*

Reveal an unwelcome truth: *"Oof. Yeah, Blodwen, you peel the bandages back from Garet's wound, and… it's not good. It smells bad, the flesh is kind of black, and there's a greenish pus. It's infected, and it's going to get worse. What do you do?"*

Put someone in a spot: *"It claws at your face before you hurl it away. Take d6 damage. You're still up? Okay, I think it gashed your forehead and blood starts pouring into your eyes. You can't really see, but you hear it scuffling about, getting ready to pounce again. What do you do?"*

Use up their resources: *"You make it up and out of that gulley, but the wound in your side is still bleeding. You get a wave of dizziness as you stand. It passes, but take another 1d6 damage, ignoring armor. You still up?"*

Demonstrate a downside: *(after rolling a 7-9 to Defy Danger and escape from a hagr) "Like you said… you duck under the log as he swings it and rush past him before he can recover. But about five strides away, your knee buckles and you collapse to the ground. It's that injury from earlier. Your knee is just this burning mass of pain, and you hear the hagr grunt and pull the log free and start to lumber toward you, what do you do?"*

Tell them the consequences: *"You're just gushing blood. If you don't put a tourniquet on it soon, you're going to bleed out. Of course, your hands—well, hand—is shaking and everything feels numb. Mark* weakened, *and you'll be Defying Danger to do anything involving fine motor control. What do you do?"*

Tell them the requirements: *"If you want to walk on that ankle, you'll need to splint it and find a cane or a crutch. And something to dull the pain would be good, too. What do you do?"*

Death and dying

When a PC is reduced to 0 HP by an attack that could kill them, they're dying and must make this move. They might also be dying because the fiction demands it: if they fall 100 feet onto rocks, they don't take damage, they're at 0 HP and on Death's Door.

DEATH'S DOOR

When you ***are dying***, you glimpse the Last Door and the Lady of Crows (describe them). Then, roll +nothing: **on a 10+**, you wrest yourself back to the realm of the living—return to 1 HP but say how your brush with death has marked you; **on a 7-9**, the Lady waves you off—you're no longer dying but you're out of the action; **on a 6-**, your time has come—choose 1:

- Make one last move as if you rolled a 12+, then step through the Last Door
- Refuse to go; gain the Revenant or Ghost insert
- Call on one of the Things Below by name and beseech it to intercede; gain the Thrall insert

If you like, you can hold off on resolving this move until the scene wraps up or the other PCs get a little spotlight. If someone tries to save the dying PC (tending to wounds, etc.), then they're Aiding the Death's Door roll. The "risks, costs, or consequences" they expose themselves to will depend largely on how they Aid, your table's take on the Lady of Crows, and the result of the roll.

The Lady of Crows and the Last Door are for you and your table to describe. They might even appear differently for different characters.

On a 10+, they're back in action and no longer dying, but they are marked in mind, body, or soul. The player decides how, but feel free to offer suggestions, like a nasty scar, a lost eye, visions of the Last Door, or a murder of crows, always nearby. Whatever they pick, bring the mark up often in play. Maybe even write it up as a threat (an ***affliction***, page 284).

On a 7-9+, the character is no longer dying but they're unconscious (or close enough) until you say otherwise.

On a 6-, their time has come and the sane thing to do is pass through the Last Door. They can make one last move, but after that they're dead. There's no saving them. They can't use that last move to avoid death. Only the rarest of magic can bring them back.

If they refuse to go, ask why. Have them look at the Ghost or Revenant inserts and pick their Terrible Purpose. If they can't tell you, they shouldn't pick this option.

To become a Thrall, the PC must know the name of a Thing Below. If none of the Things Below have come up in play, maybe the PC can Know Things before dying?

If the character "sticks around," they are in for a steady downward progression, becoming more and more unstable and monstrous. Play up the horror. Show how their "lives" are no longer the same. Push their Terrible Purpose or Impulse into play. For a Ghost or Revenant, create their Terrible Purpose as an affliction; for a Thrall, create their master as a *magical entity* (see **Threats**, page 277). An undead PC should feel like they're on borrowed time—because they are. The other PCs should be wary of their undead ally. Wary, at the very least.

Healing and recovery

The following moves deal with regaining HP, clearing debilities, and treating or recovering from problematic wounds.

RECOVER
When you ***take time to catch your breath and tend to what ails you***, expend 1 use of supplies and recover HP equal to 4+Prosperity. You can't gain this benefit again until you take more damage.

When you ***tend to a debility or a problematic wound***, say how. The GM will either say that it's taken care of or tell you what's required to do so (Defying Danger, expending supplies or some other resource, finding ___, Making Camp, etc.).

As with any move: ask them what this looks like. Are they tending to wounds? Having a snack? Applying a poultice? Chewing on willow bark? What?

Often, multiple PCs will Recover at once. That's fine. It's a good time to **ask provocative questions** and encourage them to do a little role playing between themselves.

Each character who regains HP must expend 1 use of supplies, or someone else must expend a use on their behalf. The steading's Prosperity directly affects the quality of those supplies and thus the number of HP recovered. A steading with Prosperity +1 can provide heartier fare and more potent herbs than a steading with Prosperity +0.

Once a given character regains HP via the Recover move, they can't do so again until they take more damage. A PC can't take, say, 12 damage and bounce back to full HP with a short break and some whisky. That kind of HP loss requires actual rest to restore. (And, no, a PC can't just "nick their arm for 1 HP damage" in order to Recover again. It doesn't work like that.)

Remember, regaining HP does not mean healing wounds. Those bruises, scratches, etc. are still there.

For debilities and problematic wounds, prompt them to describe how they tend to the injury. If it sounds reasonable and effective, just say, "Cool, it's taken care of." But you can also tell them what else is required, such as...

… Knowing Things to know what to do;
… Defying Danger, the danger being...
  ... the pain.
  ... them thrashing as you work.
  ... the wound/condition getting worse.
  ... that ___ arrives/happens before you finish.
  ... drawing the attention of ___
  ... that you need to use up/use more ___;
… expending (more) supplies, whisky, etc.;
… finding ___ (an herb, the antivenom, fresh water, something to use as a stent, etc.);
… Making Camp/letting them rest; or
… doing something drastic (cauterizing, amputating, field surgery, etc.).

Combine these requirements with "and" and "or" as you see fit. If they meet the requirements, then the debility is cleared and/or the problematic wound is stabilized (though almost certainly not healed).

They've dispatched the bears in the cave but Caradoc got himself smacked around in the process. He's lost 9 HP and he's dazed*—he got swatted on his shield and slammed against the cave wall. He's out of breath and sore but I never established a specific injury.*

While the others investigate the cave, Caradoc asks "Can I Recover?" Sure, but I ask what that looks like, what sort of supplies he's using. "I think I'll slump up against the cave wall, drop my shield and spear, take a few deep breathes. Maybe take a shot of whisky, and eat some flatbread." Cool! He marks off a use of supplies and regains 4 HP (the steading's Prosperity is currently 0). I also think that's sufficient to clear his dazed *debility, too.*

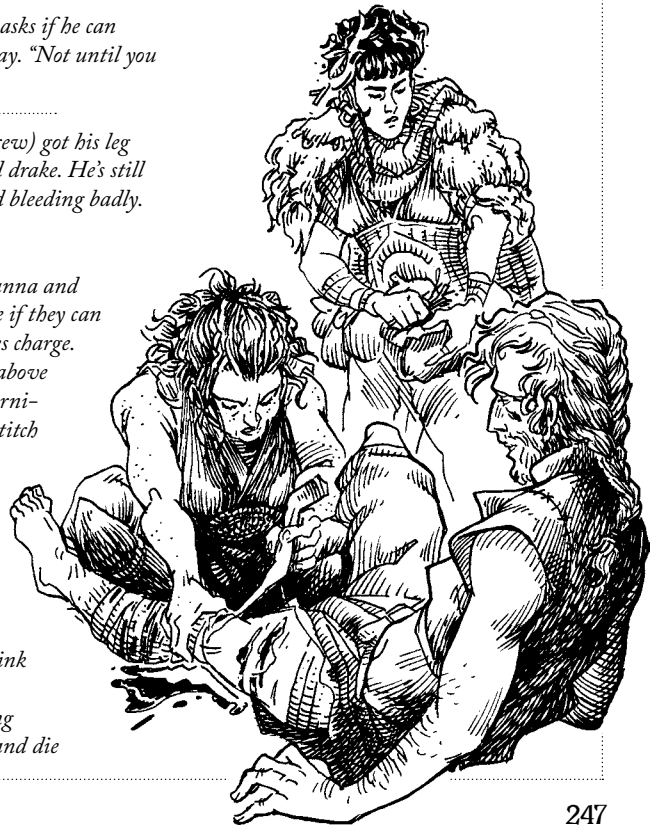
He's still down 5 HP, and asks if he can Recover again. "Nope," I say. "Not until you take more damage."

Garet (one of Rhianna's crew) got his leg slashed open by a feathered drake. He's still conscious, but at 0 HP and bleeding badly. He won't last long.

The fight is over, and Rhianna and Blodwen rush over and see if they can save his life. Blodwen takes charge. "Rhianna, apply pressure above the wound. I'll make a tourniquet. Then, I don't know, stitch him up, I guess?"

She's tending to a problematic wound, which is one of the triggers for Recover. Looking at my list of possible requirements, I think that she's Defying Danger with INT, the danger being that Garet will bleed out and die before they can staunch the bleeding. Also, they'll need to expend a use of supplies for the tourniquet and stitches. "You do it?" I ask. She does, and reaches for the dice.

She rolls an 8 and I give her a choice between a cost and a lesser success. "You stop the bleeding and save his life, but he's in bad shape. You can spend a second use of supplies to keep him going with some sort of stimulant herb. He'll be awake with 4 HP and able to move about slowly, but he'll be in a lot of pain and likely to hurt himself again. Or you can leave him, stable but flitting in and out of consciousness, unable to walk on his own. What do you do?"



MAKE CAMP
When you ***settle in to rest in an unsafe area***, answer the GM's questions about your campsite. Each member of the party must consume 1 use of supplies or provisions; if you use a ◇ mess kit (*requires fire & water*), then 1 use can provide for up to four people.

If you ***eat and drink your fill***, and ***get at least a few hours of sleep***, pick 1.

- Regain HP equal to ½ your max
- Clear a debility

If ***your rest was particularly peaceful, comfortable, or enjoyable,*** you also gain advantage on your next roll.

When the PCs are beaten up or exhausted, they'll want to Make Camp. If they have time, a ◇ mess kit, fire, and water, they can regain a lot of HP and/or clear some debilities with just 1-2 uses of supplies.

To make a choice, they need all three: food, drink, and sleep. Anyone who also uses a ◇ bedroll regains +1d6 HP, regardless of which choice they make.

Regaining HP or clearing a debility doesn't make problematic wounds go away. PCs must treat them with the Recover move, and such wounds take time to fully heal.

To get advantage on their next roll, things need to be *great*, not merely adequate. This should be the exception, not the rule.

For more about Making Camp, and how to decide on what (if anything) happens during the night, see page 334.

The party is en route to Marshedge and had an almost-disastrous encounter with the nosgolau as they camped near Titan Bones. They got Vahid back (barely) but he's dazed *and* weakened. *He also took a lot of damage, and he's down to 6 of his 16 HP. Caradoc and Rhianna took some damage, too. Blodwen's just fine.*

Once they make it back to camp, they all get a few hours of sleep. They ate and drank before the attack, so they each get to make a choice.

Blodwen's already at max HP and has no debilities. "Do I get advantage, then?" she asks. Nope! She might not be beaten up, but she's still sleeping on hard pavestones and huddled in a cloak.

Caradoc and Rhianna each opt to regain HP. Caradoc has 16 HP max, and he's got only 7 left. He regains 8 HP (half of his max) and ends up with 15 HP. He could Recover to get that last 1 HP back, but decides that it's not worth it. Rhianna has lost fewer than half her max HP, so she's back up to full.

Vahid has a tough choice: he can clear one of his debilities or he can recover HP. "How about I regain HP points from Making Camp, and then Recover to clear those debilities?" I ask how he's tends to the debilities. "Oh, I'll eat a huge meal, way more than it seems like I should be able to tuck away."

"Okay, let's say this, then. You'll regain half your max HP, bringing back up to 14. And if you eat 1 use of supplies, you can clear weakened. *But you'll still be* dazed *until you Make Camp again and get some good sleep. Deal?"*

CONVALESCE
When you ***rest for a few days in safety and comfort,*** set your HP back to your max and clear all your debilities. When you ***rest for a few weeks under the care of a healer***, you heal any problematic wounds that can heal. If you ***have suffered a permanent injury or impairment***, either retire or Make a Plan to adapt to it.

This move lets the PCs "reset" between expeditions. It's an opportunity to let time pass and have the seasons change. It's also a great time to ask questions and use your **homefront moves** (page 502).

Convalescing will heal most wounds, but it can't regrow lost limbs or repair a shattered knee. The character can either retire or Make a Plan and adapt.

If a PC retires, the player stops actively playing them. The character has lost the edge and nerve that makes them a PC. The player should make a new character, and the retired character becomes an NPC.

If the player wants their PC to adapt, then use the **Make a Plan** move (page 530) to clarify their goal and what's required to reach it. This might involve something extraordinary (like getting a clockwork hand from the Ustrina) but usually it's a matter of ingenuity, practice, and grit.

Don't make the requirements unduly hard. Your job is to **be a fan of the player characters** and **punctuate their lives with adventure**. It is not to penalize them for getting hurt. You want to see these tough, determined, resourceful characters adapt to their setbacks. Give them a path to recovery and see how they handle it.

Rhianna lost her right arm at Three Coven Lake (and she got off easy; Andras didn't make it home at all). Some quick thinking saved her life, but she's unsure how she'll be an effective warrior and archer. She's not about to retire, though.

So, we Make a Plan. "What do you hope to accomplish? Are you looking to replace or regrow the arm through magic? Or learn to shoot one-handed?" Rhianna's practical to a fault, and doesn't even consider a magical option. I look at the list of possible requirements, and write down:

- You must design and make some prosthetic or device for drawing & releasing a bow one-handed
- You must learn to use the device
- It'll take months of practice

We decide that a leather mouth-bit attached to the bowstring would let her pull and release. It's a simple thing to make with help from Sawyl the tanner.

Later, I frame a scene with Rhianna practicing her new setup. I ask what it looks like, what she's struggling with. Then Andras's mom comes by and thanks Rhianna for taking him under her wing, saying how proud she was to have Andras protecting the village. Rhianna's left feeling all sorts of bitter over losing him in search of Vahid's damn fire-jewel.

Autumn comes before Rhianna's had the months of practice she needs, and the PCs end up hunting a dark presence that's been stalking the Wood. "For now," I say, "your bow will have the reload *tag and you'll Let Fly with disadvantage. But once you get another month of practice, you'll shoot and Let Fly without penalty."*

First Adventure

Goals
Structure
Background
Setup questions
Setting the scene
Dropping the hook
Heading out

Goals

Introductions are complete. Spring has sprung forth. You've got a rich tapestry of characters, relationships, and backstories. It's time for the first adventure! Let's put all that stuff into play and see the PCs in action.

Your goals for the first adventure are:

- Paint a picture of daily life
- Explore relationships
- Identify what's important to them
- Push them into the field
- Establish details, but leave blanks
- Play up both the mundane and the mysterious
- Draw them back home

Paint a picture of daily life

Your first adventure should start in Stonetop and help make it real. The setup and the initial scenes should show off mundane slices of life and reinforce the fact that this is the PCs' home—and that it's a home worth fighting for.

Explore relationships

Take those NPCs and relationships that were established during introductions and push them into the spotlight. How does Caradoc treat his sweetheart? How does Blodwen feel about Rhianna's promise to keep her safe?

Don't just explore relationships that were explicitly established during introductions; explore the relationships they imply, too! Rhianna promised Blodwen's mother, Tegwen, that she'd keep Blodwen safe? Well, what's the relationship between Tegwen and Rhianna? Between Tegwen and Blodwen?

Keep an eye out for surprises, too! It might not have come up during introductions, but maybe when you play Garet (one of Rhianna's crew), you find that he's flirting with Blodwen. That's great! Run with it and see where that goes.

Identify what's important to them

There's nothing like a crisis to make someone's priorities come to the forefront. Keep an eye on the decisions that characters make, and where their interests lie. That'll be all sorts of fodder for later.

Push them into the field

Whatever you do, don't spend very long in Stonetop itself. Get them into the field, on an adventure, as soon as possible.

"Wait, what?" you might be thinking. "We just spent all that time establishing the village… aren't we going to DO something with it?"

Yes, you are—just not right now. Right now, your job is to get the action rolling and **punctuate their lives with adventure**. The village and its inhabitants are the backdrop for that adventure, the motivation for it, but (at least to start), they shouldn't be the focus of it.

Apocalypse World and related games (like *Sagas of the Icelanders* and *Monsterhearts*) tell you to spend the first session just following the PCs around, establishing NPCs with incompatible interests and untenable arrangements. If you do that with *Stonetop*, the PCs will soon have the blood of their fellow villagers on their hands. And that's going to lead to a very different type of game.

No: get them out of town. Get them adventuring on the town's behalf, sweating and bleeding for their kith and kin. Don't let Stonetop itself be a major source of conflict—yet.

Establish details, leave blanks

Both in the village and in the wider world, you want to be asking questions like crazy and establishing all sorts of concrete details. Who lives in those houses just outside the Ringwall? What flowers grow all around the old Fae waystones? Where did Vahid get that fancy lantern?

But leave blanks, too. Leave some details to wonder about, some mysteries to fill in later. How did the Silent Twins die? What is hiding in the Maw? Why *is* Elios such a joyless prick?

Play up both the mundane and the mysterious

Stonetop adventures should include a healthy dose of both mundane concerns and mysterious elements. If the adventure hook is mundane (like a chance to capture some wild horses), lace the adventure with strangeness and magic. If the hook is mysterious, pay attention to mundane details like weather and supplies and the fact that someone's mother is worried sick.

Draw them back home

Whatever the first adventure is, it should end with them returning to Stonetop. This should happen pretty naturally, but avoid things like trapping the whole party in some Fae's demesne or having them follow a bunch of slavers to Lygos. Let them go home. Encourage them to go home. The whole premise of the game falls apart if they don't.

Structure

Regardless of whether you use an adventure starter or a custom adventure, the first adventure will generally follow this structure in play:

1) Start with the **setup**, in which you ask a bunch of loaded questions that provide context and establish motivation. This might include a **love letter** or two (see page 568).

2) Then **set the scene**, zooming in on a particular place and time in the village. You'll frame the scene, ask more questions, and make some homefront moves that show off the town and explore relationships.

3) Once the scene is established, **drop the hook**. Show signs of trouble, reveal an unwelcome truth, offer an opportunity, tell them the consequences, etc. Spend a little time seeing how the PCs and NPCs react.

4) Assuming the PCs take the hook, they'll **make preparations**: they'll Chart a Course, Outfit, Requisition, recruit followers to join them, etc.

5) They will likely **travel** towards the focal point of the adventure. The journey will likely be an adventure itself. They might even be forced to turn back, letting the opportunity slip away or the problem get worse.

6) The journey (probably) leads them to the **resolution** of the adventure: the danger or opportunity that spurred them out the door in the first place. They explore, talk to NPCs, sneak, fight, make a daring escape, etc.

7) Then there's the **aftermath**: the journey home, the triumphant (or not-so) return, the reactions of their friends, family, and neighbors, and a return to day-to-day life. But there will be questions unanswered, threats still at large, further opportunities to explore—the source of future adventures!

Of course, the PCs might not take your hook. Or, they might get distracted by something that happens on the journey, and decide its more important than whatever you expected the focal point to be. That's all fine! Follow your agenda and principles, make moves, and keep asking them what they do.

Adventure starters

Adventure starters are pre-made first adventures that you can use to kickstart your game. You can make characters and jump into the first adventure all in one session!

With that said: adventure starters bypass the full introduction process described in the Getting Started chapter. Starters include their own abbreviated setup procedures, and delay establishing a lot of details about the village and the world until after the first adventure is complete.

Even if you don't use an adventure starter in full, you might find them useful as examples and sources of threats, dangers, discoveries, and maps.

You can find these adventure starters at www.lampblackandbrimstone.com

Background

A good first adventure requires preparation. At the very least, you should:

- Identify the central threat or opportunity
- Write up your threat(s)
- Plan your hook

Having this information planned in advance helps you **portray a rich and mysterious world**. You could theoretically ad lib the threat and hook, asking the characters questions to fill in the blanks. But you'll end up with a much more cohesive, textured, and thematic adventure if you prepare this information in advance.

During introductions, the group kept focusing on the recent crinwin raids, the abducted children, and effects this has had on town.

Vahid rolled the seasons change roll and got a 7, choosing "unexpected bounty." But there's also a threat that will emerge or make itself worse.

I've got a lot to work with. Let's see where this goes!

Identify the central threat or opportunity

The first adventure will center around an opportunity or a threat. The "spring burts forth" roll (and the player's choice) at the end of introductions will tell you which.

On a 10+, an opportunity

If they rolled a 10+ on their Seasons Change roll, they will have chosen "interesting news" or "valuable insight" or "trade opportunity." All three choices represent an opportunity. The opportunity should be both...

… external, so as to get the PCs out of the steading, but also...
… nearby, within a few days of Stonetop, so that they can get there and back with a modest amount of rations.

If they chose "interesting news", then pick (or ask the players to pick):

- A steading improvement and one of its requirements; or...
- some other goal the players established during introductions (solving a mystery, finding a treasure, mastering an arcanum, etc.).

Now, think of something that would put that requirement or goal in reach, and how the PCs could learn of the opportunity.

Vahid is keen to pursue "The Stream, Diverted" improvement. One possible requirement is inventing a way to make water flow uphill. Had he rolled a 10+ on Seasons Change and chosen "interesting news," I might have tied the opportunity to that.

What could put this in reach? Well, the Ruined Tower has all those old pipes and an underground reservoir. Vahid could study that stuff and learn how to make a pump. How could he hear of it? A shady treasure hunter might show up in town, having explored the Ruined Tower and seen pipes pumping water from the ground! He'll show Vahid, for a price...

If they chose "valuable insight", then pick a threat that came up during introductions. If nothing stands out, ask the player who rolled what they're most worried about. Think about that threat. Why haven't they done something about it before now? What information would allow them to address it (a vulnerability, the location of its lair, its motives, etc.)? Pick something the PCs can act on, fill in the details, and think about how that could be revealed to the PCs.

The obvious threat that came up during introductions was the crinwin—they raided the town just a few weeks ago and one of the town's youth went missing in the raid.

Why hasn't anything been done about the crinwin? Well, they're stealthy, vicious things living in the Great Wood—it'd be foolish to try to track them down. What info would let the PCs address the threat? The location of their lair! Maybe a hunter could spot some crinwin and be brave enough to track them to their lair.

If they chose "trade opportunity", pick (or ask the players to pick) one of the following:

- Something from the Special Items list that would benefit the whole town (like another horse, a pair of donkeys, etc.).
- Something of powerful symbolic value (like a suit of steel armor bearing Aratis's symbol).
- A minor arcanum of some utility, or something that would help unlock the secrets of a major arcanum.
- A mundane item made of exotic material (like a chest carved from dark ice).

Now, who could offer such a thing? What do they want in exchange? And why are they offering it to Stonetop, specifically?

Vahid wants to find the intricate helm that would serve as the Mindgem's head. Had he rolled a 10+, he might have asked for an opportunity to acquire it. The Ustrina could have found it and sold it to someone in Gordin's Delve, someone who knows Vahid is interested in this sort of thing. Of course, they'd ask a pretty penny for it, or more likely, some service only Vahid could grant...

On a 7-9, a threat and a gain

If they rolled a 7-9, then a threat to the steading presents itself (or gets worse). But they also will have chosen a seasonal gain. The threat will be the main focus of the first adventure, but how it presents itself should be influenced by whatever seasonal gain they chose.

As you design the threat, be sure to make it...

... **external**, so as to get the PCs out of the steading; but...
... **nearby**, within a few days of Stonetop, so that they can get there and back with a modest amount of supplies;
... **Stonetop's problem**, something that directly threatens the villagers and that no one else will deal with; and
... **urgent**, something that will get worse if not addressed.

Pick a threat that came up during introductions, or something new that strikes your fancy (from the setting guide, or from your own fevered imagination). Ask yourself: why has this become a problem now? Why wasn't it a problem before, and what changed to make it a problem? Try to tie the reason to some of the details that came up during introductions.

During introductions, Rhianna's war story was about a nighttime raid by the crinwin, just a few weeks ago, and how they tried to drag kids off into the Wood. Caradoc was supposed to be watching after Wynfor, but he left Wynfor alone so he could go "prove" himself in the battle. When things settled down, Wynfor was missing. The search party never found anything. And on top of all that, Rhianna is worried that something is driving the crinwin, making them bolder and more organized. The crinwin will clearly be the threat.

So, why have the crinwin become so bold of late? I'm thinking they have fallen under the sway of a swyn (a big, arrogant, hypnotic, monkey-headed serpent). During the raid, they were trying to kidnap children with specific traits to add to the swyn's "collection." The swyn recently moved into (or emerged from?) an old Maker-ruin, not too far from town.

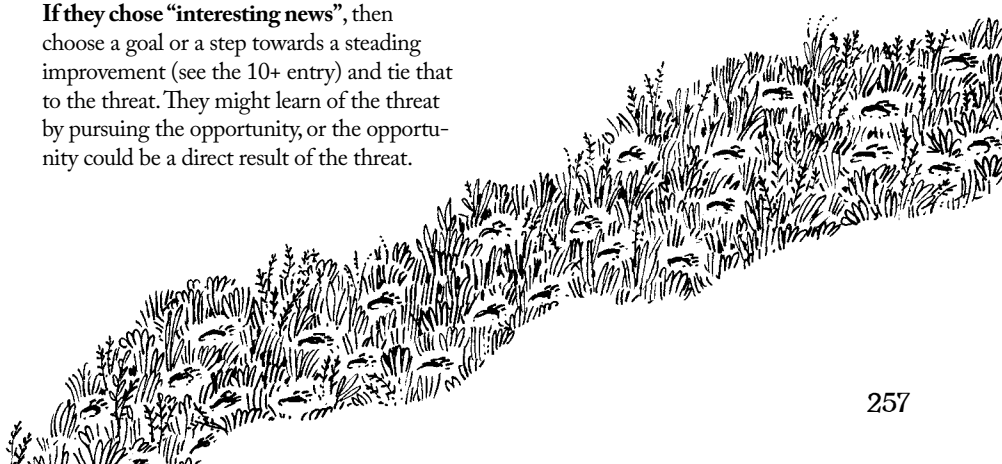
After deciding on the threat, and why it's become a problem now, decide how it manifests and how to present it. Use the seasonal gain that the players chose to guide you.

If they chose "interesting news", then choose a goal or a step towards a steading improvement (see the 10+ entry) and tie that to the threat. They might learn of the threat by pursuing the opportunity, or the opportunity could be a direct result of the threat.

During introductions, Blodwen expressed interest in figuring out where the Forest Folk went. She could learn about that by exploring one of their old encampments—perhaps a Maker-ruin that they abandoned and that is now home to the swyn. Had Vahid picked "interesting news," a hunter could stumble on the ruin and note the Forest Folk markings--and then flee back to Stonetop with that news, pursued by crinwin.

If they chose "valuable insight", then the threat makes itself known or gets worse, but in a way that reveals something useful about how to address it or about what's causing it.

Had Vahid picked this option, the crinwin could get even bolder, eventually attacking by day and trying to drag children off from the Stream. And maybe the kids' parents could fend them off and capture one of the crinwin—giving the PCs a chance to learn what they want, or where they live, or what's driving them.



If they chose "unexpected bounty", then the threat should be revealed in the course of collecting said bounty. Choose a bounty—trade, plentiful game, valuables found in the Wood, etc.—that will put villagers (or someone they deal with) in the path of the threat.

I need a bounty that will draw villagers out into the Wood despite the crinwin. I decide that spring has broken warm and early, and game is plentiful, and trappers are busy setting snares and harvesting fur and meat. One of the trappers could be abducted by the crinwin.

If they chose "trade opportunity", identify a neighboring community that would either be affected by the threat or become aware of it while traveling to Stonetop. This is the neighbor that will make the trade offer. Choose something they have that the PCs would want. If you can, try to link the neighbor's offer to the threat. Otherwise, just have the trading party report the threat while making the deal.

The crinwin (and their swyn master) dwell in the Great Wood, and the only "neighbors" who might encounter them are the Fae or the spirits and beasts of the wild. Blodwen can speak to spirits and beasts, but I can't think of anything they would want to trade. The Fae, though… Fae make deals all the time. Had Vahid chosen this option, I could say that the swyn stole something from a spriggan, and the spriggan wants it back. It could approach the PCs with an offer—recover the lost object from the Maker-ruins, and he'll trade them a bottle of ffyrnig tonic or the secret to making Truth Seeds.

Alternatively, have the players pick an expensive (Value 3) Special Item that they'd like to acquire. Pick a neighbor who's able to provide it. What they want in exchange, though, is something that puts the villagers in the threat's path.

If I didn't want to introduce the Fae, I could ask the players to pick a Value 3 item. Let's say they pick a mule. A merchant from Marshedge would happily provide them two mules in exchange for some drake feathers from the Great Wood—which Rhianna's hunters could acquire, but doing so would put them in the crinwin's (and the swyn's) territory.

If they chose "Tor's Blessing", then use the fine weather as an excuse to put villagers in the path of the threat.

Had Vahid picked Tor's Blessing, I could have a pair of young sweethearts sneak out to the Old Wall one night for an early spring tryst. The crinwin could jump them and drag one off into the Wood!

If they chose "population boom," then tie the threat to a new arrival, or to one or more youths who recently came of age.

Had Vahid picked this option, I could say that a number of Caradoc's peers take it upon themselves to go find the missing children, only to encounter the swyn itself and its crinwin servants. One or two youths could fall under the swyn's sway, and the others would return to the village injured and shaken.

On a 6-, threats abound

Things are going to start bad and they're going to get worse.

Start with a threat, one that came up during introductions. If no threats were established, or none of them feel imminent or appropriately bad, then pick something from an almanac or make something up. If multiple threats were established, or you have ideas for more, then pick one to be the main threat for the adventure to revolve around. Use the extra threats to add texture and urgency and a sense of doom (threats abound!) but mostly keep them simmering in the background.

As you design the main threat, be sure to make it...

… **external**, so as to get the PCs out of the steading; but...
… **nearby**, within a few days of Stonetop, so that they can get there and back with a modest amount of supplies;
… **Stonetop's problem**, something that directly threatens the villagers and that no one else will deal with; and
… **urgent**, something that will get worse if not addressed.

Ask yourself: what does the threat want? Why is the threat such a problem for Stonetop? Why has it become a problem now when it wasn't a problem before? What changed? Try to tie your answers to details that came up during introductions.

Next, think about how the threat has already manifested and affected the town. If the threat was established during introductions, what has happened since those established events? If the threat is new, how did it first start? Either way, ask yourself how bad it's gotten. It should be pretty bad. Don't worry about the details just yet. You'll ask the players for those during Setup.

These recent events—or the hook (when you drop it)—will almost certainly trigger Meet With Disaster, reducing the village's Fortunes by 1 (from +1 down to +0).

We already established that crinwin raided the town a few weeks ago and that Wynfor (Caradoc's nephew), went missing. Rhianna's worried about something organizing the crinwin, which I've decided it is a swyn (a big, arrogant, hypnotic, monkey-headed serpent). It recently moved into (or emerged from?) some nearby Maker-ruins.

Swyn are collectors, so I think: the crinwin are collecting children for their master. Since the raid, search parties have failed to find the child and have been attacked themselves. At least one of the searchers was killed. More raids have happened, targeting the homes nearest to the Great Wood. Trappers and hunters have been attacked and refuse to go out into the Wood. And most recently, another child will have been taken from the steading just before dawn.

Write up your threat(s)

If your initial adventure involves a threat, then flesh it out using the guidelines in the **Threats** chapter (page 277). Try to come up with an impending doom, and make the first grim portent the hook for your first adventure.

Also write up any related threats, or at least assign them a threat type and instinct.

Think, too, about other threats identified during introductions that could overlap or cross paths with this adventure, or just add texture. Are there other looming dangers? Are there any individuals, institutions, or afflictions in town that will add to the PCs' problems? Write them up as well—at least with a threat type and an instinct.

Vahid rolled a 7-9 for Seasons Change and my central threat is the swyn that's driving the crinwin to steal children. I write it up like so:

Sajra the Swyn (*villain*)
INSTINCT to indulge its ego.

Recently moved into a ruined Green Lord's tomb about 1½ days from town (why???). Has taken over a few nests of crinwin (rabble; to covet) and they've been collecting children for it. Already has Wynfor (Caradoc's nephew) and another child (who???).

- More children go missing
- Some of the (entranced) children return
- Children recruit followers
- Reveals itself, demands servitude
- IMPENDING DOOM: Subjugates the town, killing or mesmerizing any opposition

STAKES: Will Wynfor's parents forgive Caradoc? Who will fall under Sajra's sway? What will become of the stolen children brought under Sajra's control?

*The crinwin themselves are also a threat, a rabble (**Instinct** to covet). But I don't go into more detail. It's really the swyn that's the threat.*

Refine your hook

You've identified the central opportunity or threat for the adventure. You've got some idea how that threat will manifest, based on the results of the first Seasons Change move.

Now, firm up the details. What exactly is going to happen? When will this happen? Where? Who will be involved? Who will witness it and what will they report? Don't get too specific just yet, but you should be able to answer these questions in general terms.

As you refine your hook, make sure that it...

… **is actionable**, giving the PCs some chance to actually do something about it, and implying an obvious first step for them to take;
… **involves all of the PCs**, giving them all a chance to react to it and have their input; and
… **communicates urgency**, making it clear that if the PCs just sit on their hands, something bad will happen and/or an opportunity will be lost.

The details of the hook will help you identify the setup questions that you need to ask, as well as when and where you'll frame the first scene.

Vahid got a 7-9 for the first Seasons Change move and chose "unexpected bounty." I decided that spring broke warm and early, with small game abundant. Trappers are busy plying the Wood, despite the crinwin threat. One of these trappers will get abducted by crinwin.

But wait... that won't be actionable by itself. Plus, the crinwin have been abducting children; why would they grab a fully grown trapper?

Oh! They won't grab the trapper, they'll take his son (who's out with him checking snares). The trapper's son is bigger than the other kids, and the trapper will stab one of the crinwin, giving the PCs a trail to follow. That's actionable!

I consider having the trapper use some sort of signal whistle to call for help, drawing the PCs to the site of the attack. But I reject that, because it'd be too easy to have Rhianna and her crew rush out to help and leave everyone else behind in the village.

No, the trapper will run back into town yelling for help. That'll give all the PCs the opportunity to be involved. And all this will happen in the morning, meaning they have a chance to try to track down the boy in daylight. They might be able to save him if they act quickly!

Setup questions

Before you set your first scene, ask a bunch of loaded questions. Your goal here is to:

- Establish key details
- Highlight relevant setting elements
- Foreshadow
- Make things personal

If you have time, write these questions down as part of your prep. Write in pencil, for now! You're likely to make a few revisions as you go.

You might also end up writing a "love letter" or two, instead of or in addition to some of your questions.

Establish key details

What details need to be established before you start play? What needs to be true for your hook to make sense? What obvious questions arise as you think about those things? Ask leading questions that establish those things, but at the same time give the players some creative control.

Why do this? Why not just tell the players the things that need to be true?

Mostly: because it's more interactive. If you ask someone to think about a question and create an answer, they process the details of the question more deeply. That's true even if the question is about something rather mundane and inconsequential. Answering helps them engage with the world that you're creating together, and it gives them a little more ownership of that world.

But also: your players will come up with details that you never would. And even when they don't come up with anything unexpected, the fact that they came up with it instead of you gives the whole thing a more authentic texture. The world feels more real, less like something that one person is just making up.

My hook assumes that spring broke warm and early and that the trappers are out in the Wood catching game. That gives me these questions:

- *When was the last time spring came this early and was this warm?*
- *What type of game are the trappers busy trapping?*

The crinwin have been actively raiding lately, so I feel like there must be something that lets the trappers feel at least a little safe. That gives me this question:

- *How do trappers ward off crinwin? Do you think it really works?*

Finally, my central threat is the swyn, and the crinwin are collecting children for it. We know Wynfor (Caradoc's nephew) went missing during the last crinwin raid, but "collecting" implies more of a pattern than that. I think there must be a previous child who went missing, and the village gave up on searching for her. To establish those details, I'll ask:

- *Who was the youth who went missing in the Wood a few weeks before that nighttime raid by the crinwin?*
- *Why did you all give up searching for her?*

Highlight setting elements

Next, identify any unique setting elements (like the Makers, the wards on the roads, the Pale Hunter, the widespread fear of water, etc.) that will play a significant role in the hook, or that would directly inform the PCs' reactions to the hook. Write a question about each of those elements, just to make sure it's something that the players are familiar with.

The crinwin are a setting element unique to Stonetop, and they'll obviously play a big part in this. They've come up a lot during introductions, but some of the more "common knowledge" details about crinwin haven't come up, like the fact that they're child-sized, and arboreal, and live in big papery nests in the trees, and that they mimic sounds. So asking about some of those might be a good idea. I jot down these questions:

- *After the crinwin raid, what feature about their small, hairless, child-like bodies did you find most unnerving?*
- *When you've seen crinwin moving quickly through the forest canopy, what natural creature do they most remind you of?*
- *Remember that time you got lured off into the Woods by some crinwin? Whose voice were they mimicking, that got you to follow them?*

If there's a setting element that you're pretty sure will come up, but that won't be directly relevant to the hook itself... don't ask about it yet. Wait to ask questions about it until they encounter that setting element in play, or at least until its alluded to.

Thinking about it more, the whole "crinwin mimic noises and voices" thing isn't relevant to the hook or how the PCs react to it. I decide to drop that question.

Likewise, I know that the swyn is hiding in the tomb of a mummified Green Lord, so I consider asking some questions about the Green Lords or their ruins out in the Wood. But on second thought, it's not relevant yet—and it wouldn't make any sense to ask about it.

Foreshadow

Ask yourself if there's anything that you want to foreshadow: a threat, a motive, a consequence, a discovery, etc. Write a question or two that points in that direction, without being too obvious.

Foreshadowing questions are tricky! If you can't come up with a way to be subtle, just skip the foreshadowing!

The swyn is collecting children, right? I'd like to hint at that. So, I want these kids to have something in common, something that makes them worthy for the swyn's collection. I don't particularly care what that is, though, so that becomes the question (about the girl who went missing prior to the raid):

- *What did this girl have in common with Wynfor and the other kids the crinwin tried to abduct?*

I'd like to hint at the swyn itself, but I can't think of any way to ask a question about it that won't be a dead giveaway that, yup, the swyn is the boss. So I leave that out.

Make things personal

Ask questions of each character, so that all the players are involved. Try to balance the number of questions you're asking to each. If there's an imbalance, try asking one character what they think about another character's answer or past behaviors—and feel free to make it all sorts of loaded. For example: "Vahid, why do you think Rhianna was wrong to call off the search for the first missing girl?"

When prepping questions in advance, look at each one that you've written and personalize it. Decide to whom you'll ask each question. Fine tune each question to make sense from the character's perspective (remember: address these questions to the characters, not the players). Play on the themes that have started to emerge for that character. Ask the questions in such a way that they presume the character's direct involvement. Or, frame the questions so that the player is telling you what their character believes or has heard, rather than what they *know*.

The point is to make the whole starting situation directly relevant to the characters, to give them motivations and personal stakes. Get these questions right, and the players will bite on your hook with very little prompting.

As you revise the questions, also think about the order in which you'll ask them. There's a real art to this, and no hard-and-fast rule for it. Generally, go chronologically. Ask first about things that happened further in the past, then ask about things that have been happening more recently (or that are still happening). And don't be afraid to cut, either! If you can't figure out when to ask a question, ask yourself if it's really necessary!

I want to start by asking about the missing girl, the one taken prior to the raid. I think Caradoc would identify with her, so he gets this question. It becomes:

- *"Caradoc, who was the girl who went missing, a few weeks before that night-time raid by the crinwin? Why was she out in the Wood, alone, in late winter?"*

Next, I'll ask Rhianna why they stopped searching for the girl, because she's the marshal and her crew are all woodsmen. I tweak it to make it her decision to stop looking, and to twist the knife with some guilt:

- *"Rhianna, what prompted you to call off the search for this girl, empty handed? Why do her parents still blame you?"*

I think that the next logical question would be about the detail shared by this missing girl and Wynfor. This seems like a chance to play up Vahid's cleverness and caginess. I phrase it so that it's something he's figured out but maybe hasn't shared with others:

- *"Vahid, it's occurred to you that this girl shares a trait with Wynfor, and with the other kids that the crinwin tried to abduct. What is that common trait?"*

Chronologically, the next question is the one about the dead crinwin. I want to ask Blodwen this one, given her ties to the natural and unnatural. I tweak it just a little, to play up the "soft hearted" theme that emerged for her during introductions. It becomes:

- *"Blodwen, after the crinwin raid, when you examined their small, hairless, child-like bodies… what unnatural feature did you find so tragic?"*

I could ask the other question about the crinwin now (about how they move through the trees), but it doesn't really fit and honestly, the more I think about it, the less I want to include it. I decide to cut it!

I do still want to ask about the early spring and the plentiful game. I pick Blodwen for these, but because she's so young, I rephrase the questions to ask what others are saying and doing. I also crunch them together:

- *"Blodwen, when does Seren the Eldest say we last had such a warm and early spring? What sort of game has been especially plentiful, prompting trappers to spend so much time in the Wood?"*

For the question about how trappers ward off crinwin, I feel like this is something Rhianna would know about because of how much time she and her crew spend in the Wood. But I like the idea of getting Vahid involved, playing up his know-it-all status and the brewing tension between him and Rhianna. So I split the questions like so:

- *"Rhianna, what do folks who ply the Wood—like you and your crew—always wear to keep the crinwin at bay?"*
- *"Vahid, why do you doubt the efficacy of this anti-crinwin charm?"*

Okay! I'm feeling good, but I'd like to give Caradoc one more. I'll prompt some hope and urgency with this:

- *"Caradoc, why are you so certain that the missing children are alive?"*

Love letters

Consider writing one or more "love letters" to go along with these questions. Each such love letter should...

… **address a particular PC**;
… **establish some experience** that the PC has had (or is still having);
… **ask them to describe something** about that experience;
… **have them make a roll** and, based on the result, give the player…
  … **insight into or influence** over the starting situation, and/or…
  … **some sort of resource** to use in the upcoming adventure.

Write the love letter on an index card, print it out before play, or send it to the player online. Have the player read it aloud during whatever part of the setup makes sense.

I'd like to foreshadow the swyn, but asking about it directly would be too obvious. Instead, I write this love letter to Blodwen. It establishes a few potential culprits (including the swyn) and gives her the option to learn more in play.

Dear Blodwen,

Seren the Crone has told you countless tales of unnatural creatures in the Wood. Lately, though, she's been bringing up things that steal away children, such as:

* Fae, like the White Billies (eternal revelers), Blush-of-Dawn (who seeks adoration), and Auntie Sallow (who "protects" the innocent)
* The glasbren, beautiful tree spirits who've been known to entrance comely mortals
* Swyn, big snakes with monkey-like faces, hypnotic eyes, and mesmerizing voices
* The Fomoraij, of which she barely whispers, ancient evils hiding in the earth

Old Seren does drone on, and she rarely tells a story the same way twice, so let's see how well you've been listening. Roll +INT: on a 10+ hold 2 Stories; on a 7-9, hold 1 Story.

When you spend 1 Story and tell us the name of one of Seren's tales, ask the GM a question about one of the creatures described above. The GM will tell you something interesting, useful, and relevant, as revealed by the tale.

On a 6-, hold 1 Story but when you spend it, the GM will tell you two versions of the story with conflicting information, only one of which is true.

xoxo - your GM

For more guidance, see **Writing love letters** (page 568).

Setting the scene

After the setup questions have been answered, start play in Stonetop. Your goal is to establish what mundane, daily life looks like, so that you can drop the hook right in the middle of it.

Work backwards from the hook. What time of day will the hook happen? What do you want to be happening in town? Where will the hook drop? Where should the PCs be when it does?

Frame a scene to support all that. Tell the players the time of day, what's going on, what the weather's like. Zoom in on a specific place in the village or just outside it, either by dictating a place or asking the PCs where they are.

Next, ask questions that establish details and explore daily life. What are you doing? Who's with you? What are you eating? What are you looking forward to? Whose eye do you hope to catch? If you can, work in questions that reinforce the setup and/or foreshadow the hook. "What loss is felt here, caused by the crinwin's last raid?" That sort of thing.

Once the scene is set, spend some time making homefront moves and seeing how the PCs react. These GM moves are discussed fully in the **Homefront** chapter (page 483), but for now, work off this list:

- Introduce someone interesting
- Reveal simmering tensions
- Present a want or need
- Show how others really feel
- Draw out their feelings
- Change a relationship
- Oppose their wishes
- Remind them of their obligations
- Start a conflict or crisis
- Play them against each other

Avoid serious conflicts or dramatic reveals. It's okay to have a PC argue with their spouse if that's something they often do, but don't, like, spring the fact that the spouse has been having an affair! You're establishing daily life (including daily drama), not setting things on fire. Not yet.

For preparation, jot down:

- A sentence or two describing the scene(s).
- The questions you intend to ask.
- The homefront moves you plan to make, with whatever details you find useful.

These aren't the only things you'll say or ask, and you can adjust them as needed, but they'll give you a solid starting point.

The trapper should stagger into town in the morning, giving the PCs some daylight to work with. The trapper and his son would have set off at first light, and the attack would have come a couple hours later. So, the trapper would get back to town mid-morning. That's when I'll set the scene:

"It's mid-morning. Farmers till the fields and folks go about their chores. It's another fine, clear day, still cool but likely to get warm."

To play up the "unexpected bounty," I'll zoom in on Caradoc—he's the tanner's apprentice.

"Caradoc, you're at work, hides and furs all over.

- *"What unsavory task does Sawyl have you working on this morning?*
- *"Are you glad for the all the work the trappers are bringing in, or annoyed?*
- *"Aside from the gore, entrails, and noxious fumes, what's the worst part of this job?"*

Maybe I'll make some moves here, play out an interaction with Sawyl. I'll wing it.

Next, I'll ask the other PCs the following:

- *"Where are each of you this morning? What task or chore are you working on?"*
- *"Who's with you and what are you talking about?"*
- *"As you look about, what do you each see that you've seen a thousand times before?"*
- *"Who or what do you encounter that makes you think of the missing children and the recent crinwin raid?"*

I'll ask follow-up questions and improvise based on what they give me, but I definitely want to make these GM moves:

Remind them of their obligations: *Tegwen (Blodwen's mother), nags her about not attending to some mundane thing.*

Play them against each other: *Eira, Rhianna's lieutenant, complains to her that Vahid has been creeping on her.*

Ask a provocative question:

- *"Remember that time you got lured off into the Woods by some crinwin? Whose voice were they mimicking, that got you to follow them?"*

Dropping the hook

Once the initial scene is set, it's time to drop the hook. Make GM moves that introduce the core threat or opportunity of the adventure and prompt the PCs to act.

You can (and should) keep asking questions after you drop the hook. You might need to ask such questions in order to make the hook compelling enough. With that said, limit your questions to things the characters would know the answer to already ("How are you related to Gorlas? Why is everyone so quick to dismiss him?") rather than asking the players to invent entirely new elements ("Who comes barging in, muttering about crinwin nests?")

For preparation, write down the moves you intend to make and how they'll manifest, plus any questions you plan to ask. This might mean coming up with specifics that have been vague in your mind so far: who, exactly, burst in with news of a crinwin nest? Why should the PCs trust him? What exactly did he see? Either decide on these things now, or decide that you'll ask the characters for the answer during play.

None of this prep is set in stone! You'll often need to adapt and improvise based on the details established during setup and the initial scene. Stay loose!

Reactions

After you've dropped your hook, it's time to explore everyone's reactions. If your hook is compelling, the PCs will likely head out to deal with things. But before (or maybe as) they make preparations, show how others respond to the hook and the PCs' intended course of action.

This is a great time to think about NPCs with relationships to the PCs. How does the Heavy's spouse respond to him going out into the field again? What does the Would-be Hero's father say? Who thinks the expedition is folly? Who wants to come with? Lean heavily on the homefront moves during this segment.

You're not just doing this to show off the NPCs; you want to see how the PCs respond to both the hook and the NPCs. Keep an eye out for PCs triggering moves, especially Persuade, Seek Insight, Know Things, and Defy Danger (the danger being that someone takes offense, or doesn't believe their lies, or so on). Take notes on whose feathers the PCs ruffle, who gets in their way, and who reveals themselves to be on their side. Some of these people will likely become threats after the first adventure.

When prepping the adventure, jot down some notes including:

- The NPCs who you think will be present.
- The moves that you think you'll make and the NPCs you think you'll use to make them.
- Any questions you plan on asking.

Again, none of this is set in stone! Adapt as needed to reflect the events in play.

I start thinking about how I'll drop the hook, and I realize that I haven't named the trapper or his son. I'll do that now. I grab the steading playbook and skim the Residents section. I could create a new, random NPC, but I see Pryder, the youth who Blodwen said is beloved of the Goddess and her duty to protect. That's perfect, so he's the son. I pick a name for his father, Rheinal, and add him to the residents list.

Now, I start planning out the moves for my hook and filling in specific details. I also start thinking about questions I might ask for each move, to make the hook more personal and motivating to the PCs. My notes end up like this:

***Announce trouble:** Someone's yelling from down in the Wood. They're getting closer to town.*

***Introduce someone interesting:** It's Rheinal. Someone, let's say Morwenna (Caradoc's crush) is helping him up the cliffside trail from the Wood. He's barely standing, panicked, covered in blood.*

- *"Blodwen, Rheinal is Pryder's father, one of the trappers. Aside from his devotion to his family, what's his most notable trait?"*

***Reveal an unwelcome truth:** Pryder was dragged off by crinwin. They were out checking snares early this morning and got separated in a clearing. Rheinal heard Pryder cry out. He found Pryder struggling with crinwin, then he got jumped. Rheinal stabbed one crinwin, got clocked on the head, and passed out. When he came to, Pryder and the crinwin were gone. If anyone asks: yes, Pryder shares the same trait that the other missing kids had in common.*

***Ask a loaded question:** "Vahid, you notice that Rheinal still wears his anti-crinwin charm, for all the good it did him; do you say anything?"*

***Offer an opportunity:** The attack happened an hour or two ago, and Pryder is considerably bigger than the other kids who were abducted. They would have had to drag him, leaving a pretty obvious trail. Plus, Rheinal wounded one of them—it'd be dripping blood.*

- *"Rhianna, which member of your crew is the best tracker?"*
- *"Blodwen, whose hound has the best nose? Think you could get them to loan you its sense of smell?"*

The hook will take place on the outskirts of town, at the top of the trail leading down into the Wood. These NPCs are likely to be there:

- *Rheinal, obviously*
- *Morwenna (Caradoc's crush), helping Rheinal up the cliffside path*
- *Gwendl the Matron (one of Blodwen's mentors, village healer) will arrive soon*
- *Sawyl the tanner (Caradoc's boss); the tannery is right there*
- *Eira (Rhianna's lieutenant, who Vahid secretly watches) will probably be talking to Rhianna, and will probably come along*

That's plenty of NPCs for the initial scene, but I also expect there to be some interaction with:

- *Glenys (Caradoc's aunt, Wynfor's mom) and the other missing child's parents.*
- *Tegwen, Blodwen's somewhat overbearing mother.*

I start thinking about some of the moves that these people might make:

***Present a want or need**: Rheinal insists on gathering a search party right away, and going with them to rescue his son, despite barely being able to stand.*

***Point out a flaw in a person or plan** (one of Gwendl's moves): Gwendl insists that Rheinal isn't going anywhere, injured as he is. Surely he can give Rhianna and company directions to where the attack happened.*

***Show how others really feel**: Morwenna gives Caradoc an admiring glance if he says he plans to join the expedition.*

***Reveal simmering tensions**: Glenys throws shade at Caradoc, blaming him for Wynfor's abduction ("You've done enough, haven't you?"). The missing girl's parents are bitter and say something to Rhianna like "Maybe don't give up this time."*

***Oppose their wishes**: Tegwen forbids Blodwen from going, but has no authority to do so.*

***Play them against each other**: "Rhianna, are you really going to let Blodwen and Caradoc come along?"*

If they ignore the hook

Most likely, the PCs will take your hook and go deal with the threat and/or seize the opportunity. But what if they don't?

Do not force them to act on the hook. It's not your job to lead them down a pre-planned story. It's your job to **portray a rich, mysterious world**, to **punctuate their lives with adventure**, and to **play to find out what happens**. It's the players' job to portray their characters. Don't take that away from them.

If something feels off—like, if the players flounder, act helpless, or don't seem to care—then **call time out** and check in player-to-player. Maybe they need help identifying their options. Maybe there's a mismatch in interest or expectations that needs addressing.

But also: maybe your hook just isn't as compelling as you thought. Maybe your players genuinely don't think the risk is worth the reward. What do you do then?

Shift into **downtime** (page 496). Ask what the PCs get up to for the rest of spring. Frame scenes as you need or want, in order to make GM moves or resolve PC actions. Show the passing of time.

But as you do so, frame scenes and make GM moves that show the consequences of the PCs' inaction. Don't *punish* the players for ignoring your hook, but portray your NPCs and your threats with integrity.

The PCs let an opportunity pass? Okay, cool with you, but how do your NPCs react? Who's upset? Does an NPC go after it on their own, and what sort of trouble do they get into?

The PCs ignored a threat? Okay, cool with you, but start advancing grim portents. Show NPCs reacting. Have the village Meet With Disaster if it comes to that.

Eventually, *something* will prompt the PCs to go on an expedition, or else a crisis will erupt in town (see **"The next adventure,"** page 498). Or, you'll decide that this isn't the game for you and you'll stop playing.

When prepping the first adventure, think about what will happen if the PCs do nothing. If there's a central threat, lean heavily on its grim portents. Jot down a few moves that you'll make to show the consequences of inaction.

If the PCs don't go after Pryder, then I'll probably make the following moves:

***Reveal simmering tensions**: townsfolk snub Rhianna; she overhears some of her crew complaining to Eira.*

***Present a want or need**: Rheinal, Glenys, and the other parents plead with Rhianna to do something, anything.*

***Quicken a threat or crisis**: Another child goes missing, stolen from a home at the edge of town.*

***Oppose their wishes**: Rheinal puts a posse together to go looking for the kids.*

***Hurt Them**: The posse is attacked and many are killed by crinwin.*

***Advance a grim portent**: Wynfor and the missing girl appear at the edge of town, dirty and thin but glowing with a weird inner joy.*

Heading out

Eventually, they'll be off on an adventure! Here's how that usually plays out.

Preparations

When the PCs announce their intentions to head out and pursue the opportunity or deal with the threat, they'll often trigger these moves:

- **Chart a Course**, in which they tell you where they plan to go and you tell them what's involved in getting there.
- **Outfit**, in which they "gear up" for the expedition.
- **Requisition,** in which they might borrow town assets (like horses or carts).

As they make these moves, sprinkle in various homefront and other GM moves as appropriate. For example, when they Chart a Course, maybe **ask a provocative question** to the Ranger about the dangers they might find. When they Outfit, maybe **introduce someone interesting**, like the publican who provides them with whisky for the road.

The PCs might also Trade & Barter, Know Things, Seek Insight, or Persuade. They might recruit some **followers** (page 460), or have some folks insist on coming along. They might set the town to work while they're gone and have them **Pull Together** (page 536), or **Muster** the town's defenses (page 534).

See the **Expeditions** chapter (page 301) for more details.

Travel

After preparations, they'll head toward the threat or opportunity. This involves you...

… **presenting legs of travel and points of interest**, describing the environment and the weather;
… **asking lots of questions,** like, "What's the worst about slogging through these hills?" or "What do the old-timers say about this place?";
… **making GM moves**, like having their followers cause or get into trouble, providing a choice of paths, presenting the challenges that you outlined when they Charted a Course, and introducing other dangers and discoveries;
… **asking "What do you do?"**; and
… **resolving the PCs' actions**.

You'll repeat these as necessary, zooming in and out as you make GM moves and the players make moves of their own. They might encounter something that distracts them from their primary goal, or that gets them lost, or that beats them up so badly that they turn back and head home in defeat. Or, they might reach their destination with ease. It's all good!

Travel (and the prep you might do for it) is detailed in the **Expeditions** chapter (see page 301).

Resolution

Eventually, probably, the PCs will get where they're going and attempt to deal with the threat or seize the opportunity. You'll zoom in on the action, describe the situation, and make GM moves. The PCs will respond and trigger their moves. We'll all find out what happens together.

When prepping the adventure, list the sites, dangers, and discoveries that you expect to feature in the resolution. For each one, do as much preparation as you find valuable. See the following chapters for guidelines on how to prepare these things:

- **Sites** (page 345)
- **Dangers** (page 379)
- **Discoveries** (page 421)
- **NPCs & Followers** (page 449)

Aftermath

At some point, the PCs will call it quits and decide to head home. Maybe they've seized the opportunity or put down the threat. Maybe not, and they either lost their chance or are too exhausted to continue. This is the aftermath.

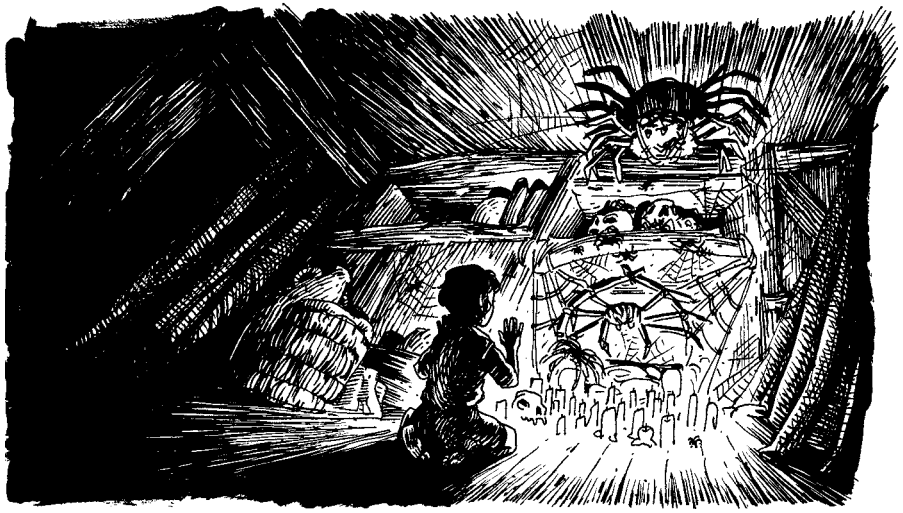
During the aftermath, the PCs tie up loose ends and return home. You update your notes—especially your threats—to reflect how the world has changed and identify any new problems the PCs might have to deal with.

When preparing an adventure, there's not much you can—or should—prepare for the aftermath. So much depends on the events of the adventure itself; there's almost no way to predict when the PCs will head for home, what loose threads will be out there, what issues they will be dealing with, etc. Mostly, you'll play it by ear.

For guidance on what to do at the end of the adventure, see the "**Going home**" section of the Expeditions chapter (page 338) and the **Homefront** chapter (page 483).

Threats

When to write up threats
Writing a threat
Example threats
Updating threats



A **threat** is an ongoing problem that will cause trouble for the PCs if left unchecked. When you recognize or decide that something—an NPC, a monster, a situation—is going to be a worsening or recurring issue, it's probably worth writing it up as a threat.

Writing up threats is not strictly required, but doing so will make things easier to manage as the world of your campaign grows more complex. Your GM playbook includes pages designed to help you keep track of threats.

Not every NPC, monster, or situation needs to be (or should be) a threat. The giant spiders between the PCs and the old Maker-ruins? If they're not going to get worse as time passes, they're probably just a danger to be faced if the PCs want to explore the ruins.

In other words, don't bother writing up a threat unless you know it's going to be a big deal.

Here's an example of a fully written threat:

NIA (*wildcard*)
Instinct to befriend spiders

Young girl, spider-touched after her ordeal with the **Mother-of-Spiders**. Blodwen's niece; daughter of Cadoc (see **Town Council**).

Talks and plays with spiders
Sets up a spider "shrine"
Brings home a baby nailadd (giant spider)
Impending doom: It kills someone

Stakes: How will the town react to her? Can her link to the spiders be broken? Can it be used for good?

Nia is an example of an NPC who has become a threat. She's not a villain or even a danger—she's a little girl, Blodwen's niece, someone the PCs rescued—but her link to the Mother-of-Spiders makes her a source of future trouble. She's a threat.

Here's another example:

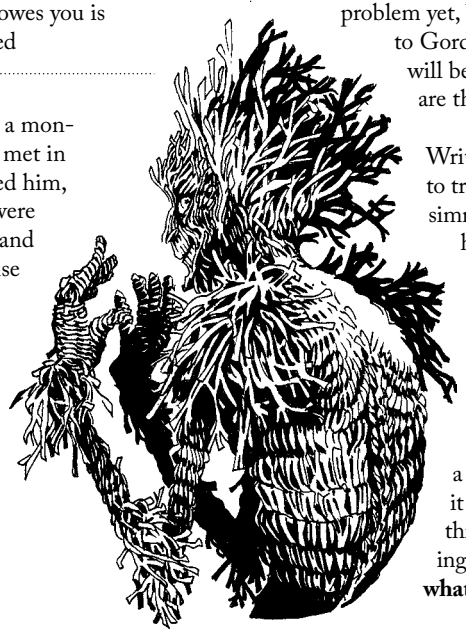
THORNTHUMB (*magical entity*)
Instinct to acquire

Dwelt in the Green Lord's Tomb. Tried to steal from PCs, but they caught him. Helped them kill Sajra. Grudgingly promised Vahid not to try to steal from, harm, or trap them. Lusts after the Mindgem. Scared of Rhianna. Thinks Caradoc is an easy mark. Blodwen owes him for the flower he gave her.

When you ***send word to Thornthumb*** via spirits, birds, or beasts, say when and where in the Wood you'd like to meet. At the appointed time and place, roll +INT: **on a 10+**, he shows; **on a 7-9**, he shows, but the GM picks 1:

- He's insulted by the summons
- You are now beholden to him
- A debt he owes you is now fulfilled

Thornthumb was a monster that the PCs met in play. They captured him, allied with him, were betrayed by him, and extracted a promise from him to let them be. But he's still out there, and he's the type of guy to hold a grudge. He's a threat.



And one last example:

ANWEN (*villain*)
Instinct to maintain order at all costs

Exiled from Stonetop years back, after poisoning folk (weak ones) during a harsh winter (less mouths to feed). Runs a bar/brothel in Gordin's Delve; fingers in lots of pies. **Ropr** (*beast*, to keep Anwen's favor) is her #2. Soft spot for **Iona** (*wildcard*, to live comfortably).

GM moves:
- Find someone's weakness
- Sacrifice another to advance a goal
- Have someone killed

Anwen hasn't shown up on screen yet. She was a player's answer to "Who's the worst person you know of in Gordin's Delve, and why are they so scary?" She's not a problem yet, but the PCs are headed to Gordin's Delve, and she sure will be. She and her minions are threats.

Writing up threats is a way to track loose ends and simmering conflicts, which helps you **portray a rich and mysterious world**. Threats provide problems and bad outcomes to spring on the PCs, making it easier to **punctuate their lives with adventure**. And a threat's write-up makes it easier to portray that threat with integrity, helping you **play to see what happens**.

When to write up threats

Threats are prep: you write them up between sessions. When you write up a threat, you make real, binding decisions about it that require thought and care. Don't do this during play.

Specifically, you should write up threats…

After introductions

Review your **notes from the first session** (page 32), looking for problems established by the players. Write these up as threats at whatever level of detail makes sense.

During introductions, the players told me about a recent raid by crinwin, about Blodwen's overbearing mother, Tegwen, and the Mindgem. I add them to the threat trackers (as a rabble, *a* wildcard, *and a* supernatural entity*), but wait to flesh them out until I know more.*

When Seasons Change

The Seasons Change move sometimes tells you to introduce or worsen a threat, or that threats abound. This might prompt you to create a new threat, one that the PCs haven't encountered before. The threat's **type** (page 282), **instinct** (page 288), and **grim portents** (page 290) will help you to flesh out the hook of any related adventure.

Vahid rolled a 7-9 on the first Seasons Change, which means their first adventure will involve a threat. I decided that the crinwin have come under the sway of a swyn (a big, hypnotic, monkey-faced snake) and they are stealing children to add to the swyn's collection.

The swyn is the real source of the trouble, so I write it up as a threat (a villain*).*

After a session

If someone introduced an element (NPC, monster, situation, etc.) during a session, and it might cause trouble later, write it up as a threat while it's still fresh in your mind. Or at least make note of it, and write it up in full later. This will serve as a reminder to bring it up in future sessions.

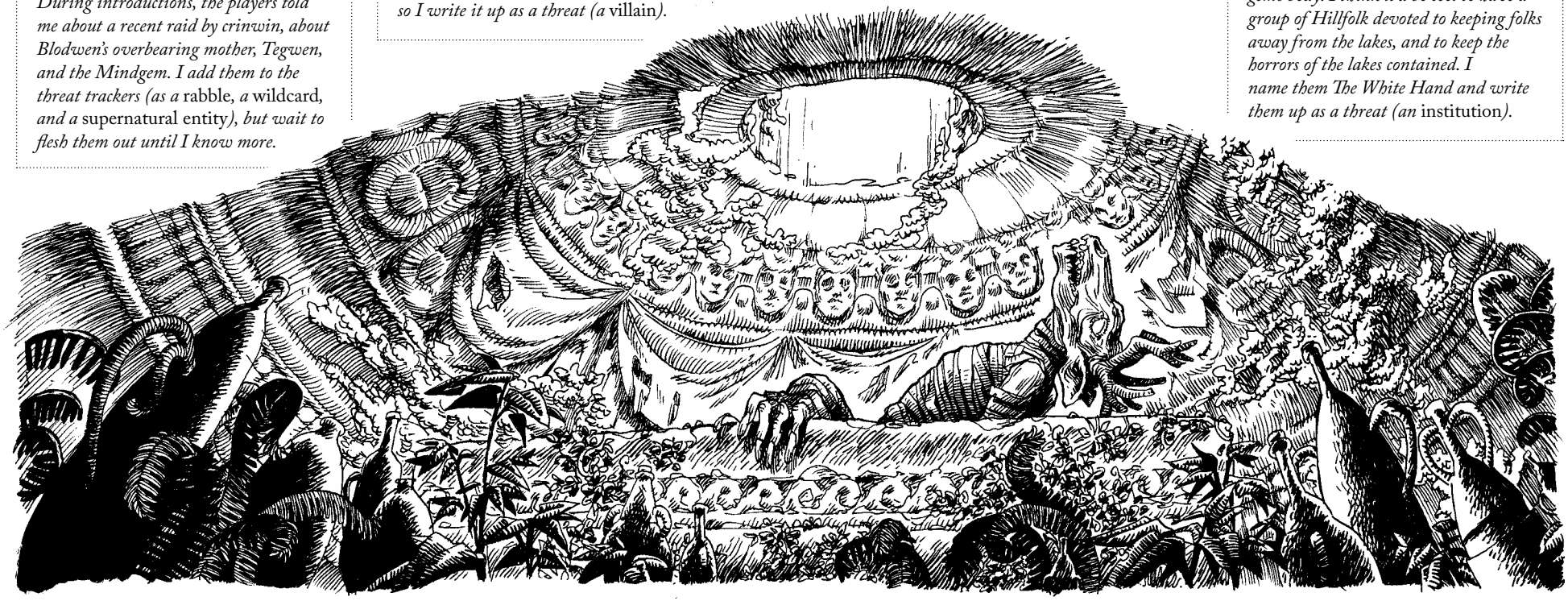
After their first adventure, the PCs returned to explore the ancient tomb and Blodwen disturbed the spirit of the mummified Green Lord interred within. While it mostly keeps to its blissful, constructed afterlife, it could definitely cause trouble for the PCs later.

I write it up as a threat (a magical entity*).*

When preparing an adventure

When you just know that a new threat is going to show up, and you already have a notion of what it looks like, it's a good idea to write it up before your next session. This could happen when the players tell you that they're going to do X, and you know that doing X will mean encountering Y, and Y feels like trouble. Or it could happen when you end a session on a cliffhanger (like with a missed homefront roll, or with something scary approaching) and between sessions you decide that you'll introduce a new threat.

At the end of the last session, the PCs (well, Vahid) talked about going to Three Coven Lake to find part of the Mindgem's body. I think it'd be cool to have a group of Hillfolk devoted to keeping folks away from the lakes, and to keep the horrors of the lakes contained. I name them The White Hand and write them up as a threat (an institution*).*



Writing a threat

To write up a threat, follow these steps. The most important steps come first; the later steps are optional.

1) Give the threat a **name** and **type**.
2) Add it to the appropriate **threat tracker**.
3) Give it an **instinct**, if it doesn't already have one.
4) Write a quick **description**, including related threats and NPCs.
5) If it has **momentum**: write out its **impending doom** and **grim portents**.
6) Optional: write some **stakes** questions.
7) Optional: pick or write **GM moves** to further define its behavior/capabilities.
8) Optional: write custom player moves.

1 Name & type

Give your threat a straightforward name, that easily distinguishes it from any other threats you're already tracking.

Every threat also has a **type**, which describes its fundamental nature, its place in the world and in the ongoing story. There are eight different threat types, described on the following pages.

It will usually be obvious which type a new threat belongs to. If its not obvious, skim the moves for each type and pick the type that fits best.

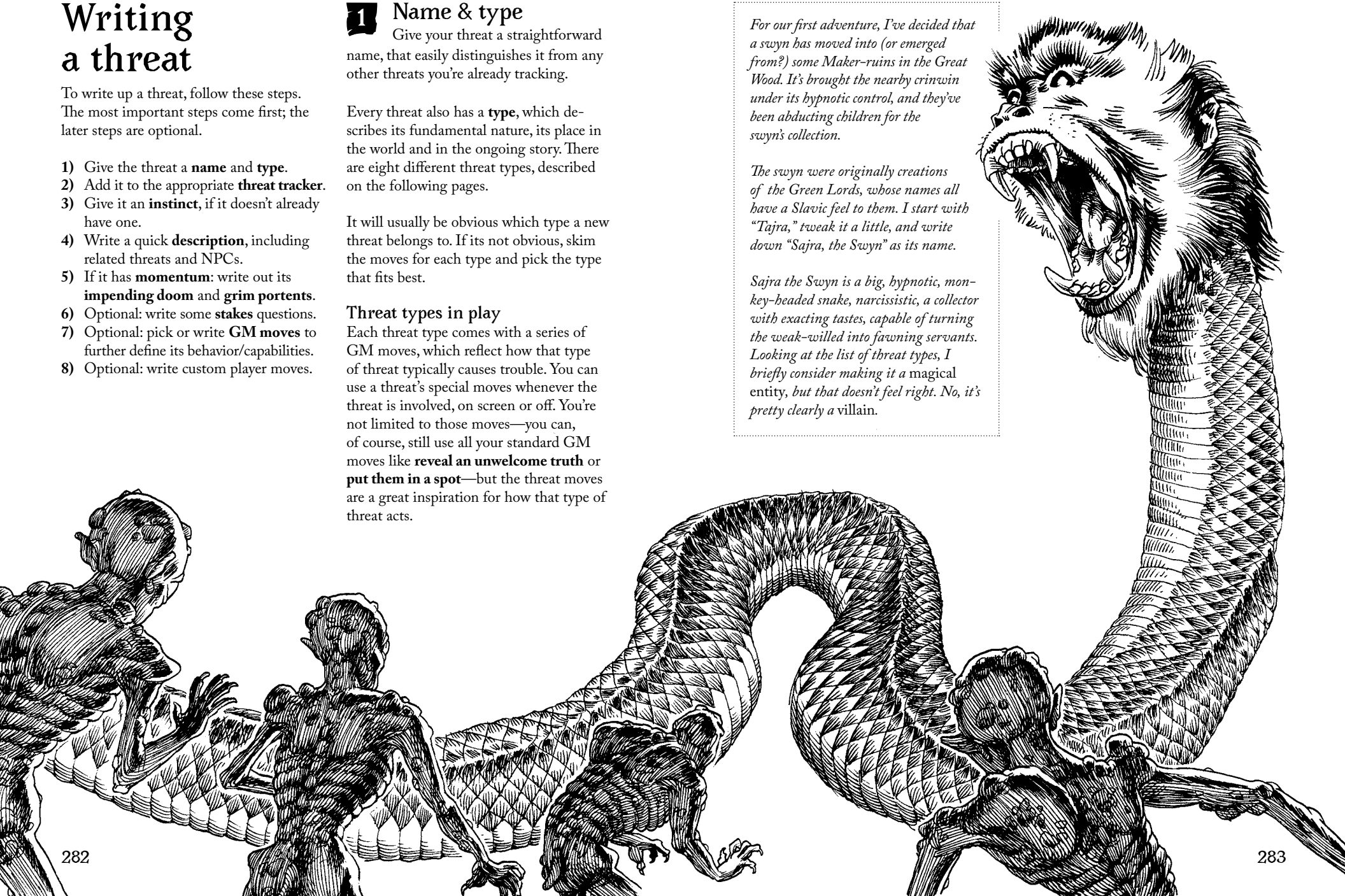
Threat types in play

Each threat type comes with a series of GM moves, which reflect how that type of threat typically causes trouble. You can use a threat's special moves whenever the threat is involved, on screen or off. You're not limited to those moves—you can, of course, still use all your standard GM moves like **reveal an unwelcome truth** or **put them in a spot**—but the threat moves are a great inspiration for how that type of threat acts.

For our first adventure, I've decided that a swyn has moved into (or emerged from?) some Maker-ruins in the Great Wood. It's brought the nearby crinwin under its hypnotic control, and they've been abducting children for the swyn's collection.

The swyn were originally creations of the Green Lords, whose names all have a Slavic feel to them. I start with "Tajra," tweak it a little, and write down "Sajra, the Swyn" as its name.

Sajra the Swyn is a big, hypnotic, monkey-headed snake, narcissistic, a collector with exacting tastes, capable of turning the weak-willed into fawning servants. Looking at the list of threat types, I briefly consider making it a magical entity, *but that doesn't feel right. No, it's pretty clearly a* villain.



THREAT TYPE

Affliction

Afflictions aren't people or monsters or tangible things. They're behaviors, circumstances, or conditions that make people suffer, bring them into conflict, or just make them worry and fret.

Afflictions can affect just an individual or two (even a specific PC), a group, a population, or even an entire region.

GM moves for *afflictions*:
- Worsen or quicken
- Spread to others/suck others in
- Mutate, take on a new form/aspect
- Eat away at something/someone
- Strip someone of honor/dignity
- Drive someone to desperation
- Justify selfishness, neglect
- Drive a wedge between people
- Cause delusion, stubbornness, foolishness
- Sow panic or despair
- Trigger shortages, hoarding
- Prompt violence, hatred, blame

Example *afflictions*:
- The black pox (**Instinct** to infect and spread)
- Braith's feud with Thecla (**Instinct** to make people pick sides)
- The drought (**Instinct** to deplete resources)
- Quicksilver taint (**Instinct** to cause delusions)
- "A woman's place" (**Instinct** to place limitations, on everyone)
- Resentment toward the Hillfolk (instinct: to prevent cooperation)
- The slave trade (**Instinct** to deny humanity)

THREAT TYPE

Beast

Beasts are monsters, animals, or NPCs driven by basic need and instinct. Most often, they're literally beasts (natural or not). They might be smart, maybe as smart or smarter than most people, but they go around following their stomach or their loins or their big stupid ego.

A *beast* threat could reflect a single, specific creature, a family/pack/herd, or even an entire species.

GM moves for *beasts*:
- Show up where it's not wanted
- Stalk or pursue prey
- Protect its home or family
- Make a show of strength, aggression
- Build or expand a nest/den/lair
- Modify its environment
- Flee or panic or rage
- Consume something (or someone)
- Grow or diminish, in size or numbers

Example *beasts*:
- The cave bears (**Instinct** to fill their bellies, protect their young)
- The wisent herd, protected by a pact with the PCs (**Instinct** to act with impunity)
- Grigor Rocksplitter (**Instinct** to make sure everyone knows how great he is)
- The frythrancs (**Instinct** to dominate their territory)
- The nailadd swarm (**Instinct** to breed and spread out)
- Orub the Hagr (**Instinct** to compulsively shape his environment)

THREAT TYPE

Institution

Institutions are people, groups, or positions that have power within a community (or multiple communities). They could be formal things, like a cult or a government, or just positions of respect (like a council of elders). An institution often has a specific leader, but not always.

An *institution* transcends the individuals who comprise it, and its instinct reflects the purpose or behavior of the institution as a whole. But it acts via individuals, usually ones invested in its continuing influence.

GM moves for *institutions*:
- Sway public opinion
- Put someone in their place
- Change a rule, law, or custom
- Acquire leverage, resources, influence
- Denounce something or someone
- Support a course of action
- Recruit new members or minions
- Squabble amongst themselves
- Change leadership
- Negotiate a deal or treaty
- Send someone else to do their dirty work

Example *institutions*:
- Aratis's priesthood (**Instinct** to preserve civilization, at all costs)
- Marshedge Town Council (**Instinct** to maintain the status quo)
- The Cult of Azm Har (**Instinct** to hoard knowledge, power, people)
- The nascent town council (**Instinct** to keep the PCs in check)
- The Ferrite Union (**Instinct** to undermine the Bosses' control)

THREAT TYPE

MacGuffin

MacGuffins are things—objects, places, even secrets—that stir up conflict. A *MacGuffin* might have power to cause trouble itself, or it could simply be something valuable that gets people fighting over it.

If there's a thing in your game that you think is a source of trouble, it's probably a *MacGuffin*.

When choosing an instinct for a *MacGuffin*, focus on how it causes trouble rather than what it does. The aetherium weather vane adjusts the weather, but it's a threat because others covet it.

GM moves for *MacGuffins*:
- Reveal a secret
- Draw attention to itself
- Point to something else
- Generate envy/fear/discord
- Weigh heavily, become a burden
- Be the target of theft
- Go missing
- Perform its function, heedlessly
- Fail at the worst possible moment
- Leave its mark on someone or thing
- Become something greater, or lesser

Example *MacGuffins*:
- The Chronicle's vault of artifacts (**Instinct** to harbor badness)
- The Lore Tree of Yevena (**Instinct** to reveal dangerous secrets)
- The Blood-quenched Sword (**Instinct** to encourage violence)
- The aetherium weather vane (**Instinct** to inspire jealousy)

THREAT TYPE

Magical entity

Magical entities include spirits, many Fae, the Things Below, even gods or their agents. They are beings that live and breathe magic and power, for whom mundane concerns like food and shelter are alien or superfluous.

Magical entities are often bound by strange, seemingly arbitrary limitations and laws. They must often act on the world subtly or through intermediaries.

GM moves for *magical entities*:

- Spy on someone, unseen/from afar
- Sense powerful longings/emotions
- Appear in glimpses, dreams, visions
- Offer service, secrets, power
- Demand an oath or sacrifice
- Lay a curse
- Twist a bargain to its favor
- Send forth minions to do its bidding
- Shape its environs, per its nature
- Pursue alien goals
- Foster rivalries with similar powers
- Grow or diminish in strength

Example *magical entities*:

- Hec'tumel, Slithering One! Pale Serpent! Death Is Its Eyes! (**Instinct** to smother life, hope, and light)
- Mother-of-Spiders (**Instinct** to see her many children spread)
- False idol spirit (**Instinct** to break free of its bondage)
- Blush-of-Dawn the Fae (**Instinct** to be adored)
- The shade of Nikalor (**Instinct** to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh)
- Yevena, mummified Green Lord (**Instinct** to preserve its glorious afterlife)

THREAT TYPE

Rabble

A *rabble* is a group, with or without a leader, united by emotion, blood, or circumstance rather than by of any sort of common purpose or goal.

A *rabble*'s instinct represents how the group as a whole behaves. Any given individual within the group might not share the instinct and might even oppose it.

GM moves for *rabble*:

- Grow or gather in numbers
- Claim territory or resources
- Fall under a (new) leader's sway
- Undergo internal turmoil
- Make a show of strength/numbers
- Declare an enemy or an alliance
- Turn on one of their own
- Overwhelm a position or a weaker group
- Despoil, loot, pillage, burn
- Refuse to be controlled/contained
- Disperse, scatter, flee

Example *rabble*:

- Hillfolk refugees (**Instinct** to not fit in)
- The slave rebellion (**Instinct** to throw off their shackles)
- Daedre the Red's bandits (**Instinct** to do whatever the hell they want)
- The Seven Brothers, Fae revellers (**Instinct** to drag others into their wanton excess)
- Heledd's family (**Instinct** to close ranks and protect their own)
- The secret cult of the false idol (**Instinct** to pursue power, fortune, and respect)

THREAT TYPE

Villain

Villains are just the worst. They are individuals with the ruthlessness, drive, and power to make life awful for any number of other people.

Villains often act via minions or intermediaries. When they get involved directly, they always try to act from a position of strength or personal safety. They often have a backup plan or two.

GM moves for *villains*:

- Grasp power, recklessly
- Gain followers or allies
- Find someone's weakness
- Make an offer, with strings attached
- Demand concessions, obedience, or respect
- Make threats, veiled or not
- Outmaneuver their enemies
- Attack cautiously, holding reserves
- Attack ruthlessly, with little warning
- Reveal preparations made in advance
- Sacrifice another to advance a goal
- Betray an ally or a trust
- Take a prisoner
- Do the unthinkable

Example *villains*:

- Brennan (**Instinct** to maintain or increase his power)
- Marc, Hillfolk slaver (**Instinct** to glorify himself and his clan)
- Iwan, schmuck-turned-sorcerer (**Instinct** to get what he thinks the world owes him)
- The Eyeless Crinwin (**Instinct** to set free the Living Darkness)
- Mozairog Mind-on-Fire (**Instinct** to return the Fomoraij to glory)

THREAT TYPE

Wildcard

Wildcards are individuals who cause trouble because they're a mystery. Or because the PCs care about them but can't trust them. Or because they're opposed to the PCs, but aren't necessarily bad people. If you feel like an NPC is a threat, but none of the other threat types seem to fit, make them a *wildcard*.

Make "triangles" between *wildcards* and the PCs. Play up the old friendship between the Heavy and Esylt the town busybody. Then have Esylt undermine the Judge's authority, sit back, and watch the sparks fly.

GM moves for *wildcards*:

- Aggressively pursue their instinct
- Show their worth, or lack thereof
- Display the contents of their heart
- Provide advice/aid, wanted or not
- Reveal a secret, or keep one closely
- Draw attention to themselves/others
- Appear unannounced
- Act strangely (for them)
- Bear witness
- Tell stories (true or not)
- Make/keep/break/demand a promise
- Force an issue or a confrontation
- Stand resolute and refuse to budge

Example *wildcards*:

- Esylt, the town busybody (**Instinct** to cling to how things "should" be)
- Afon, Fae-touched Initiate of Danu (**Instinct** to act impulsively)
- Andras (**Instinct** to try to impress Rhianna and Blodwen)
- Muirdoc, the pretty boy (**Instinct** to toy with hearts)

2 Threat tracker

Your GM playbook has three spreads for tracking threats:

- **Homefront threats**, for NPCs or groups that live in town, for afflictions that directly affect them, or for anything else located there.
- **Nearby threats**, for threats that dwell within a couple days travel of home.
- **Distant threats**, for anything further than that.

Pick the corresponding tracker. Add the threat's name, maybe a quick descriptor (e.g., "Sawyl, disgruntled hunter"), followed by its type in parentheses. Draw a line from the name to its location on the threat tracker's map.

As you continue to write up this threat, you might find it useful to add key details to the tracker (like its instinct or maybe a stakes question). Keep it short and simple, though. You won't be able to fit the full write-up for every threat.

*Sajra's lair is a Maker-ruin about a day and a half from town in the Great Wood, so I add it to the Nearby Threats tracker, on the right hand side. I write down "Sajra the Swyn (*villain*)" and draw a line to a likely spot in the woods.*

3 Instinct

Every threat has an **instinct**, written in the format "to <do something>." This is the primary behavior that makes it a problem, that causes it to come into conflict with or harm others. If it didn't have this instinct, it wouldn't be a threat.

Many other game elements (like dangers and some NPCs) will already have an instinct assigned. If such an element becomes a long-term threat, then either use its existing instinct or write up a new instinct to reflect how its typical behavior has changed or become more problematic.

If you're writing up a threat that doesn't have an instinct yet (like a curse, or some NPC you just made up), decide on its instinct now. See the descriptions of each threat type for examples.

Whatever instinct you chose, write it down in your notes, under the threat's name type. If you think it'll be helpful, and you have space, add it to the threat tracker, too.

According to the bestiary, a swyn's instinct is "to indulge its ego." That's perfectly horrid, and can lead to all sorts of villainous behavior (like collecting children). I reuse that for this specific threat's instinct.

Instincts in play

Use a threat's instinct to guide how it behaves and reacts. If you're unsure what a threat would do, look to its instinct. Have it do that.

When doing prep, use a threat's instinct to inform the sort of trouble it causes and to help you frame your adventure hooks.

4 Description

Jot down some notes, including any or all of the following that seem important:

- Who or what the threat is.
- How it came to be a problem for the PCs, or how they first encountered it.
- Its relationship(s) to NPCs, monsters, points of interest, or other threats.

These notes are for your benefit, so write only what's useful to you, what you want to remind yourself of later. Don't waste time or space on stuff that's obvious (to you).

Sometimes, you'll be writing up a threat and realize that it's made up of (or commands) lesser threats. When that happens, either...

... fully write up that other threat, as its own entry on the threat tracker and in your notes; or…

... pick a type and instinct for the lesser threat, and include them (in parentheses) as part of the main threat's description.

When writing a threat's description, you might identify blanks—details that haven't been established yet. When you notice such a blank, either fill it in now (with whatever makes sense) or choose to leave it as a blank that will get filled in during play.

I know that Sajra is a swyn, and I know what a swyn is, so I don't bother putting that in its description. I do note that it's dwelling in an old Maker-ruin, that it commands the crinwin, and that it collects children (including Caradoc's nephew).

As I make notes, I realize that I have some blanks. What is the nature of the Maker-ruin? Why has Sajra become a threat NOW, when it wasn't a threat just a few months ago? What other children does it have?

I decide that it's already abducted one or two other children, but I'll ask the players who has been taken. As for the Maker-ruin, I really like the idea that it's a mummy-tomb for one of the Green Lords. So, either Sajra was in stasis in that tomb and recently released, or it just moved there from some place further in the Wood. I can't imagine a Green Lord choosing to spend eternity with such a foul, overbearing creature, so I think Sajra must have moved in recently. Which prompts another question: what drove it here? I don't feel a need to answer that just yet, so I leave it as blank.

I had already established the crinwin as a threat (a rabble, *instinct: to covet) when reviewing my notes after character creation. They're subservient to Sajra, though, so I don't think they warrant a full write-up (yet).*

At this point, my write-up looks like this:

SAJRA THE SWYN (villain)
INSTINCT to indulge its ego

Recently moved into a ruined Green Lord's tomb about 1½ days from town (from where?). Has dominated a few nests of crinwin (rabble; to covet); they've been stealing children for it. Has Wynfor (Caradoc's nephew) and another child (who?).

5 Impending doom

If the threat has momentum—if it's changing, pursuing an agenda, or getting worse—then ask yourself: what irrevocable bad thing will happen if it proceeds unchecked? That is its **impending doom**.

An impending doom doesn't have to be world-shaking or terrible. It could be as petty as "Elios leaves Dilwen, and Dilwen never forgives Rhianna."

Of course, an impending doom *can* be world-shaking and terrible: "The Fomoraij rise and wage war on the Fae." Or: "Barrier Pass falls and the hordes sweep south."

The key thing about an impending doom is that it's irreversible. Once it's happened, there's no going back. It will fundamentally change the threat and the things it affects. The PCs might convince Elios to return, but the relationship is broken now and Dilwen still won't forgive Rhianna. They might end the Fomoraij-Fae war, but the Great Wood has still been ravaged by the conflict.

Don't overthink it! Just ask yourself: "Where is this going?" and write that down. If you can't think of something, that's fine! Not all threats have an impending doom. If a doom occurs to you later, you can always come back and add it to the threat.

Sajra is newly arrived to the area, and it's assembling servants (the crinwin) and collecting children. It's driven by its terrible ego, and wants to be adored. If left unchecked, Sajra will eventually try to take control of Stonetop. And if the PCs don't stop it, Sajra will succeed. So its impending doom is: "Subjugates the people of Stonetop."

Grim portents

Once you've established that a threat has an impending doom, and what it is, come up with 2-4 grim portents. These are milestones, steps along the way that will demonstrate the threat's progression. Grim portents should be concrete, observable things: things the PCs can see, or get word of, or feel the effects of. And—crucially—grim portents should be something the PCs can react to and possibly prevent.

Just to be clear: grim portents are things that happen in the world around the PCs. They are NOT things that the PCs do. "Townsfolk form a cult" is a solid grim portent; "the PCs learn who the cultists are" is not. It presumes that the PCs care enough to investigate the cult, that they investigate, and that they succeed. That's not a grim portent—that's a railroad.

Similarly, a grim portent can be an event that involves the PCs, but it should never dictate an outcome. "The cultists attack the PCs in their homes" is great. You can safely assume the PCs will at some point be home, and who knows how the attack will play out? "The cultists capture the PCs" is not okay, because it assumes that cultists succeed at capturing them. Again, that's a railroad.

Writing grim portents

If you're having trouble coming up with grim portents, look at the GM moves for the threat type. If the threat is a monster or a follower, look at their moves, too. Those moves represent what the threat does and how it causes trouble. Use them—along with the threat's instinct—to inspire your grim portents.

Here's another trick: work backwards. Start at the impending doom, and ask yourself "What discrete, observable event would happen just before this? What would the situation look like?" That becomes the last grim portent. Then, what would happen before that? That's another grim portent. Keep working backward until you have a grim portent that's visible from the current state of things.

As you write your grim portents, you'll probably find yourself changing your mind and maybe even rewriting the impending doom. That's fine! But try to keep things loose; a high-level outline is way more useful and flexible than a detailed plan.

Dooms and portents in play

Grim portents and impending dooms are your plans. They're what will happen unless the PCs intervene.

One of your basic GM moves is **advance towards impending doom**. Look at the grim portents for one of your threats, check the next one off, and show the PCs some sign that it's occurred or occurring. You might make this move when…

… **the Seasons Change**, and their roll results in a threat getting worse or threats abounding. In the next session, or during an upcoming scene, show them that a grim portent or doom has come to pass.

… **the players roll a 6-** and this is the hard move you want to make. You'll often do this for moves made during **loose play** (page 176), but not always.

… **the PCs have spent time away from the area where a threat is active**, and then they return to that area. Show them how things have gotten worse.

The first grim portent for Sajra is obvious to me: more children go missing! But I'm not quite sure what comes next. What are steps between "having crinwin collect children" and "Sajra subjugates Stonetop?"

Working backwards: what would happen just before the town being subjugated?

*Looking at the GM moves for villains, I see **demand concessions, obedience, or respect** and think: it would give the town an ultimatum! Accept it as their master, their god even, or be destroyed. This lines up with its instinct (**to indulge its ego**). It can **turn the weak-willed into fawning servants** (one of its monster moves) but it wants the bulk of the town to recognize its beauty and magnificence and serve willingly. Okay, what would it do before making such an ultimatum? It would **gain followers or allies** in town. How would it do that? Possibly by **finding someone's weakness** and then **making an offer, with strings attached**. But how? Villains usually act through minions or intermediaries… the children! It will send some of the stolen children home, thoroughly under its influence, and have them spy and recruit followers.*

That gives me the following grim portents and impending doom:

- More children go missing
- Some of the (entranced) children return
- Children recruit followers
- Reveals itself, demands servitude
- IMPENDING DOOM: Subjugates the town, killing or mesmerizing any opposition

6 Stakes (optional)

Ask yourself some questions about the threat and the people affected by it. What do you wonder about? What do you want to discover in play? These questions become your **stakes**.

You can ask stakes questions about PCs or NPCs, about groups or places or things. They can be about big things, or small, personal things. Whatever you ask about, it should pique your interest and you should be genuinely curious about the answer.

Stakes questions should be about the future, not the past. What *will* happen, not what *has* happened. You might have questions about the past to fill in later, between sessions or during play, but those aren't *stakes*.

Some examples of good stakes questions:

- Will Vahid convince Eira to trust him?
- Will Elios rise to the occasion?
- Who will Mabyn end up with?
- Who will die in the coming battle?
- Will Tiwlip find her missing dog?
- Will the Claws accept Kiran's authority?
- Can Ergben be redeemed?

Stakes questions shouldn't boil down to, "Will this grim portent/impending doom come to pass?" You've already answered that! A grim portent or impending doom *will* come to pass unless the PCs prevent it. Ask about things that are uncertain, that haven't been decided.

Not every threat needs stakes. When you first introduce a threat, you might not know (or care) enough to ask them. That's okay! You can add stakes questions later, as the threat evolves or as you become interested. Or a threat might never develop stakes. That's fine, too.

For Sajra the Swyn, I wonder:

* Will Brynfor's parents forgive Caradoc?
* What will become of the stolen children, the ones brought under Sajra's control?
* What brought Sajra to move into the Green Lord's tomb, anyway?

That last one, though, isn't a stakes question—it's a detail about the past. I add the first two to my threat write-up as stakes, and add a question about why Sajra arrived to the description.

Stakes in play

By making something a stakes question, you are resolving not to answer it yourself. Instead, you are disclaiming responsibility, letting yourself be surprised by how things turn out. Here's how you do that.

First and foremost: **put your stakes on screen!** If you wonder whether Nia's link to the spiders can be broken, have Nia's mother show up on the Blessed's doorstep begging her to "cure" her daughter.

Then, do any or all of the following:

- **Put it in the PCs' hands.** Tell them the consequences or requirements, and see what they do about it.
- **Play NPCs with integrity.** If a stakes questions boils down to "what would this NPC do?" then base your answer on the NPC's instinct, their past actions and relationships, your sense of who this person really *is*. Yes, you're making the decision, but you're basing it on how the NPC would act, rather than on how you want the story to go.

- **Follow the moves and the dice.** If the PCs trigger a move, and that move can answer a stakes question (or get you closer to an answer), then let it happen. Make the obvious move, the one that moves towards an answer.
- **Let it simmer.** If you put a stakes question on screen and it doesn't get resolved, it's okay to move on and leave it unanswered. Don't force it. Come back to it later when it makes sense.

The point of this process—writing stakes that you're interested in, putting them on screen, and letting the PCs and your NPCs and the dice resolve them naturally—is to make the game more fulfilling for you. It's a reward to yourself, to say "I wonder, *can* they break Nia's bond to the spiders?" and then let yourself be surprised by the answer.

So there we are, Blodwen's sister at her door, begging Blodwen to "cure" Nia of her link to the spiders. I wonder how it'll turn out!

*I start by **putting it in the PC's hands**. "Blodwen, you could try to Suck the Poison Out. It might cleanse Nia's connection to the spiders, but… it'd be like if someone took away your Spirit Tongue. What do you do?"*

Blodwen is willing to try, but not without Nia's consent. She follows her sister home and finds Nia in the corner, playing cats-cradle with a spider, her big tough-guy dad glowering on. Blodwen explains to Nia that the whole spider thing is upsetting her parents, that the link can be broken but she won't do it without Nia's permission.

*Nia's instinct is "to befriend spiders," and I think that she likes playing with them. So I **play my NPC with integrity** and say "But I don't want to lose my friends," all sweet and innocent. "Her mom sobs and her dad chokes up and bites down on his finger."*

I'm thinking the issue is settled, but Blodwen presses on. "Your mam and pappy are scared of spiders, Nia, really scared. And it makes them sad and scared when you talk to them. Are you sure you won't reconsider?"

*Blodwen's Persuading, so I **follow the moves and the dice**. She rolls a 7. I have to reveal how Nia could be convinced, but it'll be tricky, costly, or distasteful. "She doesn't want to, but the way her eyes go to her dad, you're sure that if HE said how worried and scared it made him, she'd go along with it. Good luck with that. What do you do?"*

Blodwen pulls the parents aside, whispering that they should be honest with Nia, tell her how scared they are and how much they care about her, eyes on Nia's dad the whole time. She's Persuading again, but she gets a 5. Nia's dad loses it, starts yelling at Nia, ordering her to agree. The girl starts crying and runs out of the house and goes to hide some place dark (probably with a lot of spiders).

*I still haven't answered the question decisively ("can the link be broken?"), but it won't be answered now. I decide to **let it simmer** and we'll answer the question later.*

7 GM moves (optional)

If you want to further define how the threat behaves or what it's capable of, pick or write 2-4 GM moves.

Start by looking at the GM moves for the threat's **type** (pages 284-287). If any of them seem particularly appropriate for this threat, add them to its write-up. Likewise, if the threat is also a monster, identify any monster moves that help you understand how it causes trouble over time, and add those to the write-up.

Finally, ask yourself if there's anything that you think this threat can or will do that isn't clearly defined, and that you want to remind yourself of or give yourself permission to do. Write these as GM moves, so that they complete the sentence: "the threat can/will __."

8 Player moves (optional)

Sometimes a threat will suggest a unique player-facing move, one that's only triggered when interacting with the threat, its minions, or its domain. For example, "When you ***remove a canopic jar from the sarcophagus***, roll +CHA…."

If a threat is also a monster, a hazard, an artifact or arcanum, it might already have some player-facing moves associated with it. Add these moves (or a reminder about them) to your notes if you think it'll be helpful.

Not every threat calls for custom moves. Don't bother writing one up unless it adds value.

See the **Writing Moves & Love Letters** chapter (page 549) for guidance on writing custom player-facing moves.

*As a monster, Sajra already has GM moves and even a player-facing move for "When the **swyn compels you to act against your will**…." Most of these will be relevant only when the PCs face Sajra directly, at which point I'll have its monster stats handy. But a couple of its GM moves describe its capabilities as a big-picture threat, so I add those to my write-up. My threat now looks like this:*

SAJRA THE SWYN (villain)
INSTINCT to indulge its ego

Recently moved into a ruined Green Lord's tomb about 1½ days from town (from where?). Has dominated a few nests of crinwin (rabble; to covet); they've been stealing children for it. Has Wynfor (Caradoc's nephew) and another child (who?).

- More children go missing
- Some of the (entranced) children return
- Children recruit followers
- Reveals itself, demands servitude
- IMPENDING DOOM: Subjugates the town, killing or mesmerizing any opposition

STAKES: Will Wynfor's parents forgive Caradoc? What will become of the stolen children brought under Sajra's control?

GM MOVES
> Plant a suggestion in another's mind
> Turn the weak-willed into fawning servants

Example threats

The threats here and on the following pages are more examples. These threats might not exist in your game, and if they do, they might look very different. Use them as inspiration, nothing more.

TEGWEN (*wildcard*)
Instinct to undermine others' worth

Blodwen's mother, jealous of her importance to the village and her relationship with Gwendyl and Seren. Resents Rhianna. Distrusts Vahid. Thinks Caradoc is a fool.

Stakes: How far will she go to control Blodwen? How much will Blodwen put up with?

GM moves:
- Provide (unwanted?) advice or aid
- Force an issue or a confrontation
- Wield guilt like a weapon

GARET'S WOUND (*affliction*)
Instinct to keep Garet in danger

Garet's leg got mauled by feathered drakes; Blodwen patched him up but he's still walking on it. Could get bad.

Wound isn't healing well, Garet is weak and slow
Wound gets infected, needs to be amputated
Garet becomes feverish, delirious
Impending doom: Garet dies

Stakes: What decisions will Rhianna make? How will Blodwen handle it?

MUTRA THE TEETH (*villain*)
Instinct to acquire

A boss in Gordin's Delve. His crews mine, salvage artifacts. Bought Green Lord stuff from Vahid, Rhianna; wants to know/acquire more.

Pays merchants, travelers to scope out Stonetop
Embeds agent(s) in Stonetop
Agent(s) identify key treasure(s)
Mutra demands treasure(s) for a pittance, or else
Impending doom: Agent(s) kill someone, steal treasure(s)

GM moves:
- Interrupt trade with Gordin's Delve
- Turn old allies against Stonetop

CRINWIN (*rabble*)
Instinct to covet humanity

Free of Sajra's control, they'll become more obsessed with Stonetop.

Reestablish nests, numbers
Attacks on folks in the Wood
Nighttime raids on village, stealing stuff and killing livestock
More/bigger nests nearby, anyone in the Wood is attacked/abducted
Impending doom: Full on invasion, with intent to move in, take over

When you ***Deploy the village militia against crinwin raids***, add this to the list of choices for a 7-9:

- The crinwin steal 1d4 Surplus
- An important item goes missing

THE PALE CRINWIN (*wildcard*)

Instinct to learn more and more

A curious, "friendly" crinwin somewhat exiled from its peers. Vahid communicated with "him," sort of. It's fascinated with writing, drawings.

Stakes: Will the PCs figure out how to reliably communicate with "him?" Will the villagers accept crinwin as anything but vermin or monsters?

When you ***try to communicate with the pale crinwin through noises or pantomime***, describe what you're trying to convey and roll +INT: **on a 10+**, message received; **on a 7-9**, he gets the gist but not the details; **on a 6-**, hoo boy does he get it wrong.

NAILADD SWARM (*beasts*)

Instinct to breed and spread out.

Giant spiders, spreading out via the waystones at the behest of the Mother-of-Spiders.

> Nearest waystone is infested, nailadd hunting near Stonetop
> Game is scarce, hunters/trappers are attacked, stay in town
> Spiders raid Stonetop, killing some, dragging off others
> **Impending doom:** Overrun and infest the village!

Stakes: Will Blodwen bring herself to help kill them? Will Andras overcome his fear of spiders?

FARMERS GUILD (*rabble*)

Instinct to improve their lot in life

Idealists led by Dermos and Tierney, maybe 100 backers. Want a spot on the Marshedge town council to start.

> Council refuses to recognize them
> Guild organizes a strike in protest
> Brennan has Claws/new recruits break strike, kill Dermos/Tierney
> Resentment grows, loyalists from the watch side with farmers
> **Impending doom:** Riots, looting, killing, Marshedge in flames

Stakes: Will Dermos and Brin get together? Will Kiran follow orders or his conscience?

THE MARSHEDGE COUNCIL (*institution*)

Instinct to preserve the status quo.

The head of each guild (including the fen-walkers) and a rep from each of the Old Families. **Brennan** isn't on the council but he surely influences it.

GM moves:

- Cut off Stonetop's supply of something
- Stall, bicker, refuse to make decisions

THE WHITE HAND (*institution*)

Instinct to contain the evil of the lakes, no matter what it takes

A holy sect of Hillfolk who patrol the Steplands.

Stakes: How will the PCs react to them, if they learn of their purpose?

GM moves:

- Denounce trespassers as unclean
- Sense the taint of corruption
- Spread word among the Hillfolk
- Outmaneuver their prey

THE MINDGEM'S HEART (*MacGuffin*)

Instinct to empower, ignite, awaken

A chunk of makerglass that burns with terrible heat, recovered from Three Coven Lake. Currently kept in Vahid's hearth.

Stakes: What will Vahid do with the Heart? How will Maire react to its presence in Vahid's house?

GM moves:

- Perform its function, heedlessly
- Draw attention to itself
- Catch something on fire
- Provide a potent supply of magical energy

TRADE EMBARGO (*affliction*)

Instinct to punish Stonetop

After the PCs sided with the Farmers Guild, Brennan had the council cut off trade with Stonetop.

When you ***Outfit from Stonetop***, start with 1 fewer small item than normal, and supplies each have 1 fewer use.

When you ***Recover using supplies from Stonetop***, you or your patient recover 1 HP less than normal.

When you ***Trade or Barter for anything that would come through Marshedge***, you have disadvantage.

THE SHADOWY PRESENCE (*magical entity*)

Instinct to devour life, light, warmth

The wraith of a Green Lord. Bound beneath that mound the PCs found near the spider ziggurat. It tasted Caradoc's blood, so he's tied to it. Awakened by the Mindgem's Heart.

> Earthquake sets it free
> Rampages through Great Wood, mindlessly stalking/feeding
> Catches "scent" of the Heart, moves towards Stonetop
> Starts attacking villagers at night
> **Impending doom:** Devours the Heart, becoming a permanent vortex of death and darkness

Stakes: How will its link to Caradoc affect what happens?

Updating threats

Threats change over time. Between each session, review your threats and update them as needed. For each threat, if…

… **it's no longer a threat** (because it's dead, it's left, the conflict has been resolved, etc.), then cross it off the threat tracker;
… **its threat type no longer rings true** (because you got it wrong, or because its nature has changed), then pick a new one;
… **its instinct no longer rings true or has changed**, then revise it;
… **there's something new that you want to remember**, then add that to its description;
… **any of its grim portents have come to pass**, then tick them off;
… **the PCs foiled it or changed its course**, then update its grim portents and impending doom appropriately, or cross them off if the doom has been completely averted;
… **it's moving towards something bad** (but it wasn't before), then write an impending doom and grim portents;
… **any of its stakes questions were answered**, or are no longer relevant, cross them off;
… **there's something new that you wonder about and that interests you**, then write a new stakes question;
… **its behavior or capabilities have changed** (or been revealed), then write some new GM moves for it; and/or
… **it moved closer or farther away**, then move it from one threat tracker to another.

Consider also: did you introduce any new threats in play? Were there any new enemies or rivals? Any monsters that might return to cause trouble later? NPCs who the PCs can't trust? Groups in conflict, with the PCs or with the status quo? Did you introduce any difficult circumstances that will worsen or at least persist? Did the PCs acquire anything that others really want, or that will draw attention, or just cause trouble by itself? Write them up as threats.

We just finished our first session of actual play. Rheinal stumbled home. The crinwin abducted Pryder. The PCs organized an expedition to rescue him. There was a fair bit of interaction with the NPCs in town, and no small amount of drama.

I had previously written up Tegwen, Blodwen's mother, as a wildcard *threat ("to nitpick and snipe"). But in play, I found myself portraying her as much nastier, more abusive and manipulative. Blodwen's player was on board with that, so I update her instinct to be "to undermine others' value," I make note of her attitude towards the various PCs, and I write some stakes questions ("How far will she go to control Blodwen? How much will Blodwen put up with?").*

During that first session of play, we also met Owain, whose daughter disappeared the previous winter. He and Glenys (Caradoc's aunt and mother of Wynfor, who was abducted in the late-winter crinwin raid) were bitter and nasty towards the PCs, especially Rhianna.

I start writing them up as a rabble *threat, but when I look at the threat moves, I realize that no, the parents aren't the threat. The threat is "Distrust of the PCs," an* affliction, *and the parents are just wrapped up in it. I write it up as a threat (**Instinct** to fester). I don't have a sense for where this is going just yet, so I don't write an impending doom. But I am curious: Can Rhianna regain Owain and Glenys's respect? Will Glenys ever forgive Caradoc? I write those down as stakes questions.*

Expeditions

Preparations
Running the journey
Player moves
Going home
What to prep

The characters decide to leave town. Maybe you've presented a threat and they're off to deal with it. Maybe you've dangled an opportunity and they want to seize it. Maybe they have plans of their own, something they want to accomplish, and it involves leaving home. It's time for an expedition.

Before the players leave town and head out into the wild, they'll make preparations: they'll **Chart a Course**, **Outfit**, and maybe **Requisition**, and do whatever else they need to do before leaving home.

Once they're ready, they'll head out. You'll establish new situations as they move from place to place, make soft GM moves to prompt decisions and introduce challenges, and ask them, "What do you do?" You'll resolve the PCs' actions, using the basic player moves and the expedition moves (described later in this chapter).

They'll eventually move on. You'll transition to the next landmark or challenge. You'll establish the situation there and repeat the process.

They might reach their destination with ease. Or, they might get lost. They might encounter something that distracts them from their goal. They might get beaten up so badly that they turn back and head home in defeat. It's all good—**play to find out what happens**.

Travel is an important part of *Stonetop*. It's a chance to flesh out and explore the wider world. It's dangerous and hard, which reinforces the importance of home and its relative safety. Travel isn't something to gloss over. Give it the screen time it deserves!

Preparations

CHART A COURSE
When you ***wish to travel to a distant place***, name or describe your destination ("Gordin's Delve," "the hagr's lair," or "wherever these tracks lead"). If the route is unclear, tell the GM how you intend to reach it. The GM will then tell you what's required, the risks, and how long it will likely take.

When you ***set out on the journey***, the GM will present each of the challenges one at a time—plus any surprises that you couldn't have seen coming—in whatever order makes the most sense. Address them all and reach your destination.

When the players start talking about leaving town, direct them to this move. Use it to clarify their destination and how they intend to get there. If they have no ideas, prompt them to Know Things. Their route doesn't need to be perfectly clear—something like, "We follow the tracks" is fine—but they should have some idea of where they're going and how they're going to get there.

Once they've established their destination and route, tell them as many of the following as make sense. Make your choices based on the seasons, the terrain, how well they know the area, the dangers that lurk there, the threats you've established and their grim portents. Don't worry so much about the order right now, and feel free to rephrase or tweak the wording. If it makes sense, add entirely new items.

Requirements
- You must first travel to ___, and from there to your destination
- You must wait until ___
- You need a knowledgeable guide/accurate map/detailed directions
- It'll take at least ___ days (and a corresponding amount of supplies)
- You'll need to bring ___

Challenges
- You need to watch out for ___
- The way is perilous, plagued with danger
- You risk getting lost
- You must surmount/cross/brave ___
- The terrain itself is treacherous; you risk injury on the way
- The way will be grueling; you risk exhausting yourselves/your resources
- You risk drawing the attention of ___

You'll usually link these with "and" but can also use a merciful "or." "You'll need to bring warm clothes OR the way will be hard and grueling." "You need to wait until daybreak OR you risk getting lost."

If you choose "First you must travel to ___," then Chart a Course for each leg of the journey. You can nest this requirement two or three levels deep. A journey to Lygos might require traveling to Marshedge, and from there to the arid South, and from there to Lygos proper.

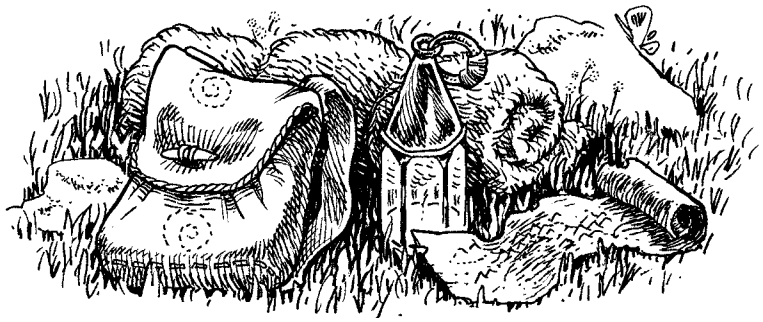
Answer whatever questions the players have. Clarify your statements. Don't be afraid to negotiate or change your mind.

Write your choices down with tick boxes next to them. Ideally, put this someplace public so the players can see it, too. This will help the players make preparations, and it'll serve as your narrative to-do list once the journey starts.

As the PCs Outfit or otherwise prepare, **remind them of the requirements**. "Does everyone have something *warm*, like a cloak or thick hides?" "You'll need to bring a horse and cart—someone's going to need to Requisition for that." "You still need to find a guide, a map, or accurate directions... how do you go about that?"

If they fail (or refuse) to meet the requirements, **tell them the consequences** and ask what they do. "Okay, without a guide, you'll risk getting lost." "Okay, but without enough supplies, you'll definitely need to Forage, and that's both time-consuming and risky." "Okay, but without warm clothes you will probably freeze to death. What do you do?" Sometimes, they'll fail to meet the requirements and call the journey off.

Once they set out on the journey, you'll frame scenes and situations that show them traveling and approaching their destination. During some of those scenes, you'll make GM moves that introduce the challenges you outlined. You'll ask the players what they do, resolve the situation, and—assuming the PCs keep going—move on to the next one. See **Running the Journey** starting on page 312 for more guidance.



"... a corresponding amount of supplies"

"Supplies" are something characters can have in their inventory. They represent stuff that the PCs might need or want on an expedition: food, water, whisky, bandages, salves, etc. The steading's Prosperity stat affects the quality and quantity of supplies available to the PCs; they add the steading's Prosperity to the number of uses they get out of each ✓ of supplies.

Supplies get used when...

... they **Recover** (page 328);
... they **Make Camp** (page 334);
... they **Have What They Need** (page 326) to produce additional *small* items; and
... you **use up their resources**, and supplies are what you use up.

By default, each person in the party consumes 1 use of supplies per day. But if someone has and uses a ◇ mess kit (which requires water and fire) then 1 use of supplies can cover up to four people.

In other words, when they use a mess kit...

... a party of up to 4 will expend 1 use of supplies per day;
... a party of 5-8 will expend 2 uses of supplies per day; or
... a party of 9-12 will expend 3 uses of supplies per day.

If they don't use a mess kit, each party member will expend 1 use of supplies per day. Obviously, it's very favorable to bring and use a mess kit!

Pack animals can graze or browse, and carry enough extra feed to "cover" themselves. Use your best judgement for other animals. The Ranger's pet wolf can probably fend for itself, and small critters don't need much food, but well-heeled hounds probably need to be fed from the party's supplies.

If the party travels with a pack animal or a cart laden with at least 1 Surplus worth of supplies, then there's no need to track individual meals and uses. As long as they have access to their stash, they can effectively re-Outfit out of it.

Winter has been brutal and Stonetop is running out of food. Rhianna and Caradoc decide to go hunt the cave bears south of town, despite Blodwen's reservations. "Sounds like you're Charting a Course," I say. "How do you intend to get there?"

Rhianna: "Their lair is a cave in the bluff, right? If we follow the bluff south, we'll find them."

I look at the list and jot down:

- It'll take at least 1 day there and back (little need to worry about supplies)
- You'll need to bring at least 3 sleds to haul the meat home, if you want enough to feed everyone
- You'll need to bring warm clothes
- You'll need to watch out for crinwin
- The way is grueling (cold, snow)
- You risk getting lost
- You risk drawing the attention of the cave bears as you approach!

I read these off and Rhianna's like, "We risk getting lost? We're just following the cliff face south." Oh, sure. Of course. I cross it off the list.

Vahid convinces the others to visit Three Coven Lake in search of the Mindgem's ever-burning heart. "Just the four us," says Rhianna. "I'm not risking my crew on this." Andras insists on coming, though—mostly because he's sweet on Blodwen.

"How do you intend to get there?" I ask. They'll take the Highway to Marshedge, resupply there, then follow the Sruth upstream to Three Coven Lake. That seems legit, so I look over the list and write down:

- First, you'll need to travel to Marshedge
  - You need to wait until summer OR you'll need to bring warm clothes
  - It'll take at least 8 days (and 8 uses of supplies each, or 16 uses total if you use a mess kit)
  - You need to watch out for nosgolau
- It'll take at least 4 days from Marshedge, and a corresponding number of supplies
- You need a knowledgeable guide OR you risk getting lost
- The way is perilous, plagued with danger
- The terrain is treacherous; you risk injury
- The way is grueling; you risk exhaustion

Vahid asks why they need a guide, given that they'll just be heading upstream. "Well," I say, "The terrain's pretty rugged. There will be places you can't stick to the river, and who knows how many little tributaries feed it."

"Hmm. I did spend time wandering the Steplands before I got to Stonetop. Maybe I've got the lay of the land?"

"Maybe. But you've never actually been to the lake, right? So you still risk getting lost."

"Ah," Vahid says. "Yeah, that makes sense."

OUTFIT
When you ***prepare for an expedition in a friendly community***, mark as many ◇ on your Inventory insert as you wish to carry, either on specific items or in "undefined." Mark up to 3 ◇ for a *light* load (quick and quiet), 4-6 ◇ for a *normal* load, or 7-9 ◇ for a *heavy* load (noisy, slow, quick to tire). Also, mark a number of ▢ in the **Small Items** section equal to 4+Prosperity (again, on specific items or in Undefined).

You can select:

- Items printed on the Inventory sheet
- Other common, mundane items
- Any of your special possessions
- Special items for which you Trade & Barter

Tell the GM what you're bringing and answer their questions about your gear and where you got it.

When a player Outfits, they decide how many ◇ to mark on their Inventory insert, and thus how heavy a load they'll carry. Some playbook moves only work with a certain load or lighter, but mostly a character's load just informs the fiction and your GM moves. "The slope's steep, but with plenty of handholds. It's no problem unless you've got a heavy load—then you'll be Defying Danger. What do you do?"

Small items don't count towards a character's load. They're things that could fit in a purse or boot with room to spare—some coins, a tinderbox, a knife, etc. The player can mark a number of ▢ in Small items equal to 4 + the steading's Prosperity.

Players can put as many of their marks in the "undefined" sections as they like. They can then **Have What You Need** (page 326) during the expedition to transfer those undefined marks to specific items. Yes, it's a good idea for players to leave their inventory as "undefined" as possible, only declaring specific items as they need or want them.

Players might pick specific items because they know that they'll need them (for example, if they Charted a Course and you told them they'd need to bring *warm* clothes) or just because they're sure that they'll want them (like a Ranger's bow).

Items printed on the Inventory sheets are things that any PC has access to and that would be useful on an expedition. PCs can also bring any of their special possessions: the ones that they picked at character creation, or those they've found in the field, received as gifts, or acquired via **Trade & Barter** (page 540). They can also pick any common, mundane item that everyone agrees would be available in a small iron-age village (a bucket, some seed, a wooden spoon, a basket, etc.).

Followers need to Outfit, too! You might tell their player what they bring, or have the player decide.

Have everyone announce their load and any specific items they're bringing. Ask about their choices! Maybe frame little scenes, using this move to show what NPCs think of them. Maybe the party's lunch gets packed up by the missing boy's kin. Maybe the smith gives the Would-be Hero a dagger as a sign of respect. Or maybe they have a spat with their mom over taking their dead father's shield. **Bring it home**!

Rhianna says "Okay, let's get us some bears. The four of us and my crew. Plus Andras, the new kid, to see if he works out. Outfit?"

"Sure," I say. "Don't forget, you'll need warm clothes. And at least three sleds."

Rhianna looks at her Inventory sheet. She knows she'll want her ❦ longbow and a ❦ wool cloak. She'll also carry a ❦❦ sled, putting her at 4 ❦ total. That's a normal *load already, so she marks 2 ❦ in undefined for a total of 6 ❦. She puts all 4 of her small item marks in undefined.*

Rhianna also Outfits for her crew. They'll each carry a normal *load, with a ❦ bow and iron arrows, ❦❦ thick hides, and 3 ❦ undefined. "There are six of them, including Andras. Some of them will have sleds… we'll figure out how many later."*

Blodwen takes a normal load: ❦❦ thick hides, a ❦ staff, and 3 ❦ undefined. She puts all 4 of her small item marks in undefined. She's got her sacred pouch, of course, but it doesn't take up space in her inventory.

Vahid decides to take a heavy load: the ❦❦ Mindgem, a ❦ wool cloak, his ❦ wind-spirit flute, and 5 ❦ undefined.

Rhianna's unhappy about how much crap he's carrying. "Magpie" he says, with a smile and shrug. For small items, he marks his sanctified amulet and 3 in undefined.

Caradoc brings a normal load: the same ❦ spear and ❦❦ shield he brought on the last expedition, a ❦ cloak, and 2 ❦ undefined. He puts all 4 small item marks in undefined.

This is the first time Caradoc has brought a cloak on an expedition—it was a bit of a thing in the last adventure that he didn't have one. So I ask, "Where did you get that cloak, Caradoc?"

"Um… from Morwenna, I think?"

"Oh, totally! She catches you in the square as the crew is gathering. She's got a bundle under her arm and avoids eye contact. 'I… I was weaving this for you… before… and, well, the embroidery on the back isn't done, but if you insist on going out there again… well, you'll need something warm. So… here.' And she blushes and shoves it in your arms and runs off. What do you do?"

REQUISITION
When you ***borrow some of the steading's assets for an expedition*** (like the horses or a plow), roll +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, go ahead, but bring it back safely; **on a 7-9**, you'll need to do some convincing; **on a 6-**, don't mark XP—you can take the asset with you, but if you do, reduce Fortunes by 1.

At the start of play, Stonetop owns a few communal assets: a couple sturdy draft horses, a pair of carts, a pair of iron plows, and a big wagon. You might also consider some of the main tradesfolk's' tools (like the smithy's anvil or the tanner's vats) as town assets.

If the PCs want to take these with them, they must make this move. The steading's Fortunes reflect how likely the other villagers are to let them have their way and put these important assets at risk. If they're borrowing multiple, related assets (like the horses and the wagon), they only need to make this move once.

As always, establish the fiction before triggering the roll. Who are they asking for permission? Who *should* they ask? Who has the right to say "yes?" Who's doing the asking, and how? If the fiction isn't clear, ask questions until it is.

If they want to borrow an asset that's actively needed or in use (e.g. taking the horses and plows during planting, or the horses or carts during harvest), then **tell them the consequences/requirements and ask**. Unless the expedition is urgent and important to the town's survival, they might just need to wait (and shouldn't they be helping in the fields anyhow?).

Players generally don't need to Requisition to access the steading's Surplus, though you might decide that they need to if it'd seem wasteful or overly risky to the rest of town.

A 10+ result means that folks are willing to let them do it, with the expectation that they bring the asset back. It's possible that the characters don't expect that to happen, but as long as they keep up the pretense, they can borrow the asset.

A 7-9 result means that someone voices an objection, but they aren't intractable. Think about why they're objecting (Is the asset needed in town for something? Do they have beef with one of the PCs?) and present that to the players. This will likely lead to a Persuade (or similar) roll. If they convince whoever is objecting, they can borrow the asset (per a 10+).

A 6- means that folks ain't having it. Maybe the asset is currently in use. Maybe Padrig's going to need to haul some goods up to Gordin's Delve and there's no way the PCs will be back in time. Maybe folks are just dead set against the PCs risking such an important asset on one of their damn fool quests.

If the players decide to take the asset anyhow, ask them how they do it. Do they throw their weight around? Do they sneak the asset out in the middle of the night? Whatever they do, they don't need to play out the specifics or make any other rolls as they do it. But it'll harm the town's morale and cohesiveness, reducing Fortunes by 1.

If the PCs borrow an asset and fail to bring it home safely, that almost always counts as **Meeting with Disaster** (page 532). Reduce the town's Fortunes by 1 (or more!).

Vahid has convinced Rhianna to do this expedition to Three Coven Lake. Since they're going through Marshedge, Rhianna's keen to do some trading. "Let's bring my crew, a horse, a cart, and… 3 Surplus? We can trade for a donkey and supplies, and maybe turn a profit on whatever's left. We'll send my crew back with the horse and wagon, and load up our new donkey for the expedition."

"Smart," I say. "But you'll definitely need to wait until summer, then. It's planting season, and the horses are in use. And you'll have to Requisition."

They wait! When the time comes, Rhianna Requisitions. "What's this look like?" I ask. She says that she hinted at the plan to Fion a while back, and as planting finishes, they have a sit-down in the pub. Rhianna rolls +Fortunes (currently +0), with advantage because of her Logistics move.

On a 10+, I'd say how Fion liked the plan, and has a list of things to trade for. On a 7-9, I'd present Fion as suspicious, but give Rhianna a chance to convince her. But Rhianna rolls a 6, even with advantage, and Fion puts her foot down. "Look, I know what this is about. You're going after one of Vahid's unholy trinkets. Well, I can't stop you, but I ain't giving you my blessing. And you'll take one o' the horses over my dead body!"

Rhianna seriously considers going over her head—the trade mission really is a good idea! But, no… the town's Fortunes are only at +0, and they can't really afford a hit right now. "I'm sorry you feel that way, Fion," says Rhianna, raising a cup of whisky. "I guess we'll just do this the hard way."

Other preparations

These might happen before the PCs Outfit and Requisition or after, or sometimes in the middle of making choices.

Zoom in and out as appropriate, switching between loose play and scenes. Gloss over the hours spent interviewing townsfolk, but maybe play out the scene where they interrogate the sketchy newcomer or try to convince the smith to hand over the bronze armor.

You might even jump back and forth in time as they take care of all the details. Don't sweat it.

Trading & bartering

If the PCs want a special item for the trip—like bendis root, a nice lantern, or a bronze weapon—they'll need to Trade & Barter. This takes time. If they're in a rush or have other priorities before they leave, this won't be an option. See the **Homefront** chapter (page 483) for details.

Gathering information

The PCs might have questions they want or need answered before leaving. They could Know Things ("Has anything like this happened before?") or Seek Insight ("I go down and investigate the scene of the attack"). They might interview an NPC to see what they know, and/or use playbook moves like the Blessed's Call the Spirits.

Reward and encourage research, but keep in mind how long these things take. If they dawdle, **tell them the consequences and ask**. "Yeah, sure, but it'll take a few hours and the longer you wait, the harder it'll be to follow that trail."

Bringing NPCs and followers

Established **followers** (page 460) like the Marshal's crew will usually join an expedition if asked, but they might need convincing if the mission is foolish or against the follower's goals.

Other NPCs might offer to join the PCs, or insist on doing so. If the PCs seek out NPCs to join them, then you might **offer an opportunity** or maybe **introduce someone interesting**. They might Know Things ("Do I know anyone who'd come into the Woods with us?") or Seek Insight ("Who here is useful or valuable to me?"), and/or Persuade ("Rheinal, we need your help"). Candidates could also become apparent through a **Muster** (page 534), or organically in play.

As always, follow your principles and your sense of the world. **Begin and end with the fiction**, but also **be a fan of the characters** and **ask questions and build on the answers**. "No, there's no alchemist in town. But the tanner sure knows their chemics… what's their name, and how well do you know them?"

If an NPC comes along, and they'll follow the PCs' lead, then write them up as **followers** (page 474) with tags, an instinct and cost, HP and damage. Otherwise, just flesh them out as an **NPC** (page 450), in as much or as little detail as you like.

Well-trained beasts (like hounds or the town's horses) also count as followers, but livestock like goats and sheep don't. You can tell a good hound what to do. A goat? Not so much.

Followers **Outfit** (page 306) just like PCs. You decide what other NPCs bring with them, now or later as you see fit.

Putting others to work

Before they go, the PCs might set the townsfolk to work. For example:

They could **Muster** (page 534), getting the town ready for trouble. Have them roll before leaving; they'll need to choose "the muster holds together even without your presence" if they want it to stick while they're gone.

They could **Pull Together** (page 536), having folks repair the granary or prepare fortifications or whatnot. They should commit resources up front, but shouldn't roll until they head home. That way, the players learn the success of the effort at the same time their characters do.

They might **set individuals to a task**, like searching the Chronicle or keeping an eye on Ergben. They might need to convince the NPC to do it. If the NPC is a follower, the task might trigger a move (like Seek Insight or Defy Danger)—in which case, have the player roll for the follower when the PCs return home, to see how it went. If the NPC isn't a follower, then just decide what happens and reveal it when the PCs return.

Make note of any such projects, so that you don't forget them later.

Miscellaneous

Your players will certainly come up with other things to do before leaving. Follow the fiction and your principles. Zoom in and out as you see fit. Tie their actions back to the townsfolk and ask lots of questions. If they trigger a move that impacts their preparations or that would be quickly resolved, have them roll it before they leave. If they trigger a move that takes time to resolve, roll it when they return.

Flashbacks

Sometimes, the PCs get into the field and a player realizes that they should have done something before they left. Let simple things go with, "Yeah, sure, of course." For more involved activities, consider playing it out as a flashback. Frame a scene in the past and play it out normally, with moves and rolls and such. When the scene is done, jump back to "now."

The key thing about flashbacks is that they shouldn't contradict or nullify anything that's happened "on screen" already. For example, if the PCs have already gotten lost trying to follow some tracks, don't let them flashback to borrow a bloodhound.

It's your call whether to allow a flashback, keeping your principles in mind. When in doubt, ask the table at large for their opinion.

While out on the bear hunt, Blodwen realizes that she'd really like to have borrowed one of the horse's moves, "Sniff out danger on the wind." She asks if she could have done that.

Blodwen can calm animals with a touch and they generally love her, but these horses are rather nervous, so this isn't a sure thing. I decide to do a flashback: "Okay… it's back this morning, before you all left. You're in the stable, the horses are still sleeping. Which one do you wake up, and how?"

"Oh, Fflur, I think. She's the more sensible. I put my hand on her nose and whisper her name, and offer her a little handful of barley." Fflur munches and nuzzles Blodwen's hand, asking for more. "I need a favor first, old friend. I'm going out in the Wood today, and I could use your sense of smell. Can you lend that to me?"

That's Persuade, but Fflur's instinct is "to panic," so it might not be easy. Blodwen rolls +CHA and gets a 7-9: "Fflur's like, 'But, how will I know if something bad is nearby?' You'll need to give Fflur some concrete assurance."

"Oh, sure. I remind her that she'll be safe in the stable all day, and I weave her a protective talisman. Does that work?" Sure it does. Fflur agrees. Blodwen updates her notes, and we jump back to right now, in the Woods. "I want to sniff the wind for danger," says Blodwen. And away we go!

Running the journey

The PCs have made their preparations. They're doing this. "We head out," they say. They're looking at you. Now what?

Break the journey up into **points of interest** and **legs of travel**. The points of interest are the landmarks and the spots where you know something interesting will happen. The legs of travel are the paths between those points.

Then, run the game:

1) **Establish the situation**: they're either on a leg of travel, or they've arrived at a point of interest. Describe the environment, provide details, ask questions, portray characters, etc.

2) **Make a soft GM move**, especially an **exploration move** (page 317). Maybe your move introduces one of the challenges from Chart a Course.

3) **Ask "What do you do?"** or otherwise figure out what they're up to.

4) **Resolve their actions**. If they trigger a player move, do what it says (and see page 326 for **player moves** specific to expeditions). If they roll a 6- or ignore a threat, make a hard GM move. Otherwise, say what happens.

5) **Repeat**. Continue to update the situation, make soft GM moves, ask what they do, and resolve their actions until there's nothing interesting left to say or do in the current situation. Then, transition to the next leg of travel or the next point of interest.

Legs of travel

Look at the PCs' route and find the next point of interest—the next landmark or spot where you plan to frame a scene. Identify the path that the PCs will take to get there. That's the next leg of travel.

If the leg of travel is trivial—uneventful, through familiar terrain, relatively short—then gloss over it. Briefly describe the weather, the route, and how long it takes, then frame a scene at the next point of interest. "You head down the path into the Great Wood. It's a fine, warm day, and in a few minutes you're standing at the Stream."

Otherwise, play out the leg of travel as a situation, one that's mostly handled through **loose play** (page 176). Here's how.

Frame the action

Say where they find themselves, and how long they've been going (minutes, hours, days). "Okay, you head out? A half-hour later, you find yourselves past the Old Wall, stepping onto the West Road. An hour later, you're surrounded by the Flats, Stonetop a blip on the horizon."

Describe the environment

If the leg of travel goes through unfamiliar terrain—an environment that the *players* have never seen before, or one that has changed significantly since the PCs last came through—then spend some time describing the environment.

Start with the obvious details: the nature of the terrain, its size and scale, the **weather** (page 324), and anything that they couldn't help but notice. Provide up to 3 impressions from different senses: things they see, hear, smell, or feel (physically or emotionally) as they travel. The *Book II* entries for each region include examples.

Keep your descriptions concise. Players will zone out if you give them too much detail, and they'll ask questions when they want or need more.

If the leg goes through familiar terrain—an environment that the players have seen before—then just describe the current weather and maybe remind them what this terrain is like.

Ask questions

Keep players engaged and create a sense of time passing as they travel by **asking lots of questions**.

If the leg goes through unfamiliar terrain, then ask the characters questions about the terrain or what it's like to travel through it. The *Book II* entries for each region include questions you might ask, and you can always ask questions like:

- What's the most striking thing that you notice about this terrain?
- What is the best/worst/most unexpected thing about this leg of the journey?
- What have you heard about this area?
- When were you here last? How has it changed?
- How are you dealing with the weather?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What are you thinking/worrying about?

If the leg goes through familiar terrain, you should still ask questions, but focus those questions on the weather, or what the PCs are thinking or talking about. Or suggest that they **Keep Company** (page 332), and let them ask questions of each other.

Portray NPCs

If there are any NPCs on the journey, describe what they're up to, what they're talking about, how they're reacting to this leg of travel. Maybe ask players what they have their followers doing, or how they think their followers act.

Add details, answer questions, clarify the situation

Elaborate on the situation as much or as little as your players' interest demands. If they're engaged and enjoying themselves, asking questions and offering more details, then **let things breathe** and spend some time just talking about the leg of travel.

Likewise, if there's confusion or disagreement about what's going on, try to clarify and get everyone on the same page.

Make a soft GM move

Once the situation is well-established, and you feel like it's time to nudge things along, make a soft GM move.

- Present a challenge you listed when they **Charted a Course** (page 302)
- Present an encounter from your **prep** (page 340), or from the setting guide
- Have an NPC or follower get into or start some trouble
- Stir up conflict between the PCs
- **Offer them an opportunity** to do something as they travel, or else to arrive at the next point of interest.

Your **exploration moves** (page 317) will be particularly useful here.

You might stay in loose play and make your move while still zoomed out. "Dark clouds start to loom and you can tell that a storm's brewing. Do you want to press on or seek shelter?"

Or you might zoom in, frame a little scene and make your move there. "A few hours later, your hound starts barking for you to follow him. When you catch up, he's in a clearing with a torn-up carcass, crows pecking at it. A wisent, probably, and pretty fresh. What do you do?"

Resolve their actions

Ask them what they do. If they trigger a player move, resolve it. If they roll a 6-, or if they ignore an established threat, then make a hard GM move. Otherwise, say what happens.

A player's action might prompt you to zoom in and frame a scene (if you haven't already). Great! You're in a scene now.

See page 326 for **player moves** that the PCs are likely to use while traveling.

Repeat

Have you zoomed in and framed a scene? Cool. Play out the scene—establishing the situation, making soft GM moves, asking "what do you do?" and resolving their actions—until the scene is finished. Then move on to the next scene or situation, or zoom back out to loose play and resolve what's left of this leg of travel.

Is there still more to do in this leg of travel? Like, another challenge for you to present or another encounter to present? Make a soft GM move to introduce it, then resolve their actions, and see where that leaves you.

When there's nothing left of interest to say or do on this leg of travel, then briefly describe the rest of it—the weather, the terrain, how long it takes—and frame a scene at the next point of interest.

Points of interest

A point of interest is either...

... a landmark that has not yet been seen in play (or that has changed since the PCs' last visit);
... a specific place where you plan to frame a scene and make a GM move; or
... the journey's destination.

So, the first time the PCs ford the Stream "on screen," it's a point of interest. After that, it's only a point of interest if something significant has changed or if you plan to do something there like have the PCs encounter the Quiet Twins.

Some points of interest will be obvious and known in advance; others will be surprises. You can prep them between sessions (see page 340) or decide on the next point when the PCs head out from the current one. You can even add a point on the fly, in the midst of a leg, often in response to a player move.

If you want inspiration, refer to *Book II*. Use the "terrain" or "discovery" sections for the region through which the PCs travel, and/or the "sites" section for whatever group or power is relevant.

Frame the action

Establish the PCs arriving at the point of interest. Say when they get there. Zoom in, make it a scene.

Normally, you'll frame the scene with the PCs at the point of interest, having already arrived. But **if you want to build tension**—because you know there's danger lurking, or you want them to *feel* like there is—then frame the scene with the location in sight but still at a distance. Then watch the players get all twitchy and suspicious.

Describe the environment

If this place is **unfamiliar to the players**, then describe it. What makes it distinct from the surrounding terrain? What are its obvious, defining features? Provide up to 3 impressions using different senses (see the entries in *Book II* for ideas). Add more details as they become relevant.

Pick impressions and details that matter:

- **Any scene**: light, visibility, space, anything constant and unignorable (wind, rain, heat, cold, sound of a stream, etc.).
- **Social scenes**: the people present, details that reflect their physical or emotional state, their attitudes, the "feel" of the place.
- **Exploration scenes**: footing, line of sight, likely paths, details that tell the place's story and reflect what has happened here.
- **Action scenes**: dangers of course, but also footing, clearance, distance, obstacles, line of sight, relative positions, momentum, things to knock over/fall from/burn, etc.

If the PCs know this place, because they've been here before "off screen" or because they picked the spot themselves, then consider asking *them* to provide some of these details. "Vahid, you've been to this pool before. What's it like?"

If this place is familiar to the players, then just remind them what it's like and point out anything that's changed since the last time they visited it in play.

Ask questions

If this is the first time the players visit a known landmark in play (like the Stream or the Crossroads), ask the characters questions about the place. The *Book II* entries for each locale include questions you might ask, and you can always ask questions like:

- What's the most striking thing that you notice about this place?
- What here tells you that this is a place where/of/that __?
- What have you heard about this place?
- When were you here last? How has it changed?
- How does this place make you feel?
- What are you thinking/worrying about?

Build on the answers they give you, reincorporating them into the fiction and asking follow-up questions as they occur to you. Take notes, and call back to these details later in play.

Portray NPCs

If there are any NPCs on the journey, ask yourself how they'd react to this place. Drop this into your descriptions to remind the players (and yourself) that they're here. Maybe get ready to make a soft GM move with (or against) an NPC.

Add details, answer questions, clarify the scene

Flesh out the scene as much as you need to, in response to player questions or PC actions. Draw a quick map or picture if you think it will help. Figure out who's where and doing what. If there's confusion or disagreement about what's going on, try to get everyone on the same page.

Make a soft GM move

If you zoomed in on this place solely because it's a landmark that hasn't been seen on screen before, and you don't really have anything else to do here, then just **offer them an opportunity**. "Okay, does anyone want to have a conversation in-character? Or do something else here? Or do you move on?"

Otherwise, make a soft GM move. Say something that provokes the PCs to act and/or that increases tension. Your exploration moves (next page) will be particularly useful here.

Resolve their actions, repeat

Play out the scene. Ask them what they do. Resolve their actions. Establish how the scene and the situation has changed. Repeat, moving the spotlight around between PCs. **Play to find out what happens**.

If this point of interest is their destination, or **if things have taken a dramatic turn**, then this scene might roll into another scene, and another. Great! The journey is over, at least for now.

When the party decides to move on, figure out what their next point of interest is, what the next leg of travel is to get there, and frame the action on that leg of travel. If they decide to **go home**, see page 338.

Exploration moves

Add these to your arsenal of GM moves once the players leave town and head into the wider world. These same moves get used when **exploring sites** (page 352), but here, we'll discuss how to use them as part of a journey.

Your exploration moves are:

- Provide a choice of paths
- Hint at more than meets the eye
- Offer riches at a price
- Present a discovery
- Point to a looming danger
- Introduce a danger, person, or faction
- Bar the way

➤ Provide a choice of paths

Present the proverbial fork in the road and ask them which way they go. There might be other paths, and they might do something different, but you're presenting the obvious options and prompting them to choose.

Try to give them some indication of how the options are different. Otherwise, their choice isn't meaningful.

The available paths don't have to be literal paths, or they don't both have to be. For example, the choice could be between stopping and exploring this ruin, or pressing on towards their destination.

As a hard move, provide a choice between paths that they don't want to take.

> *"The cave is maybe 30 or 40 paces off to your right, no sign of movement around it. But, Blodwen, you spot tracks in the snow. Big ones, leading from the cave and off to your left. What do you do?"*
>
> *"Okay, the sleds are loaded. Are you going to head back the way you came? The crinwin will almost certainly notice you if you do. Or you could cut deeper into the Woods and try to circle around them, but that'll take longer. What do you do?"*
>
> *"As hard as you push yourselves, by the time the sun's almost set, you're still a good half-hour away from town, maybe more. Do you press on, traveling in the dark? Or do you start looking for some place to spend the night out here?"*

➤ Hint at more than meets the eye

Drop a hint that there's something interesting here, a discovery to be discovered or a lie to be uncovered. This move often spurs the players to Seek Insight or Know Things or otherwise look closer.

To make this move, point out something out of place or something fraught with meaning, but don't say what it means. Be a little coy about it. It's a hint, not an announcement.

"Blodwen, while Rhianna and her crew are butchering the bear, you get this... feeling. Like, sort of a chill, and not just from the cold. You think you're being watched. What do you do?"

"Vahid, as you watch the crinwin flee, you realize that they all headed for this great big redwood pine, maybe fifty paces away. Just the sort of tree where they'd nest. Everyone else is catching their breath and wiping off crinwin blood. What do you do?"

➤ Offer riches at a price

Show them something valuable, but costly or difficult to get. Then sit back and see if they think it's worth it.

Consider "riches" to be anything the PCs would consider valuable. That could be actual riches, or just some sort of supply or resource they desperately need. And consider "price" to be any sort of cost: time or safety, effort or attention or retribution.

As a hard move, offer something that you know one of the PCs (or NPCs) on the journey *really* wants, but in a way that would derail or jeopardize the overall expedition. Bonus points if the opportunity is fleeting, increasing the pressure to go after it.

"Rhianna, while they're butchering the bear by the stream, Lowri calls you over and points out a huge set of hoof prints. 'Ceirwmawr, I'm sure of it. Fresh, too.' His eyes gaze off deeper into the Wood. 'It'd be a feat to sing of, that's for sure. Not to mention a whole lotta meat.' What do you do?"

"You know, if that is a crinwin nest—and it sure looks like one—there's probably all sorts of stolen stuff up there. Like, all the things they've swiped from people this past year. Maybe even your grandmother's ring, Caradoc. What do you do?"

➤ Present a discovery

Discoveries are interesting things that the PCs find but that aren't inherently or immediately dangerous. They might be useful or valuable, or just something mysterious that's worth investigating. See the **Discoveries** chapter, starting on page 421.

When you make this move, you just put the discovery in front them. Describe it, tell them what they see/hear/smell/feel, what (if anything) it does. Make it clear that this is something of note. What they do next is up to them.

"Blodwen, while you and Vahid wait for the others, the wind picks up and starts tossing puffs of snow about. But then you realize that, no, those puffs are a little too intentional, and you hear—no, more like sense—a laughter in the wind. There's a wind spirit flitting about. What do you do?"

"Yeah, Vahid, now that you're closer, and looking up at it, you can see that it's definitely a nest. A papery thing, like a wasp nest, but way, way bigger. This must be what the crinwin live in. What do you do?"

➤ Point to a looming danger

This is the claw-print in the mud, the wolves howling in the distance. This is the piles of sticks, strangely neat and tidy, sure sign that a hagr dwells nearby.

Use this move to foreshadow future dangers, to make the PCs nervous and to prompt them to investigate or take precautions. Or flee. They could also flee.

Here's a good twist on this move: instead of telling them what they find, ask them what they find that tells them __ is afoot.

You can also ask a question that gets them thinking about the danger without revealing any specific sign of it. Like, "Caradoc, what sort of experience do you have with feathered drakes?" Or, "Vahid, what have you heard about the nosgolau, the nightlights that are said to haunt the Flats and lure travelers off the road?"

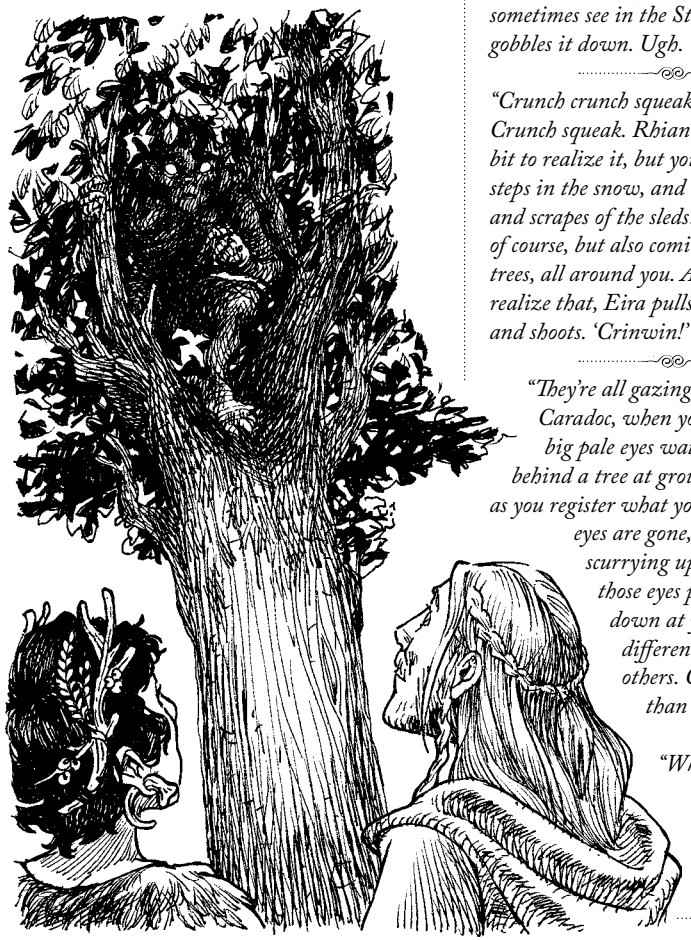
"Rhianna, you've all been quietly trudging for a couple hours through the snow when the hair on the back of your neck stands on end. What do you see or hear that tells you that you've entered crinwin territory?"

"Blodwen, as you sniff the air, you catch the unmistakable scent of a predator, one of the bears, you're sure of it. And not coming from the cave… it's coming from the east, towards the Stream. What do you do?"

➤ Introduce a danger, person, or faction

With this move, you're putting a danger on screen. You're not pointing to it, it's not looming, it's *here*, what do you do?

Alternately, you're introducing an NPC and giving the PCs a chance to interact with them. Or, you're revealing that there's a subset of creatures or people that they didn't know about before: different strains of crinwin, a cult within the Hillfolk, rivalries and allegiances among the Fae, etc.



As a hard move, you'll often introduce a danger by jumping straight into a fight or action scene. A *stealthy* foe or a hidden hazard might even attack and deal damage before the PCs can react!

"Okay, so you all creep towards the Stream. You hear the rush of water, and then you see it. It's huge, like a horse but stouter, pacing back and forth at an opening in the ice. Its snout darts into the water and pops up with one of those silvery, scaly slug-things that you sometimes see in the Stream, and it just gobbles it down. Ugh. What do you do?"

"Crunch crunch squeak. Huff huff huff. Crunch squeak. Rhianna, it takes you a bit to realize it, but you're hearing footsteps in the snow, and heavy breathing, and scrapes of the sleds… from the party, of course, but also coming from up in the trees, all around you. And just as you realize that, Eira pulls back on her bow and shoots. 'Crinwin!' she yells!"

"They're all gazing up at that nest, Caradoc, when you notice a pair of big pale eyes watching you from behind a tree at ground level. As soon as you register what you're seeing, the eyes are gone, and there's a scurrying up the tree. Then those eyes poke out, looking down at you. It seems… different… than the others. Curious, rather than angry.

"What do you do?"

➤ Bar the way

They encounter an obstacle, or hit a dead end, or discover they lack something needed to move ahead. They've got to find a way through, or over, or to backtrack and find a way around.

Describe what's barring the way forward, and maybe give an option or two for what they could do instead.

"It's just not going to happen, Caradoc. You can barely scale the bluff yourself, and don't see any way to drag those sleds up here laden with bear meat. And it's not like there's anything up on the Flats for you to tie a rope around, either."

"You drag the sleds northeast but, shortly past the Stream, the drifts get much deeper. It'd be grueling to wade through and there's no way you'd get home by dark. Looks like the only path left is back through crinwin territory. What do you do?"

Use other moves, too!

Just to be clear: you can and should use your standard GM moves while the PCs are on a journey. **Ask provocative questions** ("what's your crew doing to get on your nerves?"), **demonstrate downsides** ("you're falling behind under all that gear"), **separate them** ("down the hill you go"), **use up their resources** ("expend 3 uses of supplies each, or 3 total if you use a mess kit"), **tell them the consequences/requirements** ("you need fire to use a mess kit, but a fire will draw attention from the crinwin"), and so forth.

Resolving Chart a Course

When the PCs Charted a Course, you gave them a list of requirements and challenges (see page 302).

Requirements

Hopefully, they addressed the requirements (like "You'll need to bring __" or "You need a knowledgeable guide") before they left. If they didn't, **tell them the consequences** of not being prepared. If they persist, either **bar the way** or add some extra challenges to your list.

Once they're in the field, make soft GM moves that threaten the things they need, and/or to **show their downsides**. Put the guide in danger. Describe how loud the horse and cart are or how heavy the firewood is.

When it's time to make a hard GM move, consider targeting these same resources. What do they do when their guide is injured, or the horse runs off in a panic?

If they no longer have what they need for the journey, make them feel it. **Show the downsides** or **tell them the consequences** or just **bar the way**, and see how they cope.

Presenting challenges

Once the PCs head out on the journey, you need to present the challenges that you warned them about, plus any others that they couldn't have seen coming. That includes both surprises that you've prepped in advance, or things that arise naturally from the fiction or the dice.

As you resolve a **leg of travel** (page 312), ask yourself whether this is a good place to introduce a challenge. Likewise, as you pick **points of interest** (page 315), pick spots where you can introduce a challenge. You can also introduce a challenge after you've framed a scene for any reason, often in response to a PC's move.

Usually: introduce a challenge by making a soft GM move. Ask the PCs what they do and resolve their actions. Repeat as needed. The PCs might overcome the challenge quickly and easily or things might snowball into a steaming mess. Follow the core loop and **play to find out what happens**. When the situation is resolved, move on to the next one.

If you introduce a challenge in response to a 6- on a PC move, then feel free to drop them right into the thick of it. If someone gets a 6- to **Forage** (page 336) and one of the challenges is "you risk getting lost," then you can just have them get lost as your hard move. You don't have to *threaten* them with getting lost, first. They're lost!

Present each challenge only once. After the party deals with it, then tick that challenge off your list. Present a different challenge, or the next point of interest, or the next leg of travel, or have them arrive at their destination.

With that said: a challenge that they've addressed could come back to haunt them if they make poor decisions or if the dice don't go their way. Yeah, they might have Struggled as One to handle the treacherous mire of Ferrier's Fen, but they're still in the fen! A 6- on a future roll could still send someone plunging into the water, and running off blindly into the mists is still a good way to get drowned.

The PCs are en route to Three Coven Lake from Marshedge. Their current leg of travel has them following the Sruth into the Steplands. This seems like a good time to add a challenge: "the terrain is treacherous."

*I keep things zoomed out and **tell them the consequences**. "The rain has made the soil loose and muddy. If you stick to the river, you'll be Struggling as One, risking a fall or even a mudslide. What do you do?"*

*Rhianna uses her Read the Land move, asking for the best way through. I improvise, saying that the southern slopes look a bit rockier and more stable. She leads them that way and gets advantage on her **Struggle as One** roll (page 328). Good thing, too, because Caradoc and Vahid both roll a 6–, getting caught in a mudslide. Rhianna uses her 10+ result to rescue Vahid (yanking him back from the scarp), but Caradoc is in trouble and starts to get swept away down the slope!*

We zoom in and play out the scene. Caradoc barely manages to save himself, taking some damage, getting very muddy, and losing all his supplies in the process. They take a brief rest and press on.

*For their next point of interest, I pick a spot where I can introduce another challenge: a valley where three tributaries of the Sruth come together, and they risk picking the wrong one and getting lost. I frame a scene with them overlooking the valley, describe the environment, and **introduce the danger**. "It's not clear from here which one leads to Three Coven Lake. Pick wrong and you'll end up lost or at least wasting lots of time. What do you do?" Vahid Knows Things (recalling his previous wanderings in these parts) and gets an 11. I reveal that they want the southern fork. Huzzah!*

*Their next point of interest will be wherever they Make Camp, and this leg is just more rugged, muddy hills as they follow the tributary. They've already dealt with the treacherous terrain, but I also said that the way will be grueling. So, I **present a choice of paths**. "Rhianna, you're humping up the twentieth slope today, and it's just a wet slog. You've got a few hours of light left. Do you want press on and Struggle as One with CON? Or look for a place to camp, maybe hunt a bit?" They opt to stop and **Forage** (page 336), but get a 6–. This area is perilous, so I aggressively introduce a danger. A Hillfolk ambush it is!*

"The way is perilous, filled with dangers"

This isn't a specific challenge, it's more of an ongoing threat. Save it for truly dangerous legs of travel: Ferrier's Fen, the Steplands near the lakes, the Labyrinth, etc.

On each leg of perilous travel, and each time they **Make Camp** (page 334) in a perilous area, **point to a looming danger** or **introduce a danger** that's already been established. Then see how they respond.

If you like, **have them roll the Die of Fate**.

1d6	DANGER
1	A danger springs on them, unavoidable
2-3	Introduce a danger, right in front of them
4-5	Point to a looming danger
6	Point to a looming danger, but also present a discovery

Also, feel free to spring dangers on them any time that they roll a 6- (on any move), or any time a move draws attention or generates a complication.

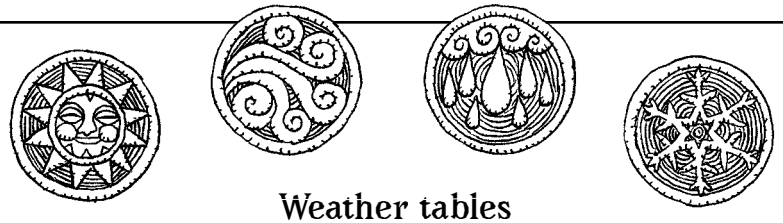
Weather

The weather is an important part of any journey. It colors the whole trip and can be a challenge all by itself.

You decide when it rains and when the sun shines, based on your agenda and principles but also on your sense of theme and story. Include the weather when you describe the environment ("It's a chilly morning, a thin fog blanketing the land") and invoke the weather with your GM moves. **Announce trouble** by describing how the wind picks up and the canopy sways and the sky goes dark. **Bar the way** with a blizzard. **Separate them** in the fog.

If you want, let the Die of Fate guide your choices. For example, you could ask the players what sort of weather they hope for, then have them roll a d6 to see how well fate complies. If they're sneaking into a mercenary camp in winter, they might hope for winds and snow to hide their approach. On a 1 or 2, nope, it's a clear, still night with a bright moon, so cold that every step squeaks. On a 3 or 4, there's a driving wind *or* a gentle snow. On a 5 or 6, yeah, just what they wanted.

Another way to use the Die of Fate is with preset results, based on the season. Here are some general tables that do just that. Use these as-is, or make your own for specific locales and specific seasons, informed by the most recent **Seasons Change** move (page 517).



Weather tables

LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING

1d6	WEATHER
1	Snow/sleet/hail, an early thunderstorm or day of cold, soaking rains
2-3	Cold and windy, maybe some showers
4	Clouds on the horizon, steady wind; roll again later with disadvantage
5-6	A fine, sunny spring day; some clouds, some gusting winds

SPRING/EARLY SUMMER

1d6	WEATHER
1	A heavy storm; high winds, hail, thunder, lightning
2	Steady, chilly rain
3-4	Warm and windy, maybe some brief showers
5-6	Warm, sunny, pleasant

SUMMER

1d6	WEATHER
1	A heavy storm; high winds, hail, thunder, lightning, tornadoes
2	Blazing heat, still air, not a cloud in sight
3	Hot and humid, with brief, drenching thunder storms
4-5	Hot, muggy, some wind
6	Warm, sunny, breezy, perfect

LATE SUMMER/EARLY AUTUMN

1d6	WEATHER
1	A powerful thunderstorm or cold, soaking rain
2	Windy with a few rain showers
3	Warm, clouds on the horizon, steady wind; roll again later with disadvantage
4-5	Hot and dry during the day; cooler and windy at night
6	Warm, sunny, breezy, perfect

AUTUMN

1d6	WEATHER
1	Cold, drenching rain and/or sleet
2	Cold, windy, light rain or early snow
3	Chilly, windy, clouds on the horizon; roll again later with disadvantage
4-6	Crisp, breezy

WINTER

1d6	WEATHER
1	Blizzard: wind, snow, all of it
2	Intense cold and wind
3	Very cold, very clear, very still
4	Cold and snowy, or cold and windy
5	Some snow, but mostly just dreary
6	Warm (for winter) and sunny

Player moves

These moves become relevant while the PCs are on an expedition.

HAVE WHAT YOU NEED
When you ***decide that you had something all along***, transfer a mark (or marks) from your "undefined" inventory to a specific item or a slot. If you mark a slot, fill it with a common mundane item or something from your special possessions.

Alternately, you can expend a use of supplies to mark an additional small item/slot (▢).

Whatever you produce, it must be something you could have had all along. The GM or any player can veto unreasonable items.

This move lets the players convert undefined inventory into specific items. It means that when they Outfit, they don't have to decide on everything that they've brought with them; they determine how much they're carrying and can define their inventory in the field.

Once they use this move to produce an item, that item is now in their inventory. They can drop it, use it up, break it, give it to someone else, etc.

This move can only produce items the character already owns or common, mundane items (like those on the Inventory insert or things that could be easily acquired in an iron-age home or farm). You can also let them retroactively try to Trade & Barter for special items via a flashback.

Loot, load, and inventory

If a PC or follower acquires something in the field (like loot) and wants to bring it along, they have to add it to their inventory.

Small items (things that could fit in a pocket, purse, or boot with room to spare) don't count against a character's load. The player can just add it to the **Small items** section of their Inventory sheet. There's no hard limit on how many small items they can carry, but you can call shenanigans if you think they're being unreasonable.

Items with a ◇ or ◇◇ count towards a character's load. Remember: 3 ✓ or less is a light load, 4-6 ✓ is normal, and 7-9 ✓ is a heavy load. They can drop (or give away) items from their inventory to make space, or they can discard (or give away) undefined ✓.

If they want to carry 10 ✓ or more, or something very heavy/awkward (like an unconscious ally or a loaded sled), then not only will they be slow and noisy, but they'll also risk exhaustion, accident, and/or injury. **Tell them the consequences**, then continue to make it a significant part of the fiction and your moves.

Ask questions about the stuff they produce. "What kind of food did you bring?" "Who did you get that from?" "What made you think to bring that?" You're not (usually) trying to challenge their decisions; these questions provide texture and help you **portray a rich and fantastic world**.

They creep up towards the cave entrance, and peer in. "It's really dark in there," I say. "Are you going in blind, or what?"

Caradoc says, "I'll use my lantern!" It's not a standard thing on the Inventory sheet, but it is one of his special possessions (a gift from Sawyl), so he can produce it with this move. He moves a ✓ from "undefined" to the slot with "◇ Sawyl's lantern," then says he'll light it. "You have a tinderbox?" He doesn't, but it's an option in the ***Small items*** *section of his Inventory sheet. He moves a mark from his undefined small items to the tinderbox, uses the tinderbox to light the lantern, and hands it over to Blodwen, so that he can wield his shield and spear. (Technically, she should now add it to her sheet and maybe give Caradoc one of her undefined ✓, but we all expect this to be temporary so we just ignore it for now.)*

"Okay," I say, as they leave for Marshedge. "The first two days pass without incident. You find yourselves making camp, just before dark, at the wayside near Titan Bones. Mark off two uses of supplies each, or 4 total if someone has a mess kit."

They look at each other, and realize that no one has supplies in their Inventory, or a mess kit. "Well, you can Have What You Need for supplies and a mess kit. One diamond of supplies gives you 4 uses, and the mess kit is one diamond itself."

"Andras has the mess kit," says Rhianna. "He insisted on coming, he can do the cooking." She moves one of his undefined ✓ to a slot on the follower sheet, writing in "mess kit."

"Okay. I've got the supplies," says Caradoc. He erases an undefined ✓. He's about to mark one by "Supplies," but realizes that he's going to expend all 4 uses, so he doesn't bother. "Hey… it says here that a mess kit requires fire and water. Does that mean we need to provide firewood, too?"

"Not necessarily," says Vahid. "We established that merchants usually stock the waysides with wood and dried dung for fires. Sort of a leave-a-penny, take-a-penny thing. And the waysides all have wells." I agree… they've got fire and water covered.

"Hmm," says Rhianna. "Two days used up 4 supplies. We've got another eight days ahead of us… so that's 16 more uses of supplies. Or four more diamonds." She, Blodwen, Vahid, and Andras each convert one of their undefined ✓ into supplies.

"What sort of food are you carrying, mostly?" I ask.

"Well," says Rhianna, "It'd have to be something lightweight, enough to fill bellies, but only when cooked. Hmm. Looks like we're eating oatmeal, kids."

The "veto" clause in the move is there to maintain plausibility. It means that you can say "no" when a player decides they've been wearing a bunch of mummer's bells while they've been sneaking through a silent ruin. It also means you can **reveal an unwelcome truth** when appropriate, and say things like "Wait, a clay pot? Didn't you tumble down a rocky slope earlier? I don't think anything fragile like that would have survived."

RECOVER
When you ***take time to catch your breath and tend to what ails you***, expend 1 use of supplies and regain HP equal to 4+Prosperity. You can't gain this benefit again until you take more damage.

When you ***tend to a debility or a problematic wound***, say how. The GM will either say that it's taken care of or tell you what else is required to do so.

Characters will often need to Recover while on an expedition. This move is described in detail on page 246, in the **Harm & Healing** chapter.

STRUGGLE AS ONE
When you ***Defy Danger as a group***, establish the party's approach and each roll +STAT (per Defy Danger): **on a 6-**, you find yourself in a spot, the GM will describe it or ask you to; **on a 7-9**, you pull your weight; **on a 10+**, you do well enough to get someone else out of a spot, if you can tell us how.

If you roll a 6- but someone saves you, don't mark XP.

This move triggers when the whole party works together in the face of the same danger(s), usually over a period of time and when you don't want to dwell on the details. If you're about to have everyone Defy Danger, you should probably use this move instead. It's intentionally more forgiving than everyone Defying Danger, and it moves the action along more quickly.

With that said: they aren't Struggling as One if one PC is essentially responsible for everyone else's fate. If they risk getting lost and the Ranger is navigating, then the Ranger is Defying Danger (maybe with someone providing Aid). They'd only be Struggling as One if they faced some additional danger or challenge, against which they all contended.

When you call for them to Struggle as One, clarify the danger and the stakes. Use the same trick you use with Defy Danger: "Sounds like you're Struggling as One, and the danger is getting stuck or exhausted by the muck and mire."

It's possible—likely, even—that the PCs will strive against multiple dangers. If the dangers are sequential (like scaling the cliff and then rushing to get back to camp before the storm hits), then resolve it as two separate moves. But if they're dealing with multiple dangers at once (like trying to reach the hilltop before nightfall while also avoiding hunting drakes), then it's a single set of rolls.

"Establish the party's approach" means "figure out how they're going about this." What's the plan? Who's going first? Are they using, say, a rope? Who's on lookout? And so forth. From there, figure out which stat(s) make the most sense. Use the same guidelines you would for Defy Danger. Everyone might roll the same stat, or (if they break up the jobs), they might each roll something different.

Those participating in the struggle can't Aid each other—they're already involved! In order to Aid, a PC or follower must be somehow unaffected by the struggle (like a Ranger's bird flying ahead to scout as the party trudges through the fen).

Everyone rolls at once and figures out what they got. Encourage them to keep their results quiet for the moment.

Ask who got a 6-. **Put them in a spot**, following your principles and exploiting your prep. (If someone received Aid, then put the helper in the spot with them, or instead of them.)

Once you've described the spot, ask if anyone got a 10+. Ask them to describe how they get the character(s) out of their spot. If they come up with something plausible, then they do it—no more rolls required.

If multiple characters get a 6-, you've got a few choices:

Put them in the same spot, or close enough. "Caradoc, Vahid, you're trudging along, and… the hill isn't really *moving*, is it? But then you realize, yeah, it is, it's a mudslide! The path you're on starts to give way." In this case, a single 10+ might save everyone, depending on the fiction and what that player comes up with.

Put them in different spots at the same time. "Blodwen, as twilight falls, you find yourself falling behind, breathing hard, losing sight of the others. Meanwhile, Rhianna, you realize that you've lost track of Eira in the grass. Like, oh crap, where is she?" In this case, each 10+ will save only one of them.

Pick one and put them in a spot, ignoring the other 6- results for now. Resolve that spot. Then, **say how time has passed and put the next character in a different spot**. This is a great technique to demonstrate a really long and arduous trek, or one with multiple dangers. In this case, each 10+ can be used only once.

If anyone finds themselves in a spot and there isn't a 10+ to save them (or the player who rolled 10+ can't come up with something plausible, or chooses not to), then zoom in and play out the scene from there. Ask the affected character what they do. Or, tell someone else what they see and ask *them* what they do. Maybe they just Defy Danger and roll a 10+ and it's all good. Maybe it snowballs into an absolute disaster. **Play to find out.**

If the scene resolves and they've gotten themselves out of the spot, don't make them Struggle as One again against the same challenge. Just skip ahead to the end of the struggle. But if, in the process of resolving any 6- results, the situation changes such that they face a new or different danger, then it's okay to have them Struggle as One again.

Regardless of the results, this move is a great time to ask questions. "Blodwen, have you ever been up this high before? How does the view make you feel?" "Vahid, as the path slipped out from under your feet and you started to fall, what went through your mind?" "Rhianna, after you've hauled Caradoc back up on the path, huffing and puffing… what do you say to him?"

One of Rhianna's crew just came back with a rusty spade and Rhianna's sure of it—this is crinwin territory. They hope to sneak through and avoid a fight, kill the bears, then find a way up the bluffs and head home via the Flats.

"So, you're being sneaky?" I ask. "Sounds like you're Struggling as One, and the danger is that the crinwin notice you. What does this look like? Are you all together, or spread out, or what?"

"We go single-file, weapons out," says Rhianna. "Just a couple paces between us. Lowri scouts ahead, he's got the sharpest eyes. I'll go next, and you three follow me. Step where I step. The rest of my crew will bring up the rear. I'll look for the firmest ground, least likely to make noise. There's no point in hiding… we'll just have to move quietly and hope that no one's watching."

Okay! I tell Rhianna she can roll +INT or +WIS, since she's looking for the firmest and quietest path, but everyone else will be rolling +DEX to follow her steps. Rhianna's crew rolls +1 (they're stealthy*), but Andras rolls +0 because none of his tags apply. The dice hit the table.*

"Okay, anyone get a 6 or less?" Vahid did. "Okay, cool. Don't mark XP just yet. Let's see… oh, yeah. All that weird gear you carry, because of Magpie? It's not stowed right for this stealthy stuff. You're snagged on something and if you try to move, it's going to fall and make a lot of noise. What do you think it is?"

"Marbles," says Vahid. "I've got a big pouch of them." He moves an undefined mark on his Inventory sheet to a slot and writes in "pouch of marbles."

"Why do you… no, never mind. That pouch is now snagged on a branch, suspended like this, and one of the marbles fell out, hit a rock. CLINK! Everyone's stopped, holding their breath. If you shift even a little, it'll spill open and make a ton of noise. Anyone got a 10+, able to help him out?"

Rhianna does. "Any sign of crinwin? Like, did they hear that clink?"

"Yeah," I say. "It's painfully quiet. You're all stock still, not even breathing, and you then you hear it. 'Clink! Clink! Clink clink CLINK!' in the distance. Crinwin, mimicking the sound. A way off, but maybe getting closer? What do you do?"

"I motion for everyone to be still, then I take that rusty spade we found and I hurl it behind us, north and east. I'm hoping it'll hit a tree and draw their attention while we skedaddle. Yeah?"

"Smart. Sounds like you're Defying Danger with INT?"

"I got a 10+ on my Struggle Together. Doesn't that mean I can just do it?"

"Oh, right, sorry. Yeah, it's like you say… you throw the spade, hurl it maybe 30, 40 paces away. It ricochets off a tree, PING. And then the crinwin start going 'PING! PING!' and you can tell they're moving in that direction. What do you do?"

"I slip back to Vahid, unsnag his pouch, give him a dirty look, and we get out of here."

"Cool! Okay, off you go. And, Blodwen, what was racing through you mind during all of that?"

The PCs have put fire to the crinwin nest and started heading back toward Stonetop. I ***tell them the requirements****. "Between the fight, and the nest, and the bears… it's getting late. If you want to get home before dark, you're going to have to Struggle as One. The danger is that you exhaust yourselves, or take too long, or run into something else out here. How do you do this?"*

"Let's put two people on each sled and haul ass. Vahid, Caradoc, and I will each take one, pared up with one of my crew. Blodwen, you take point with Eira and Lowri, keep us going the right direction and watch for trouble. Yeah?"

Everyone agrees. "Blodwen, you'll be rolling WIS. Everyone else, I think either STR or CON, your choice. Vahid, you've got a heavy load, so roll with disadvantage. Rhianna, your crew isn't hardy *or* athletic *or the like, right? So I think they're +0?"*

"Really? Lowri and Eira are navigating and watching for trouble. And they're all Woods-wise*." That works for me, so, sure, they roll +1.*

Everyone rolls. Vahid and Caradoc both get a 6-. I could put Vahid and Caradoc in a spot together, but I feel like spreading it out.

"Vahid, you're hauling, hauling, hauling, right? Your nose is running, your eyes are watering, your lungs are burning. When was the last time you worked this hard for this long?"

"Oh, I pull my weight around the village," he says. "It's not a matter of hard work, it's the damn cold that's doing it to me. My lungs are just raw."

"Sure, cool. Anyhow, you start stumbling. You get up each time, but you and Andras are falling behind. Does anyone have a 10+ and a way to help them out?"

Rhianna does. "I curse a little, then tell Lowri to take over for Vahid. And I have Eira to take over for me. We'll rotate through, every ten minutes or so, two people get a breather."

That takes care of Vahid, but Caradoc still has a 6-. "Okay, you rotate like, three times, pacing yourselves but making progress. Then, Caradoc, there's a lurch on your sled. And a grinding sound. Something tears. Vahid, you see that they've hit a log, buried in the snow. A branch snagged the sled, and the whole thing is stuck. Anyone else got a 10+?" They all look around, but no one does. Blodwen and Rhianna's crew both got 7-9s. "Okay, Caradoc, mark XP. What do you all do?"

And we play out the scene from there.

KEEP COMPANY
When you ***spend a stretch of time together,*** ask the others if they want to Keep Company. If they do, take turns asking a PC or NPC one of the following.

- What do you do that's annoying/endearing?
- What do I do that you find annoying/endearing?
- Who or what seems to be on your mind?
- What do we find ourselves talking about?
- How do you/we pass the time?
- What new thing do you reveal about yourself?

This move helps to develop characters, build camaraderie, reveal intraparty tensions, and so forth. Good, juicy stuff.

Watch for opportunities to invoke this move, but don't overdo it. You or any player can decline, usually because you've Kept Company recently or there's something more interesting that you or they want to get to. Check with the group and see if they want to Keep Company when…

… they **Make Camp** (page 334);
… there's a stretch of uneventful travel;
… they **Struggle as One** (page 328), and everyone gets a 7+;
… some of the party split off to go do something, and you jump back to the others who are waiting around;
… two or more characters share a watch; or...
… the party spends time doing some boring task (like Foraging or chopping timber up in the foothills).

It's particularly good to Keep Company on the way *home* from an adventure, as it gives everyone a chance to reflect on how the recent events have affected them.

Once you've decided to Keep Company, prompt the players to start asking questions. Pick someone to go first (it can be you if you want). Have them pick a question, a character to ask about, and go. They can ask about other PCs or NPCs who are present; you, of course, should ask about PCs.

Just to be clear: the characters aren't sitting around, actually asking each other these questions. You—the real-life players and GM—are asking each other questions about each others' characters.

If there's a question or an answer that piques your interest or that seems a bit vague, ask follow-up questions (and encourage the other players to do the same). "Oh, you're thinking about Morwenna? How can we tell? Blodwen, what do you do when you see that?"

Sometimes these questions will lead to little scenes. That's great! Players might even trigger moves (like Persuade or Seek Insight) before the next player asks their question. All good.

Vahid, Caradoc, Blodwen, and Rhianna make camp near Titan Bones. They've got Andras with them, but left the rest of Rhianna's crew behind. After handling the logistics, I propose that we Keep Company and everyone agrees. "Okay, who wants to ask the first question?"

Rhianna goes first. "Andras, what do you do that's endearing?" Andras is a follower, so it's my job to answer. "I think, mostly, he's just being competent and helpful and doesn't need to be told to do anything. He's come a long way since you first took him under your wing. And maybe, too, the way he's mooning over Blodwen. It's pretty cute."

That makes me wonder how Blodwen will react, so I take my turn. "Blodwen, what is Andras doing that you find annoying or endearing?" (Notice how I didn't choose one or the other; I'm genuinely curious how she feels about him.) She thinks about it a bit and says that she keeps catching him looking at her, then pretending he isn't. He's been doing it most of the trip." "Is that annoying?" I ask, "Or endearing?"

"Annoying," she says. "Even though I'm doing the same thing to Caradoc." Oh? Oh!

I ask Blodwen to go next. "Caradoc, who or what do you seem to be thinking about?" As if she needs to ask. "Morwenna," he says. "Definitely Morwenna." I ask how we can tell and he's like "Oh, I'm just sitting here moping, the cloak she made for me pulled tight. I'm kind of fingering the hem and staring off into space." He gives a longing sigh.

I ask Blodwen how she reacts. She goes over and gives him a bowl of porridge. "Want to talk about it?" she asks.

"No," he sighs. But then he blurts out "I mean, what am I supposed to do? Just stay home and do nothing when there's danger afoot? Let other people take care of it? Like, Rhianna? Or, like, like you? Gods, I thought women wanted someone brave and tough and all that. But no, not Morwenna. She just wants me to stay home and dig in the dirt."

"Ain't nothing wrong with staying home and tilling the earth," Rhianna says under her breath. (I shoot her player a little grin.)

The scene plays out, with Andras looking a bit sullen. Rhianna uses Take the Measure to ask if she can trust him to keep things professional, and I'm like "For now, yeah."

Vahid hasn't asked a question, so he goes. "I sit down next to Rhianna and offer her a smoke. What new thing do you reveal about yourself? I'm interested in that comment, about staying home and tilling the earth."

Rhianna's always cagey about her past, and I half-expect her to cop out and say something like "Nothing. I tell everyone to shut up and get some sleep." But out here, without most of her crew around, she opens up a bit. "I was betrothed, once," she says. "To a boy named… Urien. He was a farmer's son. Worthless with a spear, but gentle and good with animals. You'd have liked him, Blodwen." Vahid asks what happened and she sighs and shakes her head. "Got sick. Caught the fever in late autumn, was dead by winter." She gives a little smile. "Life sucks, then you die. Grab onto the ones you got." And then she's like, "I'm looking straight at Caradoc when I say this."

"What?" he says, acting like he doesn't get it.

MAKE CAMP
When you ***settle in to rest in an unsafe area***, answer the GM's questions about your campsite. Each member of the party must consume 1 use of supplies or provisions; if you use a ◇ mess kit (*requires fire & water*), then 1 use can provide for up to four people.

If you ***eat and drink your fill***, and ***get at least a few hours of sleep***, pick 1.

- Regain HP equal to ½ your max
- Clear a debility

If ***your rest was particularly peaceful, comfortable, or enjoyable,*** you also gain advantage on your next roll.

Make Camp happens when the party **settles in** to rest in **an unsafe area**. There's a lot of judgement calls to be made. If you're handwaving a few days of travel on the Makers' Roads, the move doesn't trigger every night. You can just **use up their resources** ("okay, the next three days consume 6 uses of supplies…") and frame the next scene ("…and towards the end of your fourth day of travel, you round the bend and Gordin's Delve looms above") without ever bothering with Make Camp.

But! If there's danger afoot, or the PCs have been hurt, or they're investigating a site and they're, like "I think we need to rest," *that* is when this move triggers.

When they announce that they want to Make Camp, think about where they are and what they are (or should be) worried about. Then ask them questions.

If ***the route is perilous***, or if ***they need to watch out for ___***, or if ***they risk drawing the attention of ___***, then ask them how they address that.

If ***it's cold***, ask them how they stay warm. If ***they start a fire***, ask what they use for fuel or how they start it. If ***it's wet***, ask them what they do (if anything) to stay dry.

Ask what precautions they take to keep animals out of their food. Ask them if they set a watch, and the order.

As you ask these questions and get their answers, be sure to **show downsides** to their stuff ("if you want to use a mess kit, you'll need to start a fire") and **tell them the consequences and ask** ("if you start a fire, you're more likely to attract attention… do you make one?"). But also, **offer them opportunities, with or without a cost** ("sure, you could look around for a better campsite, maybe Seek Insight, but it'll take some time and you might not find anything before dark").

Once they settle in, but before you decide what's going to happen during the night, ask if they want to Keep Company.

You decide what (if anything) happens during the night. Consider all the dangers you've established and the preparations that the party has made (or not made). Think about relevant threats and their grim portents. If it's obvious to you that a particular encounter would occur, then it occurs. Decide who's on watch when it happens, frame the scene, make an appropriate GM move, and play from there.

If you think that something *might* interrupt their rest, but you aren't sure, then call for the Die of Fate. Consider giving them advantage or disadvantage on the roll, depending on how well-prepared they are. Here's a general-purpose result table:

1d6	OCCURRENCE
1	Something dangerous approaches, inclined to do harm.
2	Something dangerous approaches, curious but not aggressive.
3	Something annoying happens (critters in the food, rain, an argument, etc.).
4-5	The night passes uneventfully.
6	They observe something interesting, find something useful, or otherwise gain some small boon; or the night passes uneventfully

For more about the benefits of Making Camp, see page 248 in **Harm & Healing**.

Deprivation

If PCs don't get food, drink, or rest, then at first the only consequence is that they don't get to make a choice when they Make Camp. But the longer they go with insufficient food, water, or rest, the more danger they're in. Start by asking them to Defy Danger (the danger being their hunger, thirst, or exhaustion). Escalate with a debility, then more debilities. Make increasingly aggressive GM moves (**tell them the requirements or consequences**, **show downsides**, **reveal unwelcome truths**, etc.) as they endure more deprivation. Use the GM moves for ***afflictions*** (see page 284). Between sessions, write up their deprivation as a threat.

The party is en route to Marshedge in early summer. The first two days were uneventful, but this is the first time we've seen Titan Bones on screen, and there's danger there, so I've zoomed in and they're Making Camp. We've already decided that they're making porridge with a mess kit, using fuel left in the wayside's common supplies. "But just enough to cook with," says Rhianna. "It's plenty warm. No need to announce our presence." They set a watch order.

"Are you doing anything to prepare for the nosgolau?" I ask. Vahid rigs up some twine strung with little bells, propped up on blocks of firewood. "If anyone wanders off, they'll trip the wire and wake the rest of us." Nice.

We use the Keep Company move, and there's some delightful teen drama.

They settle in to sleep and I have to decide if and when the nosgolau show up. I'm pretty sure that they will. I ask Blodwen to roll the Die of Fate to see which watch they appear in, and I figure if she gets a 6 then I'll let them off easy. But, no, she rolls a 2. Vahid's shift.

I ask Vahid what he does to keep awake, and what he's thinking about, and then I ***introduce a danger****. "Like an hour into your watch, you realize you're watching this light off in the distance, up on Titan Bones. And then it's closer, and you hear a whisper, someone calling your name. Someone who probably isn't there, but who you feel compelled to go to. Who is it?" Vahid says it's Isra, his best friend from long, long ago. There's a custom move for this, so I have Vahid roll +WIS and surprise, surprise, things don't go so well…*

FORAGE
When you ***spend a few hours seeking food in the wild***, roll +WIS. In winter, you have disadvantage. **On a 10+**, pick 2; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- You acquire ✓ provisions (1d6 uses)
- You acquire an extra 1d6 uses of provisions
- You discover something interesting or useful
- You avoid danger or risk (else, there is some)

Provisions can substitute for supplies when you Make Camp, 1-for-1.

This move represents one "party" going out to gather food. If two or more go together, one of them is Foraging while the other Aids. If they split up, they can each roll the move—potentially gathering more food but putting themselves in more danger.

It's possible to travel while Foraging, but as a rule they'll cover only half the distance they would otherwise.

On a 7+, let them roll to see how many uses of provisions are at stake before they make their choices. You might also reveal the danger, risk, or challenge (at least its general form). If they're only getting a paltry 1 use of provisions, at the risk of getting lost, well... they might skip the danger, thank you very much.

Use the fiction, their choices, and the number of provisions at stake to fill in the details. If they get a 10+ and end up with 2d6 uses of provisions with a risk, then maybe they spot a big old buck and they have to bring it down. If they get just 1 or 2 uses and avoid danger or risk, then perhaps they found wild carrots and some birds' eggs and so forth but the trip was otherwise uneventful. Feel free to ask the player what they found, especially if they avoided danger or risk.

On a miss, you might **reveal an unwelcome truth** that the land is barren or picked clean, or **show a downside** of their lack of experience in the wild, or **hurt someone** and have everyone in the party mark a debility from hunger. Or you could drop them right into a bad situation, like getting gored by a wild boar or surrounded by feathered drakes, and, hey, maybe they can score some provisions after all.

After a week on the road, mishap and misadventure have depleted the party's supplies. They're all out, and still a couple days from Marshedge. Rhianna goes a-hunting, bringing Andras with her.

"Are you, like, hunting game? Looking for plants to eat? What's the plan?"

"Hunting game. This is what we do back home for a living." Sure, of course. She rolls (with Aid from Andras) and gets a 10. They roll a 3 for provisions, and decide to avoid danger or risk.

"Well, that's not great. What do you think you brought down?"

"Probably just some birds," says Rhianna. "Maybe a few mourning doves?"

Works for me.

Meanwhile, Blodwen and Caradoc are foraging near the road, looking for edible plants and the like. Caradoc is Aiding; Blodwen rolls +WIS and gets an 8. They roll the d6, for 2 uses of provisions.

That's a small number, but Blodwen's trying to impress Caradoc. "What's the danger or challenge?" she asks.

"Hmm. Blodwen, on a hunch, you follow a swath of wildflowers up and around a curve in a hill, and there, coming from a dead old tree still gripping the side of the hill, there's a big buzzing sound. Bees! There's lots of honey in there, for sure, 2 uses of provisions, but you'll have to get it out. That's your challenge. Or you can turn around and go home safely but empty-handed. What do you do?"

Later, after resupplying in Marshedge and heading out towards Three Coven Lake, they once again find themselves short on food. Rhianna takes Andras hunting again, but the rest of them stay at camp. They're well off the roads, now, and don't want to take chances.

Rhianna and Andras roll to Forage and, alas, they get a 5. The party's getting close to Three Coven Lake, less than a day away (not that they know that). My notes include a run-in with Hillfolk who are devoted to keeping people away from the lake, and this seems like a good time to spring it.

"Okay, it's a dreary, miserable day, but at least it's no longer raining. Rhianna, you and Andras have tracked a big old ram through the hills for a bit, and you finally brought it down while it was drinking from the stream. There's plenty of meat for the taking, like maybe 8 provisions worth? Andras has gone down to butcher the thing while you keep lookout."

That's just me setting the scene. Now I use the Hillfolk's monster move, ***outmaneuver their prey****, and I go hard. "You're scanning the hills around you, and then, like, out of nowhere, there's a mounted warrior on one of the peaks. A Hillfolk. He whistles, and as he does, you realize the trick—he's a distraction! You see Andras look up, too, and right then, an arrow comes from out of nowhere and tags him for 1d8 damage. Is he still up? Okay, cool, I think it took him in the leg, he's down and grabbing at it and his eyes are darting about in a panic, what do you do?"*

Going home

The PCs will eventually turn back and head for home. Now what?

The return journey

In general, gloss over the trip home. The points of interest that you described on the way out probably haven't changed much. The party already faced the challenges you established when they Charted a Course. The trip home might still be long, and grueling, and even dangerous, but unless there's something *new*, just handwave most of the journey.

The trip home is a time to ruminate and consider. Describe the journey at a high level, maybe asking the characters some questions. "Vahid, what part of that Green Lord's tomb do you keep thinking about?" "Blodwen, how are you feeling about Danu right now?" "Rhianna, Caradoc... what are you going to tell Wynfor's mom?"

Suggest that the group Keep Company. It's a great way to explore how the expedition has affected the PCs and their relationships. It also adds a sense of time passing.

If the party wraps up an expedition at or near the end of a session, then you might even skip the return trip entirely. Take care of any bookkeeping that would happen when they arrived home, either now or between sessions. Then start the next session with the PCs already at home, maybe with some time having passed. Some **love letters** (page 568) can be useful here!

Sometimes, though, returning home is as much of an adventure as the initial journey, maybe moreso. If the PCs…

… **bring something/someone back that makes the trip more difficult or dangerous** (like a few sleds full of bear meat or a pampered, whinging minstrel);
… **are lost, badly injured, out of supplies, or hunted**;
… **are racing to get home** before something bad happens; or
… **return home by a different route**, with new challenges and points of interest…

… then Chart a Course back to Stonetop and play out the trip home just like you resolved the initial journey.

Arriving home

Before the PCs arrive home, consider:

- How long have they been gone, and how has their absence been felt?
- If they suffered casualties, who back home will be most affected or upset?
- What have folks back home been up?
- If the PCs Requisitioned any assets, how has that impacted the village?
- Did any threats advance towards their impending dooms?
- Are the PCs Returning Triumphant, or could they with some effort?
- Could the PCs' return cause panic or reveal calamity, triggering **Meet With Disaster** (page 532)?

Think about how you'll reveal the answers to these questions in play. Make yourself a to-do list. Then play out the PCs' return home and any scenes that naturally follow.

See **Aftermath** (page 490) in the Homefront chapter for full details.

RETURN TRIUMPHANT
When you ***return home in triumph***, having saved your fellows, put down the threat, seized the opportunity, etc., then clear one of the steading's debilities (*diminished*, *lacking*, or *malcontent*). If the steading has no debilities marked, then increase Fortunes by 1.

A successful adventure boosts morale and sets the village on a path towards prosperity. Or, it at least undoes some of the harm that prompted the expedition in the first place.

To trigger this move, the PCs' return must be *triumphant*, something that makes folks celebrate or at least talk excitedly. If crinwin steal an infant and the PCs go into the Wood after them, triumph means saving the kid. It doesn't mean killing a few crinwin and returning with the child's corpse.

You'll have to feel this out in play. If a stranger limps into town raving about the raiders who butchered his caravan, well, no one expects the PCs to save his companions. They're probably goners, and triumph means putting those raiders down. But if it was the town's logging camp that came under threat, triumph would mean getting most of the workers home safely, regardless of whether they took out raiders. Priorities!

When in doubt, poll the table: if anyone (GM or player) thinks that the return isn't triumphant, the move doesn't trigger.

Remember to **begin and end with the fiction**. Don't just increase the steading's Fortunes, say (or ask) what that looks like. Show off the tearful reunions and the celebrations. Have NPCs thank the PCs in public and private ways. **Bring it home!**

What if they... don't?

It's possible that the PCs might not *want* to return home. They might want to continue exploring an area, or resettle in a different town, or just leave and never come back.

To help prevent this, remember to **bring it home**. While the PCs are on an expedition, ask about NPCs that they care about. Remind them of their responsibilities back home. Ask them who or what they miss the most out here. Do this consistently, so that the PCs feel connected to the village. Returning home will feel like the obvious thing to do.

If they consider staying in the field, **remind them of the consequences**. Folks might assume that the PCs are dead, their jobs will go undone, less-competent folks might take charge, etc. Practically, the PCs won't be able to Outfit without access to a friendly town, or Level Up without at least a temporary home base.

That said, it's not your job to force them home, it's your job to **play to find out what happens**. Sometimes it makes sense for some or all of the PCs to stay in the field (for example, to unite the Hillfolk against the southern slavers) or to leave town for good (because, say, the Seeker has become a liability). This might mean the end of the campaign, or the end of a particular PC's story. But it might also mean some significant change to how the game plays. See **Shake-ups** (page 590) for ideas.

What to prep

If you know that an expedition is in the PCs' future, there's plenty you can prepare in advance. You don't *need* to prepare these things, but prep can help make the journey go more smoothly in play.

First, **chart the course**. Look at where they're going, their likely route(s), and make your choices for the Chart a Course move. Write them down with little check boxes next to them, so you can tick them off as you present them in play.

Next, **draw a map** of the route that you expect them to take or the area you expect them to traverse. Grab a map of the vicinity around Stonetop or the World's End region and highlight or add the points of interest relevant to the journey. Consider making a more zoomed-in map for areas that aren't very well detailed on the regional map.

Identify your points of interest, including…

… any landmark that has not yet been seen in play (or that has changed since the PCs' last visit);
… any specific places where you plan to frame a scene and make a GM move; and...
… the journey's destination.

Then identify the **legs of travel** between each point of interest. Note how long the leg will likely take.

For each leg of travel or point of interest, make a few notes:

- A brief description, no more than a sentence.
- 2-3 impressions, ideally hitting senses other than visual.
- Some questions you want to ask of the players.
- Any challenges (from Chart a Course) that you plan to introduce there.
- Any other dangers or discoveries you expect to be encountered there.

For regions or locations described in *Book II*, you can either copy the relevant details or just add a page reference to your notes (and maybe bookmark the page). Feel free to add questions or other details of your own devising!

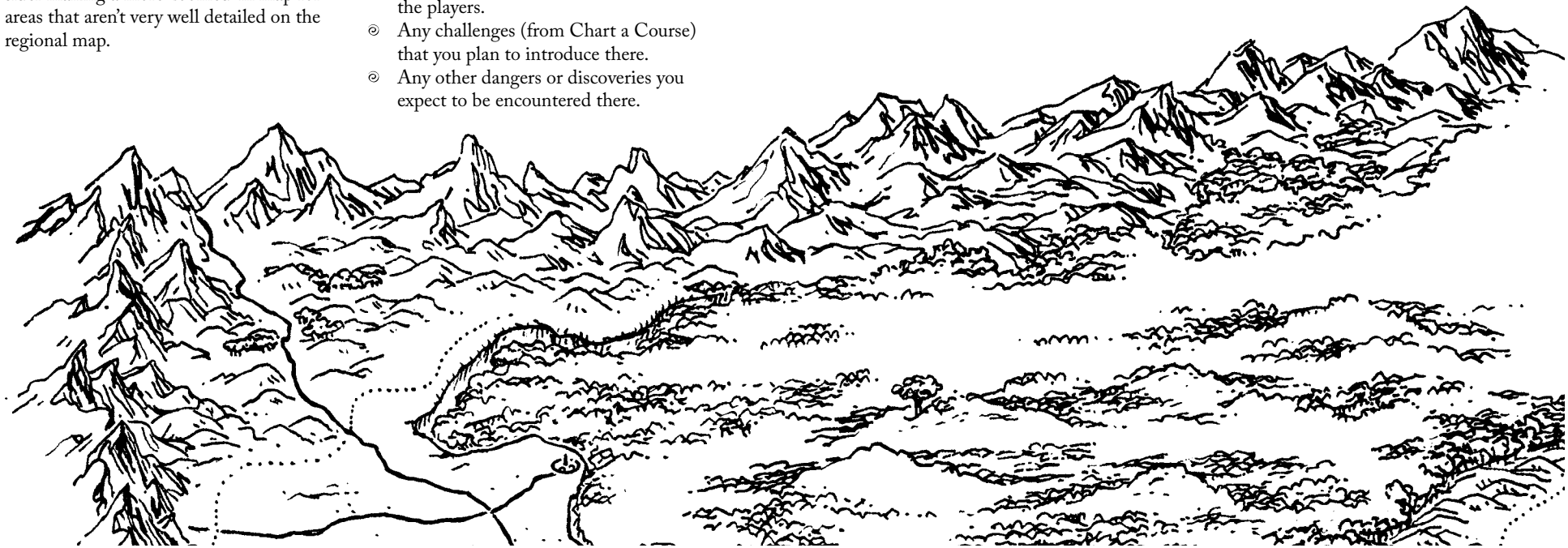
Prepare up to 7 **potential encounters**—dangers, discoveries, or events that you can drop into the journey in response to a player move or just to break things up. Use the region's dangers and discoveries in *Book II* for guidance and inspiration.

For each encounter, limit yourself to 1-3 sentences but try to tie them into a larger story. For creatures, include a disposition or activity—what are they up to and how are they likely to react to the characters? For any encounter, use it to show the characters (and more importantly, the players) the bigger picture. For example, don't just have them encounter a random hagr; have them encounter a hagr who is sullenly building a new home for itself because the Mother of Spiders and her brood chased it out of its old home.

Consider making a Die of Fate table for the **weather** (page 324), for events while they **Make Camp** (page 334), or for encounters they might have while traveling through a **perilous area** (page 323).

Create each **site** (page 355), **danger** (page 379), **discovery** (page 421), and **NPC** (page 453) they are likely to encounter, in as much or as little detail as you feel valuable and appropriate.

Finally, write up any **followers** (page 474) or other NPCs that you expect to join the party.



Let's think back to the first adventure. Crinwin (in service to a hypnotic, child-collecting swyn) are going to abduct Pryder. Rheinal, Pryder's father, will stagger back into town, injured and covered in crinwin blood. I expect the PCs to track the crinwin and try to rescue Pryder.

I Chart a Course in advance, writing down these requirements:

- You must first travel to the scene of Pryder's abduction, and follow the tracks from there
- You'll need to bring a decent tracker
- It'll probably take at least a day there and back, maybe more
- You risk getting lost (losing the trail)
- You'll need to watch out for crinwin (obviously) and other dangers of the Wood like nailadd, feathered drakes, and Fae
- You risk drawing the attention of crinwin

Next, I zoom in a little on the "Vicinity" map and expand it a little, showing the path that the crinwin took and the nearby landmarks (the Red Grove).

I list my points of interest and legs of travel:

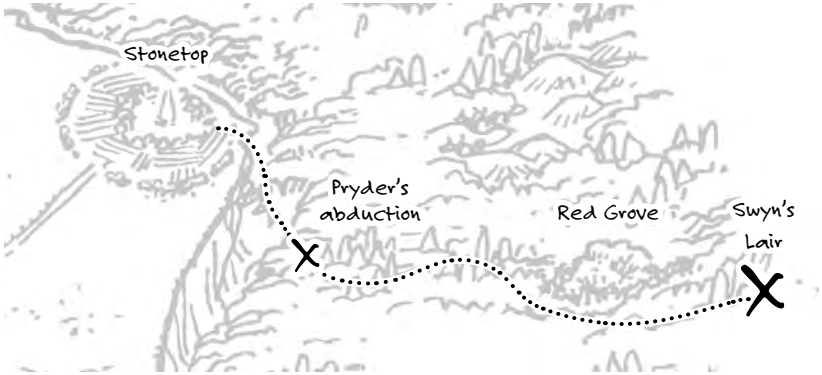
* The Stream. *It'll be the first time they cross the Stream in play. I note its page number in the almanac and skim it.*

* The Great Wood (~1 hour). *This will be the first time exploring the Wood in play. I crib impressions and questions from the almanac, and add "What sign of a warm, early spring do you notice?"*

* Scene of Pryder's abduction. *I jot down some impressions ("Blood on the stone that hit Rheinal" and "Pryder's crinwin-charm, discarded in the brush"). I'll ad-lib any investigation that they do, but this is where they'll find the trail.*

* Following the trail (~5 hours). *More travel through the Great Wood. They risk getting lost here. They'll pass by the Red Grove, so I skim the entry in* Book II, *but I doubt they'll go there.*

* Camp site. *Not a specific location, but they'll need to Make Camp. I'll play the location by ear, but they'll need to watch out for crinwin or other dangers.*



* More trail (4-5 hours). *I'll ask some questions like "What's the worst part of hiking through the forest?" and "What do you find yourself missing from home?"*

* Old Crinwin Nest. *Like a giant wasp hive, torn apart by crinwin under Sajra's sway; signs of crinwin killing each other.*

* More trail (4-5 hours). *They're getting closer, so they risk drawing attention of crinwin as they travel.*

* The Swyn's Lair. *An old Green Lord barrow. I'll work this up as a full-fledged site for them to explore.*

For possible encounters, I review the Great Wood entry in Book II *and come up with:*

* Three feathered drakes roaming the area, hunting deer & wisents; catch the PCs' scent and think they look slow and tasty.

* The crinwin that Rheinal wounded, dead and abandoned by the others.

* A grumpy Fae named Thornthumb; kicked out of the Maker-tomb by (and lost his hoard to) the swyn; tries to steal from PCs; willing to help against swyn but will ultimately swindle/betray them.

* An old Maker-ruin just off the tracks; old Forest Folk glyphs on trees/rocks nearby; half-dozen crinwin are excavating it on Sajra's behalf

* Crinwin, loyal to Sajra the Swyn, on patrol or keeping watch.

I put sticky flags in Book II *by the entries for feathered drakes, crinwin, nailadd, and swyn. I write up Thornthumb using the steps for* ***"Creating Fae"*** *(*Book II, *page 100).*

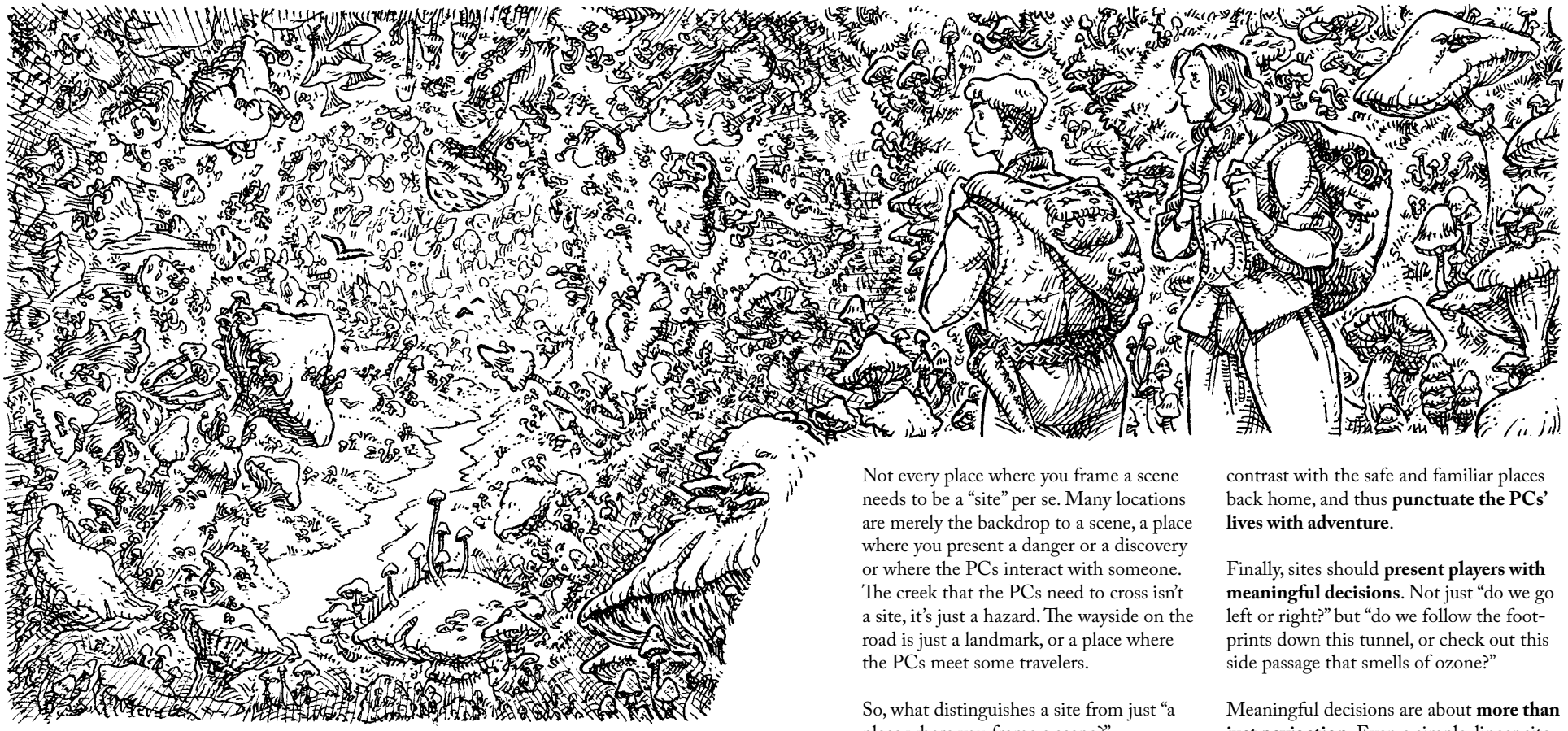
I create the swyn's lair as a ***site*** *(page 345) and make notes about the abandoned crinwin nest and the older Maker-ruins. I pick dangers and discoveries for each.*

I make notes on portraying NPCs (Rheinal, Pryder, Wynfor, etc.). Rheinal might join the PCs, and he'll take orders, so I write him up as a follower.

I'm ready to go.

Sites

Environmental storytelling
Running sites
Exploring sites
Creating sites
The Green Lord's Tomb



Sites are interesting places that the PCs can explore. They might be the destination of an expedition, a point of interest along the way, or just an incidental discovery. They are places where adventure happens!

Sites vary greatly in size and scope. Some are very small, discrete places like a stone altar on a lonely hilltop. Some are made up of distinct rooms, areas, or zones—like a cave system, or a barrow mound, or a crumbling manor from the age of the Makers. Some are sprawling complexes made up of multiple smaller sites.

Most sites are out in the wilderness, but you can think of a settlement (like Marshedge or Gordin's Delve or a farming valley up in the Whitefang Mountains) as a site as well. You can even find sites within settlements: the Judge's Chronicle (if there is one), the cistern in Stonetop (if there's more down there than water), the mill in Marshedge, the titular delves of Gordin's Delve—these are all sites!

Not every place where you frame a scene needs to be a "site" per se. Many locations are merely the backdrop to a scene, a place where you present a danger or a discovery or where the PCs interact with someone. The creek that the PCs need to cross isn't a site, it's just a hazard. The wayside on the road is just a landmark, or a place where the PCs meet some travelers.

So, what distinguishes a site from just "a place where you frame a scene?"

A site should **tell a story**, even if you're making that story up on the fly. You want your players asking, "What happened here?" and, "Why is this like this?" and it should feel like there's an answer, even if it's beyond their reach. When your site tells a story, you're **portraying a rich and mysterious world**.

Sites should be **exciting places to explore**: mysterious, wonderous, often dangerous. They should stir your players' curiosity and keep everyone a little on edge. They should contrast with the safe and familiar places back home, and thus **punctuate the PCs' lives with adventure**.

Finally, sites should **present players with meaningful decisions**. Not just "do we go left or right?" but "do we follow the footprints down this tunnel, or check out this side passage that smells of ozone?"

Meaningful decisions are about **more than just navigation**. Even a simple, linear site can be full of choices! Do the PCs try to talk to the ghost who haunts this place, or avoid it, or bind it, or what? Do they futz with the magic runes or leave them be?

When they fall into the icy water, do they press further into the cave, wet and shivery and risking hypothermia? Or do they spend time and torches drying their clothes?

Create sites that are dynamic and unstable, full of potential energy like a coiled spring. Then see what the PCs decide to do, and **play to find out what happens**.

Environmental storytelling

Sites have stories to tell. You should be able to answer questions like:

- Who built this place?
- How did it fall into ruin or disuse?
- Who or what dwells here now?
- When and why did they arrive?
- What are they up to now?
- What else has happened here?

The procedures later in this chapter (page 355) will help you establish the site's story, as will the resources in *Book II: The Wider World and Other Wonders*.

In play, you **tell a site's story through its nouns**—through the rooms or areas you present, the way you describe the environment, and the dangers and discoveries you put in front of the PCs.

For example, let's say your site was a Stone Lord temple to Aratis, then perverted by the Barrow Builders, and later sealed away by the Hillfolk. When the PCs explore it, they might find a crude stone slab, carved with warnings and runes. If they pried it open, they'd find a vast, dusty hall, lined with marred icons of Aratis. Further in: a blood-stained altar, discarded bones, and the tormented ghosts of sacrificial victims.

Now, what if a sorcerer has recently been here to claim the site's power? Then that stone slab would be ajar. The sorcerer's footprints might be visible in the dust. If the PCs approached the altar, they'd smell the rotting corpse of a recent victim. If they weren't careful, they'd get attacked by some unnatural vermin, drawn to the offal.

"What here tells you...?"

Consider asking your players to paint the scene for you. Identify a detail or element of the site's story and ask, "What here tells you __?" Let them do the environmental storytelling.

For example, "What here tells you that…

… this place has been sealed up for centuries?"
… this was once a shrine to Aratis?"
… that the shrine was defiled and used for human sacrifice?"

This approach engages players, but don't overuse it. Save it for when you know what you want to establish, but you don't care about the specifics and you're happy to build on what the players give you.

This technique isn't for everyone. It blurs **the Line** (page 195) and some players will feel like you're asking them to do your job. Others might freeze up, or introduce zany details that don't fit. But with the right group, it can be magical.

In each room, area, or scene, **try to include at least one detail or element that reflects the site's story**. Even if your players don't pick up on it, or they never piece the story together, that sort of detail will make the site feel richer and more mysterious.

Running sites

When the PCs explore a site, you run the game normally and follow the **core loop** (page 169). You play out a series of scenes and situations, as always. They just happen to take place in that site.

Considerations

As PCs explore sites—as you establish the situation, make GM moves, and resolve PC actions—keep in mind:

The physical space

Its rough dimensions, its construction, the height of ceilings and width of passages, obstacles, footing, slopes, different levels. You can use maps to help describe and clarify the site's layout and where things are.

Light sources

Who's carrying them? What are their tags? How far can they see? What out in the dark can see them? How long will their light sources last, and is that long enough?

Senses other than sight

Sounds of course, but also odors and textures, heat and cold and humidity, air pressure and movement.

Marching order

Who's going first, who's next, and who's bringing up the rear? This is especially important in cramped quarters or when something attacks.

Equipment

What does everyone have in hand, or at the ready? How heavy a load are they carrying? If it's a heavy load, how much does that suck? Do they have room to swing that *awkward* maul in here? Can they fit through that tunnel with their shield?

Followers and NPCs

Include them in the situation! Where are they? What are they doing? How do they react to __? Make GM moves through them, or at them. If left behind at camp or to stand guard, what (if anything) befalls them?

Physical and mental states

Hunger and thirst, fatigue, irritability, disorientation, dread. How do the PCs react? How do NPCs handle it? (Spoiler: not well.)

Denizens

Who or what else is here? What signs of their presence might the PCs find? Would they notice the PCs? If so, how would they react? Are they hostile or wary or curious, or what?

Light sources & tags

Here's a quick reference:

Hand: E.g., a rushlight. Illuminates no farther than your reach. Barely enough to navigate or read by.
Close, area: E.g., a candle, oil lamp, or lantern. Casts light a few feet, enough for 2 people to navigate by.
Reach, area: E.g., a torch. Illuminates out to ~10 feet, enough for a small party to navigate by.
Crude: E.g., a rushlight, an oil lamp. Prone to flicker or snuff out when moved quickly or in light wind.
Dangerous: E.g., a torch. A big open flame, smoky, prone to catch things on fire if not careful.
Slow: E.g., a tinderbox. It takes at least a few minutes to start a new fire!

Lamp oil is useless as a weapon. It takes time and effort to light, doesn't burn very hot, and goes out if spilled.

Exploring sites

Most sites are made up of multiple discrete areas or rooms. Some sites are so big that these areas or rooms are divided into zones or smaller sites.

As the PCs explore a site, you'll zoom in on one of these discrete places, establish a scene or situation there, and play it out. When the PCs move on, you **transition to the next interesting scene or situation**. But how do you decide what and where that is?

If you haven't already done so, **establish the PCs' intent**. Which way do they go? What are they looking for? What are they trying to escape or avoid? If their intent isn't clear, ask questions until it is.

Once you've established the PCs' intent, consult your prep, the appropriate entries in *Book II*, and/or your growing sense of this site, its story, and its contents. **If the next interesting place is obvious**, great. Frame the action there.

During the first adventure, the PCs have stopped to investigate an empty crinwin nest, high up in a great big tree. They've already searched the brush nearby and found a few dead crinwin that seem to have killed each other.

They've learned all they can down here and are talking about moving on. But Caradoc looks up at the empty nest and says "I want to check that out." To do so, he'll need to climb the tree—which my notes say is like a sequoia redwood! That will be a challenge for sure, and thus where I'll frame the next scene.

For larger sites with many areas or rooms, you might rely on a player move to inform where you frame things next. For example, the PCs might…

… **Defy Danger** to find the specific place (the danger being they get lost and/or stumble into a danger);
… **Seek Insight** to explore the site and see what they find;
… **Know Things** about a place they've studied, to know where __ might be;
… **use a playbook move**, like **Expert Tracker** (page 130) to follow a foe's trail to wherever it leads; or…
… **use a custom move** specific to this site (like the **Seek Out** move from The Deeps, *Book II*, page 251).

If no obvious place presents itself, then **pick a GM move you want to make.** Then pick a place in the site where it would make sense for you to make that move, or create such a place on the fly.

If you need inspiration at any point in this process, refer to your prep. If that doesn't help, **pick or roll from a relevant terrain, discovery, or site table** in *Book II*, or use an example site (tweaking it as you see fit).

Once you've decided where to establish the next scene or situation, transition to it. That could be as simple as just framing the action. Something like:

- "You enter the next room and see…"
- "You follow the outline of the broken road further into the ruins. It's been like half an hour when…"
- "You run headlong into the tunnels, who knows how long, and when you stop to catch your breath, you find yourself…"

But if the next interesting room or area is some distance away, you might want to spend a little play-time getting there. Zoom out and handle it like a **leg of travel** (page 312) on an expedition:

- Describe the environment that the PCs pass through
- Ask the PCs questions (about how they're feeling, what's on their mind, what this makes them think of, etc.)
- Portray followers and other NPCs
- Maybe Keep Company

You might make a soft GM move, too. **Use up their resources** as they march ("Mark off another hour on your lamp oil"). **Hint at more than meets the eye** ("That's the third time you've seen that mark"). **Point to a looming danger** ("A bit later, you find these gouges, like from the talons of something really big").

Or, to heck with it. **Introduce a danger** or **present a discovery** at some point along the way, and I guess this is where the next scene happens, actually.

The PCs and Andras are at Three Coven Lake, atop the dam and surveying the sprawling ruins. I present a choice of paths: climb the bluff to the north and check out the rooms carved into it, or explore the gentler southern shore. They stay clear of the water and go north.

I haven't had time to fully prep, so, I skim the Three Coven Lake entry. There's lots of terrain and smaller sites I could pick from, but that's not inherently interesting. I decide to introduce a danger, person, or faction. I roll an ENCOUNTER *(*Book II, *page 443). I get a 6 ("other entities") and then pick "Stone Lord constructs." I roll a* DISPOSITION *of "curious." I think a lithic servant is spying on the PCs (on behalf of some other entity?). I'm not sure where this encounter will occur, so I look at the* BLUFFS TERRAIN *table (*Book II, *page 441) and roll an "overhang" and "walkway/stairs… carved into the stone."*

Okay, cool, but I think it'll take a bit of a hike to get there. They set a marching order, and I start transitioning to the scene. "So, you head up into the bluffs, climbing this crumbling, rock-strewn stairway. It's a slog, and Andras keeps wincing on his leg."

Blodwen checks in with Andras, who plays it off as no big deal. Then I get back to my description. "A bit later, the stairs turn and run up the side of the bluff. There's no railing, just a sheer drop to your left, down to rocks and more water than you've ever seen. What are each of you thinking right now?"

After the players answer, I zoom in to make my move. "After like an hour, the stairs pass through a short tunnel in an outcrop. And Caradoc, something… moves. Up on top of that outcrop, like 30 feet up. It's a… person? No… more like a man-sized puppet made of stone, watching you. What do you do?"

The party stops. Vahid Knows Things (it's a Stone Lord construct, but he's unsure if it's a drone or autonomous or what). They try to communicate but it doesn't respond. Caradoc tries climbing up to it, but it slinks away. They move on, but it follows at a distance.

"This is no good," says Rhianna. "I Read the Land. What's the best spot for an ambush? I want to catch this thing." We decide that they could draw it into a chamber in the bluffs that Rhianna spots up ahead—and that's where we frame the next scene!

GM exploration moves

Use these GM moves heavily as the PCs explore a site. These are the same moves that you use while **running a journey** (page 312), but here we'll discuss using them in more local, focused areas.

Your exploration moves are:

- Provide a choice of paths
- Hint at more than meets the eye
- Offer riches at a price
- Present a discovery
- Point to a looming danger
- Introduce a danger, person, or faction
- Bar the way

➤ Provide a choice of paths

Use this move to prompt the PCs to move on, signaling that there's nothing more of interest here. Use to it remind them of their options when they decide to move on themselves. Or, use it to force a decision.

The choice of paths should be meaningful. Know where each path leads (at least in general) before you make this move, and give the players some indication of how they're different.

> *"Passages go left and right. Both curve inward, like so. To the left, at the end of your light, you see rubble. To the right, you can make out an alcove in the inner wall. And ahead of you, you're not sure but you think it opens to a big, vaulted room. Which way do you go?"*
>
> *"So, what do you think? Do you want to head north and take those stairs up into the bluffs? Or pick your way down to the south shore and check out those ruins poking out of the lake? Or what?"*

➤ Hint at more than meets the eye

Think about something you want to reveal to the PCs, but that wouldn't be obvious. Then think about what telltale signs could point to it. Describe that. See what the PCs do. They'll often ask questions, Know Things, or Seek Insight—or all three!

This move is a great way to telegraph a discovery—especially a **clue** (page 424) or an **opportunity** (page 428)—and to engage in environmental storytelling.

> *"While Vahid and Caradoc bicker about the rubble, Rhianna, you notice these smooth, curving patterns in the dirt. What do you do?"*
>
> *"Vahid, now that you're closer, you can see that both have the same sigil carved into their, well, 'foreheads,' I guess? Stone Lord markings, for sure, and… they look kind of familiar?"*
>
> *"Okay, so Blodwen, you're patching up Caradoc. I presume you've got the lantern on the cave floor next to you? Well, as you finish, you notice the flame like, pulling, towards the back of the cave. Like there's a draft, maybe? What do you do?"*

➤ Offer riches at a price

Present something valuable to the PCs—be it actual treasure, information, a needed supply, etc.—but also present a danger that makes it costly or difficult to get. See if they think it's worth it.

> *"There's this beautiful wooden chest up against the wall, covered in soil and dirt but still intact, about yea wide. And there's a dead crinwin in front of it, clutching a withered, blackened arm."*
>
> *"Yeah, Vahid, these are Tempest Lord runes. Not only that, this is some sort of formula or spell, related to… thunder? But you can't tell more than that without digging it up, which will take time and make noise. You'll risk a run-in with that beast whose scat Caradoc found earlier. What do you do?"*

➤ Present a discovery

Pick a discovery—a clue, an encounter, an opportunity, an artifact or arcanum, or even another, smaller site. Maybe roll on a table from *Book II* to decide what it is. Put it in front of the PCs, and see what they do. Refer to the **Discoveries** chapter (page 421) for guidance and more examples.

> *"As you slink about the courtyard, your foot hits something hard. Metal? You look closer, and yeah, it's a bronze slab, poking out of the soil. And, oh-ho, there are more runes on it! What do you do?"*
>
> *"'Hey, guys?' says Andras. He's looking at a wall in the back, and when you get closer you see it's a map. Of the whole city, from back before it fell. Here, let me sketch it out. It looks like… this."*

➤ Point to a looming danger

Use this move to telegraph a threat, a monster, or a hazard, to reveal and reflect its presence in the site.

> *"What should you be on the lookout for? Um… oh. You find some scat, like fist-sized, and ropey, full of fur and bones. Whatever this is from, it's a predator. A big one. What's your next question?"*
>
> *"So, Vahid, you're checking out that side passage? Cool. As you approach, you see that it's blocked by a solid slab of stone. And then there's this eerie, like, 'whoosh' and everyone's lanterns sputter. You all feel a chill, and Vahid, your breath is fogging up. What do you do?"*

➤ Introduce a danger, person, or faction

Put a danger directly in the PCs' way. As a hard move, have it catch them unawares. Or, have them encounter a denizen of the site, or a group thereof. The line between "person" and "danger" isn't always clear.

> *"Standing by the pool, so still you don't even notice him at first, is Wynfor. He didn't look up when you entered. Still hasn't. He's just… staring at the water, eyes glassy, with this little half-smile. He's drugged, maybe? What do you do?"*
>
> *"A 2? Huh. Well. You step closer to the barrow entrance, but then URK—your foot's caught on something. You look down and see a reddish vine, coiled around your ankle and calf, covered in inch-long thorns, some of which are stuck in you. But you barely feel it. What do you do?"*

➤ Bar the way

Make this move to deny access to part of a site. It could be something that's been there all along, like a locked door or a chasm. Or you could cut the PCs off as they explore, via a cave-in, a trap, a bridge collapsing behind them, etc.

Maybe there's a key they can find, or a way through with a lot of effort, or another, riskier path?

Or not. Sometimes the way is shut, and they have to turn back for now.

"No, the slab is solid, and probably a foot or two thick? It's weird, though. This very much feels like an entrance. The way it's inset into the construction around it… did this, like, fall into place? Regardless, you don't see any way to lift it up again. What do you do?"

"What's the best way through? Well, not that way. The passage is just gone, like rubble and rock and dust floating in the air. If you want to rejoin the others, you'll need to loop around, back through the shrine and the central chamber. What do you do?"

Use other moves, too!

Don't forget to use your standard GM moves while the PCs explore a site, as well as **threat moves** (page 284) and moves from hazards and monsters. For example:

- **Announce trouble:** "You hear footsteps approaching."
- **Use up their resources:** "It's been an hour: mark off your light sources."
- **Demonstrate a downside:** "Your axe catches on the low ceiling, and the thing darts in and chomps your leg for 1d8 damage."
- **Separate them:** "Too slow, I guess—you tumble into the tunnel below, alone. Oh, and take 1d8 damage."
- **Tell them the consequences/requirements and ask:** "You'll have to Defy Danger, and you risk a nasty, bone-breaking fall; do you do it?"
- **Advance towards impending doom:** "It's no use! You're caught in the swirling current and can't swim free—the whirlpool is getting closer!"
- **Hurt them:** "ZZZOLT, there's a flash of light and pain and now you're slumped against the wall, singed and aching—take 1d6+2 damage, ignores armor, and marked *dazed*."

Creating sites

You won't always create sites the same way, or to the same level of detail. Sometimes, you'll improvise a site in play; other times, you'll carefully prep them between sessions. Often, you'll do a bit of both.

Regardless of how much you're prepping vs. improvising, you want your site to **tell a story**, to be **an exciting place to explore**, and to present the players with plenty of **meaningful decisions**.

Here's how to do that:

1) Lay the foundation
- Ask questions
- Build on what you've got
- Exploit the setting guide

2) Build up its story
- Look for connections
- Ask yourself questions
- Answer those questions
- Create a timeline

3) Sketch out the site's contents
- Populate it
- Identify dangers and discoveries
- Establish areas/rooms
- Describe the environment
- Arrange areas/rooms

4) Write it up as much as you like
- Create a map or visual (maybe)
- Detail each area/room
- Subdivide as needed
- Make lists and tables
- Make plans
- Review and revise

You don't need to do this entire process, or do it all at once. If pressed for time, do only as much of the process as you need for the next session. Improvise the rest, and finish later if it's relevant.

Last session, the PCs lured a curious construct into a site north of Three Coven Lake. I laid the foundation during play, picking an example site from Book II*: "warren of rooms carved into a bluff. Once a Stone Lord's manor, then a warlord's fortress, finally the site of her demise." I made up details as the PCs set their ambush, and we ended there.*

Between sessions, I flesh out this warren they've found themselves in, building up its story and sketching out some contents. I suspect that the PCs will make this their base camp, so I even draw a map.

I still need to decide what this construct's deal is, and figure out where in Three Coven Lake the PCs might find the Mindgem's fiery heart (the whole point of this expedition). I bet they're related! I lay the foundation for the heart's resting place: a reclaimed tenement north of the bluffs, home to a deathless sorcerer whose mind is spread among a number of lithic servants (all powered by the fiery heart). I write up the sorcerer, but don't bother detailing the site yet—I doubt the PCs will get there next session.

Instead, I create a few other areas the PCs might encounter first: a haunted workshop, a broken obsidian mirror, and the home of an exiled Hillfolk spirit-talker (the sorcerer's rival). I'll flesh out the sorcerer's complex after the next session.

1 Foundation

Start with a core concept for the site and its story, something with a few compelling details that you can build on while improvising or as you continue to prep. This should be brief: a few sentences and an evocative title, no more.

Ask questions

If you're establishing the site during play, and the PCs might know about it, defer to them. Has a PC been here before? Ask what it's like! Would a PC have heard of it? Ask what they've heard.

As always, incorporate the players' answers into the fiction but feel free to put a twist on it. Sure, that barrow was full of bones and swarming mice when the Fox explored it, but that was years ago and the mice could be gone. Sure, everyone knows the ruin is haunted, but perhaps it's a grumpy Fae who dwells there rather than a ghost.

For our first adventure, the main threat (Sajra the swyn, a monkey-headed snake beast) dwells in a Green Lord tomb. The crinwin are dragging Pryder (one of the village youths) back there, and the PCs are in pursuit. I've already Charted a Course and prepped the journey, and I expect the PCs to arrive next session.

Earlier, we established that Rhianna thinks the crinwin are headed to a big Maker-ruin. She and her pa followed a rabid wolf there in her youth. They found it near the ruin, but got spooked. "What spooked you off?" I asked. This was before the Forest Folk left, and she said they'd found the wolf's burnt bones near the entrance, like an offering, and they wanted nothing to do with that!

Build on what you've got

Think through what you know about this site. What can you assume from context? What have you told the players and what have they told you? What have you already decided, in your heart of hearts?

If there's a resource that you want to build on or adapt—like an image or map, a module from another RPG, or an **adventure starter** (page 22)—think about that, too!

Why are you putting this site in the game? For color? To break up a journey? Because this is where the PCs can find what they're looking for? Or what? Do your reasons imply anything more about this site?

If you're prepping in advance, then write this stuff down. If improvising, just think it through. Either way: let your creativity build on this foundation.

I jot down what I know about this site:

- 1½ days away, in the Great Wood
- Sajra's been here since last fall
- Sajra displaced a Fae squatter, Thornthumb, who's still in the area and holding a grudge
- Sajra has entranced a nest of crinwin and two Stonetop children
- Crinwin are looting a nearby ruin to add to Sajra's hoard
- Rhianna was here in her youth
- Forest Folk left burnt offerings (?)

I'm putting this site in the game because I need a lair for the villain, and because I'd like the PCs to meet a mummified Green Lord, maybe. Which tells me that:

- The tomb is basically intact

Exploit the setting guide

Book II is full of example sites and tools to help you create your own. Use it for inspiration and to help make sites that fit the larger *Stonetop* setting.

If you're making a site from scratch, start by deciding what manner of site it is: a Fae domain, a ruin of the Makers, a haunted site, etc. If unsure, refer to the entry for the relevant region and review the sections for "Terrain" and/or "Discoveries" therein.

Once you know the manner of site you're creating, go to the "Sites" section for the appropriate entry. For example, you'll find the entry for **Forge Lord sites** on page 158 of *Book II*, and **haunted sites** on page 72, in the "Death and the undying" entry. Use the procedures and tables there to develop the site's concept.

Treat the tables as creative prompts. Pick options that make sense or catch your eye, or roll if unsure. If you do roll, try to make sense of the results even if they seem disjointed. Unlikely combinations can lead to some of the most interesting, memorable sites. That said, if a roll really doesn't feel right, then pick something else or roll again. You're not beholden to the dice!

Consider the results in light of what you've already established. Envision the site. If you're prepping in advance, write a few sentences describing the place. Try to get fairly specific, but keep it brief.

If you're creating the site on the fly, you can ask your players to roll the dice. Read the results out loud, or write them down and "Hmm" sagely, revealing them through play. Either way, take a short break to think through the rest of the process.

*The swyn's lair is a Green Lord tomb, so I find the "Sites" section of the Green Lord entry. This is a "ruin," so I start there (*Book II, *page 214). The process has me roll or pick a Green Lord theme, and "tombs, mummification, constructed afterlives" is the obvious choice. I roll a 6 for structure, "ziggurat/pyramid/dome" and the purpose is clearly a "tomb." I roll a 1 for architectural elements, "huge slabs of smooth stone…carved with scrollwork and bas relief." Because I want a Green Lord mummy to still be in there, I choose "buried, submerged, and/or overgrown, but mostly intact" for the site's condition.*

The procedure then has me pick a Great Wood terrain, so I flip to that table and roll a 4, "clearing, meadow, sparse trees." It also says to populate it with lingering signs, artifacts, and dangers but I'll worry about that later.

I ponder a bit and write down:

THE GREEN LORD'S TOMB

A dome-shaped tomb, mostly intact, with a few old oaks growing out of it. Looks like a small hill, with bits of worked stone poking out of the soil. Inside are wide-open halls of white marble with intricate scrollwork, leading to the still-intact burial vault of a Green Lord. Forest Folk used to leave it offerings. A Fae, Thornthumb, used to live in the outer halls, but was displaced last autumn by Sajra and its crinwin minions.

2 Story

Sites should tell stories, even if those stories are relatively simple. A site's story informs how you describe it and what the PCs might find within.

If you're prepping between sessions, then give this process some time. Take notes. Browse *Book II*. Let things percolate and come back to them later.

If you're doing this during play, keep it short and simple. Go with the obvious connections, questions, and answers.

Look for connections

Start with the site's **foundation** (page 356), the details already established, and the questions you've started asking yourself. Consider how those things connect to:

- Each other
- Other setting elements in *Book II*
- The setting's timeline (see AGES OF THE WORLD, *Book II*, page 496)
- Things the players are interested in
- The PCs, their stuff, and their pasts
- Established NPCs and threats
- Previous events in-game
- The questions on your **"I wonder…"** list (page 33)

Let these connections prompt questions, suggest answers, or just inspire new ideas. Think about how all these elements fit together in your site.

Ask yourself questions

Think about what you've got so far, and start asking questions. Write them down! Ask yourself about…

… the **connections** you've made and what those connections imply. "What do the Ustrina know about this ruin? Why do they stay away?"

… any apparent **contradictions**. "If the site is intact and fully visible, but close to town, why has no one explored it?"

… **fuzzy details**. "It was a workshop, but what type of work?" "Who was this Forge Lord, specifically?"

… **causes and reasons**. "What melted the statue?" "Why did they build this place here, specifically?"

… **how it's changed** over time. "How did it fall into ruin?" "Who inhabited it next? How did they change it?"

… the **denizens** who dwell here, their motives, and how they interact with each other. "What does the hagr want?" "How do the bandits keep the ghosts at bay?"

… **timing**. "How long have the crinwin been here?" "How long was the barrow sealed before Winoc opened it?"

… **anything else** that feels important.

Answer those questions

Start answering your questions, in whatever order makes sense or whatever order the answers occur to you.

If there's a clear answer to a question, then great, use that. Otherwise, jot down some possible answers. Either pick between them randomly or choose the answer that excites you most, the one that makes the most sense or feels the most thematic. If unsure, put it aside for now and come back to the question later.

If no answer occurs to you at all, or you dislike the ones you've got, then flip through your notes, your threats, and other entries in *Book II*. Look for connections that might help answer the question. Roll on a relevant table in *Book II*, or use a divination tool (e.g. tarot cards).

If you're still stumped, consider whether you need to answer this question, or if it's the right question. Add the question to your **"I wonder…"** list (page 33) or frame it differently. Maybe the question isn't, "How do the bandits keep the ghosts at bay?" but rather, "Which of the bandits have been possessed?"

Let your answers spawn new questions. Answer them. If new connections occur to you and prompt new ideas, consider using them. Don't be afraid to revise and adapt your answers or even your foundation if you need to.

Create a timeline

As the site's story becomes clear to you, start to create a timeline of key events. Put them in a relative order: this happened, then this, and then this. Vague times are usually fine (centuries ago, decades ago, years ago, last winter, last week, etc.).

If your site is more than a decade or so old, refer to AGES OF THE WORLD (*Book II*, page 496). Try to align your site's timeline with that of the setting.

If you're prepping the site in advance, then write this timeline down in as much detail as you find useful. It's typically a bullet list of key events, but you can include details like the motives or experiences of actors in the site's story. If you're so inclined, you might even draw maps or illustrations of the place at various points in time to visualize how it has changed.

If you're improvising a site during play, then keep things high-level. Focus on the details relevant to play. If you're creating a Stone Lord ruin that's been haunted by a ghost for a few decades, then gloss over the ruin's origins and spend more time on the ghost's death and subsequent events.

New questions will arise as you make your timeline—answer them! As you make new connections, reconsider previous decisions. Adjust your timeline accordingly.

When you think you're done, read over the timeline from beginning to end. Look for obvious holes or contradictions. Address them as needed.

I've laid the foundation for my Green Lord tomb; it's time to build up its story. I start by looking for connections.

The Green Lords bred the Fae to create false afterlives for themselves. But when the Fae rebelled, they "gutted tombs." So why is this tomb still intact? (A question for later!)

The tomb is in the Great Wood, so the Forest Folk must have known about it. The area is probably marked with Forest Folk glyphs.

Rhianna and her pa found what looked like a burnt offering left outside this place, which they think the Forest Folk left.

Forest Folk descended from the Green Lord's mortal servants. There's a mummified Green Lord in there. Did they worship it?

Blodwen's player is curious about the Forest Folk; she might be able to learn something about them here.

Sajra is a swyn. The Green Lords made swyn with help from the Things Below, to fight the Fae. The Fae hunt swyn.

Sajra moved in last autumn, and kicked out a Fae named Thornthumb. Thornthumb was a collector himself, so some of his hoard must still be there.

Thornthumb would know all the ins and outs of the tomb. He would have known (and traded with?) the Forest Folk before they left, too

Sajra has turned the crinwin into "fawning servants," but their instinct is "to covet." They're probably jealous of the children's place in Sajra's collection.

From there, I make a list of questions and then start answering them.

- Why didn't the Fae gut the tomb during their uprising? *The inner vault is guarded by powerful, loyal Fae. The outer tunnels were looted and ransacked, but the vault and Green Lord are secure.*
- When did Thornthumb move in? *A few centuries ago, after he lost his home in the Fae revolt.*
- What did the Forest Folk think of this place? *They treated it as a sacred site, petitioning the Green Lord like an oracle or (fickle, dangerous) god.*
- What was Thornthumb's relationship with the Forest Folk? *Did he act as an intermediary between them and the Green Lord? Or charge them a toll for passing through his home? That second one feels right.*
- What caused Sajra to come here? *Swyn hate each other, but they do breed occasionally. I think Sajra is young and came here to establish its territory? This makes me think that swyn have genetic memory, and hatch with much of their progenitors' knowledge and cunning.*
- What minions did Sajra bring with it when it arrived? *If it's young, probably not many. Some crinwin from elsewhere, but that's it.*
- What treasures did Thornthumb leave behind? *It could be anything. One of the Mindgem's missing parts? Eh, that just feels too convenient. Not sure I need to answer this just yet.*

- How did Sajra get Thornthumb to leave? (Threats? Violence? Trickery?) *It took over his mind and had him gift Sajra the tomb and his hoard. Now he's oathbound to stay away.*
- Has Sajra met the Green Lord? *No, I think it's stymied by the guardian Fae. But it wants access to the vault—it thinks it can overthrow the Green Lord and claim its treasure and servants.*
- Where do the crinwin actually live? *I think Sajra loathes the crinwin. It lets the most-trusted ones (who came here with it) nest in the tomb, but not in its quarters. The new crinwin nest outside.*
- What's the crinwin's relationship to the children? *Crinwin are jealous but also curious, creepily mimicking the kids' words and songs. The kids are scared of the crinwin, but mostly kept in a stupor.*
- What do the crinwin think of Sajra? *The "trusted" ones basically worship it, and lord over the new ones. They mimic Sajra's voice and collect its discarded "treasure." The new crinwin fawn over it and desperately want to please it.*
- What do they all eat? *Crinwin forage small game, grubs, roots, and (gross) food for the kids. But Sajra goes out periodically to hunt for itself. I can't see it living on the crinwin's meager fare.*

As I put the site's timeline together, I realize that the Fae rebellion happened in the Age of the Makers, millennia ago, which means that Thornthumb was there a loooong time. I bet he used his sway over plants and trees to help keep the place hidden.

When I'm done, the timeline looks like this:

IN THE TIME OF THE MAKERS
(millennia ago)
- Tomb is built, Green Lord interred
- Centuries later: Fae revolt starts! Guardian Fae stay loyal, but rebels ransack the tomb's outer tunnels, burn most mummified servants
- Thornthumb displaced by war; finds tomb, moves in to outer tunnels, hides the ruin with plants and growth
- War ends, tomb is largely forgotten

OVER THE NEXT FEW CENTURIES
- Forest Folk sometimes petition Green Lord's spirit for knowledge/aid
- Thornthumb collects tolls from Forest Folk petitioners; his hoard grows

LAST TWENTY YEARS OR SO
- Rhianna & pa find burnt wolf here
- Forest Folk disappear; crinwin and nailadd populations grow
- Sajra is hatched in Vor Svetelik

LAST AUTUMN
- Sajra arrives at tomb with crinwin thralls in tow; makes Thornthumb, promise to stay away from the tomb, Sajra, its servants and possessions
- Sajra enthralls local crinwin; they make nests outside the tomb

LAST WINTER INTO SPRING
- Crinwin kidnap Tiwlip from the Woods
- Crinwin raid Stonetop, kidnap Wynfor and bring him back to the tomb
- Since thaw: crinwin have started excavating other ruins near tomb

NOW
- Crinwin have kidnapped Pryder, are dragging him towards the tomb.

3 Contents

Decide what the PCs might find as they explore the site: its inhabitants, the areas within it, the dangers and discoveries that make it interesting, and the connective tissue that holds it all together.

If you're improvising the site during play, you'll do this spontaneously, inventing the contents as needed based on the site's foundation and story, often picking from ideas presented in *Book II*.

If you're prepping between sessions, then do the following steps in whatever order makes sense. Take multiple passes. Start high-level, with generalities. Then review what you've got. Consolidate where you can. Look for what's missing and for interesting interactions. Revise. Make decisions and create stuff as needed.

Populate it

Who or what lives or dwells here? Who or what is visiting, exploring, or just passing through? You probably already know this, but make a list.

Don't limit yourself to people. Think about beasts, spirits, constructs, undead entities, and any other entity that the PCs might interact with.

If there are multiple denizens, then think about the relationships between groups and individuals. Factions and rivalries. Debts, alliances, and feuds. Familial ties. Love and hate and jealousy, all that stuff. Include some notes about these relations as you make your list.

If you expect the PCs to communicate with any denizens, then create them as **NPCs** (page 453), with tags, traits, an instinct, roleplaying notes, etc.

Identify dangers & discoveries

Make a list of the dangers and discoveries implied by the site's foundation, story, and occupants. This might include:

- **Hazards** (page 381) that the PCs might need to deal with
- **Monsters** (page 391), i.e. denizens that the PCs might fight
- **Clues** (page 424), especially those that the PCs need to achieve their goals
- Other, smaller **sites** (page 426)
- Non-hostile **encounters** (page 426) with the site's denizens
- **Opportunities** (page 428)
- **Artifacts** (page 428) and **arcana** (page 438) found within the site

Refer to the relevant entries in *Book II*, or make your own as needed.

The goal here is to identify the elements that you want to include, and those that you need to to account for. Don't worry just yet about placing them within the site, or writing them up in detail. You can do that now, if it helps you make decisions or answer questions. But it's often best to wait until you're doing the site's final **write-up** (page 368).

Establish areas/rooms

Write out the distinct rooms or places that are suggested by your site's foundation and story, by its denizens, and by common sense. A small site might have just one area, but most sites have at least a few.

If the site was built for a specific purpose, start there. What rooms or areas would it have had to fulfill that purpose? A home would have a place to sleep, a hearth, some sort of common room, a larder, etc. But a fortress would have ramparts, a gate, a well, maybe an inner keep.

Think about why the PCs are here in the first place. If they're looking for something, what room or area is it in? Why is it there, specifically? What does that tell you about the site?

If you need to invent a new area or room (to hold a danger or discovery, or to just fill out the site), then create it as a new site using the tools in *Book II*. If the PCs are exploring a Stone Lord ruin and you need to place a broken construct somewhere, then roll up a new **Stone Lord site** (*Book II*, page 384), treat it as an area within the larger site, and place the construct there.

Describe the environment

Envision the site, or the individual area or room you're working on. Make some notes as to how you'll describe it.

For a larger site, think in generalities. What sorts of rooms, areas, terrain, and features can be found there? Build out a vocabulary of places, imagery, impressions, and details that you can pull from when framing scenes and describing the site.

For smaller, discrete places, get specific. What features of this place make it distinct? Keep it brief for now, just a sentence or two, enough to define the place in your head.

As you do this, think about the site's story. What traces remain of its original purpose? What condition is it in now? How are the current denizens using it, and how has that changed or shaped the place? Reflect the site's story in how you describe the environment.

If it helps you to draw maps or pictures at this point, go for it!

I start sketching out the contents of my Green Lord tomb with the following lists:

DENIZENS

- Sajra the swyn
- "Trusted" crinwin. Nests inside, came here with Sajra and lord over the others. Collect Sajra's castoff junk, mimic its voice. Jealous of the kids.
- "New" crinwin. Nests outside, jealous of everyone. Mimic kids' songs, voices.
- Wynfor and Tiwlip. Entranced kids, kept near Sajra. They sing for him!
- Pryder. Injured, imprisoned, out of it. Not yet entranced?
- The mummified Green Lord, blissfully unaware of the others
- The guardian Fae outside the vault

☐ Other Fae/spirits in the Green Lord's false afterlife. Resentful? (Detail!)

DANGERS

- Swyn, Book II, p. 222
- Crinwin, Book II p. 61
- Green Lord Mummy, Book II p. 221

☐ Magical wards on vault (create!)
☐ Guardian Fae (create!)

- Ensnaring plants (from Thornthumb)
- Unstable construction, Book II p. 390

DISCOVERIES

☐ Thornthumb/Sajra's hoard (create!)
☐ Grave goods interred with the Green Lord (create!)
☐ The crinwin's trash hoard (create!)

- Crinwin keeping their own "children" (dead animals, crude dolls), singing with them (mimicking kid's voices)
- "Trusted" crinwin bossing new crinwin around, mimicking Sajra's voice
- Hidden tunnels for Sajra/crinwin to come and go
- Outside: giant snake poop & shed skin

AREAS/ROOMS

- Intact inner tomb (burial vault, the wards, the guardian Fae)
- Green Lord's afterlife (Fae domain)
- Entrance hall (overgrown, crumbling, vandalized)
- Exterior of tomb ("hill," oaks with the shabby nests of "new" crinwin).

☐ Sajra's quarters (what, exactly?)
☐ Wherever the children are kept (???)
☐ "Trusted" Crinwin nests (where?)

ENVIRONMENT (OUTSIDE)

- Forest Folk glyphs carved into trees nearby, faded
- Hill, worked stone poking out of soil
- Few big oaks, reaching out over the hill like a blessing
- Papery crinwin nests in the oaks, small and new-looking
- Overgrown, cave-like entrance

ENVIRONMENT (INSIDE)

- Grand, vaulted chambers and halls
- White stone slabs, carved with plant-motif scrollwork/bas relief
- Mostly dark, but the white stone catches and amplifies light
- Dirt, mud, rubbish strewn about
- Empty burial niches lining halls
- Graffiti, marred carvings, old soot
- Wood archways/pillars, like trees that just grew that way, some rotten
- Root tendrils hanging down in places
- Collapsed tunnels/walls, rubble

I do a second pass to firm up the fuzzy bits. I don't bother with the Fae or spirits who dwell in the Green Lord's false afterlife (I'm not sure that the PCs will even get in there), nor with Sajra's hoard or other treasures (In a pinch, I can pick stuff from Book II*).*

For the inner vault, I think that the wards involve a series of tests, meant to ensure that petitioners approach the Green Lord with proper respect. I write down:

- Halls of Humility & Gratitude (dream-like tests)
- Hall of Offerings (guardian Fae, leads to false afterlife)

I'm not sure what exactly these will entail; I'll come back to them later. I do spend time creating the ***Almtakers*** *(page 405), the Fae who guard the Hall of Offerings. It seems important to understand them, even if they never appear in play.*

Now, where is Sajra's lair? It would be the grandest place that remained in the outer tomb. But what? I go back to the Green Lord sites and roll up a new one to represent this room. I get a theme of "spirits of the wild… bound or put to use" and a purpose of "Esoteric (laboratory, shrine, surgery, etc.)," and more stone slabs and carvings for architectural elements. I roll a theme from the ***spirits of the wild*** *(*Book II*, page 357): "water/streams/ponds/lakes."*

Okay, I think this was a shrine (to Danu?), featuring a natural spring and tended by the spring's spirit. The Fae and Thornthumb left it intact, but Sajra has claimed it as its den. Ooh, and Sajra's presence is starting to corrupt the place. Cool! (I add "Spirit of the spring" to my list of denizens.)

If Thornthumb left the shrine intact, then he probably dwelt in another chamber. I bet it was, like, a memorial to the Green Lord, a mosaic of moss depicting its achievements. The Fae burned it during the revolt, but the moss grew back under Thornthumb's care (in crazy-quilt patterns). The crinwin looted the place under Sajra's direction, but maybe there's still a hidden entrance that Thornthumb knows of? Yeah!

Now, what's going on with the children? Wynfor (Caradoc's nephew) and Tiwlip (the girl who was taken first, last winter) are enthralled by Sajra. I think it prefers their company to the crinwin, so it keeps them in its own chamber: clean (they wash in the spring) and bedecked in ill-fitting silks (from Thornthumb's hoard). They're docile and dreamy, but armed with bronze knives and they'll stab anyone who tries to take them away or otherwise mess with Sajra's stuff.

Pryder, meanwhile, arrived only recently. He's concussed and feverish, recovering in a burial niche near Sajra's lair. Sajra's ordered him to sleep, and I think the "new" crinwin who brought him here are guarding him (to the chagrin of the "trusted" crinwin).

For the "inside" criwin nests, my first idea is to have them be in the entrance hall. But I don't really want them to be the first thing the PCs encounter inside. I'd like to build up some tension! The nests can be in a great hall just outside the inner vault, big and grand, now partially collapsed and strewn with rubble. The crinwin nests are built on (old, rotting) pillar-trees.

Arrange areas/rooms

Look at your rooms and areas and think about how they're arranged. Where else can you get to from each area? What (if anything) lies between them?

To represent the site's layout, you might…

… group them by region or zone;
… create a list of areas/rooms that you'll either pick from or roll on;
… write down the "exits" for each area or room, and what each connects to;
… make a flowchart or nodal diagram;
… draw a representational map; or…
… use some variation or combination of the above.

Which approach you use will depend on personal preference, the complexity and size of the site, and how "concrete" you want the site to be.

As you arrange your site, you might realize that something is missing, or decide to add a new room or area as filler or connective tissue. Or you might realize you have an idea for a new danger or discovery. Or that something you thought of earlier no longer fits. So be it!

If you're arranging your site concretely, with specific connections between areas, then think about the order in which the PCs are most likely to explore them. How will that shape the experience?

Linear connections (room A leads to room B leads to room C) mean the PCs must visit those areas in that order. Linear sites also constrain how denizens react or where they can go when the PCs approach.

To make a site more dynamic, with more decision points for the players and more ways its denizens can respond, include:

- Multiple paths through the site
- Loops, where areas/rooms connect to each other from multiple directions
- Different levels and sub-levels
- Multiple entry/exit points
- Hidden, difficult, or dangerous paths
- Paths that the site's denizens can use but the PCs can't

Such additions make a site more interesting, but also more complicated to prep and run. And multiple paths, levels, and so on don't always make sense. Sometimes a simple, straightforward site is best—there can be plenty of exciting moments and meaningful decisions in a linear site!

I've been picturing the Green Lord's tomb as a series of halls and chambers encircling the inner tomb, reflecting its dome-like shape. I start by listing the areas and rooms, like so:

OUTSIDE
- Clearing around hill
- Entrance to tomb (overgrown)
- Oaks atop hill (crinwin nests)

INSIDE
1. Entrance
2. Mossy chamber
   - Hidden tunnel to outside
3. Great hall (crinwin nests)
   - Entrance to inner tomb
4. Shrine (Sajra's lair)
   - Connects back to entrance

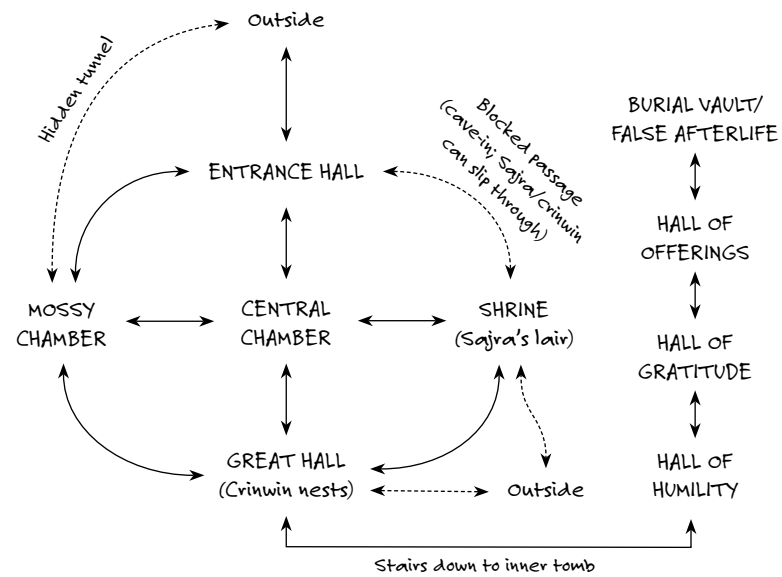
Between each of the above: halls with (ransacked) burial niches

I'm thinking that the hall between the shrine and the entrance will be mostly caved in, with a narrow tunnel that Sajra and the crinwin can squeeze through.

Upon reflection, that feels too linear. The swyn and the crinwin are mobile, stealthy, cautious *foes and I want this to feel like a game of cat-and-mouse. The layout should support that.*

I put the inner vault below the main level of the tomb and add a central chamber between the entrance, mossy chamber, shrine, and great hall. I think the central chamber was a larger burial vault for the Green Lord's chief servants (ransacked, of course).

I draw the site out as a nodal diagram, adding a few burrowed tunnels to the outside—I don't think Sajra or the crinwin would be happy with only one exit!



4 Write-up

Once you've identified the site's contents, organize your notes and write things up in as much detail as you find useful, valuable, or fun.

The goal here is a **document that helps you run the site in play**. And as you create that document, you'll end up **honing your craft**. You'll fill in gaps. You'll find ways to improve your environmental storytelling and make the site more exciting. You'll see how the site fits together and fix things that don't make sense.

The nature of your write-up will vary from site to site, and every GM's approach is different. One of your sites might need a few paragraphs, a list or two, and some references to *Book II*. Another site might call for maps, room-by-room descriptions, factions, tactics, and so on.

Remember: you're writing this for yourself. Don't bother with flowery language unless you plan to read it out loud. Your write-up doesn't need to be pretty or even complete; it needs to be functional.

Create maps or visuals (maybe)

If you don't already have one, consider making (or using) a map or visual aid to represent the site. This might be a nodal diagram like the one on the previous page, pictures, a representative map, or even 3D terrain if that's your jam.

Maps and visual aids help solidify the site in your mind. They speed up play and make it easier to describe the environment ("It looks like this!"). They make it easier to adjudicate PC actions and to decide what the site's denizens can perceive and how they respond to the PCs.

But maps and visuals require a lot of work. And maps in particular lock you into a specific layout, making it harder to adapt to pacing needs or brilliant ideas. If you don't have time, or if you prefer a looser structure for this site, then don't bother.

Detail each area/room

Give each area or room a title, something you can refer to in your notes: "Entryway" or "Long hall" or "room A," etc.

Then write out the details and decisions that you want to remember about that area—the stuff you don't want to forget or think through in play. Include some or all of the following:

- A description of the environment
- Impressions from various senses
- Questions you might ask the PCs
- Contents: NPCs, dangers, discoveries, potential events (below)
- Lore, backstory, or explanations
- Exits and connections to other areas

For the contents, include whatever details you need: numbers, where they're found, behaviors, tactics, etc. (see **"Make plans"** on the next page). For content that has its own stat block or write-up, include a page reference, a copy of that write-up, or a link as appropriate.

Subdivide as needed

If there are details that you find yourself writing for multiple areas or rooms, pull that out into its own entry.

Likewise, if certain dangers, discoveries, or NPCs might be found throughout the site, or are complex enough to warrant it, then give them their own heading.

Find/create content

If you need to add something to an area or the site as a whole, either pick something from *Book II* (and tweak it as needed) or create it from scratch. Refer to:

- **Preparing hazards** (page 384)
- **Monsters** (page 391)
- **Prepping clues** (page 425)
- **Building encounters** (page 426)
- **Opportunities** (page 428)
- **Creating artifacts** (page 434)
- **Creating minor arcana** (page 444)
- **Creating major arcana** (page 446)
- **Creating NPCs** (page 453)
- **Writing moves** (page 551)

If you realize you need to create a new area, treat it like a smaller site. Lay its **foundation** (page 356). Build up its **story** (page 358). Sketch out its **contents** (page 362), and then write it up as needed.

Make lists and tables

Some content exists in a quantum state. The sentries walk a perimeter. The cave bears might be out foraging. The ruin is vast and you can't be bothered to plot out where each danger, discovery, or NPC is at every moment.

Put this sort of content into a list (or lists). When the PCs enter a new area, or when you want to make a GM move but aren't sure what to do, then pick something from this list.

If you like, turn the list into a table. Assign numbers 1-6 or 1-12 to the options and have a player roll the Die of Fate to see which option they get.

For examples, see the many regional and site entries in *Book II*.

Make plans

Think about how NPCs or monsters are likely to react to the PCs, or what might happen when the PCs enter an area, or how long after X will Y happen. Reflect this in your notes as…

… a descriptive sentence or two;
… one or more GM moves you can make;
… a series of if/then statements;
… a list of possibilities;
… a Die of Fate table;
… a custom player move;
… an **impending doom** and a series of **grim portents** (page 290);
… a timeline or timetable of events; or…
… a combination of the above.

Review and revise

When you think you're done, read through your write-up. Is anything missing? Add it. Is anything no longer needed? Cut it.

Make sure it makes sense. What was the site originally built or used for? Would it have served that purpose? How is it being used now, and does that actually work? How do denizens come and go? How do they see? Where do they sleep, store food and prep it? What do they do with waste?

Do the site's areas, layout, and contents reflect the answers to these questions? If not, or if you can't answer these questions at all, then revise your write-up accordingly.

Give the write-up one last read-through, looking for inconsistencies or conflicts. If you find them, fix them.

It'll never be perfect. There's always something you'll miss, something that could be better. It's okay. If anyone even notices, you can fix it during play!

I'm ready to write up the Green Lord's tomb! I start by turning my nodal diagram into an actual map of the main level, because it helps me to picture the place.

From there, I start detailing the "Exterior," but quickly realize that I need to break it up into the approach, the exterior of the site proper, and the various entrances. I give the crinwin their own write-up, because I want to detail their numbers and tactics.

I move on to the interior, starting with the entry chamber. I realize that I'm writing things that are true about every room, so I create an entry for "Interior (throughout)."

I write up the collapsed tunnel and its secret burrow, then the central chamber. The central chamber starts simple enough (vaulted ceiling, smashed sarcophagi, empty niches), but I realize that this is where the rebel Fae would have burned the bodies of the Green Lord's servants. I add details about the soot-stained ceiling and scorched floor.

I write up the shrine next. I envision its original state, then I imagine what Sajra has done to it. He's replaced the goddess's statue with his hoard, so I add "broken statue" to the rubble in the central chamber. I write up Tiwlip and Wynfor (the kids) and some notes about how they live. Then I write up the spirit of the spring (because Blodwen can speak with spirits).

Next comes the mossy chamber. I create the moss spirits as a bit of comic relief. Then I realize that moss needs light and water, so I add the glowing makerglass in the ceiling and an irrigation channel in the floor. (I add the channel to the map, the shrine, and the central chamber, too.)

I write up the great hall, starting with the pillars, the crinwin nests, and the stairs. I want to include an "unstable construction" hazard, telegraphing it with the collapsed pillar, the rubble, and the sagging ceiling. Then I prep the hazard as an impending doom and grim portents.

I'm yet to decide where Pryder is. I know he's asleep in a burial niche, but where? I pick randomly, placing him between the mossy chamber and the great hall. I write up that hallway, with the crinwin who kidnapped Pryder jealously guarding him and some "trusted" crinwin spying on them.

Speaking of crinwin: They get a second entry for the interior. I consider making a "crinwin encounter" table to reflect the weird stuff the crinwin get up to, but the crinwin are almost certainly going to be on alert when the PCs enter the tomb. Instead of a table, I write up some if/then tactics for them and a quick list of things they might be up to if caught unawares. I also add some details to other areas to reflect the crinwin's relationship to wasps, their obsessive hoarding, and their attempts to ape Sajra.

Sajra also gets its own write-up. I realize that it might not be in the tomb when the PCs arrive, so I create a Die of Fate table for that. I start writing some if/then tactics, but Sajra is smart, mobile, stealthy, cautious *and* magical*—there are too many options! I opt for a brief description of its priorities and likely tactics.*

I don't bother with a map or detailed write-up of the inner tomb just yet. I picture it as a fairly linear space largely separated from the main floor. I doubt the PCs will head in there this session. I'll improvise if they do.

The Green Lord's Tomb

As they approach

Hint at more than meets the eye: PCs hear children singing (crinwin imitating Tiwlip & Wynfor's voices, but multiples of the same voice).

- Caradoc, you know this song; it's one you sang as a youth—what is it?
- Vahid, how can you tell this is crinwin mimicry, and not the missing kids?

Present a discovery: Glyphs carved into trees that surround hill, faint/worn, left by the Forest Folk (see *Book II*, page 152); mark this as a place of reverence, and refer to the *premnitsi* ("the receivers") and *istina* (the "truth," or… "oracle?").

Exterior

Wide, low hill, surrounded by trees. Three oaks (still bare), last year's grasses, some briar, shrubs. Sparse saplings dot the hill.

- Bits of worked stone poke out of the hill's soil and dead grass, easy to miss
- Small crinwin nests in boughs of oaks
- A faint odor: rotting cabbage, bad eggs
- Faint hum of… bees? No. Wasps!

Crinwin (outside)

See *Book II*, page 61 for **crinwin & wasps**.

4 crinwin always on watch in the oaks or nearby trees, often "singing" with the kids' voices. 1d4+2 crinwin sleep in nests. 1d6-1 other crinwin are outside, doing **crinwin stuff** (see page 376).

If sentries notice PCs: Stop singing, use bird calls to alert others. Other crinwin scatter, hide. Those in nests wake, stay hidden.

If PCs poke around outside: Watch, sneak closer. Keep signaling others via birdsong.

If PCs try to enter: Sentries start howling like wolves. Replies come from the Wood. Crinwin inside go on alert. ~30 minutes later, 1d6+9 Crinwin arrive back at tomb.

If PCs attack sentries: Flee into surrounding canopy (if possible) or into tomb if not. If PCs persist in hounding them, start wolf howls (as above).

If PCs molest a crinwin nest: Crinwin in nest burst out, wasps swarm. Try to daze or confound PCs, then flee.

Entrances

Main entrance: Recessed into the north side of hill, at end of a ditch full of briar. Briar obscures a 15 foot archway, partially filled by soil and rubble. Leads to entrance chamber (A). PCs can enter if they cut the briar back or don't mind getting scratched (1d4 damage), but they risk agitating a nest

Secret tunnel: Opening is west of the hill, 30 feet past the tree line, under a boulder and hidden by glamour and brush. A tight squeeze for a PC with a light load. Leads to the trapdoor [T] in the mossy chamber (D). Unknown to Sajra/crinwin.

Burrows (S): Dug into the hill or rubble about 18 inches across, visible only when right next to them. Used by crinwin and Sajra. Too small for PCs or Pryder. Wynfor, Tiwlip, and Thornthumb could theoretically squeeze through them.

Interior

White marble construction. Scrollwork and bas relief of plants/chimerae, often marred or busted. Dark unless otherwise noted, but marble reflects/amplifies light.

- Damp, cool air
- Wooden archways, like they grew there
- Crudely carved graffiti (vulgar images, curses in Green Lord script)
- Lazy, sluggish wasps
- Distant echoes of voices/animal noises

Hallways are 10 feet wide and lined with burial niches: 8 to 24 per hall, human-sized but a few larger. No bodies, but some have displays of junk (bones, potsherds, rocks, maybe a bit of Value 1 finery with some flaw), set up by the crinwin to mimic Sajra's horde.

Entrance chamber (A)

Dimly lit from outside. Soil and debris piled nearly 4 feet high at entrance, sloping down into the room. Beyond, the floor is filthy, muddy.

- Thick layer of leaf litter, slick underfoot
- Plants/shrubs/saplings growing in soil
- Moss/lichen/vines on the walls, especially near the entrance

Tracks: Crinwin tracks in dirt, signs of them dragging Pryder towards central chamber (C). Faint, wavy marks in dirt, like a big snake trail, from Sajra going to/from shrine (E).

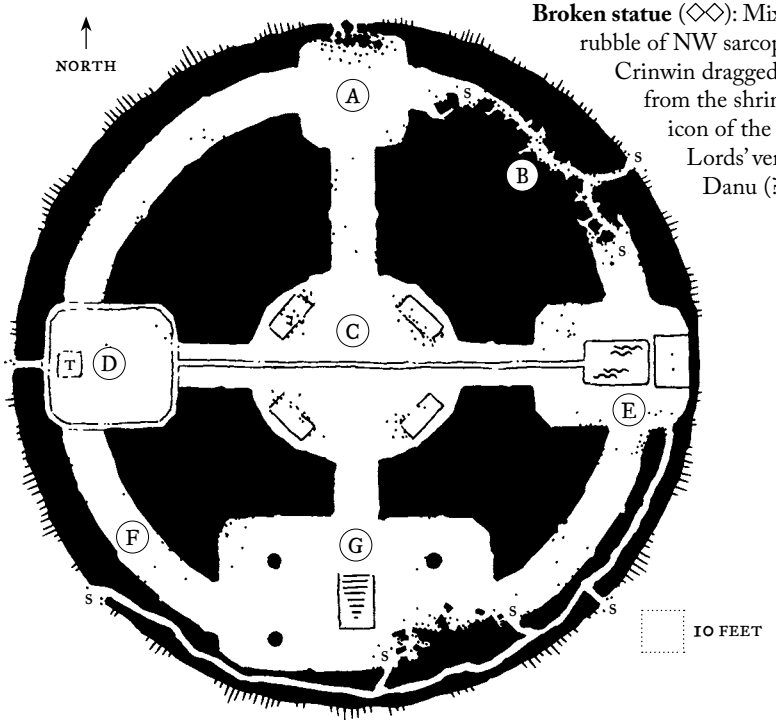
Collapsed hallway (B)

Caved in when Fae sacked tomb. Eight **mummified servants** (*Book II*, page 221) trapped in the rubble. Crinwin have dug out a tunnel that they/Sajra can squeeze through; also leads outside (via one of the burrows). Sajra's trail can be spotted.

Central Chamber (C)

Ceilings vaulted to 20 feet, coated in soot. Very faded scorch marks on floor. Empty burial niches line walls. Large (smashed, empty) sarcophagi; one in SE corner most intact, stuffed with bones, snail shells, bug husks, and a huge snake skin (Sajra's). A small channel, set into the floor, carries water from the shrine (E), through this chamber, into the mossy chamber (D).

Broken statue (◇◇): Mixed with rubble of NW sarcophagus. Crinwin dragged it here from the shrine (E). An icon of the Green Lords' version of Danu (?).



Mossy Chamber (D)

Dimly lit by glowing makerglass, flush in the ceiling (gouges from crinwin trying to remove it). Crazy-quilt patterns of colored moss cover walls, floor, ceiling. Channel in floor enters from east, encircles chamber, irrigating soil under the mossy carpet.

- Trilling frog song as they approach
- Hushed quiet as they enter
- Trickle of running water just audible
- Damp, earthy smell
- Soft spring of moss carpet underfoot
- Colors of the moss seeming to shift, almost making pictures; nope, it's gone

Moss spirits (*horde*, *spirits*, *vain*, *moody*): **Instinct** to express themselves visually. **Notes:** Fret over Thornthumb. Sajra is a boor, crinwin are vile, and you clearly just don't understand their work.

Trapdoor (T): A moss-covered slab in the floor pulls up, reveals a hole and the secret tunnel. Crinwin haven't found it.

Critters: Ants, snails, frogs, moths, gnats. Wasps/crinwin often prey on them.

Shrine (E)

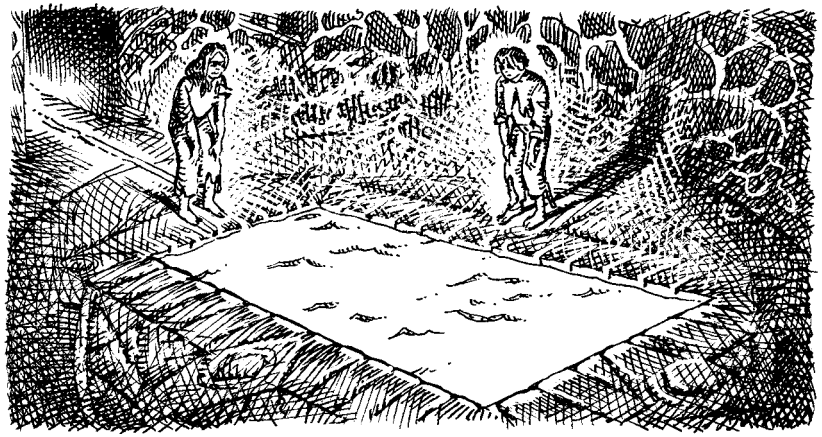
Rectangular pool: spring-fed, a foot deep, and glows gently (glow fades when water leaves pool). Channel set into floor carries water to west. An altar dominates the east wall, but the icons have been replaced by items from Sajra's hoard.

- Noticeably cooler air
- Spring water bubbling up through silt
- Light patterns dancing on ceiling/walls

Sajra's hoard: Finely made worked goods on altar and shelves lining walls (*immobile*, *beautiful*, Value 4 total). PCs promised Thornthumb they wouldn't steal anything.

- What thing of shiny, worked beauty catches your eye?
- What about the collected objects feels tawdry, desperate?

Wynfor & Tiwlip (*small*, *entranced*, *docile*): HP 3; Damage bronze knife d4 (*hand*); **Instinct** to bask in Sajra's presence. **Notes:** Ill-fitting silks. Asleep or gazing at pool. Ignore PCs unless they try to take them or hoard. Then stab 'em.



Pile of furs in northeast corner serve as a bed for the kids. A fine (though chipped) ceramic urn serves as a chamber pot (the crinwin empty it as needed). Kids eat nasty stuff that the crinwin forage; don't like it, but Sajra tells them to eat.

Spirit of the spring (*solitary*, *spirit*, *anxious*): **Instinct** to fuss over everything. **Notes:** Mile-a-minute whisper. Asks questions, won't wait for replies. Hates Sajra but frets over its opinion. Easily upset, then insults herself.

Sajra is unlikely to be here when the PCs are. See **Sajra the Swyn** (next page).

Pryder's hallway (F)

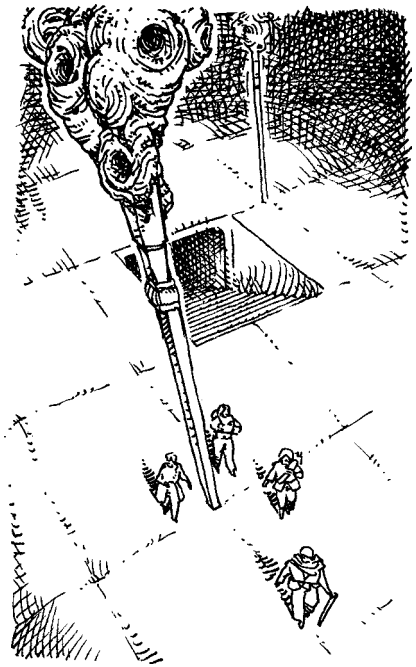
Pryder sleeps here in a burial niche. 1d4+2 "new" crinwin (the ones who brought him here) keep watch. 1d4 "trusted" crinwin look on from near great hall (G).

Pryder (*woods-wise*, *handsome*, *concussed*): HP 0 of 6; Damage d6 if armed; **Instinct** to see the good in things. **Notes:** Asleep per Sajra's command. Head wound, cuts/bruises, feverish. Slow, tires quickly, but mind is free.

Great hall (G)

Three 20-foot-tall pillars (trees, basically). Fourth pillar & wall/ceiling collapsed long ago. Stairwell yawns in center of room, goes down to **intact inner tomb**.

- Rotting cabbage/egg smell, but worse
- Large bas reliefs, all vandalized/marred
- Sagging ceiling, roots hanging down through cracks in white stone



Crinwin nests hug the pillars up near the ceiling (easy to miss). If alarm hasn't been raised, then: 3-6 "trusted" crinwin sleep in nests, 1-4 spy on Pryder's hall (F), and 0-5 are here doing **crinwin stuff** (page 376).

Wasps: Colonizing crinwin nests, pillars. Swarm if agitated. See *Book II*, page 61.

Unstable pillars: Advance this each time a pillar is struck, or as a GM move.

Pillar cracks/buckles, dirt pours down
Stones fall (1d6+1 damage, *forceful*)
Pillar breaks, big stone slabs fall (1d8+3 damage, *area*, *forceful*)
Impending doom: Ceiling collapses, burying anyone still inside (Death's Door); connecting tunnels blocked off

Crinwin

See *Book II*, page 58. ~30 crinwin total, about half are "trusted" (replace *cautious* with *zealous*). "New" crinwin flee if half their numbers are lost; "trusted" crinwin fight to death.

4 sentries outside. 4-10 total watching Pryder in hallway (F). 3-6 asleep outside. 3-6 sleeping in great hall (G). 10-15 off foraging or away on tasks. Up to 5 others doing crinwin stuff (see below).

If alerted to intruders: 2-3 keep tabs while others rally near entrance hall (A). Once ~10 have gathered (10-20 minutes), mimic Tiwlip/Wynfor calling for help to lure PCs to entrance, then swarm them.

If Sajra, its hoard, or kids are threatened: Nearby crinwin raise the alarm and attack.

If caught unawares, will be doing **crinwin stuff**: eating/processing food, expanding or repairing nests, fighting over junk, bullying each other, mimicking Sajra or the kids, talking/singing in their voices.

Sajra the Swyn

See *Book II*, page 222. When the PCs first approach the tomb, call for Die of Fate.

1d6	SAJRA'S DISPOSITION
1-3	In shrine (E), alert.
4-5	Not in tomb, off hunting. Will be back in 1d6 hours, or 30-60 min after crinwin start "wolf howling."
6	In shrine (E), asleep, digesting a big meal. Sluggish, slow to react.

Uses tunnels to flank. Targets loners/small groups. Prioritizes itself, then its ego, then its hoard/lair/kids; crinwin are expendable.

Intact inner tomb

Below the main level, accessed via stairs in **great hall** (G). Consists of:

- **Antechamber**: Hexagonal room, 20 feet across. Featureless white marble. Can't proceed with iron/steel.
- **Hall of Humility**: Magical ward, only the humble will pass (how?).
- **Hall of Gratitude**: Dreamlike ordeal, shows savage mortal lives before the Green Lords. (Custom move?)
- **Hall of Offerings**: Guarded by the **Almtakers** (page 405). Includes portal to Green Lord's false afterlife.
- **Green Lord's burial vault**: sealed off, no physical access. Holds the body of the **mummified Green Lord** (*Book II*, page 221), its canopic jars, grave goods.

I don't bother writing up the inner tomb in detail right now, because I don't think the PCs are likely to explore it in the next session. They're here to rescue the kids and maybe fight the crinwin, and that's plenty to keep them busy.

Between sessions, though, I write custom moves for the ***Halls of Humility and Gratitude*** *(see page 389), and then lay the foundation for the Green Lord's false afterlife as a* ***Fae domain*** *(see* Book II, *page 102). But I don't bother doing any more than that. The false afterlife is a dreamlike realm where almost anything could happen, and the burial vault is just a burial with an extremely powerful mummy. And none of it matters unless the PCs get past the Almtakers. I feel like I can improvise just fine if they do!*

Dangers

Hazards
Monsters
Running combat

Dangers are likely to hurt the PCs or the things they care about. There are two basic types of danger:

Hazards are environmental dangers, like traps, treacherous terrain, or weather.

Monsters are active dangers, usually things with intent; adversaries that the PCs can fight (or fight off).

PCs usually encounter dangers when they're on an expedition, or when things get bad and a danger shows up in town. Ultimately, they're just elements of the fiction: you frame a scene that includes a danger (or introduce one into a scene), you describe the situation, you make a move using the danger, and you ask "what do you do?" Go from there.

Like any element of the fiction, dangers can be improvised. Much of this chapter, though, focuses on preparing dangers in advance. The last chunk of the chapter deals with running fights.

Dangers vs. threats

Dangers may or may not also be **threats** (see page 277). Threats are ongoing problems, things that will come back to haunt the PCs later; they might not be dangerous, but they're always troublesome. Dangers are immediate problems: things that can hurt or hinder the PCs during a scene, here and now.

Ultimately, the difference is what you prep. Your prep for a threat tells you what they're up to, what sort of trouble they might cause, how that trouble will escalate and where it's ultimately going. Your prep for a danger tells you how to use a hazard or monster here and now, in a scene.

Lots of threats are also things that the PCs might fight. If they are, write up a monster description for them (see page 391) or find an appropriate entry in the almanacs. Lots of monsters that the PCs encounter might become threats later. If they do, write them up as a threat between sessions.

Hazards

Hazards are environmental dangers. They can impede or harm the PCs but lack initiative and intent. Hazards can't really be fought and slain with spear and shield; they must be avoided, endured, thwarted, or overcome.

Improvising a hazard

Hazards don't always need game mechanics or stats. You'll often just improvise them.

To improvise a hazard: imagine a physical obstacle or danger that would make sense in the environment. Then, frame a scene (if you haven't already) and make a GM move to introduce the hazard. Ask the PCs what they do. If they ask clarifying questions, make up answers that make sense but then act as if they were true all along. If the PCs do something with an obvious outcome, say what happens. If they trigger a player move, resolve it. Use your knowledge of the situation and your sense of the fiction to describe what happens next.

When the players try to bypass or overcome a hazard, you should regularly **tell them the consequences/requirements and ask** if they still want to do that. Players should understand the risks before they commit to any course of action—even if the risks are "you aren't sure what will happen."

Clever players will often come up with ways to bypass a hazard that don't trigger a move. Resist the urge to call for a move (like Defy Danger or Struggle as One) just because you think "there should be a roll." Always confirm that the trigger is, in fact, being met. Otherwise, you'll end up invalidating the players' creativity and you might find yourself struggling to come up with meaningful results on a 7-9 or 6-.

You can also introduce hazards in response to a player move. A new hazard is a great consequence on a 7-9 roll to Defy Danger ("You get past the thug, but the lamp tips onto the mattress—it's on fire!"). When someone Seeks Insight and asks, "What should I be on the lookout for?" make up a hazard and tell them about it. If they're traveling cross-country and someone gets a 6- on pretty much anything, you could **introduce a danger** and have the sky open up in a torrent of rain.

Remember that on a 6-, when you make a hard GM move and establish badness, you decide just how bad it is. That means you can introduce a hazard and immediately have it cause harm or badness, as long as it makes sense in the fiction. But you don't have to. So when the Fox rolls a 6- to Burgle a chest, you might jump straight to **hurting them** with a poison needle trap. But you could also **introduce a danger** and say that they notice these arcane runes around the lip, and clearly some sort of harmful magic will be unleashed if the chest is opened, what do you do?

When a hazard is present during a fight or any other sort of action scene, keep including it in the fiction and keep making moves with it. A hazard is part of the environment and the **fictional positioning** (page 42) of the characters; its presence limits what the PCs can do and informs the results of their actions.

Vahid, Caradoc, Blodwen, Rhianna, and Andras are exploring the ruins around Three Coven Lake. They're climbing a set of wide, ancient stairs going up the side of a bluff. It'd be a nasty fall into rocky water, but the stairs so far have been well-built and stable.

I decide to change that, and ***introduce a danger****. "The stairs and bluff curve inward, away from the lake, then the stairs level off to a short landing. Vahid, you're in front, so you see this first. The landing has partially collapsed, and while there's enough left to scamper across, it doesn't look entirely stable. The stairs on the other end look fine, though. What do you do?"*

They ask some questions about the drop (like 50 or 60 feet, onto rocks) and the size of the landing (originally about 12 feet square, but there's only like 2 or 3 feet left for most of it, up against the cliff wall, and a gap of almost 9 feet).

"Only 9 feet? So we can just jump it, right?" says Caradoc.

I ***tell them the consequences and ask****. "It's certainly jumpable, but it's not a sure thing. You'll each have to Defy Danger, and anyone with a normal or heavy load will be at disadvantage. Oh, and I don't think Andras can make it—he's still nursing that arrow wound in his leg, right? But the rest of you can try if you want. What do you do?"*

They decide against jumping it. Vahid pokes the landing with his spear and otherwise takes in the situation, Seeking Insight. He gets a 7-9. "What here is useful or valuable to me?" he asks.

I think about the situation and make a decision (remember, I'm making this up as I go). "Well, the ledge that remains should bear your weight if you go one at a time, but it's impossible to tell. But when you look closely, you realize that the cliff face has some ridges that could be used as handholds. Oh, and if you've got any rope in your gear, that could be useful, too."

I then ***offer riches at a price*** *and say that he can see the rest of the stairs from here. "They appear to be intact all the way up to the next opening carved into the cliff, an ornate arch carved with Maker runes. What do you do?"*

"I really want to check that out," says Vahid. After some discussion, they produce some rope and tie each other together, then scamper over the ledge one at a time, using the handholds to brace themselves. The rope means that they're Defying Danger as a group, so we resolve this using Struggle as One (and decide that everyone gets advantage on their rolls for acting on the answers from Seeking Insight).

Damage from hazards

If a hazard (improvised or prepared) deals damage, ask yourself what it could likely do to a normal person.

WORST OUTCOME	DIE
Bruises & scrapes, pain, light burns	d4
Nasty flesh wounds, bruises, burns	d6
Broken bones, bad burns, debilitating pain	d8
Death or dismemberment	d10

Then, assign effects to the hazard according to its capabilities (choose all that apply):

IF...	EFFECT
... armor can't protect against it	ignores armor
... it slices through leather/hide	1 piercing, *messy*
... it can tear metal apart	3 piercing, *messy*
... it knocks them down or around	*forceful*
... it's big/vicious/scary	+2 damage
... the PCs have taken precautions	disadvantage
... it catches them off-guard	advantage

Apply disadvantage to the damage roll if the PCs knew (or suspected) about the hazard and proactively did something to protect themselves. For example, if the hazard is a poisonous gas and they cover their faces and mouths with damp cloth before entering it, impose disadvantage on the damage roll. By contrast, if the hazard catches them flat-footed, hurting them even before they realize it's there, then apply advantage to the damage roll.

Certain death

If a hazard (or other source of harm) would definitely, absolutely kill a normal person, then it shouldn't deal damage to the PCs—it should immediately reduce them to 0 HP and trigger the Death's Door move. If they survive, then that means they caught a break. You can and should still **hurt them**, badly.

Telegraph this sort of hazard very clearly. "If you fall, I'll probably give you one chance to catch yourself. But if that fails, it's a 60-foot drop onto jagged rocks and shallow water. You won't be taking HP damage, you'll be rolling Death's Door. You sure you want to do this?"

Preparing hazards

If you're preparing an expedition or a point of interest in advance, you might want to prepare some hazards. Prep hazards for all the reasons you prep anything: to give yourself interesting stuff to say, to speed up play, to shore up your weaknesses, to hone your craft, and to give yourself permission to play hard and visit badness on the PCs.

Prep your hazards as much as or as little as you find valuable. Remember that prep is for your benefit; unless you're making notes for someone else to use, there's little point in writing down stuff that's obvious to you.

There are a few approaches to preparing hazards. You might prepare one as...

... a detailed description;
... a series of GM moves, possibly with an instinct;
... an impending doom (with grim portents);
... one or more player-facing moves; or...
... some combination of the above.

There's no hard and fast rule for when to use each approach. Use whichever one seems most appropriate for the hazard you have in mind.

Book II presents many hazards prepared with these approaches. Use them as-is or refer to them as examples.

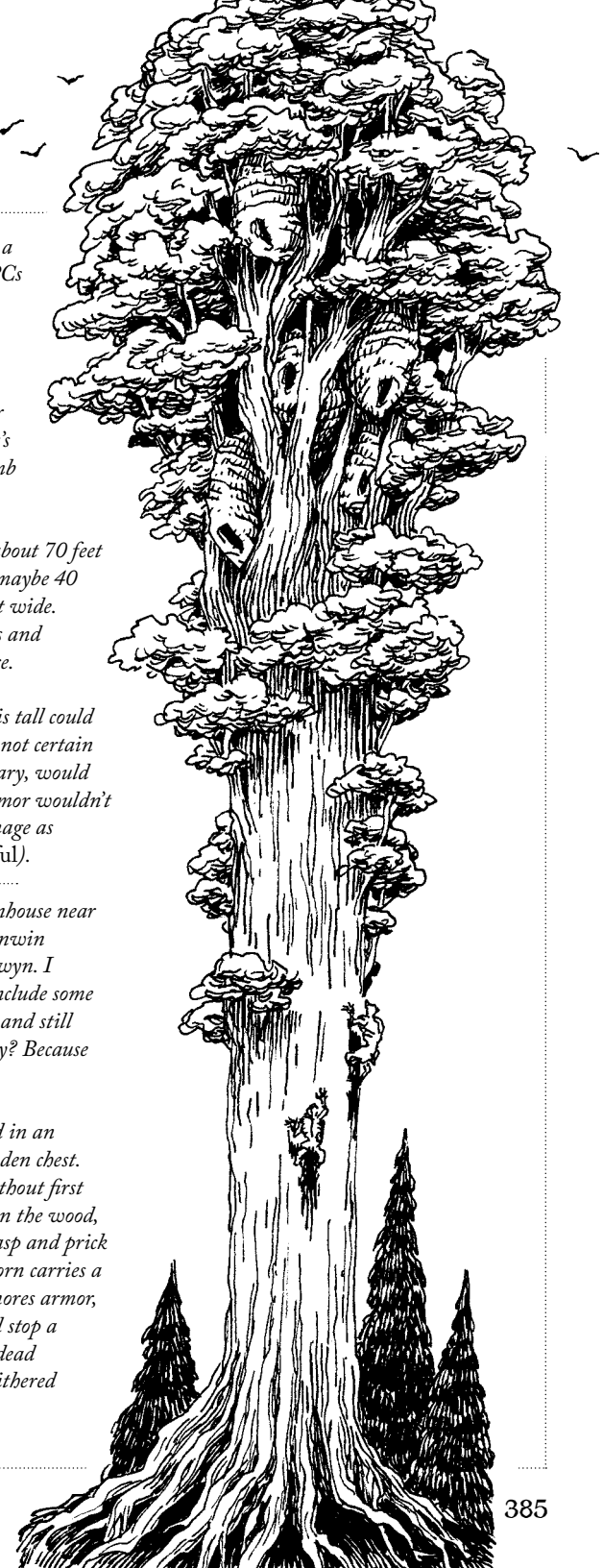
As a detailed description

Think about the hazard and its specific fictional details: Where is it? What does it look like? How does it work? What triggers it? What does it do? You might just visualize it in your mind, or jot some notes down, or even draw a picture or diagram.

In play, introduce this kind of hazard much like you would if you were improvising it. Frame a scene where the hazard is relevant, introduce it with a GM move, ask "what do you do?" Answer the players' questions and resolve their actions based on your understanding of the hazard.

This approach tends to be good for traps, because it means taking time in advance to think through how the trap works. When you improvise a trap, it's easy to make up details that don't make sense under scrutiny.

This approach is also good for physical obstacles, especially ones that aren't particularly dynamic (like a chasm they might want to cross, or a tree they might want to climb). Having thought through the physical space allows you to easily answer the players' questions and resolve their actions.



For our first adventure, there's a ruined crinwin nest that the PCs might encounter en route to Sajra the swyn's lair.

I suspect that the PCs might want to investigate the nest, or set fire to it, but I know that it's high up in a huge tree. The climb would definitely be a hazard.

I make some notes: the nest is about 70 feet up, and the lowest boughs are maybe 40 feet. The trunk is maybe 10 feet wide. I look up sequoia redwood trees and make a little sketch for reference.

A fall while climbing a tree this tall could definitely kill a person, but it's not certain death. It's definitely big and scary, would knock someone around, and armor wouldn't help against it, so I set the damage as 1d10+2 (ignores armor, forceful*).*

There's also an old Maker greenhouse near Sajra's lair, which enslaved crinwin have been excavating for the swyn. I decided earlier that it would include some old magical seeds, locked away and still unpilfered by the crinwin. Why? Because they're protected by a trap!

I think that the seeds are stored in an impossibly well-preserved wooden chest. If anyone disturbs the clasp without first pressing two particular knots in the wood, a thorn will shoot out of the clasp and prick whoever is handling it. The thorn carries a lethal poison (d10 damage, ignores armor, will quickly necrotize flesh and stop a heart if not treated). There's a dead crinwin in the room with a withered black hand; it tried to open the chest earlier.

As GM moves

Think about how the hazard works and—more importantly—how you intend to use it in play. Write out a series of fairly specific GM moves that reflect as many of the following as make sense:

- How the hazard's presence is foreshadowed or revealed
- How the hazard harms or hinders
- How the hazard escalates or gets worse
- How the hazard might thwart attempts to overcome it.

Consider adding conditional triggers to each of these moves, as a reminder of when to use them.

If the hazard is dynamic and changing (like a storm, an avalanche, a wildfire, etc.), give it an instinct, written in the format "to [do something]." During play, use the hazard's instinct as a guide to how it behaves. If you're not sure what a hazard is going to do next, do whatever its instinct suggests.

Why use this approach? Mostly, because it helps you hone your craft. You can think through pacing and escalation in advance, rather than under pressure during play. This sort of prep can also make it easier to **let things burn**; if you write a move like "slice off a limb" when you prep the hazard in advance, you'll be more likely to actually do that during play.

That old ruined greenhouse that the crinwin are excavating has a number of animate, aggressive, vines that could cause all sorts of trouble for the PCs. I first consider writing them up as monsters, but I realize that they can't really be fought… no matter how many vines they chop through, there will be more! Instead, I write the vines up as a hazard with the following GM moves:

* Make quiet noises as they slowly grow and creep *(how it's foreshadowed)*
* Seem to be moving, but stop when looked at directly *(how it's foreshadowed)*
* Reveal a mass of vines entwining a desiccated crinwin corpse *(how it's foreshadowed)*
* Slip a tendril around a limb, slowly and quietly *(how it hinders)*
* Sprout thorns and inject a numbing, euphoric poison *(how it harms)*
* Lash out with more tendrils to subdue struggling prey *(how it escalates)*

I also give it an instinct: "to ensnare."

I'm not seeing this hazard as doing damage—it just restrains prey, makes it bliss out and stop struggling, and then slowly suffocates it. I figure that anyone who gets injected with the euphoric poison will need to Defy Danger to do anything other than relax and enjoy themselves.

As an impending doom

Write a series of increasingly bad events, ending with some final doom.

Start by imagining the final, ultimate bad thing that can happen and write a short description, like "The throne room collapses." Then, write 1-4 grim portents, events that represent how the hazard starts and how it escalates. Pair each portent with damage and tags, if appropriate.

Put one or more check boxes next to each grim portent (multiple check boxes means that portent happens multiple times). End with the impending doom. In play, when you make a GM move, you can **advance towards impending doom** and have the next event happen.

Optionally, you can write triggers that cause the doom to get closer. The trigger might be fictional ("each time there's a loud noise or powerful blow") or mechanical ("each time someone rolls doubles").

During play, consider making the number of check boxes in the impending doom public. This can ratchet up the tension and it lets the players make decisions based on how much time they have (or don't have).

Sajra the swyn's lair is an old Green Lord tomb, buried by ages of forest growth. One of the chambers features a cracked, sagging roof held aloft by three ancient wooden pillars (and a fourth that collapsed many years ago). Some of Sajra's crinwin have started building nests around the remaining pillars, further weakening them.

The PCs are likely to get into a fight with the crinwin in this chamber, and the pillars could easily be harmed and start collapsing. I write up the hazard like this:

UNSTABLE PILLARS: Advance this each time a pillar is struck, or as a GM move.

- o Pillar cracks/buckles, dirt pours down
- o Stones fall (1d6+1 damage, forceful)
- oo Pillar breaks, stone slabs fall (1d8+3 damage, area, forceful)
- o IMPENDING DOOM: Ceiling collapses, burying anyone still inside (Death's Door); connecting tunnels blocked off

As player moves

Write a custom player-facing move to reflect the hazard (or part of it), like "When you ***breathe in the horrible stench of the Maw***, roll +CON…." When the PCs encounter the hazard and the move becomes relevant, share it with the players. Resolve it like you would any other player-facing move.

A player-facing move is a great way to establish and communicate stakes. You can tell a player that they'll have to Defy Danger to leap across the chasm, but unless you also tell them what will happen on a 10+, a 7-9, and 6-, they don't *really* know the risks. With a custom move, you can bake the stakes right in.

Player moves are also a good way to handle "weird" hazards, like magic that messes with their minds or that follows strange rules of cause-and-effect. A player move can abstract these situations and give them a vague, dreamlike quality.

Remember: everything **begins and ends with the fiction**. If the PCs come up with a clever way to bypass a hazard or its trigger, then your move might no longer apply. That's great. Don't negate their choices, their creativity, or their abilities just because you've got a cool custom move you want to use.

See **Writing moves** (page 551) for guidance.

As a combination

Many hazards will work best as a combination of these approaches. You might start with a detailed description of a trapped chamber, then add a player-facing move for what happens when they try to bypass the trap in a particular way. Or you might write up a series of GM moves and an instinct for a wildfire, plus a countdown describing how the fire spreads. Get creative.

I previously wrote up the ruined crinwin nest—and the climb to reach it—as just a detailed description. I noted that it might do 1d10+3 damage on a fall, but thinking about it more, the fall could easily kill someone or seriously injure them. I want the PCs to know just how dangerous the climb could be, so I write up this custom move:

When you fall from the boughs of the tree, take 1d10+3 damage (ignores armor, forceful) and roll +CON: on a 10+, you're bruised and bleeding and in a lot of pain, but miraculously nothing's busted; on a 7-9, something's broken—ask the GM what; on a 6-, you landed bad and you're at Death's Door.

Sajra's lair is an old Green Lord tomb, and the mummified Maker is still ensconced in its central vault. To reach the vault, one must pass through the Hall of Humility and the Hall of Gratitude. They are warded with Fae magic to ensure that those who approach the vault do so with proper respect. I decide to write these hazards as custom moves.

When you enter the Hall of Humility, choose 1:

* Tell us of a moment that left you feeling humbled and small before the natural world; you may then proceed to the Hall of Gratitude.
* Tell us of a personal triumph, a moment that fills you with pride and self-satisfaction; you then exit the Hall of Humility and find yourself back in the antechamber.

When you **enter the Hall of Gratitude**, you see a shifting tableau of ancient peoples living and learning at the feet of tall, magnificent beings. Roll +WIS: on a 10+, you witness someone learning a skill or trade that is nowadays taken for granted—describe the scene, then move on to the Hall of Offering; on a 7-9, you find yourself living one of these ancient lives—describe the task you are performing for the Makers and how you realize that this life isn't yours, then mark dazed and move on to the Hall of Offering; on a 6-, the tableau shifts and you find yourself living a life of savagery, brutality, sickness, hunger, and want—tell us a hardship you experience most cruelly, and mark all three debilities. Then tell us how you find your true self again, and move on to the Hall of Offering.

Monster format

Almanac entries in *The Wider World* include many monster write-ups like this—use them when you can, either as-is or slightly modified.

(0) **Icon**: A quick visual identifier for different monster types (see page 392). You don't need to include these in monsters you write up.

(1) **Name**: What the monster is called (by itself, by the people who deal with it most, or by you, the GM, for your own reference).

(2) **Tags**: Terms that help describe the monster. All monsters have an organization tag (*solitary*, *group*, or *horde*) that indicates how they hunt and fight; many have a size tag (*tiny*, *small*, *large*, or *huge*) that describe how big they are. Other tags describe a monster's basic nature (e.g. *construct*, *spirit*, *undead*), its traits (e.g. *stealthy*, *terrifying*), or its behaviors (e.g. *organized*, *cautious*). See page 395 for context.

(3) **Hit points (HP) and Armor**: How much damage the monster can take, and how well protected it is. When a monster is reduced to 0 HP, it's out of the action (unconscious, disabled, dying, or dead—your call). When a monster suffers damage, reduce that damage by its armor. The description after the armor rating describes its source, and any exceptions.

(0) Crinwin (1)
Horde, *small*, *hoarder*, *cautious*, *stealthy* (2)
(3) **HP** 3; **Armor** 1 (reflexes)
(4) **Damage** claws, rocks, choking d6 (*hand*)
(5) **Special quality** climbs/jumps like a squirrel
(6) **Instinct** to covet
- Mimic noises, words, cries for help
(7) - Hide or vanish into the trees
- Snatch something and dart away

(8) They've always been there, in the Wood, lurking in the trees. For generations, the Forest Folk hunted them and kept their numbers in check. No longer.

- Out-of-place noises: partial bird calls, off-season insect buzz, a bear's growl from the treetops, snippets of nonsense speech
- Figures scurrying, leaping, swinging through the branches
- Sinewy strong fingers around your throat
- Clammy, blackish blood; too cold and putrid to be natural

(9) **Something interesting**: there's something that everyone agrees will keep crinwin at bay (a smell, a charm, a sound, a little ritual, etc.). What is it, and why are you sure that it's next to worthless?

Something useful: there really is something that keeps crinwin at bay, but it involves something uncommon, impractical, or both. What is it, and why isn't it common knowledge (or at least commonly accepted)?

(4) **Damage**: how the monster typically attacks, the damage it does, and the tags associated with that damage (see page 398 for descriptions).

(5) **Special qualities**: (optional) innate traits that impact play but aren't otherwise obvious or described by tags. Special qualities can be advantageous ("echolocation" or "immune to heat/fire"), disadvantageous ("blind" or "vulnerable to water/cold"), or neutral ("made of crystalline rock"). These aren't GM moves, per se, but they can and should inform the fiction that you establish and the GM moves that you make.

(6) **Instinct**: what the monster typically does that brings it into conflict with others. Use its instinct as a guide to its behavior. When you're unsure what a monster would do, go with what its instinct suggests.

(7) **Moves:** GM moves that you can make with this monster. You're not limited to these moves—you can and will use all your standard GM moves like **announce trouble** or **use up their resources**—but monster moves describe specific ways that the monster fights or causes trouble.

(8) **Description:** the monster's appearance, habitat, behaviors, etc. Might include impressions or tips for portraying it.

(9) **Optional elements:** including lore (something interesting and something useful, for when someone Knows Things), or custom player moves (e.g., "When you ***lock eyes with the swyn***, roll…").

Monsters

Monsters are active dangers—things that the PCs can fight (or at least fight off). They are usually animate and sentient, or close enough. It's a game term more than anything else, covering beasts and people, constructs and spirits, and actually monstrous foes.

At left is an example monster, fully prepped, with its individual elements called out.

Whenever you prep a threat or an expedition, and you identify something that the PCs are likely to fight, either find its monster entry in the almanac or create the monster yourself.

As I've planned my first adventure, I've identified a number of monsters that the PCs might encounter: crinwin, nailadd, feathered drakes, and of course the swyn itself. All of these monsters have write-ups in Book II, *so I'll just use those.*

However, I've decided that Sajra the swyn's lair is a mostly-intact Green Lord tomb, and that the final entrance to the burial vault is guarded by some powerful Fae servants. I flip through the Fae entry in Book II, *but none of the examples fit the bill. I'll need to create these Fae guardians from scratch!*

To create a monster:

1) Conceptualize it
2) Name it
3) Give it tags
4) Calculate hit points
5) Calculate armor
6) Calculate damage
7) Write special qualities
8) Write its instinct
9) Write its moves
10) Describe it
11) Write any appropriate optional elements: lore, player-facing moves, etc.

If you're improvising a monster during play, just quickly conceptualize it (step 1) and then calculate its HP, armor, and damage (steps 4-6). Use your standard GM moves to run it for now. Write it up in full between sessions, if it still matters.

Monster types

These icons are used to classify the different creatures appearing in *Book II: The Wider World and Other Wonders*.

human individual
spirit/construct
Maker
human group
Fae
emanation
natural/beast
undead
Thing Below
spirit
corrupted/ Fomoraij
unknown origin
construct

1 Concept

Before you do anything else, imagine the monster. What is it? What does it look like? What does it do? Does it live alone or with others? How does it fight, eat, and live?

You'll usually have some ideas for the monster when you start this process. If not, or if you want something to spur and guide your creativity, then use one of the various sets of monster creation tables in *Book II*.

Another trick is to pick a monster from more traditional fantasy settings, something that isn't present in *Stonetop*. Identify what you find most interesting about it (its look, its powers, its symbolic meaning, its behaviors or relationships to others, etc.) and craft a similar monster that "fits" into the mythos of Stonetop. For example, if you're a big fan of ropers (cavern-dwelling monsters that look like giant stalagmites), you might decide to place something like that in the Labyrinth, keeping its powers but changing its lore to align it with the Things Below.

You should have a decent grasp on the monster's concept before you move on. Your concept might change and evolve as you work, but this process fleshes out a concept that you already have. It doesn't generate the concept for you.

I want two powerful Fae guardians to protect the Green Lord's burial vault. They'll appear in the Hall of Offerings and greet anyone who makes it through the Halls of Humility and Gratitude. I know that they're loyal to their Green Lord master, and that they control access to both its constructed afterlife and its actual, physical burial vault.

I work through the procedure for ***Creating Fae*** *(*Book II, *page 100). I've already decided that their preoccupation is "guarding." I roll a 2 for size (*"large"*), and a 2 and 7 for aspects ("antlered/hooved" and "treeish"). I roll a 2 on a d6 to see how person-like they are. I'm picturing tall, powerfully built tree-men with woody flesh. blank faces, and elk-like antlers.*

For talents, I roll a 6 ("messing with time, space"). I think that they can teleport intruders around and can vanish or appear as they please within their little domain. I also pick "cursing/blessing/giving/taking." I think they extract promises from those who come before them, and curse those who break their vows.

Looking over the remaining tables, I think these Fae were bred from tree spirits to help protect their Green Lord's afterlife. They remained loyal during the Fae rebellion, and maintain a fierce protectiveness--hence the tomb being intact.

2 Name

You'll want a way to refer to the monster, at least in your own notes. Write it down.

If the monster has a proper name that it goes by, call it that, maybe with a short description. For example, "Sajra the Swyn" or "Daedre the Red, bandit leader." Pick proper names from an appropriate name list or almanac entry, or make up something similar.

If the monster is known to the people of Stonetop, and it's something they consider mundane or commonplace, then give it a simple, descriptive name in plain English (like "feathered drake" or "butcherbird").

If the monster is surrounded in mystery, a thing of rumor and legend, then give it a Welsh-sounding name (like "nailadd" or "ceffylwraig"). Come up with a word or description in English associated with the monster, then run it through an online translation service. Combine and tweak the resulting translation (or try other phrases) until you find have something that sounds good and is simple enough to use in play. (You can use this technique to come up with proper names, too.)

For monsters that are known to another people, like the Manmarchers or Hillfolk, use a similar process as above. But for mysterious, rumored monsters, translate the English description into a language appropriate for the people or region. If it's a mysterious monster known to…

… **the Hillfolk**, then translate it into Breton and drop some of the vowels, giving it a clipped, truncated sound.
… **Marshedge**, then translate it into Irish.
… **the Manmarchers**, then translate it into German.
… **the folk of Barrier Pass**, then translate it into Nepali or Tibetan.
… **Lygos or the South**, then translate it into Greek, Hebrew, Persian, or Arabic.
… **the folk of Gordin's Delve**, then decide which immigrant group originally named it, and translate it as above.
… **other peoples** (like the Ustrina), then consult the appropriate entry in *Book II*.

For monsters that are unknown and unnamed, give them spooky, descriptive titles in plain English, like "The Shadowy Presence" or "The Killing Frost" or "The Thing in the White Well."

Because Fae can speak with anyone, their names are more like phrases. I think my guardian Fae share a title, related to gifts or offerings and standing guard. I think a bit and write down: The Almtakers, guardian Fae.

The Forest Folk would have had their own (Slavic-sounding) name for the Almtakers, which folks from Stonetop might know. I play around with an English-Bulgarian dictionary, and find that "receivers" can translate to "priemnitsi." I like that: "the Priemnitsi."

3 Tags

Assemble a list of tags by answering the following questions.

How does it hunt or fight? (pick 1)	TAG
In large groups (6 or more)	*horde*
In small groups (2-5 per group)	*group*
By itself	*solitary*

If an individual monster is part of a group, but it still fights or hunts mostly on its own, then give it the *solitary* tag (and appropriate HP and damage ratings; see below).

How big is it? (pick 1)	TAG
Cat-sized or smaller	*tiny*
Like a human child	*small*
Adult human-sized	–
Like a horse, cart, etc.	*large*
Like an elephant, or bigger	*huge*

What is its nature? (add all that apply)	TAG
Lacks physical form	*spirit*
Between physical and spiritual	*Fae*
Made by someone	*construct*
Changed by the Things Below	*corrupted*
From the first age of creation	*primordial*
Dead, but in denial	*undead*

What is it notable for? (add all that apply)	TAG
Amassing trinkets and treasure	*hoarder*
Avoiding fights, fleeing early	*cautious*
Intelligence	*cunning* or *devious*
Disturbing/terrible presence	*terrifying*
Sneaking, surprising, ambushing	*stealthy*
Using spells or magic	*magical*
Working well in groups	*organized*

If the creature possesses some other quality that can be easily described in one word, make up a tag.

If the Almtakers fight, they fight as a pair, so I give them the group *tag. They're maybe 12 feet tall and quite massive, so I give them the* large *tag. They're obviously* Fae, *and notable both for using magic and working well together. I write down their tags as:* group, large, Fae, magical, organized.

4 Hit points

Determine the monster's maximum HP by answering the following questions:

How does it hunt or fight? (pick 1)	HP
In large groups (6 or more, *horde*)	3
In small groups (2-5, *group*)	6
By itself (*solitary*)	12

Just to be clear: each monster in a *horde* has 3 HP, and each monster in a *group* has 6 HP. This isn't a shared pool of HP (unless you choose to abstract a group; see page 416).

How big is it? (pick 1)	HP
Cat-sized or smaller (*tiny*)	-2
Like a human child (*small*)	–
Adult human-sized	–
Like a horse, cart, etc. (*large*)	+4
Like an elephant, or bigger (*huge*)	+8

What else applies? (pick all that do)	HP
It's particularly tough/durable	+4
It's smiled upon by the fates	+2
It's animated by more than biology	+4
It lacks vital organs	+3

The Almtakers fight as a pair, with the group *tag, so they start with 6 HP each. They're also* large, *giving them +4 HP. The Fae have strange forms, but they are still living things with discernible anatomy: they bleed, have hearts, brains, joints, and so forth. But these Fae—with their woody flesh and massive frames—are particularly tough. I give them +4 HP, for a total of 14 HP each.*

5 Armor

Answer the following:

What is it protected by? (pick 1)	ARMOR
Naught but cloth and flesh	0
Leathers or thick hide	1
Mail, scale, or similar	2
Steel armor, boney plates, carapace	3
Potent magical wards or supernatural resilience	4

What else applies? (pick all that do)	ARMOR
It's *tiny*	+1
It bears a shield or similar	+1
It's skilled in defense	+1
It lacks vital organs	+1

In parentheses after the armor rating, note the source(s) of the armor. Then list any variants or exceptions.

The Almtakers have the Fae's typical resilience to anything but iron, so I start by giving them armor 4. Even against iron, they have wood-like flesh; I think that counts as "thick hide." They have organs and anatomy, so no bonus there, but I think that they're skilled in defense—they're guardians, after all. I write down:

Armor 5 (resilience, skill), 2 vs. iron (hide, skill)

Yikes. These things are tough.

6 Damage

What is the monster's typical form of attack? Write it down, along with the monster's damage rating and appropriate tags. To determine them, answer the following:

How does it hunt or fight? (pick 1)	DAMAGE
In large groups (6 or more, *horde*)	d6
In small groups (2-5, *group*)	d8
By itself (*solitary*)	d10

Attack tags & terms

Range tags (in *italics*) indicate the range at which an attack is useful.

hand: tight quarters; up close and personal
close: melee range, 1-2 steps away
reach: 3-4 steps away
near: up to 30 or so steps away
far: quite the distance; up to 100 steps, maybe more.

Other tags (in *italics*) indicate extra fictional effects. Reflect tags in how you describe and resolve a monster's attacks.

area: affects everything in an area
crude: prone to break, wear out, etc.
forceful: knocks foes around/down
grabby: grapples, grabs, and restrains
messy: especially destructive, rips foes and things apart

Attacks with **[*n*] piercing** ignore *n* points of a foe's armor. Attacks that **ignore armor** treat armor as 0.

See page 94 for more tags & terms.

What is the nature of its attack? (pick all that apply)	ADD
Useful up close and personal	*hand*
Works well at sword's reach	*close*
Can keep foes at bay	*reach*
Useful at range	*near* or *far*
Can hurt many foes at once	*area*
Small and weak	-1 die size
Vicious and obvious	+2 damage
Relentless or overwhelming	advantage
Latches on, pins, grapples	*grabby*
Can slice through thick hide	1 piercing, *messy*
Can tear metal apart	3 piercing, *messy*
Bypasses armor entirely	ignores armor
Prone to breakage	*crude*

How big is it? (pick 1)	ADD
Cat-sized or smaller (*tiny*)	-2 damage, reduce range
Like a human child (*small*)	reduce range
Adult human-sized	-
Like a horse, cart, etc. (*large*)	+1 damage, add a range
Like an elephant, or bigger (*huge*)	+3 damage, add a range

What else applies? (pick all that do)	ADD
It's impressively strong	+2 damage, *forceful*
It strikes deftly and precisely	+1 piercing
Physical injury is not the worst danger it poses	-1 die size
It is ancient and noteworthy	+1 die size
It abhors violence	disadvantage

Advantage means you roll damage twice and use the higher result; **disadvantage** means roll twice and use the lower result. **Reduce range** means the attack's range tag(s) are one step lower (e.g. from *close* to *hand*), while **add a range** means the attack gets an additional range tag (e.g. if already *close*, it's now also *hand* or *reach*).

If the monster has multiple, distinct modes of attack, write each down with its own damage rating and tags.

The Almtakers are loathe to fight, but when they do, they smash foes with their trunk-like forelimbs, or plant those limbs and kick out with their legs. I write down "Powerful blows" as their primary form of attack.

*They fight as a pair (*group *tag), so they start with d8 damage. Their limbs are particularly long for their size, so I give them the* close *range (rather than* hand*). And while their limbs are big and long, I don't think they're "vicious and obvious."*

The Almtakers are large, *giving them +1 damage and an extra range. I add* reach *instead of* hand. *I think they'd be better at keeping foes at bay than at infighting.*

I picture them with an implacable strength (like tree roots!), so I give them +2 damage and forceful. *Their primary danger, though, comes from their abilities to curse oathbreakers and to mess with time and space. That reduces their die size from a d8 to a d6. They're quite ancient (from the time of the Green Lords) but not particularly noteworthy, so I leave their die size there. And because they loathe violence, they'll roll damage with disadvantage.*

I write their damage entry as:

Powerful blows: d6+3 damage w/disadvantage (close, reach, forceful).

7 Special qualities

Consider writing a special quality for each of the following that the monster possesses.

- An exceptional/limited sense (like "sees heat instead of light")
- A useful adaptation/defense (like "immune to fire")
- A strange form or composition (like "amorphous ooze" or "made of dust")
- A weakness or vulnerability (like "powerless in sunlight")
- An effect on its surroundings (like "flames dim and flicker in its presence")
- An important trait, not otherwise obvious (like "can talk" for a bird)

If it's a *construct*, be sure to write a special quality or two that reflect its construction or purpose. If it's *planar*, give it at least one special quality about how it is unnatural or doesn't belong.

Only write special qualities that you think will impact play, above and beyond their basic description and other stats. Don't bother with special qualities for things that are obvious or assumed. If you're writing up a giant demonic frog, you don't need to write down "amphibious" (it's a frog) but should probably write down "coated in toxic, caustic slime."

The Almtakers have all the special qualities associated with Fae. I don't want to write all that out, so I just say "Fae nature" and a page reference.

I think they have three glowing, empty eyes. That's weird and creepy, but won't really affect play. They have woody flesh, but I've already accounted for that in their HP and armor. I've already noted their vulnerability to iron.

They have no mouths, but "speak" telepathically. I think they're entirely honest. And I think their presence messes with time and space—things change places without moving, moments take minutes, minutes pass in moments, that sort of thing. Those are all important traits that might influence play, so I write down

Special qualities: Fae nature (Book II, page 98), telepathic; can't lie or mislead; subtly warp space/time.

8 Instinct

What does the monster do that brings it into conflict with others, or leads it to harm others? Write this in the format "to [do something]."

Good instincts describe a general pattern of behavior rather than a specific action. "To gorge itself" is a good instinct; "to swallow prey whole" is too specific (that's more like a move). With that said, try to write instincts that are distinctive. "To hunt" is an okay instinct; "to relentlessly pursue its prey" is better.

It's possible that a monster might have multiple instincts, like a cave bear's "to fill its belly; to protect its young." Do this sparingly; it's best for nuanced monsters with conflicting motivations, or for monsters who are strongly ruled by their base natures.

The Almtakers guard the entrance to their Green Lord master's burial vault and constructed afterlife. They'll challenge anyone who approaches, judging them, demanding an offering, and extracting a vow of peace and respect. Ultimately, this behavior all stems from a simple instinct: to protect its master.

9 Moves

Each monster should have a few GM moves. Write these moves so that they finish the sentence "the monster can/will __." For example: "surround and harry prey" or "smash through obstacles" or "sound the alarm."

If the monster… (choose all that apply)

… **is deceptive and sneaky**, write a move about its dirty tricks.

… **uses spells or magic**, write a move that describes its powers.

… **works well in groups**, write a move about how it calls on or coordinates with others.

… **is a spirit**, but it can manifest or possess a physical form, write a move that describes how it does so.

… **poses a primary danger other than physical injury**, write a move to reflect the true threat it poses.

… **actively defends itself**, write a move to describe that defense.

… **has a special form of attack**, write a move to describe it, along with any tags and—if appropriate—an alternative damage value.

… **has fewer than 3 moves**, or if something seems to be missing, write another move that describes what the monster is notable for doing.

Most monsters have three moves; simple ones might only have two. Particularly important or dangerous foes can have four or maybe even five.

Don't write monster moves that just describe its basic attack. If you gave it "stone-tipped spear, d6 damage (*close*, *reach*)," then don't write a move "Stab foes with a spear." You already know it can do that! If you really want a move to describe how it fights, write something more interesting, like "Leap headlong into battle" or "Hem foes in with a thicket of spears."

Likewise, avoid writing moves that are just "do its instinct." Look for specific ways to express the instinct. If its instinct is, "To pursue prey," then how does it pursue its prey? Oh, it can "Scent prey from miles away?" or "Unerringly track a creature whose blood it's tasted?" Excellent.

Write moves that will help you use this monster at the table. A loosely-worded move (like "Bully and manipulate people" or "Cast a spell of fire and flame") gives you a lot of flexibility and permission, but it's only helpful if you can improvise that sort of action at the table. A more specific move (like "Threaten their family or reputation" or "Conjure barely-controlled spells of primordial fire") will give you much more direction at the table, and might be easier to use.

The Almtakers use spells and magic, work well together, and their primary danger isn't from the wounds they inflict. That gives me three moves to write. I go with:

> Lock eyes and teleport them away
> Act in tandem, without hesitation
> Lay a wasting curse on anyone who breaks their promise of respect and peace

That last one is a little wordy and unclear, so I split it up like so:

> Require an oath of good intentions
> Lay a wasting curse on oath-breakers

10 Description

Write as much or as little of a description of your monster as you like. Remember, the audience here is you, using the monster during play. Write your description with that in mind.

Think about how you'll describe the monster to your players during play. How big is it, what does it look like, how does it move, etc. Use similes and comparisons to familiar objects ("it's like a huge elk-centaur, with big old antlers on a skull head, exposed ribs and an extra pair of creepy little T-rex arms"). Maybe sketch something out, or find pictures online to show your players.

Tip: include at least one impression on a sense other than sight, like the skittering sound it makes, the smell of ozone left in its wake, the cold sweat they feel in its presence. Keep it concise and evocative. Limit yourself to three such impressions at most.

Other things that you might include in the description:

- How many there are
- Where they are found
- What they are likely to be doing when the PCs encounter them
- Social structures and relationships
- Backstory and history

Many monsters are also NPCs; if they'll be talking to the PCs, consider coming up with a memorable, distinctive way to embody them at the table (see page 457).

I think a bit about how I'll describe the Almtakers and jot down these notes:

* 12 ft tall, humanoid, skin like wood. Tree-trunk forearms, goat legs, antlers. No mouth; three glowing white eyes.
* Move like gorillas, or on crutches... plant their big forearms and swing legs forward. Creaking wood sound.
* Weird, dreamlike presence. "Wasn't it just over there?"
* "Voice:" quiet, breathy. Repeat every few words, like an echo.

11 Optional elements

If the monster has nuanced motivations or behaviors, consider writing out tactics for the monster, as a series of "if-then" conditions and behaviors. This can help you **portray your characters with integrity**, and speed up play.

To write tactics, think about how and where the PCs are most likely to encounter the monster. Write an "if" or "when" statement for that, and what the monster will likely do as a response. What are the PCs likely to do next, and how would that affect the monster's behavior? Write another if/then for that. Keep following the likely forks in the paths, writing ifs/thens until you've covered the likely results: the monster attacking, the monster fleeing, the monster agreeing to let them go, etc.

If you expect the players to Know Things about the monster, then maybe prepare "something interesting" (for a 7-9 result) and "something useful" (for a 10+) in advance. See **Know Things** (page 220) for guidance. Remember, though: these notes are for your benefit. Don't bother prepping stuff you can improvise at the table, or things that are obviously implied by the monster's stats. Prep lore to fill in gaps that aren't otherwise apparent, or to pre-plan just how much information you'll give on a 7-9 or a 10+.

Finally, consider writing one or more custom player-facing moves. If there's something the monster might do to the PCs, or an effect it might have on them, and a custom player-facing move would help you resolve it in play, then write it up. Player-facing moves are particularly good for resolving nasty attacks or touchy, unpleasant effects. Mind control, instant "kill" powers (like petrification), and poison are all good candidates. See **Writing moves** (page 551) for guidance.

I imagine the players might Know Things about the Almtakers, and what they'd consider to be a "worthy" offering. I think of something interesting and something useful, and add that to the write-up.

I'm also thinking that their telepathy makes them particularly difficult to deceive. I write a player-facing move to reflect this.

When I'm done, the Almtakers' write-up looks like this:

THE ALMTAKERS, guardian Fae
(group, large, Fae, magical, organized)

HP 14; **Armor** 5 (resilience, skill), 2 vs. iron (hide, skill)

Damage powerful blows d6+3 w/disadvantage (close, reach, forceful)

Special qualities Fae nature (Book II, page 98), telepathic, can't lie or mislead; subtly warps local time & space

Instinct to protect its master
> Lock eyes, then teleport them away
> Act in tandem, without hesitation
> Require an oath of good intentions
> Lay a wasting curse on oath-breakers

12 feet tall, humanoid, skin like wood.

Tree-trunk forearms, goat legs, antlers. No mouth, three glowing white eyes.

Move like gorillas, or on crutches—plant their big forearms and swing legs forward. Creaking wood sound.

Weird, dreamlike presence. "Wasn't it just over there?"

"Voice:" quiet, breathy. Repeat every few words, like an echo.

Something interesting: the Forest Folk spoke of the Priemnitsi, or "Receivers," who took offerings on behalf of a great oracle. Could these Fae be them?

Something useful: this place exists out of time, cut off from the world. Gifts of things that are new since the time of the Green Lords (or vivid memories of such things) would be well-received.

When you attempt to deceive the Almtakers (even if you're technically telling the truth), roll +WIS: on a 10+, you hide your intentions and they're none the wiser; on a 7-9, they're suspicious and they probe a bit—either come clean now or double-down and try to deceive them even more; on a 6-, they've seen right through you.

Running combat

Remember, "monster" is just a term for something that the PCs might end up fighting. It includes hostile (or potentially hostile) people as well as spirits and beasts and honest-to-goodness *monsters*.

Regardless of their nature, monsters have personalities—or at least patterns of behavior—that are more nuanced than just "kill the PCs." Every monster has an instinct. Most have a sense of self-preservation. Many have wants, needs, fears, or weaknesses that the PCs can leverage—they're *characters* as well as monsters.

Portray your characters with integrity. Consider what this monster—with *this* instinct and *these* motives, facing *these* PCs who are acting in *this* way—would do. Then have it do that. Hint at the monster's story and its inner life. Present monsters who might not actually want to fight, or who can be reasoned with, or scared away.

But also, **portray monsters as *monsters***. Try to capture the fear of facing down a hungry predator or a big angry beast. Play up the tension, desperation, and bloody consequences of a fight with another human being. Think about what it'd be like to encounter a hungry ghost, or an otherworldly Fae, or a demon made of boundless hate and jealousy, and try to convey that to your players. Make your monsters scary.

Let things burn. Don't protect your monsters, and don't protect your NPCs, and don't protect the PCs. If the fiction and the dice and your sense of what would happen all point toward injury or death, then go with it. Don't fudge things in pursuit of some grand story. Play to find out what happens.

Introducing monsters

Whenever it's time to make a GM move, you can **introduce a danger** and put a monster in the scene.

Don't worry about your monsters being "fair fights" or "balanced encounters" or something that the PCs can even defeat. Worry about your monsters *making sense*. **Portray a rich and mysterious world,** right? If it makes sense for the PCs to stumble across a pair of (extremely dangerous) thunder drakes, go for it. Then **play to find out what happens**.

Exactly how you introduce a monster will depend on the situation, the monster's tags and qualities and moves, and the actions of the PCs. "Obvious" monsters encountered in a wide-open space will give the PCs plenty of opportunity to plan and react. *Stealthy* monsters in a dark, cluttered space while the PCs stumble around in torchlight? Not so much.

The PCs are up in Gordin's Delve trying to trade off some valuables they found in the Green Lord's tomb. Rhianna's off talking to a contact. Vahid, Caradoc, and Blodwen are at a pub. Caradoc and Blodwen get up to leave and Vahid, he sees a couple of unsavory types get up and follow.

Now, if these guys are just a pair of local miners that Caradoc managed to tick off, then I'll ***introduce a danger*** *and let the PCs see them coming. "About halfway back to your hostel, you realize that you're being followed. It's those guys from the pub and they look pissed. What do you do?" The PCs have all sorts of options—they might try to lose them, or set an ambush, or talk, or whatever.*

But if these bad guys are stealthy *cutthroats who regularly murder unwary travelers in alleys and loot their corpses, then I'll be much more aggressive about it. I'll start by* ***hinting at more than meets the eye****. "You find yourselves in a dark, empty little trash-strewn square, and everything's quiet. Too quiet. You feel like you're being watched. What do you do?"*

Let's say they Seek Insight, roll a 7-9, and ask, "What should I be on the lookout for?" I'd say, "You're pretty sure someone's following you, or maybe circling ahead. And these alleys are filled with good spots for an ambush. What do you do?" Whatever it is, they'll be on guard. My next move will probably be to ***introduce a danger****, but softly and with a chance to react. "As you pass a dark side-alley, two thugs rush out towards you, what do you do?"*

But suppose they Seek Insight and get a 6-, or just ignore my veiled threat and blunder on. In that case, I'll ***introduce a danger*** *hard and painfully. "Caradoc, this guy comes out of a dark side-alley and snags your right arm, twists, and shoves you face-first into a wall. Take 1d8 damage. Blodwen, you see a second guy step forward, sneering, a glint of metal in his hand. What do you do?"*

The flow of battle

Fighting foes is a big part of the game, but combat isn't a distinct mode of play. There's no moment where you say "roll for initiative" and different rules kick in. There's no orderly round-robin where everyone takes one action on their turn.

When a fight starts, you **run the game**: describe the situation, make a GM move, ask "what do you do?" Resolve their actions. Repeat. Fights in *Stonetop* are—like everything else in the game—a conversation.

Monsters don't Clash or Let Fly; you don't roll to see if their attacks succeed. Instead, you make a GM move. Usually, you **describe the attack but stop short of it connecting**. Ask the player(s) in the spotlight, "What do you do?" Whatever their response, it's likely to trigger a move. Resolve the move, and let the situation snowball from there.

*Caradoc just got slammed face-first into a building and a second cutthroat is advancing on Blodwen, knife in hand (I'm **announcing trouble**). "What do you do?" I ask.*

Blodwen left her staff back at the hostel; she's basically unarmed. "I'll give ground and back away," she says, "looking for a stick or a rock or something to defend myself with." That's Seeking Insight, and on a 6- the guy's probably gonna shank her. But she gets an 8.

*"Yeah, sure, there's a broken broom up against the alley wall, you could use it as a club. And a few loose bricks." I then **put her in a spot**. "But as you see them, the guy comes at you, knife stabbing low like this. What do you do?"*

Fights usually involve a lot of things happening at once. You need to **manage the spotlight and keep everyone involved**. When there's a pause in the action, address a different character (ideally one who hasn't talked in a bit). Describe the situation from their point of view, make a GM move, ask "What do you do?" Sometimes you'll move the spotlight after resolving a single PC action or move. Other times, you'll resolve a few moves that flow naturally together, and move the spotlight when they're done.

Blodwen Sought Insight and spotted some junk she could use as a weapon, but I kept the spotlight on her and had the cutthroat attack. She says, "I'll twist out of the way, then dive for that broom!" We agree she's Defying Danger with DEX (with advantage, for acting on Seek Insight).

She gets a 9, and I offer her a cost or a lesser success. "You can get the broom but you'll be cut for 1d8 damage, or you can dodge clear and not make it to the broom." She decides to get the broom, taking 5 damage in the process. "Okay, you've got it," I say, "but your shoulder is bleeding from that cut."

*It's been a while, so I move the spotlight to Caradoc. First, I recap his situation: "So this guy has your right arm twisted behind you and he's pushing your face into the cold, rough brick wall." Then I make a soft GM move (one of my monster moves, **fight dirty**): "He grabs your hair and pulls back, and you just know he's about to smash your face back into that wall, what do you do?"*

A character actually suffers a monster's attack when...

... you set up an attack with a soft move, and the PC ignores it;
... the results of a PC's move (like Clash) says that they do; or
... the PC rolls a 6- on pretty much any move, and you decide that they do.

Suffering a monster's attack doesn't (just) mean that they take damage. It means you use the monster to make an aggressive, hard move. You can, of course, **hurt them**. Or you can make any other hard GM move that makes sense. If your move involves the PC getting hurt, roughed up, or worn down, then deal damage as part of that move.

"So this guy's got my right arm twisted? But my left arm's free? When he pulls me back by my hair, I'll quick draw my new dagger like this and stab behind me." I wasn't expecting that, but it makes sense based on how we've described things. Clash it is!

*He rolls a 4, and I start thinking about **hurting him** and breaking his nose on the wall. But Caradoc invokes Impetuous Youth, bumping his result up to a 7-9 (at the cost of losing his knife). He stabs the thug and deals damage (3 of the thug's 6 HP) but also suffers the thug's attack. I decide to **turn his move back on him**. "He yells and lets go of your right arm. But then he grabs your left arm, the one with the knife, and like twists it up and over like this, kicking your legs out and smashing you down. Take 1d8 damage, and oh yeah, your knife goes flying from your hand."*

A PC's actions are informed by **fictional positioning** (page 42): where they are, what they're doing, where their enemies are and what they're doing, momentum, terrain, lighting, weapons, reach, room to maneuver, and everything else that we've established about this situation.

Fictional positioning affects whether a PC's actions trigger a move, and which move is triggered, and whether an action is even feasible. It also affects the range of possible results, both good and bad. A strong fictional position can mitigate the bad results of a roll, and a desperate fictional position can mean that a 6- is really, really bad.

Skillful players will look for ways to shape their fictional positioning, allowing them to trigger more advantageous moves, set themselves up for better results, or even skip needing to roll entirely.

I jump back to Blodwen, who just dove past her assailant and grabbed a broken broom to use as a weapon. She got cut, but now has some distance between her and her attacker. I describe the situation: "You grip the broom and he turns to face you, a little more respect in his eyes." Then I ***offer an opportunity*** *for Blodwen to seize the initiative. "He crouches down like this, knife at the ready—you can tell he's waiting for his moment. What do you do?"*

"Just like old Seren taught me. I'll pretend to be scared and present an opening. When he attacks, I'll sidestep and smack his wrist, then swing up and smack his face."

I could say "no, he doesn't buy your act" or maybe even ***tell her the requirements*** *and say she'll have to Persuade to lure him in. But I think this guy is a big bully, not expecting much of a fight, and he gets suckered in. "Cool, roll to Clash!"*

She gets a 7-9, so her maneuver mostly works but she suffers his attack. She rolls only a 1 for damage (vs. this guy's 6 HP), so I say that she smacks the knife out of his hand but doesn't get the follow-up swing at his face. Because he no longer has his knife, I make his attack softer than I would have and ***put her in a spot****. "Before you can swing up, his left hand grabs the shaft. Then he grabs on with his right hand, and you find yourself struggling over this broken broom handle."*

I jump back to Caradoc, who's in a spot of his own—on the ground, no knife, angry bad guy above him. "He's still got your left arm twisted out behind you, and he's like kneeling on your back." I ***announce trouble****. "He keeps adding pressure. It feels like your arm is going break or something. What do you do?"*

"I'll, like, reach back with my right hand and grab his face, try to gouge an eye or tear his cheek or something."

That's just not reasonable given the position this guy has him in. I clarify the situation, then ***tell him the requirements and ask****. "You're gonna need to get free of his hold before you attack him. And if you want to force yourself free, that's going to be Defy Danger with STR. You do it?"*

"Wait, wait. I think this counts as a threat to my loved ones, right? These guys are trying to kill Blodwen, not just me. Anger is a Gift?" It's a bit of a stretch, but sure. "Cool, I spend 1 Resolve to act suddenly and catch him off-guard. Do I still need to roll?"

"You're still in a really bad position here. But I tell you what--I think catching him off guard means you can twist free and attack him at the same time. So a Clash instead of Defy Danger. Cool?" He agrees, rolls a 10+, and manages to wrench free with a yell and punch the thug out.

You'll generally focus the spotlight on one or two specific characters at a time. Other players can interrupt and interject, within the bounds of what the fiction, the rules, and politeness allow. Don't be afraid to shut down (politely yet firmly) a player who keeps stealing the spotlight, or whose character is preoccupied, or who wants to do something implausible.

Caradoc finishes off his foe and I jump back to Blodwen, who's struggling with the other cutthroat over the broken broom handle. I ***show a downside*** *and tell her "He's a lot stronger than you, you can barely hold on. What do you do?"*

Before she says anything, Caradoc jumps in. "I spend my last Resolve and act suddenly. I come out of nowhere and bowl this guy over. Clash?"

I'm tempted to say "No, this is happening while you're fighting with your guy." But his move does let him spend Resolve to "act suddenly, catching them off-guard."

"Huh. Yeah, I guess. Roll it!"

As a fight goes on, avoid anything that feels like "trading blows" or just a grinding away at each other's HP. Use your GM moves and the results of player moves to constantly shift the momentum of the fight and the fictional positioning. Even when one side rolls low damage (or no damage), look for a way to make the situation change.

Regularly ask yourself, "Would this monster keep fighting?" Use its instinct as a guide, as well as what you know about its personality and why it's fighting in the first place. *Cautious* foes in particular will look to escape violence as soon as a fight goes south.

Caradoc gets a 12 on his Clash and does indeed tackle the cutthroat. He rolls only 1 damage, but his maneuver still works. "You shove him up against the far wall and he grunts a little."

I shift the focus back to Blodwen and ***offer her an opportunity****. "Whew, you're free. You notice this guy's dagger at your feet. What do you do?"*

"I pick up the dagger and calmly walk up to them. Caradoc has him pinned?"

"Eh, they're still struggling, but mostly, yeah."

"I put his knife to his throat. 'Stop. Piss off right now and you live. Keep struggling and I'll bleed you like a spring lamb."

I'm thinking that's Persuade, but really, he's got no reason to resist. They've clearly won, and this guy's more of a knife-in-the-dark type than a fight-to-the-death type. "He stops struggling," I say, "and his eyes bug out at you, Blodwen. He nods a little. Caradoc, do you let him go?"

Foes they can't hurt

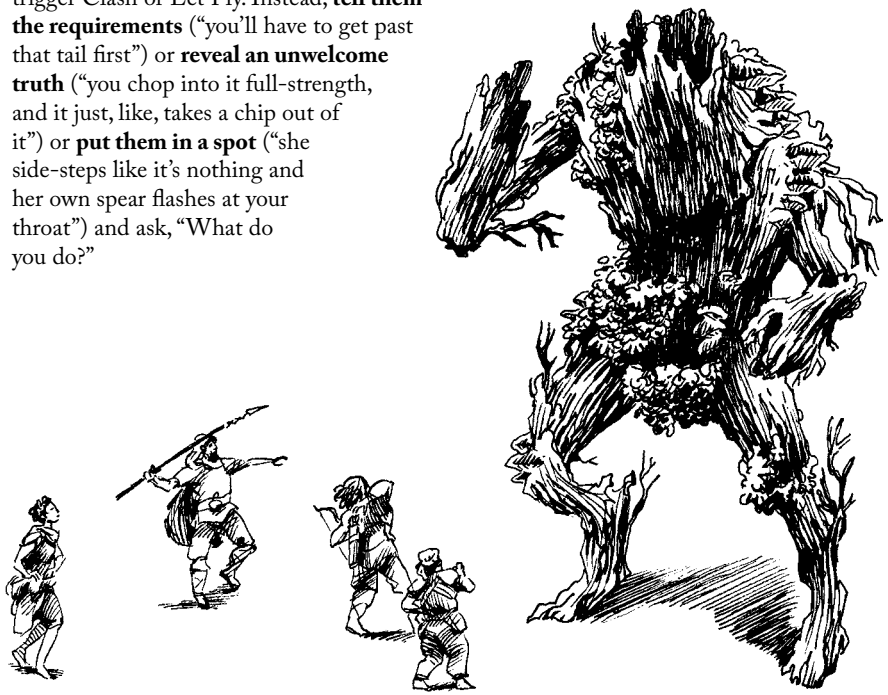
Sometimes, the PCs can't feasibly attack their foe. The monster might have a special quality (like "made of stone") or tag (like *huge*) that makes them effectively invulnerable to the PCs' weapons. It might have a move (like "swat arrows from the air") that counters attacks. Fictional positioning might make an attack extra dangerous or impossible (it's got a *reach* weapon and the PC has a *hand* weapon).

When you first present such a monster, convey how hard it'll be to hurt. "It's got this lashing, whip-like tail, at least 10 feet long." "It's like literally a moving tree, 30 feet tall and made of wood." "She moves with the calm confidence of a master fighter."

If the players say that they attack in a way that just wouldn't work, then they don't trigger Clash or Let Fly. Instead, **tell them the requirements** ("you'll have to get past that tail first") or **reveal an unwelcome truth** ("you chop into it full-strength, and it just, like, takes a chip out of it") or **put them in a spot** ("she side-steps like it's nothing and her own spear flashes at your throat") and ask, "What do you do?"

Make the PCs work for it. They might have to figure out a way to actually hurt this foe. They might need to Defy Danger to get close enough, or Aid each other to have any chance of overcoming its defenses. They might need to use the environment to their advantage. They might have to retreat or flee because they just can't hurt it. They might need to wait for their moment. They might need to do something drastic.

Reward creativity and effort. If they have an idea or a move that would work—even one you never expected—then run with it. **Be a fan of the player characters**. But also, **respect your prep** and the fiction. If your notes say that this monster is hurt only by bronze, and they don't have any bronze, don't let them steamroll you into agreeing that it's also vulnerable to, oh, silver.



They're exploring the ruins near Three Coven Lake. The room gets suddenly colder and the lanterns flicker, and (after a 6- to Seek Insight) a long, hand-like shadow reaches out and grabs Vahid. He drops his lantern and starts shaking in a fit. I address the others: "What do you do?"

Caradoc doesn't hesitate. "I draw my knife and slash into that shadowy limb, trying to cut Vahid free. Clash?"

"No, don't roll." I ***reveal an unwelcome truth****. "Your knife goes right through the shadow, like there's nothing even there, but your hand goes numb and there's frost on the blade. Rhianna, Blodwen, you see this happen, what do you do?"*

Blodwen looks at her possessions and says "Bendis root! I've got some from my herb garden." She drops her staff, sets down her lantern, and Has What She Needs to produce some.

*"It'll take a few moments to get it out and light it. You still do that?" (****tell the requirements and ask****). Yup, she's doing it. "Rhianna, what are you doing?"*

"This is like a ghost, right? So what hurts ghosts? Iron? Silver?"

That's Knowing Things, for sure, and she rolls a 10+. "Silver. In fact, you're pretty sure that's why Vahid got that silver dagger last summer."

"Oh. Oh! I'll step in and pull it off of him, then attack this thing."

"Cool, roll to Clash!"

Fighting spirits

Spirits are hard to fight because, by default, they lack a physical form. Most mundane attacks have no effect and pass right through them. And yet the most dangerous spirits can still attack physical creatures, even without manifesting!

Some spirits (like ghosts) are vulnerable to certain materials. The PCs might also acquire items (like the Twisted Spear) or moves (like the Lightbearer's Purifying Flames) that can directly harm spirits. A spirit reduced to 0 HP this way is destroyed or at least dispersed for the time being.

Many spirits can manifest or possess a physical form. The PCs can hurt such a form, but reducing its HP to 0 simply destroys the form and/or forces the spirit back into its intangible state.

You might find it useful to track a spirit's "manifest" HP separately from its "true" HP. If the PCs attack a manifest spirit with something that could harm its true form, those attacks damage both sets of HP.

Multiple combatants

When the PCs face multiple foes (and they often will), break up the action into multiple smaller engagements—the Ranger fights one crinwin, the Fox fights another, the Marshal and his crew deal with the rest of them. This isn't anything formal. It's just a natural way to manage the scene.

Unengaged foes—those that aren't pinned down in combat—are all sorts of potential trouble. Incorporate them into your moves whenever you have the chance. **Announce trouble** and have them move to flank the PCs. **Demonstrate a downside** of being outnumbered and have them block a PC's path. **Reveal an unwelcome truth** and have one come out of nowhere and smack a PC when they roll a 6-. Bad guys don't just sit around waiting to be attacked.

When a PC or follower engages multiple foes, make more aggressive moves than when they face a single foe. If they ignore the threat posed by multiple foes, **tell them the consequences and ask**. If they carry on and ignore the threat, or roll a 6-, or otherwise suffer the enemy's attack, then make your move extra hard.

When ***a PC or follower's attack could feasibly hurt multiple foes***—because of the *area* tag, because a *group* of followers is making or Aiding the attack, or just because the player describes it in a way that makes sense—then the player rolls to Clash or Let Fly just once, but they roll damage separately against each foe.

When multiple PCs and/or followers attack a foe at once, one of them rolls Clash or Let Fly and the others Aid. If a group of followers attacks a single foe (or a significantly smaller group), they effectively Aid themselves.

When multiple combatants deal damage to a single foe, roll one combatant's damage (usually the best one) and add +1 extra damage for each capable attacker after the first. Apply tags from all the attackers as they make sense. For example, if a PC fights two Hillfolk warriors (d8 damage, 1 piercing) riding horses (d6+2 damage, *forceful*) and suffers their attack, you'd probably roll damage from one horse and add +3; that's d6+5 damage (1 piercing, *forceful*). Ouch.

Clever tactics can make a huge difference when dealing with multiple combatants. Holding a chokepoint reduces the number of foes they have to fight at once. Focusing fire on a tough opponent can help drop it more quickly. Attacking a group's flank and dropping some of them before they can react? Golden.

Rhianna, Garet, and Eira (two of her crew) find Caradoc barely holding a doorway against six crinwin. Some turn and hiss. Rhianna says "We draw hatchets and wade in!" Her crew are archers but not warriors, so she spends 1 of her crew's Loyalty (see page 464) to get them to follow her lead.

Caradoc's got two crinwin occupied, so I tell Rhianna she'll be dealing with the other four. "How are you doing this?"

"I'll take point, chopping the first one and plowing past him to get at the next. Garet's on my left, Eira's on my right, a step behind, each hacking at one of their own."

"Sounds like Clash with Aid from your crew," I say. "But they're not providing advantage—they're letting you fight multiple foes at once." Rhianna rolls an 8. She and her crew deal their damage but suffer the enemy's attack.

Rhianna rolls her 1d8 damage twice (once per crinwin she engaged), getting a 7 and a 2. Crinwin have 1 armor and 3 HP, so the first one goes down and the second is up but injured. She also rolls her crew's 1d6 damage against each of the other two crinwin, getting a 4 and a 3. Garet drops his, Eira's is badly wounded but still up.

They also suffered the crinwin's attack. I don't have a particular move in mind, but I know it'll deal damage, so I start with that. "Rhianna, each of you takes 1d6 damage from the crinwin you're fighting. Actually, you take 1d6+1, because you fought two of them."

"Really? Didn't I cut the first one down before it could hurt me?"

I could tell her that it got a lick in before it went down, but whatever. "Good point. 1d6 damage to each of you." She takes 4 damage herself. Garet takes 1 and Eira takes 5. They're all still up, but Eira's in trouble. I let that inform my move and I ***put her in a spot****. "Okay, so Eira got tripped by hers and it's on her chest, smashing her head against the wall. She looks out of it and, Rhianna, you've still got a crinwin in your face. Meanwhile, Caradoc…"*

Abstracting groups

If the PCs have a group of followers, then you'll often want to abstract their actions in combat. Resolve the group's actions with as few individual moves as possible. For example, if the Marshal's crew of six opens fire on a horde of 20 crinwin, have the Marshal make a single Let Fly roll to see how it goes.

If the group deals damage to another group, or takes damage from another group, then you can roll damage once per side and abstract the results. A group deals damage and has HP and armor as though it was one individual member of the group. For example, the marshal's crew of six would deal 1d6 damage, have 8 HP, and 1 armor from their hide armor. The horde of crinwin would deal 1d6 damage, have 3 HP, and have 1 armor from their agility and reflexes.

If one group outnumbers the other, they get a +1 bonus to damage and armor for every multiplier past 1. For example, the 20 crinwin outnumber the crew of six by about 3:1, so they'd get a +2 bonus to damage and armor.

Damage represents casualties. If one group loses half its HP, then about half that group's numbers are out the action. Adjust the bonuses to damage and armor accordingly! So if the crew of six dealt 4 damage to the crinwin when they Let Fly, that'd do 1 damage after armor and reduce the crinwin from 3 HP to 2 HP. One third of the crinwin (let's say seven of them) would be out of the action, reducing their advantage to only about 2:1. Their bonus to damage and armor is now only +1.

Shift the spotlight between the group and individual PCs. Switch the scale and "zoom" of the action accordingly. Foes that are engaged by individual PCs aren't really part of a group. So if one PC ran in and attacked two crinwin while another PC Defended and drew the attention of another three, the Marshal's crew of six would be left contending with only eight crinwin (20 to start, less 7 dead from Letting Fly, less 5 occupied by PCs). That's basically even numbers, so the crinwin have lost their bonus to armor and damage.

A group reduced to 0 HP is routed, massacred, or otherwise defeated. The fate of individuals within each group is up to you.

Keeping fights interesting

Fights should be exciting, dynamic, and tense. The players should never feel like they're just "trading blows" or trying to deplete a foe's HP. Players shouldn't get bored waiting for "their turn," and the outcome should never be entirely certain.

Make soft GM moves all the damn time. After every player move, describe the situation and make a soft move: say something that provokes action or raises the tension. Then ask someone, "What do you do?" Sometimes, your soft move will be **offering an opportunity** for a PC to act freely, or to follow up on a previous move's success. It's easy to do this accidentally, though, which results in the monsters seeming to just stand there and not do anything. Be intentional!

Make your moves—especially your monster attacks—colorful, descriptive, and specific. Don't just say, "It attacks you," say "It swoops down at you, talons out like this, coming right at your face! What do you do?"

Demand the same of the players. If they say "I stab it with my spear," then reply with "Okay, cool, what's that look like?" If the player seems uncertain, or hesitant to commit, then offer them choices. "Are you, like, running at it? Bracing yourself? Are you going for its gut or its wings or its face, or what?" If you can't visualize the action, ask for more detail.

Consider the momentum of the action and other elements of fictional positioning. Incorporate them into your descriptions and your GM moves. So if your soft move was "it swoops at your face, talons out" and their response was "I brace myself and drive my long spear into its gut!" and they get a 7-9 to Clash, then the results should take all that into account. "Yeah, you impale it, but its momentum yanks the spear out of your hands and they both tumble over here, next to the edge. Roll your damage!"

Vary your GM moves, especially when a monster's attack lands. Don't always **hurt them** or **put them in a spot**. Lean on your monster moves to add variety. Sometimes, look at your list of GM moves and pick something you haven't done in a while, just to keep things fresh. No matter what move you choose: if it involves roughing up the PCs, or it could maybe take them out of the fight, then deal damage along with the move.

When a PC "whiffs" a damage roll, **respect the fiction of their attack** and the fact that they (probably) got a 7+ on whatever move allowed them to deal damage in the first place. The low damage roll means that it wasn't a telling blow, but it should still change the fiction. "Only 2 damage? Yikes, you don't pierce its hide. But it's still disoriented a bit, and struggling for breath—looks like you knocked the wind out of it."

Keep in mind what other enemies are up to. The PC stabbed the monster that was swooping at him, but what are its friends doing? Make a soft GM move to bring them into the action. "…looks like you knocked the wind out of it. Meanwhile, the next one is swooping down at you while you're unarmed, what do you do?"

Keep the spotlight moving. When one PC isn't actively engaged, make a soft move at the current PC, then move the spotlight to the idle PC and ask what they do about it. "…the next one is swooping down at you while you're unarmed. Rhianna, you see this happening, what do you do?"

Give less combat-oriented characters opportunities to shine. Encourage the Seeker to Know Things about the foe's vulnerabilities. Include spirits or beasts that the Blessed can interact with. Include victims to rescue, fragile treasures to protect, and puzzles to solve. Not always, and not every fight, but often enough to keep everyone engaged.

Incorporate the environment into your description and your moves: lighting, terrain, visibility, and the fog of war. They're on a massive staircase? Use a monster's attack to **put them in a spot** and bowl them half-over the edge. It's pitch black except for their sphere of torchlight? Have the monsters retreat and then **announce trouble**, "You can't see them, but you hear their calls as they circle for another attack, what do you do?"

Populate your battlefields with potential energy—heavy things to knock over, high places to fall off of, kindling to set aflame. Throw in some **active hazards**, too: raging fires, crumbling ceilings, sucking mire. Present these elements as opportunities to the PCs. Use them to answer "What here is useful or valuable to me?" Incorporate them into your GM moves, soft and hard.

Regularly recap the situation, especially as you move the spotlight around. "Okay, so: Vahid's on the upper part of the stairs. His spear and the creature he wounded are over here, near the edge. Caradoc, you're hanging off that same ledge. Blodwen, Rhianna, and Andras are on the other side of the gap, with Blodwen holding the torch aloft and Rhianna and Andras scanning the skies. Caradoc, you feel your grip starting slip. What do you do all do?"

End fights earlier rather than later. If it's clear that the PCs will win, have the bad guys flee or surrender. If things start to drag and someone rolls a 6-, use your hard move to drastically change the situation—a new monster shows up, a PC gets captured and dragged off, a follower sacrifices themselves to save the PC and finishes off the monster. If the PCs want to flee, let them Struggle as One to escape instead of playing out individual actions.

Finally, remember that this isn't easy. **GMing is a practice**, not something you master. You'll likely start out forgetting to do all of this stuff, and that's fine. Reflect a little bit after each session on what was fun and exciting about your fights, and what seemed to drag. Ask yourself what you could have done differently, and try to do that next time. Keep pushing yourself to improve!

Maps, tokens, and minis

It's often helpful to visually represent a battle, especially one with lots of combatants and distinct zones. This could be anything from a crude sketch of the battlefield to a full-fledged diorama with 3D minis and terrain. Visualizations like this are great for establishing the situation and making sure that everyone is on the same page.

Be careful, though, not to let the map dominate the game. Use the map to visualize and communicate, but keep the focus on the conversation. **Begin and end with the fiction**, not with meeples on the table or squiggles on the whiteboard! If someone says "I circle around to the north and then attack that guy up there," pull them back into the fiction with something like, "As soon as you get to about here he snarls and charges you, ax raised like this—you still attack? Cool, what does that look like?"

Discoveries

Clues
Sites
Encounters
Opportunities
Artifacts
Arcana

Discoveries are the interesting things that PCs encounter, stuff that isn't immediately dangerous but that prompts investigation, interaction, and decisions. They include:

- **Clues**, like a monster's footprints in the muddy soil
- **Sites**, like the monster's den
- **Encounters**, like the curious spirit met while following the monster's tracks
- **Opportunities**, like the eggs found in the monster's den
- **Artifacts**, like the strange medallion tucked in the nest with the eggs
- **Arcana**, like the lime-caked runes carved in the walls of the den, detailing a spell that can hide you from death

These aren't formal categories, and they often overlap. Those footprints might be a clue that the monster is nearby, but they might also be an opportunity to track it down or find its den.

Discoveries can also be **threats** (page 277) or **dangers** (page 379). An aurochs quietly munching away is a discovery—a chance to acquire meat and valuable horns! But it's also a monster, one that could really mess the PCs up if they aren't careful.

Add discoveries to the game when…

… **a player move prompts you to**. When a PC Seeks Insight and asks, "What happened here recently?" your answer might take the form of a clue. When they Forage and pick, "You discover something interesting or useful," you're almost certainly going to present them with a discovery of some sort.

… **your prep demands it**. If you've already decided that there's a particular artifact buried in the pile of rubble, and the PCs dig through that pile, then of course they find the artifact.

… **the established fiction implies it**. Say you make up some bandits, and the PCs drive them off. If they follow the bandits' tracks back from where they came, it only makes sense that they'd find the bandits' camp.

… **the setting guide suggests it**. When the PCs are on the Makers' Roads, you might roll for a **fellow traveler** (*Book II*, page 272) and create an encounter based on the results. When they're off exploring the Foothills, you might roll for a random discovery on that region's tables (*Book II*, page 148).

… **you think it'd be interesting, fun, or just a good idea**. If the PCs get lost in the Steplands and you want to shake things up, you might put a discovery in their path, like a Hillfolk goatherd, or a creepy looking cave, or whatever else makes sense.

… **some combination of the above prompts you to**. Maybe the Ranger Seeks Insight before approaching the Green Lord ruin, asking, "What here is useful or valuable to me?" *Book II* suggests that Forest Folk glyphs mark the area, which could provide useful information, so you present them as the answer to the question.

Book II: The Wider World and Other Wonders contains all manner of discoveries for you to use in your game. The entries for each region and location include tables that you can pick from or roll on. The entries for the various peoples (like Green Lords) and powers (like the Things Below) include tables for sites and lists of potential artifacts and arcana. Use these tools as much or as little as makes sense for you and your game. **Exploit the setting guide!**

Use discoveries to tell stories, to **portray a rich and mysterious world**. When you prep a discovery or create one on the fly, **think offscreen**. Think about how it came to be here. Tie it to past events or ongoing situations. Don't just have the PCs meet a merchant on the road, have them cross paths with Ulna, the wheezy old merchant who sold them that lantern. Don't just have them find some boars to hunt, have them encounter (normally fearless) boars who are fleeing in terror from the demon who's awoken deeper in the Wood.

Use discoveries to **punctuate their lives with adventure**. Give them word of a powerful artifact or an unexplored ruin, as a way to prompt an expedition. While on an expedition, present discoveries that the PCs can wonder at, interact with, explore. Reward their bravery and curiosity with yet more discoveries.

Once you've put a discovery in the game, follow the **core loop** (page 169). Ask the PCs what they do, resolve their actions, and repeat. Maybe they ignore a discovery and move on. Maybe they take it with them, or make plans to come back later. Maybe the discovery snowballs into a completely new situation. **Play to find out what happens**.

Clues

Clues point the PCs towards some sort of knowledge, conclusion, or revelation. They are signifiers of something else. They are nouns that tell stories.

Present clues when PCs Seek Insight, as a way to **begin and end with the fiction** as you answer their questions. Use them to **announce trouble** or **hint at more than meets the eye**, to **offer an opportunity**, or to make any other GM move that involves imparting knowledge or establishing facts.

Creating clues

If a provocative, juicy clue just occurs to you, or something in *Book II* suggests a clue that resonates, then ask yourself whether it contradicts your prep or any established truths. If not, use it!

Otherwise: start with the **revelation**, the thing you want the PCs to potentially learn. Work backwards from there. Imagine a clue that could lead to the revelation, such as:

- Signs left on the environment (tracks, crushed grass, an old firepit, etc.)
- Physical remains (blood, bones, hair, fur, scales, feathers, droppings, etc.)
- Something out of place (a clean bowl on a dusty table, a strange idol, etc.)
- Writing, art, or markings (a note or letter, a mosaic, idle graffiti, etc.)
- An NPC's/monster's behavior (a ghost pointing, a liar's shifty eyes, etc.)
- Noises, glimpses, scents (a howl in the distance, smoke on the wind, etc.)
- Rumors, reports, tales, or gossip (heard from an NPC, remembered, etc.)
- Flashes, omens, or revelations (a dream, a psychic impression, etc.)

Some clues point directly towards their revelation. Others merely hint at it, and make sense only with some effort or in hindsight. Present clues that fit in with the established fiction, and **play to find out what happens**.

If you're stumped, maybe tell the players the revelation and ask how they figure it out. "What should you be on the lookout for? Hmm. The hdour's watching this place via magic, and they know you're here! What do you notice that tells you this?"

Rhianna and her crew Forage and pick "You discover something interesting or useful." I decide to reveal that a trio of feathered drakes is in the area, but that they've fed recently and aren't actively on the hunt right now. The clue itself seems obvious to me: Rhianna finds the remains of their most-recent kill.

"Wisent bones," I tell her. "Chewed-on and snapped. Looks like drakes did it; you find claw prints and a few shed feathers. There's offal, too—the flies are real bad—so this can't be more than a day old. What do you do?"

She studies the scene, Seeking Insight and asking, "What should I be on the lookout for?" I tell her that these were full-grown drakes, two of them driving the wisent towards a third waiting in ambush. I ask how she figures that out. "Mostly from reading the tracks. And, like, knowing about drakes. Hey, you said this was recent, right? Like in the last day? So they're probably not hungry right now. If we hustle, we can probably clear their territory before they start hunting again. Yeah?" Totally!

Prepping clues

As you prep for a session, try to identify any **crucial revelations** that the PCs need in order to accomplish their current goals or to make important decisions. For each revelation, create at least one clue, ideally two or three. The players need this info to meaningfully engage with the game, right? Make sure that there are plenty of ways for them to get it.

Vahid has dragged the PCs to Three Coven Lake, in search of the Mindgem's fiery makerglass heart. He's acquired an ancient scroll that hints at it once being here, powering some arcane device.

In order to accomplish their goals, the PCs will need to learn where exactly the Mindgem's heart is. I've decided that it's still powering that arcane device, which animates a number of constructs. But a deathless sorcerer long ago fused his soul to that device, sending his consciousness out into those constructs.

I think about potential clues, ways that the PCs could learn some or all of this. Then I write out the following:

- An old map of the city, showing a site marked with a sigil that's also prominent on the scroll.
- The constructs bear that same sigil from the scroll; the PCs might interrogate one or follow it home.
- A rival of the sorcerer tells the PCs where to find the arcane device, hoping to stir up conflict.

(And now I start thinking about who or what the sorcerer's rival might be, and how the PCs might encounter them…)

Decide where and how the PCs could find any clues you prepare. Some clues will be tied to a specific place, NPC, or monster. Other clues will be notional, things you can introduce whenever and wherever it makes sense.

If you suspect that a clue will prompt your PCs to Know Things or Seek Insight or use some other information-gathering move, consider what information you might provide. Maybe write down something interesting and something useful, or what isn't what it seems, etc.

Continuing the previous example, the second and third clues are clearly tied to encounters with specific entities. But the first clue—the map—could theoretically be found anywhere in the ruined city.

I suspect that Vahid will Know Things about that sigil if he finds it on the map or the constructs, so I jot down:

SOMETHING INTERESTING: This sigil is a personal identifier for a maker named Skol Gaeille. Such sigils were used to mark an individual's property.

SOMETHING USEFUL: That spot on the map/wherever these constructs come from... there's a good chance that you'll find the arcane device there—or at least a lead to find it!

If you like, think about other revelations that you might make—information that's not crucial, but that could offer the PCs an opportunity, or that would illuminate the world or your NPCs. Create clues for these revelations, too!

Sites

Sites are interesting places that the PCs might want to explore. There's a whole chapter devoted to **Sites** (page 345).

But sites can be discoveries, too! As the PCs trek through the Steplands, they might stumble on a Stone Lord ruin. If they explore that ruin, there might be smaller sites within—a shrine to Aratis, perhaps, itself containing a Chronicle from the days of the Makers. Sites within sites within sites!

To create a site, or an area within one:

1) Lay the foundation
- Ask questions
- Build on what you've got
- Exploit the setting guide

2) Build up its story
- Look for connections
- Ask yourself questions
- Answer those questions
- Create a timeline

3) Sketch out the site's contents
- Populate it
- Identify dangers and discoveries
- Establish areas/rooms
- Describe the environment
- Arrange areas/rooms

4) Write it up as much as you like
- Create a map or visual (maybe)
- Detail each area/room
- Subdivide as needed
- Make lists and tables
- Make plans
- Review and revise

See page 355 for the full process, and page 349 for guidance on **running sites**.

Encounters

When the PCs cross paths with someone or something that isn't immediately hostile or dangerous, that's an encounter. This usually means people, but an encounter can be with beasts, spirits, constructs, or anything else the PCs can interact with.

Building encounters

Answer each of these questions, in whatever order makes sense. As the encounter evolves in your mind, feel free to go back and tweak or change earlier answers.

- Who/what is the encounter with?
- Where/when does it happen?
- What are they doing?
- Why are they here?
- What do they want?
- How do they react to the PCs?
- Why are you putting this encounter in the game? What's at stake?

The more specific the answers, the more interesting the encounter! "Migrants on their way to Gordin's Delve, in need of aid" is a good encounter! But "A family from Marshedge, going to join their father in Gordin's Delve, and whose donkey (and all it carried) has wandered off the road" is much more compelling.

If you're improvising, you'll answer many of these questions instinctively, or already have some answers from context. Great! Start with what's obvious, and add specific details as you frame the encounter and play out the scene.

If you're prepping, you might leave some questions unanswered, or answer them with possibilities instead of specifics. Even answers you think are set in stone might change in response to events in play.

I'm prepping the expedition for our first adventure. I expect the PCs to follow the trail left by some crinwin dragging young Pryder through the Great Wood, back to a Green Lord tomb wherein our villain (Sajra the swyn) is lairing. I want a couple potential discoveries to introduce along the way, so I review the Great Wood entry in Book II.

I look at the DISCOVERIES *table (*Book II*, page 203) and see "a crinwin, Fae, or spirit of the wild, curious or indifferent." I like the idea of a Fae who was living in the tomb but has been displaced by Sajra. I look up* ***Creating Fae*** *(*Book II*, page 100) and use that for guidance. I end up with Thornthumb, a hollow little plant-man skulking around the Great Wood, fuming over the loss of his home and his hoard. He'd love to see Sajra killed or driven out, but he's also a compulsive hoarder and thief.*

I'm not sure when or where the PCs will encounter Thornthumb; but I think he'll notice them at some point and either try to steal from them (especially if he learns of the Mindgem) or approach them and offer info about Sajra (if he thinks they can defeat it).

As for this encounter's purpose and stakes: I think this guy will be fun to play, and he's got lots of potential to help, hinder, and frustrate the PCs!

Create the NPCs if you haven't already, following the steps on page 453. If there's more than one NPC, decide which one(s) the PCs are most likely to interact with and focus on them. Portray the others as a group, zooming in with more detail only as you need to.

Running encounters

Run encounters like any other part of the game. Follow the **core loop** (page 169). Frame the action with the encounter about to start, or just starting, or already underway. Describe the environment and portray your characters. Make a soft GM move, ask what the PCs do, and resolve their actions. Repeat until the encounter resolves itself or becomes a new situation.

As you run the encounter, elaborate and riff on what you've already established. You'll probably do this naturally as the players ask questions and you clarify the situation, or in order to resolve PC actions.

Build the NPCs into actual characters, with names, core concepts, memorable traits, impressions, and so forth. If the encounter is with a group, embellish specific individuals as they come into focus. If you're stumped for details, **ask the PCs questions and build on the answers**.

If you've established the instinct, tags, and moves of an NPC, use them to inform how you portray them and run the scene.

Keep the encounter's purpose and stakes in mind. **Zoom to an appropriate level of detail, and don't be afraid to wrap a scene up when its purpose has been fulfilled**. For example, if you add an encounter with the intent of just adding a little color, and the PCs react as if it's some sort of pivotal scene, step out of character and address the players. "Folks, no, this is just a tinker on the road and not some sort of threat. Let's move on." But at the same time, be open to the possibility that this encounter is more important or meaningful than you planned. Maybe that tinker has some key information to share after all!

Opportunities

An opportunity is anything that the PCs come across that might benefit them, or that they could take advantage of. It's a very broad category, including:

- Useful or valuable stuff (coin, trade goods, tools, weapons, Surplus, etc.)
- Expendable resources (provisions, clean water, lamp oil, supplies, etc.)
- A good spot to __ (make camp, set an ambush, take shelter, etc.)
- A way to get somewhere (a key, a short cut, a hidden passage, a ford, etc.)
- A chance to __ (learn something, get a drop on a foe, impress someone, etc.)
- An experience (a breathtaking view, a hallucinogenic mushroom, etc.)
- A resource that the PCs might come back for later (a mine, timber, etc.)
- A place of power (a shrine, a nexus of arcane energy, etc.)
- An **arcanum** (page 438)
- Anything else that comes to mind

Not all opportunities are equal. Sometimes you'll **offer an opportunity** directly, but other times, you'll merely **hint at more than meets the eye** or **offer riches at a price**, and the PCs have to work a bit to take advantage of it. Some opportunities will be exactly what the PCs need. Others will be less obviously useful, or distractions from their larger goals. And some are there only because you think they should be, or because a table in *Book II* suggests it.

Once you put the opportunity in play, ask the PCs what they do and go from there. Often, they'll jump on it, or attempt to. But they might ignore it, or decide it's not worth the trouble, or pass it by for now with plans to come back later. Don't force it. **Play to find out what happens!**

Artifacts

Artifacts are things laden with meaning, power, or value. They're objects that the PCs might take with them, or come back later to claim. Relics of the past, gems and finery, magic items—treasure, basically!

Book II contains over a hundred artifacts that you can drop into your game. Some are just brief descriptions and a few tags, like "A ◇ makerglass jar with a threaded lid, seals airtight (*indestructible*, Value 2)." Other artifacts have more formal write-ups, often with custom moves. Like this:

A large urn
Immobile, magical
About 4 feet tall, made of thick shell-like material, and fitted with a heavy lid. When the ***urn is unoccupied and a Fae looks inside***, it is compelled to crawl in (it can always fit). If you ***then close the lid***, the Fae is trapped and the urn slowly and painfully peels away its knowledge, essence, and sense of self. In time, nothing remains but a pile of pearls (Value 2).

A handful of artifacts are presented as **steading improvements** (page 514), and many **arcana** (page 438) are some sort of artifact. You can create your own, too; see page 434.

If the PCs take an artifact with them, make sure that someone adds it to their inventory and is accounting for its load (if any). If they bring it home, prompt the players to decide whether it becomes someone's special possession or an asset of the village as a whole.

Placing artifacts

Put artifacts in the game where they make sense. That sealed tomb that the PCs are exploring probably has grave goods! The sorcerer that they're hunting probably has a few magic artifacts at her disposal.

Put artifacts in the game, too, when you think they'd be fun or interesting. Offer one as a trade opportunity when Seasons Change, or when a PC Trades & Barters. Let a PC find one when they Forage and choose to "discover something interesting or valuable."

When you prep a site, place artifacts in specific spots and/or create a list of things you can place when and wherever it makes sense to do so.

As with any discovery, try to place artifacts in a way that tells a story. Consider how it came to be here, how long it's been here, how it's shaped the environment or how the environment has shaped it. Why has no one claimed it? Who else is looking for it? Who else knows it's here? Reflect these things in where you place an artifact and how you describe it, as a way to **portray a rich and mysterious world**.

The PCs head back to the Green Lord's tomb, to explore it properly after killing the swyn. I've decided that Thornthumb got past Vahid's sanctifying marks and made off with his old hoard, but I think there must still be a few artifacts for the PCs to find.

Looking over the Green Lords entry in Book II, *my eye lands on "a number of ◇ corroded bronze hatchets," which I picture interred with those mummified servants—the ones buried in the collapsed hallway. I doubt Thornthumb would have even known about these, or bothered with them if he did.*

*I also spot **a large urn** (previous page), which I imagine was something made by the Green Lord who's interred here as a way to deal with troublesome Fae. Thornthumb would have steered clear of it, but I can see the crinwin using it to store doodads that Sajra didn't want. So it's stuffed full of rubbish, including some other junky-looking artifacts and maybe even an arcanum like **a cracked flute** (*Book II, *page 523). Oh, and it's in that partly-collapsed chamber, the one where the crinwin were nesting. Nice.*

Identifying artifacts

When the PCs find an artifact, describe it! Tell them what they've found, and what's obvious at a glance.

If the artifact is **merely interesting, useful, or valuable**, then make that clear as part of your initial description or as soon as the PCs interact with it. Don't imply that there might be more to discover if there really isn't.

> *"Each corpse has a bronze hatchet. The heads are corroded and dull, but the wooden handles have this beautiful swirling grain. They're remarkably well-preserved, too. They don't feel magical, but the smith could restore the ax heads with a little work, and they'd be, like, Value 1 each."*

If there is more to the artifact, then make that clear as part of your description, or **hint at more than meets the eye**, or just **offer an opportunity** to learn more.

> *The PCs dig the urn out of the rubble and dust it off. "It's quite large," I tell them. "Like four feet tall and yea big around. The material is weird. It's not ceramic. More like… snail shell? And, Blodwen, you in particular feel like it's sort of… calling out? What do you do?"*

From there, **follow the PCs' actions and resolve them**. If they look more closely, tell them what they see. If they pick it up, tell them what they feel. If the artifact has a custom move, and they trigger it, then present them with the move (and resolve it, of course).

If they Seek Insight about the artifact, resolve the move! On a 7+, answer their question(s) honestly and helpfully, with as much detail as the situation warrants.

> *"What should you be on the lookout for? Honestly, not much. The urn isn't calling you. It's magic, yeah, but it doesn't feel like magic that affects, like, mortals."*

If they Know Things about the artifact and get a 7+, then tell them some combo of what it is, what it does, what it's worth, how they might activate it or sell it for its full value, or how they might learn more. If the artifact has a custom move, then maybe you'd give them some inkling of what it does on a 7-9, and give them the move's full text on a 10+.

Many of the artifacts in *Book II* include "something interesting" and "something useful" as part of their description.

Ultimately, you want the players to know what an artifact does and how to use it, so that they can make meaningful decisions. If the PCs can't figure this out now, give them a path toward doing so, such as…

… **telling them the requirements**. "Old Gorlas knows about the Fae, he could maybe tell you." Or, "You'll need to bring it home and consult your scrolls."

… **Making a Plan** (page 530) with them to learn what it the artifact is or does.

… divulging the info via a **love letter** (page 568).

… revealing the info after a bit of downtime. Maybe ask the player how the PC learned it.

… some combination of the above.

Once a PC figures an artifact out, give the player its tags, write-up, and any custom moves, etc. If it's a steading improvement, add it to the steading playbook.

Arcana have their own considerations; see page 438 for details.

Artifacts in play

Some artifacts are simply interesting or valuable. But others have extraordinary properties or generate magical effects. When questions arise about an artifact (like how it works, what's involved with using it, what it can/can't do, etc.), **talk it out with the players**. Consider the artifacts' description, what's implied about it, and the specific details already established in play. Extrapolate an answer together.

If the PCs want to leverage an artifact to achieve some long-term goal, then Make a Plan or write up a new steading improvement to reflect their idea, whichever makes the most sense.

> *They open the urn and sift through the junk. "Are there markings inside?" asks Vahid. "Or anything else to explain that calling Blodwen feels?" I'm not sure, so I ask Vahid if he's Knowing Things about the urn. He is, and he rolls a 7.*
>
> *"Something interesting… It's clearly the work of a Green Lord. And the magic is a compulsion that affects Fae. So how do you know this?" We decide that there are flowing runes along the urn's inside, some of which Vahid can decipher.*
>
> *"It was made by the Green Lords? I'm Well Versed in the Makers and their arts, so I get a follow-up question. What exactly does this urn do?"*
>
> *My instinct is to give him only a half answer, but that's not cool. Instead, I just give him the description (from page 428). "And before you ask," I say, "no, there aren't any pearls in there. Just a bunch of junk. Though, there is a cracked flute in there made of redwood…"*

Artifacts as threats

Think about how NPCs react to artifacts. Are they intrigued? Freaked out? Jealous? Does word of it spread to other towns? If the way people react to an artifact becomes a source of trouble, then write it up as a **threat** (page 277, a *MacGuffin*).

Likewise, **if the artifact itself is a source of trouble**, write it up as a threat, probably a *magical entity* or an *affliction*.

If the PCs want to destroy, disenchant, or seal away a dangerous artifact, then think about its tags, the established fiction, and what makes sense for your game. A *fragile* artifact should be easy to destroy; one that's *indestructible* should be much harder to un-make. But destroying either one might entail serious risks or consequences, like unleashing a hostile spirit or corrupting the nearby locale. Encourage the PCs to Know Things, or Seek Insight, or Make a Plan to figure out what's involved.

Selling artifacts

If an artifact has a listed Value, then PCs can Trade & Barter to sell it as if it were a special item. If they know or suspect that it's magical, they can try to leverage that for a better price—or they might need to hide its magical nature in order to close the deal. Magic creeps some folks out!

If an artifact has a Value "to the right buyer," then PCs could:

- Know Things to identify a buyer, then send them word or seek them out
- Wait for a trade opportunity (from Seasons Change) with such a buyer
- Make a Plan to sell it at full Value
- Use Trade & Barter to sell it for it a lower Value

Artifacts with no listed Value count as unique items: they can't be sold via Trade & Barter. As above, the PCs can Know Things or Make a Plan to find a buyer, or wait for a trade opportunity. If they find a buyer, assign the artifact a Value, typically 2 or 3 but sometimes as much as 4.

Trying to sell valuable or powerful artifacts is a fraught enterprise, a great way to turn those artifacts into *MacGuffin* threats. If the PCs refuse an offer, then the other party might try to steal the artifact (or send goons to do so). Even if the trade is successful, word might get out that Stonetop has such things, or that the PCs know where to find them, and that can lead to all sorts of unwanted attention.

Buying artifacts

As a rule, specific and/or magical artifacts are unique items—the PCs can't just Trade & Barter to acquire them.

If a PC wants to acquire such an artifact, they might:

- Know Things about where such things can be found, or who might have one (and then attempt to acquire it)
- Make a Plan with the GM
- Put out word that they're looking for such a thing, and then choose a "trade opportunity" when Seasons Change
- Tell the GM what they're after, and then choose "interesting news" when Seasons change

If the PCs do find someone who possesses a specific or magical artifact, and the PCs attempt to negotiate a trade, then you'll have to decide what it's worth. Value 2-3 is typical, with some artifacts worth Value 4. But if the NPC doesn't realize what they have, they might consider it to be as low as Value 1 or even 0.

Creating artifacts

Appendix B (*Book II*, page 498) includes a detailed procedure for artifact creation. Use it when none of the existing artifacts in *Book II* meet your needs, or when you have an idea for an artifact that you want to flesh out. Or, just use it because you want to—making artifacts is fun!

To create a new artifact:

1) Determine its **origin and theme**
2) Determine its **nature** and any related characteristics
3) Determine its **form**
4) **Synthesize** these details
5) **Write it up**, however makes sense

These steps are presented in order, but they can generally work in whatever order makes sense to you. Maybe you find it more effective to pick an artifact's form prior to picking its nature! That's fine.

> *I'm coming up with other artifacts for the PCs to find in the Green Lord's tomb, and decide to create one from scratch—something that maybe got missed by Thornthumb when he cleared the place out. It could be very large, something he couldn't move. Or something small that he missed. Or maybe it's made of iron, so he left it behind? I don't know, but I'll find out!*

1 Origin and theme

Pick or roll for the artifact's origin, the people who made it or the power to whom it's most closely tied (the Stone Lords, the Fae, the Things Below, etc.).

If you already know where the artifact came from, just pick. If a few different origins seem likely, either choose one for now (and feel free to change your mind later) or pick between them randomly.

Each of the possible origins in *Book II* has a table of related themes. Pick from or roll on the appropriate theme table. Allow the theme(s) to inform everything else about the artifact.

> *Looking at the* origins *table, "the Green Lords" seems like the obvious choice. I roll on the Green Lords'* themes *table and get a 2, "Plants and growing things, grandiose and/or unusual."*

2 Nature

Pick or roll for the artifact's nature: a mundane item, a strange material, the tether for a spirit or sentience, etc.

Each result on the nature table points to another table, or set of tables, to determine its characteristics. Pick from or roll on these sub-tables as well. Then follow their instructions (which might send you to other characteristics, to its form, etc.).

> *I roll a 3 for this artifact's nature, so it's a mundane item. That directs me to the* why they might care *table, where I get a 6: "it's inherently valuable—silver, trade goods, etc. (Value 2)." That then directs me to pick or roll for its form.*

3 Form

If it's not already obvious, pick or roll for the artifact's size (*small*, ◇, ◇◇, *immobile*), tags (like *fragile* or *crude*), and whether it's particularly hard to access or otherwise take advantage of.

From there, pick from or roll on the what is it tables. Interpret these results liberally, keeping the origin, theme, and nature in mind. Let yourself be inspired!

> *I roll a 4 for size ("a ◇ item"), a 9 for what it is ("something less common"), and a 3 for the specific, less-common thing ("Curiosity: a wonder, device, enigma, doohickey, toy, etc."). Huh.*

4 Synthesis

Take the details you've established so far and imagine the artifact that they suggest. Fill in missing details and make decisions. What is this artifact, exactly? What was it originally for? How did it come to be, or be *here*? You don't need the artifact's full history, but try to envision something that makes sense and that at least hints at a story.

It's okay to change or discard some of the details you established earlier, or interpret them loosely or metaphorically. They're meant to spur your creativity, not limit it.

> *So: a mundane ◇ curiosity, inherently valuable, with a theme of "plants and growing things." I picture a silver sphere, the size of a fist, with a filigree vine-and-leaf pattern. It was probably just a pretty thing, a grave good buried with the Green Lord that rolled behind a plinth or some rubble.*

5 Write-up

Once you have a clear picture of the artifact in your mind, write it up as one of the following.

As a brief description

Write something short and sweet, ~30 words or less, including load, tags, and other **game elements** (see page 437). This approach is best for simple, non-magical artifacts, but it can also work for artifacts with a straightforward magical effect.

For examples, see any of the "various treasures" lists, like those of the **Barrow Builders** (*Book II*, page 40) or the **Stone Lords** (*Book II*, page 388).

> *This artifact I've been creating doesn't need much description, so I write down:*
>
> ◇ Silver filigree sphere, fist-sized, vine-and-plant patterns (beautiful, Value 2)

As a detailed description

Give the artifact a title, either something descriptive ("a stone cup") or a proper name ("the Red Pennant"). Assign it tags, load (if any), and other **game elements** (see page 437). Then write a few sentences about it, what it looks like, what it does (if anything), what that involves, and why it's useful, interesting, and/or valuable.

Consider writing "something interesting" and "something useful" about the artifact, if you suspect that the PCs will Know Things about it.

For examples, see **a spindle of fine thread** (*Book II*, page 75), or **an oversized ring** (*Book II*, page 164).

I create another artifact that the PCs could find in the old tomb, something interred with the Green Lord itself.

I run through the first three steps and end up with an origin of Aratis and a theme of "laws/rules/traditions." It's redwood, with an extraordinary property of "fills those who look upon it with ___." It's "a ◇◇ item," with a form of "Fire: incense, oil, candle, lamp, lantern, sconce, brazier, hearth, etc."

Interesting! Apparently, this Green Lord revered Aratis, the god of civilization and order. Redwood is "a natural tether for spirits of the wild," and fire is often a symbol of chaos. But taming fire is a very "civilized" thing to do, and the Green Lords did harness spirits to do their bidding. I think this is a brazier, binding a fire spirit sanctified to Aratis.

I ponder a little bit and then write the following, riffing on the Judge's move, ***Censure*** *(page 118).*

REDWOOD BRAZIER
(◇◇, magical, near, area)
A shallow wooden bowl, about 3' wide. Lustrous red, carved with icons of Aratis. Inside is charred, but intact.

When you light a fire in the brazier and awaken the spirit of sanctified flame within, mortals and Fae in its presence feel a sense of solemn awe. When anyone violates decorum in the presence of the flame, they are filled with... (they pick 1)

- Shame, and act accordingly
- Doubt, and hesitate or pause
- Fear, and seek to hide or escape

As player moves

Write a detailed description (as per the previous page). Then write a custom player move to reflect how the artifact works or what PCs can do with it.

Custom moves are a great way to reflect artifacts with magical powers, especially ones that are unpredictable, unreliable, or dangerous. See page 551 for guidance on **writing custom moves**.

You'll find examples of such artifacts all through *Book II*. See **bloodshot amber** (*Book II*, page 139), **a crystal knife** (*Book II*, page 154), and **a black menhir** (*Book II*, page 425) for a sense of what's possible.

As a steading improvement

If the artifact could benefit the village of Stonetop as a whole, then write it up as a steading improvement. This is a good way to reflect resources (like a mine or a water source), improvements to the food supply (a new crop, weather magic, etc.), or other artifacts with far-reaching benefits.

Make a Plan with the PCs to establish the requirements, the ongoing costs (if any), and the benefits of completing it. See page 514 for more about **improvements**.

For examples, see the **golden sapling** (*Book II*, page 189) and **rhoillyg orchard** (*Book II*, page 216).

As an arcanum

If you envision the artifact providing a lasting or reusable benefit, but only after the PCs spend time and effort unlocking it, then consider writing it up as a **minor arcanum** (page 444).

If you envision a magical artifact growing in power as a PC learns to use it, but also having serious, lasting consequences, and you're up for the challenge, then write it up as a **major arcanum** (page 446).

Tags and game elements

Regardless of how you're writing up an artifact, include a list of relevant **gear terms & tags** (page 94), such as: +1 armor, *awkward*, *crude*, *dangerous*, *fragile*, requires ___, *slow*, uses, etc.

If it can be used as a weapon or a light source, include range tags (*close*, *area*, etc.) and other weapon traits (like "2 piercing" or "ignores armor").

If it takes up space in inventory, put ◇ or ◇◇ at the start of the tag list (or just before the object itself in a simple description). If it's too big to just carry on your person, give it the *immobile* tag.

Artifacts might have additional tags not found on mundane items, such as:

beautiful: draws attention, makes some people want it
fireproof: unharmed by heat or flame
implanted: it's part of you, or must become so before you can use it
indestructible: can't be broken or marred by mundane force or art
loud: makes a lot of noise
magical: imbued with unnatural power
terrifying: people and beasts freak out in its presence

Arcana

An arcanum is a card or playbook insert, something you give the players. Each one represents a discovery—an artifact, a place, a bit of lore, a magical effect, etc.— with mysteries that the PCs can unlock. "Arcanum" is a game term; it's not something characters are likely to refer to in-fiction.

The front of an arcanum describes what the PC can tell at a glance or with a little effort, plus the requirements for unlocking its mysteries. The back shows those mysteries, which can include custom moves, new options, followers, and consequences.

Minor arcana are small cards, like the one shown here. They provide no real benefit until the PC unlocks them. Once unlocked, the PC gains access to all the benefits on the back.

Major arcana are half-page playbook inserts; see page 61 for an example. Each offers one or more "free" custom moves. A PC who unlocks its mysteries gains more powers, but using those powers has consequences.

Stonetop includes 64 minor and 18 major arcana by default. All of these are reproduced in APPENDICES C and D, starting on page 508 of *Book II*.

The Seeker playbook starts with a major arcanum and two minor arcana. The Heavy starts with **Storm Markings** (*Book II*, page 566) if they take the Storm-marked background.

Placing arcana

Be thoughtful about how often you introduce new arcana. Between unlocking them, using them, and dealing with their consequences, they can have a huge impact on the game. Give the players too many and they'll be overwhelmed with options. Give them too few, and you'll be missing out on a fun part of *Stonetop*. Don't be stingy with arcana, but don't hand them out like candy, either!

Most arcana are **artifacts** (page 428); place them as such. Try to place them in a way that implies a story or at least illuminates part of the setting.

MINOR ARCANUM

A half-buried plaque

◇◇, *cumbersome*, *magical*

A bronze plate poking out of the soil, somewhere in the Flats or near the Dread River. It's dented, a bit warped, with Maker-runes and esoteric diagrams etched into the surface. How the heck did it end up here?

The plate contains the workings of a spell, which you can learn but…

- ☐ …you must first dig up & clean the plate.
- ☐ …you must decipher the Maker-runes.
- ☐ …it'll take a few weeks of study.
- ☐ …you risk harm to your voice, your hearing, and/or your neighbors as you practice.

FRONT

6

Caradoc and Vahid take a short trip to the Ruined Tower in early autumn, to poke around and see what they find. Caradoc spends a few hours scouting out the outer ruins, Seeking Insight. He asks, "What here is useful or valuable to me?"

The Ruined Tower entry in Book II *includes a number of discovery tables for the outer ruins, including one for "something valuable." I roll and get "a half-buried plaque, or some other artifact of the Tempest Lords." The half-buried plaque seems like a perfect thing to find in the blasted rubble around the Tower.*

I pause to consider whether I want to add this arcanum to the game. It's right up Vahid's alley, and while he has a few still-locked arcana, he can't easily act on them just yet (one requires that he suffer a terrible burn; another needs Rhianna's help and she's busy; the third involves finding pieces of the Mindgem's body and he has no leads.) This is an arcanum he could act on now, and one that I think would be fun to see in play.

"Okay," I tell Caradoc, "In the rubble near the tower, you find this bronze plate poking out of the soil…"

MINOR ARCANUM

Thunderous Bellow

When you ***channel the storm primeval and utter a thunderous bellow***, take 1d6 damage (ignores armor) and roll +CON: **on a 10+**, everyone nearby (except you) must choose 2; **on a 7-9**, everyone nearby (except you) must choose 1.

- Drop what they're carrying and cover their ears
- Be deafened and disoriented for a few moments
- Stagger a few steps away from you

BACK

6

Some arcana are **sites** (page 345), or part of one. Place them where they make sense, and feel free to tweak the details on the front of the card. The "runes around a ruined hall" arcanum describes a throne room, but maybe a smithy makes more sense in your game?

A few arcana represent tales or specific encounters. Present these to the PCs as **clues** (page 424), **encounters** (page 426), or **opportunities** (page 428). Again, feel free to modify the specifics on the front of the card to meet your needs.

A handful of arcana—notably **Storm Markings** and the **Ineffable Words** (*Book II*, pages 566 and 568)—represent a PC being infused with magical power. Offer these as opportunities, or even inflict them as consequences when the PCs are exposed to truly potent magic.

Identifying arcana

Be generous with info about arcana. You want the players to know what's involved in unlocking them and using them. They need that info to make informed decisions. That's why arcana are handouts; you're meant to give them to the players.

When the PCs discover an arcanum, you might…

… **just give the player(s) the card** and have them read it, front and back. Maybe the PC doesn't know all this info yet; work with the player to figure out how and when they figure it out.

… **offer riches at a price** or **tell them the requirements** to learn more about the arcanum, which might involve taking a risk and Defying Danger, or talking to someone, or Seeking Insight. If they do so successfully, give them the card.

… **prompt them to Know Things** about the arcanum: **on a 10+**, give them the card and have them read both sides; **on a 7-9**, have them read the front, and show them the back when they have some time to study it or learn more; **on a 6-**, either have them read the front and then have something bad happen, or hint at the arcanum's power and tell them how they could learn more.

A few major arcana lend themselves to a slow reveal. For example, you might tell the PC that rubbing this magic ring calls up a mist. But the first time someone dies in that fog, the ring asks, "May I take this one?" and you give the player the insert for the **Ring of Daagon** (*Book II*, page 560). Judge for yourself whether this would work for any given arcanum, and whether your player(s) would enjoy it.

Unlocking arcana

To unlock their mysteries, many arcana (especially minor arcana) ask the PCs to invest significant time and effort. They have requirements like, "spend a few weeks deciphering the glyphs," or, "acquire the special ingredients," or "risk lasting harm to your physique and health."

Give players opportunities to pursue these requirements. When there's downtime, ask if they want to work on unlocking any arcana. If they're unsure how to do so, give them suggestions. Maybe they can Know Things about it, or Trade & Barter for what they need, or Make a Plan.

Establish which requirement the PC is working on and how they're going about it. **Begin and end with the fiction**. Ask what this looks like. Where and when are they doing it? Who is involved?

Also, **bring it home**. Ask what chores they're neglecting or who they get to cover for them. Think about how NPCs in the village react. Who might be affected, or put at risk, or confront the PC? Use your homefront **threats** (page 277) and **moves** (page 502) here.

Frame scenes as needed, to resolve PC moves or play out the tensions described above. Or, frame scenes that you or the players think would be fun and interesting.

When an arcanum's requirement says that they "risk __," it almost certainly involves Defying Danger. Maybe you **put them in a spot**, and ask, "What do you do?". Or maybe you stay zoomed out and ask how they deal with the risk at a high level, using their approach to decide what stat they should roll and what the possible outcomes might be.

Even if you resolve a risk at a zoomed-out level, you might still zoom in on a 7-9 or a 6- to play out the consequences. But you don't have to. Plenty of consequences or costs work at a zoomed-out level, too. Maybe it just takes longer. Or maybe they wake up some long-dormant Green Lord bioweapon, a new *affliction* threat, but one that doesn't become relevant until the next season. **Let things breathe**.

Whatever approach you take to handling a risky requirement, respect the outcomes! **Follow the rules**—don't fudge or ignore the results. **Be a fan of the characters**, and give them the full benefit from their moves and their rolls. But also, **let things burn**. If the PCs risk something and get a 6-, or even a 7-9, there should be real costs or consequences.

Caradoc brings Vahid to examine the half-buried plaque. They're not in any immediate danger, and this is exactly the kind of thing Vahid studies, so I just give him the minor arcanum card.

I'd previously warned Caradoc of a large beast in the area, so they try (and fail) to dig the plaque up quietly. Caradoc has to fight a beznpol. but they do dig up the plaque and get it home. They've met the arcanum's first requirement.

Vahid spends his remaining free time that autumn laying wards on the Ringwall. But towards the end of winter (after a bear hunt), Vahid turns his attention towards the plaque.

"Can I decipher the runes?" he asks. We agree that he's Knowing Things (with advantage, because of Polyglot), and he gets a 10+. He can read them just fine! He marks off the second requirement.

The next requirement is, "it'll take a few weeks of study." I don't think this will cause much disruption (it's winter), but I still ask him what he lets slide. "I stop going to the public house for story time with the kids," he says. Oh no! I frame a scene where Nia (Blodwen's niece) comes to check on him. It's very cute.

The last requirement is, "you risk harm to your voice, your hearing, and/or your neighbors as you practice." I ask Vahid how he deals with this. He's trudging out to the Old Wall each day, practicing away from town ("Yes, in the snow, I hate it"). He then casts "Thunderous Bellow" (or tries to) a few times each day, until he masters it.

We agree that he's Defying Danger with CON. On a 10+, I'll say that he gets it after a few days, with nothing worse than a hoarse voice and ringing ears. On a 6-, I think he'll unlock the arcanum but I'll hurt someone–little Nia, who sneaks out to see what Vahid's up to and ends up partly deafened by a bellow.

But Vahid gets an 8, so I offer him a choice between a cost and a lesser success. "You can cast the spell," I tell him, "But to truly master it, you'll need to cast it so many times that you permanently harm your voice. Like, all raspy and prone to coughing fits. Your singing voice will be shot. Or you can stop early. You'll be able to use Thunderous Bellow, but you'll have disadvantage and the dangerous *tag. What do you do?" He hems and haws a bit, but ultimately opts to keep his voice intact—for now.*

Consequences

Each major arcanum has a list of potential consequences, with one or more check-boxes next to each one. Players mark a consequence when one of the arcanum's moves says to, or when you tell them to do so as a hard GM move.

The player decides which consequence to mark. They don't have to mark them in order. "Nested" consequences should come after the ones they're nested beneath, but aside from that, it's the player's choice.

Whichever consequence they mark, it happens. **Begin and end with the fiction**. Say (or ask) how the consequence manifests, what it looks like and feels like. **Bring it home**, too; show how that consequence affects others, and how NPCs react.

Consequences are a limited resource. They stay marked even if their impact is passing, temporary, or undone. If a PC marks, "You are burned… Mark a debility and take 2d4 damage," then that consequence stays marked even after they regain their HP and clear the debility.

Many consequences involve permanent changes to the PC or the world. These might be undone, but there's no standard way to do so. Make a Plan, based on the established details in your game.

If all consequences have been marked, decide as a group whether that means there are no more consequences to accrue (thus making some moves impossible to trigger and other moves safer to use), or if future consequences mean that you make a hard GM move, in line with the consequences seen previously in play. The answer might be different for each major arcanum, or even for each move. Talk it out, together.

Sharing arcana

PCs can share arcana with each other, or even with NPCs, as long as it makes sense to do so.

If the PCs share a minor arcanum with each other, work with them to figure out how the requirements might change.

> *The next winter, after a year of strife, Caradoc asks Vahid to teach him the* ***Thunderous Bellow*** *spell (page 439). Vahid agrees! They've already met the first two requirements (digging up the plaque and deciphering the runes), but it'll still take a few weeks of study and Caradoc still risks harming his voice, hearing, or neighbors as he learns.*
>
> *"Can I Aid?" asks Vahid. He sure can—in fact, he needs to. Caradoc can't read Maker runes! Vahid's Aid is allowing Caradoc do more than he could alone; it doesn't grant advantage when Caradoc Defies Danger.*

If the PCs share a major arcanum with each other, then in general:

- Each character must unlock its mysteries individually, tracking their own progress
- Each character tracks their own consequences individually, meaning they can each suffer the same consequence

Of course, each arcanum is different and there will be exceptions. For example, the consequences for the **Mindgem** (*Book II*, page 548) all affect the Mighty Servant itself, reflecting how it learns and changes. Thus, multiple PCs giving orders to the Mighty Servant would all be marking off the same list of consequences.

NPCs using artifacts and arcana

At some point, an NPC or monster will get their hands on a magical artifact or arcanum. The PCs might give it to them, or teach them to use it or the spell it imparts. Or, the NPC might acquire/steal/borrow it from the PCs. Or it might be in the NPC's possession to begin with.

Most magical artifacts and all arcana are written to be player-facing, often with custom moves or procedures that assume a PC is using them. So how does that work when an NPC or monster is the active party?

First, consider whether the NPC or monster can use the artifact/arcanum at all. Not everyone has the talent, learning, or aptitude to learn spells or command magical effects. Of course, some magical artifacts just work and anyone can use them.

If an antagonistic NPC or monster is learning to use an artifact/arcanum, you can reflect that as an impending doom and grim portents, or even write up the artifact/arcanum itself as a threat (a *MacGuffin*, probably).

If one or more friendly NPCs are learning to use an artifact or arcanum, and that's something the PCs want to happen, then Make a Plan to lay out the requirements. If their mastery of this magic would provide some lasting benefit to the village, then write it up as a **steading improvement** (page 514).

To reflect a monster or NPC using a magical artifact or arcanum, you might…

… just **imagine how it works in their hands**, and incorporate that into your descriptions and GM moves when you portray them;

… **reflect it in their stat block**, as one or more tags, special qualities, moves, or combinations thereof;

… **write custom player moves** (page 551) for what happens when they use the artifact against the PCs, and/or…

… **write it up as a threat** (probably an *affliction*, a *magical entity*, or a *MacGuffin*) if the NPC's use of the artifact is going to cause long-term trouble. This is a particularly good choice for major arcana—their consequences make great grim portents!

As you do all this, don't worry about replicating the artifact or arcanum exactly. Magic is weird and fickle, and might work differently for different people or entities. Aim to capture the feel of the requirements, moves, and drawbacks, but don't fret too much over consistency.

Creating minor arcana

Write up an artifact as a minor arcanum when…

… you can envision a meaningful set of steps for unlocking its mysteries
… once unlocked, it provides a lasting, repeatable, and/or renewable benefit, and…
… you think you can describe it and its benefits concisely, in ~300 words or less (~150 words per side).

Good candidates include artifacts that house a spirit or sentience, or that convey the workings of a spell/ritual/technique, or that produce a recurring magical effect.

Alternatively, you might have an idea for some other discovery—a clue, a site, an encounter—that meets the criteria above. You might still walk through the artifact creation process to conceptualize the idea, but either skip the Form step or interpret it very loosely.

With the arcanum's concept in mind, write the following, in whatever order works for you:

- Its initial title
- Its tags and other elements
- A brief description
- The requirements for unlocking it
- Its unlocked title
- Its mysteries

Expect the process to be iterative. You'll often go back and revise earlier parts as you work, maybe even rethinking its core concept. That's fine and normal.

Initial title

Write a short, simple phrase describing what the arcanum appears to be. A minor arcanum card can fit ~20 characters of 12-point type, so aim for that.

Examples: "A set of clay tablets," or "A broken glass sword."

Tags and others elements

List the arcanum's tags, load, and other **game elements**. See page 437 for guidance.

Brief description

What is it? How do the PCs encounter it and perceive it? How does it make them feel? Keep it short, like 75 words or less, but also make it as punchy as you can.

Requirements

Write a brief intro, like "To unlock the mysteries of these tablets, you must…" Follow that with a series of checkbox steps. The requirements might involve…

… deciphering/studying something;
… learning something, or figuring it out;
… finding/acquiring something;
… getting help from someone/thing;
… convincing someone/thing to __;
… days/weeks/months/seasons of effort;
… a certain skill or talent;
… making/repairing/finishing something;
… paying a cost/making a sacrifice;
… undergoing an ordeal/challenge;
… a ritual/rite/observance;
… something bloody/weird/extreme;
… labor/effort/practice/hard work;
… a simple custom move;
… risking __ (harm, collateral damage, failing to master it, ruining it, etc.);
… combinations of the above; or…
… anything else that makes sense.

See the existing **minor arcana** (*Book II*, APPENDIX C, starting on page 508) and the **Make a Plan** move (page 530) for ideas and guidance.

It's okay if some requirements are vague, or if they'd require multiple steps. If the players ask how they'd go about achieving such a requirement, prompt them to Know Things, and/or Make a Plan with them.

List the requirements in the order that you'd expect someone to complete them, but be open to the PCs doing them in a different order.

Feel free to play with the formula, too. Maybe this arcanum allows for a choice of requirements (like **"a clear, natural pool,"** *Book II*, page 514), or maybe it's unlocked via a custom move (like **"a cracked flute,"** *Book II*, page 523).

Unlocked title

Write something grand and significant-sounding, or at least something distinct. Write them in Title Case, as proper nouns. You can get ~20 characters in one line, or ~40 characters in two lines.

Examples: "Ranaji Kav's Final Technique," or "The White Flame Blade."

Mysteries

Write out the back of the minor arcanum, the custom move(s) and/or follower(s) gained by a PC who unlocks its mysteries. If the arcanum has different tags once it's unlocked, write them here.

Try to reflect the origin, theme(s), and characteristics that you identified when conceptualizing the arcanum. Does it **house a spirit or sentience**, or call one up? Create that entity as a **follower** (page 474). Does it **allow a PC to learn a spell/ritual**, or does it **produce a magical effect**? Think about how that magic might work, and write a custom move or two reflecting the arcanum's theme(s), FUNCTION, DRAWBACK, and USAGE (*Book II*, pages 504-505).

See page 551 for advice on writing **custom player moves**. Use existing minor arcana and playbook moves for inspiration and guidance. And remember: not every move needs to involve a roll!

Edit aggressively, boiling your text down to the bare essentials while maintaining clarity. You can fit only ~150 words on the back of a minor arcanum card.

Don't be afraid to modify an arcanum after you see it in play. If it's unclear, disruptive, or otherwise unfun, talk to the players and change it. An arcanum isn't actually a set of runes carved in stone—it's just a little piece of paper and you're allowed to make revisions.

Creating major arcana

A major arcanum is a half-page playbook **insert** (page 57). Write up a discovery as a major arcanum only if…

… you're willing to do a fair amount of work to create it;
… you're okay with it being a significant part of your ongoing game;
… you can see how it'd be immediately useful (or at least interesting);
… you picture it growing in power with effort or as the PC uses it; and…
… you can imagine an escalating series of consequences from using it.

Start with the arcanum's concept—its core themes, what it is, and what it does. Like, "a Fae-made mirror that creates resentful copies of yourself," or, "a shard of divine essence that burns away your flesh and replaces it with holy flame." If you haven't already, use the **creating artifacts** process (page 434) to help conceptualize it, but don't feel constrained by that process.

Each major arcanum works differently, but almost all have these common elements. Flesh them out in whatever order works for you:

- Its title, tags, and a brief description
- Its starting moves
- How it's unlocked
- Its mysteries
- Its consequences

Refer to the existing major arcana for a sense of structure and what's possible. See **Noruba's Ice Sphere** (page 61) for one example, and Appendix D (*Book II*, page 540) for the rest

Title, tags, and description

Give your major arcanum a Proper Title, something capitalized, evocative, maybe a little ominous. The "Misty Mirror" and "The Everflame" are good examples.

List its tags and other **game elements** (page 437), including its load (if any).

Write a brief description of what it is and how it appears to the PCs. Make it as clear and punchy as you can, hinting at the arcanum's power. But also, keep it short and concise. Aim for 75 words or less.

Draw it or find a picture to represent it, something to place at the top of the insert.

Starting moves

Write the starting move(s), the ones that are easily accessible to a PC who acquires the arcanum. These should be useful and compelling, something the player(s) will be excited (or at least tempted) to use.

How it's unlocked

Write the requirements as a distinct move, as a checklist, or as part of the arcanum's initial move(s). These requirements might involve…

… successfully using one of the arcanum's starting moves __ times;
… rolling a 6- on one of the initial moves __ times (suffering the consequences each time);
… paying a certain cost __ times;
… collecting specific items or bits of lore;
… performing certain tasks or rituals;
… spending weeks practicing/studying/contemplating the arcanum;
… experiencing some extreme event(s);
… some combination of the above; or
… anything else that makes sense.

Mysteries

Write the extra move(s), options, and/or followers that a PC can gain by unlocking the arcanum. They should be quite potent, but using them should require or at least risk marking consequences.

If there are multiple mysteries to unlock, decide how that works. The PC might…

… unlock them all at once;
… unlock additional mysteries the same way they unlocked the first one (using the starting move, paying a cost, etc.);
… unlock further mysteries after marking a certain number of consequences; or…
… do something else to unlock them.

See page 551 for advice on **writing custom player moves**. Look to other major arcana for inspiration, but don't be afraid to try something new and unique.

Keep the mysteries as concise as you can. They need to share one side of a half-page insert with the consequences; you've got ~200 words to work with, 300 at most.

Consequences

Create 5-10 consequences that a PC might incur when they use the arcanum's mysteries. If you write 6 or fewer, give some of them multiple checkboxes to indicate that they can be suffered multiple times. A major arcanum should have ~8 checkboxes total.

Make 2-3 of the consequences not-so-bad, maybe even beneficial. But by the time the player is marking the fourth or fifth one, things should be feeling grim.

Consequences might involve…

… suffering harm/debilities/conditions;
… physical mutations/changes;
… changes to the PC's perceptions, thought processes, and/or instinct;
… benefits like +1 Armor, increased HP, resistance to certain harms, etc.;
… changes to how others perceive the PC
… introducing a new threat or danger
… unwanted attention;
… new, problematic custom moves;
… a task the PC must perform;
… chaos wrought upon the larger world;
… the loss of the arcanum or its powers;
… some combination of the above; or…
… anything else that makes sense.

It can help to think of a major arcanum as a **threat** (page 277), with the consequences acting as grim portents and impending dooms that the player gets (has) to pick.

Edit and revise

Look at what you've got so far, and revise mercilessly. The arcanum's starting moves, its mysteries and the way they're unlocked, and its consequences should all reflect its concept and themes. They should suggest a story, but not dictate one. The pieces should all work together, tempting both player and PC to keep using the arcanum, despite the inevitable costs.

Write multiple drafts. Edit heavily. Be willing to discard ideas that you love. Share drafts with your players and other GMs. Be open to feedback. Get it as good as you can before putting it in play, but be willing to revise if something doesn't work.

Writing a major arcanum is a lot of work, but it can be very rewarding.

NPCs & Followers

NPCs
NPCs in play
Creating NPCs
Followers
Follower moves
ORDER FOLLOWERS
STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND
Followers in play
Creating followers
Updating followers
Losing followers

NPCs

NPCs are **non-player characters**, anyone who exists in the game's fiction who isn't one of the PCs. This includes people, of course, but also includes spirits of the wild, shades of the departed, and bound entities. It can even include beasts like dogs, horses, or plucky chickens. If it has a personality, and the PCs can communicate with it, it's an NPC.

Many NPCs are also **threats** (page 277) that cause ongoing trouble for the PCs or the village. NPCs can also be **monsters** (page 391) that the PCs can fight. This chapter, though, discusses them as people (or at least, as sapient beings) with whom the PCs interact.

If an NPC takes orders from a PC, deferring to them and generally doing what the PC says, then that NPC is a **follower**. Players can trigger moves like Clash or Seek Insight via their followers, and followers can hold Loyalty that makes them more likely to do what a PC wants. Followers are discussed in detail starting on page 460.

NPCs in play

Part of your job as the GM is to portray NPCs. What they do, what they say, how they feel—that's all up to you! Practically, you portray NPCs as part of the **core loop** of play (page 169).

As you establish a situation, say (or ask) what NPCs are there, what they look like, how they're dressed or how they carry themselves. Say (or ask) what they're up to. Speak in their voices or summarize what they say.

When you make a GM move, you can use NPCs to make it. **Announce trouble** by having a follower sidle up to the Marshal and whisper, "we're being followed." **Put them in a spot** by saying, "He's about to scream bloody murder, what do you do?" **Show a downside** by saying, "Mari got all handsy with the waitstaff again, and got a pitcher of ale over her head, again, and she's about to lose her temper—again."

When you resolve player actions, you decide how NPCs react or are affected. When the Fox passes off a barrel of swill as fine whisky, you decide whether the merchant just falls for it, or would never believe it, or might believe it but only if the Fox Persuades them. When the Marshal has her crew Clash and gets a 7-9, you decide who among them suffers the enemy's attack.

When PCs do something that doesn't trigger a move, you say what happens, and "what happens" often involves how NPCs react. When the Would-be Hero says, "I love you" to his sweetheart for the first time, there's no player move that tells you how she responds.

The point is: portraying NPCs—framing scenes with them, describing them, making moves with them, saying how they react—is a big part of running the game.

Modes of portrayal

When you portray an NPC, you can **speak in their voice**, in first-person ("I… just don't know if I can keep… doing this"). Or, you can **summarize what they say** and how they say it, in third-person ("She tears up and says she can't keep doing this—it's awkward").

Speaking in an NPC's voice tends to be more immersive and engaging than just summarizing their words. It prompts players to respond in kind, speaking in the voice of their PCs. It allows you to show instead of tell. And it can be an awful lot of fun.

Summarizing an NPC's words is often easier to do. It doesn't require skill in acting. It's easier to correct yourself. It often takes less time to summarize a conversation than to play it out. You can be more intentional about the info you share and the GM moves you make.

In practice, you'll often **switch between modes**. You might start in third-person but deliver a key line in an NPC's voice. You might start in first-person, then zoom out to summarize their tale. You might describe a conversation that involves multiple NPCs, but punctuate it with a few key lines in specific voices.

Try to **be mindful and intentional about how you use modes of portrayal**. Pick and choose based on the needs of the scene, the pacing of the session, and the preferences of your players.

Challenge yourself! If your instinct is to always summarize what NPCs say, try a bit of first-personal portrayal. If you find that you always speak in-character, try summarizing conversations instead. **GMing is a practice** (page 203), and you only get better at things you try!

Multiple NPCs at once

You'll inevitably have some scenes where multiple NPCs are in conflict or at least have conflicting opinions. In such scenes, you need to balance **giving your NPCs life** with **being a fan of the PCs**.

Try to keep the conversation centered on the PCs. Have NPCs appeal to them and get them to take sides.

If that doesn't make sense, then focus on conveying the gist of the conflict. Use third-person summaries more than first-person portrayal. Very few GMs can make an extended scene of "NPCs talking to each other" work.

That doesn't mean you should avoid first-person portrayals when NPCs are in conflict. It just means that you should do so sparingly. Frame the conflict with a few lines of dialogue from each NPC, and then zoom out to summarize the conversation and the salient points.

When you *do* portray multiple NPCs in the same scene, be as clear as you can about when each NPC is talking. Having distinct voices or mannerisms for each NPC can really help with this. Another trick is to shift your head/body from side to side as you switch characters, leaning left and looking right as NPC #1, and the opposite as NPC #2.

Dialogue scenes

Many scenes will be dialogue scenes, scenes where one or more PCs are talking to an NPC, and that's the extent of the action.

It's easy to fall into "just talking," where you all are inhabiting the PCs and NPCs and just play-acting, seeing how they respond to each other. It's fun, and it's a chance to **give your characters life** and to **let things breathe**. But be careful! It's also easy to let dialogue scenes drag on and meander without purpose.

Like all scenes, **good dialogue scenes have a purpose**. There's a reason that you (or your players) have initiated this conversation, between these characters. The PCs are trying to accomplish something; you're trying to convey something; there's a question that needs answering; there's a conflict to resolve—or escalate! Keep the reason for the scene in mind, even as you're portraying the NPC(s) and speaking in their voice(s).

Try to **stick to the core loop**! Establish the situation—the time and place, the NPCs involved, the tone and gist of the conversation—and then make a soft GM move. Have the NPC ask, "So, what can I do for you?" Or, have them say something provocative and give the player a chance to respond. Or, step out of character and say how the NPC is acting nervous, or how they look unwell, or how there's a strange new idol on their hearth that wasn't there before. Ask, "What do you do?" Go from there.

Remember to **be honest and generous with the truth and detail**. When you make a GM move (soft or hard) via an NPC's voice, step out of character and be explicit about the implications of what you just said. If you intend to portray an NPC being shifty and nervous, deliver their lines and then say, "He's being shifty and nervous." Don't assume that your players will properly interpret your portrayal.

Keep an eye out for players triggering moves during dialogues. If you (as an NPC) put up resistance and the PC persists, they just triggered Persuade. If you ask the PCs a pointed question and they straight-up lie, they're probably Defying Danger. If the PCs have special moves that kick in during a conversation (like Under Your Skin or Up With People), ask the player if they want to use them.

When the purpose of a scene has been resolved, or when the dialogue starts to fizzle out or swirl, **wrap up the scene**. Step out of character, transition to the next scene, move the spotlight, and/or shift into loose play.

Creating NPCs

Remember that one of your principles is to **give your characters life**.

You want your NPCs to be distinct and memorable, believable and compelling people instead of just names on a sheet. A world full of interesting NPCs is **a rich and mysterious world**.

You want your players to care about your NPCs and their fates—even if that means hating them or wanting them dead. When your players care about your NPCs, it's much easier to **punctuate the PCs' lives with adventure**.

Finally, you want your NPCs to act with integrity and their own internal logic. This makes them more believable and compelling, but it also means you can fall back on, "What would this NPC do?" and answer it honestly. It's a key part of **playing to find out what happens**.

So: how do you *do* that?

1) Give them a name
2) Conceptualize them
   - Build on what's established
   - Ask the PCs questions
   - Pick a memorable trait
3) Give up to 3 impressions about them
4) Flesh out details as needed, such as:
   - An instinct
   - Their connections to others
   - Their motivations
   - How you'll embody them in play
   - Game stats: tags, HP, armor, damage, and GM moves

You might also add details to treat them as a **follower** (page 460), **monster** (page 391), and/or **threat** (page 282).

You'll often improvise these details in play and flesh out the NPC between sessions. But if you expect an NPC to appear in an upcoming session, prep some or all of these details in advance. As always, though, **prep only as much as you find useful and valuable**.

1 Name

Give the NPC a name, or ask the players to do so. Choose from the appropriate name list or *Book II* entry, or use a name with a similar sound or origin.

- **Stonetop names** are Welsh-inspired
- **Marshedge names** are Irish-inspired
- **Hillfolk names** are Breton- or French-inspired, but clipped and missing vowels
- **Manmarcher names** are Germanic
- **Barrier Pass names** are Tibetan- or Nepalese-inspired
- **Southern names** draw from Greek, Hebrew, Persian, or Arabic.
- **For other peoples** (like the Ustrina), consult the appropriate entry in *Book II*.

Add the NPC's name to the steading playbook.

Prior to leaving on a trade mission to Gordin's Delve, Rhianna Musters the village to guard against crinwin. She gets a 10 and picks "1 or 2 individuals show real potential; ask the GM who and how." I don't have anyone in mind, so I look at the list of Stonetop names and say "Uh… let's say that Andras catches your eye to replace good old Garet. And, oh, Elios. He's someone you can leave in charge while you're gone." I add both names as residents of Stonetop in the steading playbook.

2 Concept

Figure out who this person is. What are the most obvious and important things about them? What are their pronouns? How old they are? Where are they from? If you had to describe them in just a few words, what would they be?

Build on what's established

Start with what you already know about this NPC and extrapolate. If the NPC is written up as a follower, monster, or threat, then their concept is already well-established and you just need to fill in some details. But if you're making up this NPC from scratch, you'll need to do more work.

No matter how sparse the details, you always know something about this NPC. How or why were they introduced? What can you infer about them based on that context? What have you already established about the world that can fill in the blanks? Go with the obvious answers or intentionally choose something that undermines a trope.

Hold your ideas lightly for now. As you ask questions and choose traits for this NPC, your initial concept for them might change. That's great! Stay loose!

I just introduced Elios as a good person to take charge of the defenses while the PCs head to Gordin's Delve. I figure Elios is an established farmer, maybe around Rhianna's age. I instinctively thought of him as a "he." I tell this to Rhianna. I'm now thinking of a good, well-liked family man, but we'll see what my players have to say.

Ask questions

Many NPCs will be people who the PCs would know, or least know of, so ask your players about them. They'll care more about NPCs that they help create! Keep **the Line** (page 195) in mind. Ask the characters questions that they'd be able to answer. The closer the PCs are to an NPC, the more questions you should ask.

For locals or people PCs know well:

- Are you related to them? How?
- What's their family situation? (Married? Kids? Parents? Siblings?)
- Who else are they close to? Who cares about them?
- What do you like/dislike about them?
- What are they respected for?
- What do others say behind their back?
- What's their most notable feature?
- How have they always treated you?
- What do they seem to like/dislike?

For outsiders, but ones the PCs know:

- When/how did you first meet them?
- When did you last see them?
- What do you know of their family?
- How would you describe them?
- Why do you (not) look forward to seeing them again?
- How have they changed since last you met?

For folks the PCs have heard of but don't actually know:

- What are they known for?
- What is said to be their most notable trait?
- Who do you know who's met them?
- How are they different than what you expected?

For specific NPCs, you can be much more provocative. Frame your questions so that they assert things that you want to be true, while still asking the player something meaningful. When you introduce a mercenary from the Heavy's blood-soaked past, maybe ask, "Why would you never want to cross swords with them?" or "What dastardly deed did you once see them do?"

If multiple PCs know the NPC, spread your questions around. Even better, ask questions that push the PCs towards conflicting opinions of the NPC. If you asked the Heavy what dastardly deed they saw this mercenary do, then maybe ask the Seeker how that same mercenary once saved their life.

Build on the answers your players give you. Clarify and ask follow-up questions, but otherwise treat their answers as if they've been true all along.

I ask Rhianna, "So what makes Elios a good choice to leave in charge?" She says that he helps her drill the militia. Folks have always looked to him when she's out in the Wood. "Why is that?" She says he spent time as a mercenary when he was younger, and has actual experience with this stuff. Interesting!

"Cool!" I say, then turn to Blodwen. "How are you related to him? And what's he like?" She says that he's her uncle (her mother's brother), a hard worker, gruff but always kind to her.

I then ask Vahid what he dislikes about Elios. And he's like "Ugh. He's the worst. Can't take a joke. No sense of humor at all."

Assign memorable traits

Give the NPC at least one specific, memorable trait and play that trait up. These traits become your touchstones for portraying them. Folks might not remember that the publican's daughter is named "Tegid," but they'll remember "the girl who runs everywhere."

Pick traits from the list of NPC Traits in the steading playbook, or make them up, or ask the players to do so. Write these traits down next to the NPC's name, along with their occupation or lot in life, plus any key relationships.

An NPC's traits might flow naturally from what's already established, but you can also pick a trait that contrasts with what you know or what you'd expect. Maybe the burly smith also knows all the gossip. Maybe the Fox's kind-hearted spouse harbors a hatred for the Hillfolk. Such contrasts make NPCs more compelling and memorable.

Based on what we know, I jot down:

ELIOS (he/him): farmer, humorless, ex-mercenary, Blodwen's uncle

I check the NPC Traits list, looking for an interesting contrast. My eye catches on "just got married." I think it's a bit fraught, and ask the PCs why. Vahid pops in with, "He married a younger woman, someone very talkative and bubbly. It's a weird match, but they seem happy enough. Well, she does. Elios is never happy."

I love it. I add "just married" to his write up, and make a note to figure out who his new wife is, too!

3 Impressions

At this point, you should have a solid concept for the NPC, enough that you can start portraying them.

If you're creating this NPC on the fly, frame a scene with them (if you haven't already) and **give up to 3 impressions about them**, their surroundings, or what it's like to be around them.

If you're prepping the NPC in advance, decide on these impressions now and write them down, to whatever level of detail you find helpful. Bring them up when you first put the NPC on screen.

Impression examples

Face: angular, broken nose, dimpled, freckles, hawk nose, leathery, missing teeth, paint, scar, scowl, soft, sunburnt, tattoo, warts, etc.
Eyes: big, bright, cool, cloudy, dark, deep, droopy, missing, pale, small, squinty, quick, watery, etc.
Hair: bald, curly, greasy, straight, thick, thin, etc.
Body: big, heavyset, little, lithe, meaty, missing __, round, short, stooped, tall, thick, thin, wiry, etc.
Presence: alert, brooding, cheery, elegant, fidgety, friendly, haughty, hunched, intense, serene, etc.
Scent: earthy, musky, floral, ripe, sour, smoky, etc.
Clothes: boots, charms, clean, [color], dirty, furs, ribbons, silk, torc, threadbare, unkempt, etc.
Voice: breathy, clipped, crass, gruff, high, hoarse, lilting, lisping, monotone, mumbly, nasally, quavery, rumbling, shrill, soft, stutter, etc.

Each impression should involve a different sense or aspect of the NPC (see the sidebar for examples). Keep impressions short, simple, and evocative. Give less detail than you think you need; let the players' imaginations fill in the rest.

Maybe ask the PCs to help describe the NPC, especially if it's someone they know well. Of the Would-be Hero's crush, maybe ask "What do you find most attractive about them?" When Brennan the Claw first appears on screen, maybe say "Rhianna, you've met him—what about his face makes it just so punchable?"

Most impressions should reflect an NPC's concept—they're a way to show rather than tell. But maybe give one impression that contrasts with the rest of the NPC: give the dastardly mercenary soft, sad eyes, or say that the well-dressed merchant reeks of body odor. Such contrasts give your NPCs depth and texture.

I'm ready to portray Elios, so I frame the scene. "Like you said, Rhianna, you double the watches and step up drills. A few days later, you find Elios, competently running a shield wall."

I give some impressions that play up his role. "He's got this deep, almost monotone voice that folks kind of lean in to hear, and a scar on his face that you assume he got in his days down south." Then, to make him a little more human, I add, "And as he watches folks practice, you realize that he's, like, fidgeting with a… locket? Probably a gift from his new wife."

4 Additional details

Fill in the rest of an NPC's details only as they become important and relevant to the story or to how you portray them.

If you're making the NPC up on the fly, you likely won't have time or the mental bandwidth to do these intentionally. It's common to just portray new NPCs naturally and instinctively, based on what you've already established. You can then go back after the session and take notes about how you portrayed them, and/or flesh out some of the missing details.

If you're prepping an NPC in advance, think about the following areas and make some decisions about them. But remember: prep only what's useful and valuable to *you*.

Embodiment

Consider one or more of these tricks to help embody the NPC. Tricks like these can help make the NPC distinctive, even if you're not a natural performer.

- Pick **an actor or character from TV, film, or theater**. Tell the players to picture them as the NPC. Or, try to portray that character but don't tell the players you're doing so!
- Pick **someone you know personally**. Impersonate them, but don't tell anyone.
- Pick **a way of speaking** or **tweaking your voice**, **a catch phrase**, **a physical tic**, or **a behavior** for this NPC. Use it whenever you portray them.
- **Find or create a picture of them**. Display it when portraying this NPC.

These tricks are relatively easy to use on the fly, while improvising a new NPC. If you do use one, make a note to yourself after the session about what trick you used, so that you can portray the NPC consistently in the future.

As the scene unfolds, and Rhianna starts telling Elios her plans and how she wants him to be in charge, I lean into that "deep, almost monotone voice" that I described him having. I lower my pitch and keep my tone flat. I realize that I'm doing the voice of Eeyore, the sorrowful donkey from Winnie-the-Pooh, *and that seems right. I jot down "Eeyore voice" in my notes.*

Instinct

Between sessions, consider writing an instinct for your NPC. Write them in this format: "to [do something]."

If the NPC is…

… a **monster** (page 391) or **threat** (page 277), their instinct should bring them into conflict with others.
… **a follower** (page 460), their instinct should cause trouble for the PC who leads them.
… **anyone else**, their instinct should reflect their basic outlook and how they approach the world.

Use an NPC's instinct to guide how they behave and react. If you're unsure what an NPC would do, look to their instinct. Have them do that.

After the session, I think about Elios a bit and write this instinct for him:
To complain but get the job done.

Connections to others

When you have time—usually between sessions—think about how this NPC gets along with others. Ask yourself some or all of the following:

- What do they think of the PCs?
- Who are they related to? Friends with?
- Who are they loyal to, and why?
- Who do they dislike, and why?

Ask yourself follow-up questions. If you're unsure of an answer, leave it as something to wonder about for now.

Use the answers to portray the NPC, and to help resolve PC actions. The smith dislikes the Fox's spouse? The Fox might have to Persuade the smith to do an otherwise simple task. The smith is loyal to the midwife? Her support might get the smith to agree.

Don't flesh out an NPC's entire social network. Leave blanks, and fill in details as they become relevant to play.

My notes for Elios now look like this:

> ELIOS (he/him): farmer, humorless, ex-mercenary, Blodwen's uncle. Newly married. Eeyore voice.
> Instinct: to complain but get the job done.
>
> *After the session, I ask myself some of these questions and add these notes:*
>
> Respects Rhianna. Kind to Blodwen. Vahid is a dangerous weirdo. Loyal to his wife.
>
> *I need to flesh out his wife, but it can wait until I need her for a scene.*

Motivations

If you want to really flesh out an NPC's internal life and motivations, ask yourself some or all of the following:

- What do they want from the PCs?
- What do they fear?
- What angers them?
- What do they long for?
- What do they think they deserve?
- What do they aspire to do or be?

Unless you really enjoy this kind of prep, save these questions for NPCs whose inner lives and motivations really matter. In most cases, you can rely on an NPC's concept, traits, and instincts.

> *Elios's motivations seem straightforward to me. For now, humorlessness, his instinct ("to complain but get the job done") and his new marriage give me plenty to work with.*
>
> *In the future, though, maybe folks start to doubt Rhianna's leadership and look to Elios instead. At that point, I might ask myself some of these questions. What does he want from the PCs? He wants Rhianna to get her crap together. What does he fear? Being responsible for the entire town's safety, but also his wife or infant son coming to harm. What angers him? The way Vahid and Caradoc keep bringing trouble down on the village, and how Rhianna turns a blind eye towards that.*
>
> *Such answers would imply a looming confrontation between Elios and Rhianna, where he might demand that she rein in Caradoc and Vahid or else step down from the role of marshal.*

Game stats

If you think that an NPC…

… **might get into a fight with the PCs**, stat them up as a **monster** (page 391).
… **will cause ongoing trouble**, write them up as a **threat** (page 277).
… **will regularly act on a PC's orders**, stat them up as a **follower** (page 474).
… **needs HP, armor, and a damage die, but isn't a monster or follower**, then use the follower guidelines anyhow (page 474). Or just wing it.

An NPC might not need these stats when you first create or conceive of them, but that might change over time. A friendly NPC might start following a PC's lead and become a follower. Or they might become a source of ongoing trouble and become a threat. Or both. Both is good.

> *When I first introduce Elios, I don't expect him to get into a fight with the PCs, and he's not causing them any trouble. So there's no need to give him monster stats or write him up as a threat.*
>
> *He respects Rhianna, and generally defers to her when it comes to the town's defenses, but I don't really see him as her follower.*
>
> *As play progresses, though, and the town becomes frustrated with Rhianna's leadership, I might decide that Elios has become an ongoing problem and I'd write him up as a threat (a* wildcard, *probably, at least to start).*

Followers

Followers are NPCs who generally take orders from a PC and follow their lead. They're usually people, but well-trained beasts, bound spirits, and even sentient artifacts can count as followers. PCs can gain followers mechanically (via their playbook, a move, or an arcanum), or naturally through the course of play.

Followers are, first and foremost, NPCs. You, the GM, ultimately decide what they do and what they say, and what happens to them. What distinguishes them from other NPCs is that...

… they'll generally do as their PC says;
… they can accumulate Loyalty to their PC, which makes them easier to lead and manage; and
… when a PC has them do something, they can trigger player moves.

Followers also get a full set of stats, very similar to those of **monsters** (page 391). They have tags, HP, armor, a damage die, an instinct, and possibly GM moves.

Followers also have two additional stats: a **cost** and **Loyalty**.

A follower's cost describes what keeps them following a PC's lead. It's usually a few words, like "coin, payment, treasure" or "affection, respect" or "training." When a PC pays the follower's cost, the follower holds Loyalty.

Loyalty is a currency the followers can hold. The follower's player can spend that Loyalty to get the follower to ignore fear, behave themselves, or do something they'd rather not do. See the **Strengthen Your Bond** move (page 464) for details.

Here's an example follower:

RHIANNA'S CREW, the hunters
Group, *archers*, *observant*, *stealthy*, *respected*, *woods-wise*
HP 6; **Armor** 0
Damage hatchet 1d6 (*hand*) or bow 1d6 (*near*, ○ low ammo, ○ out)
Instinct to hew to tradition and superstition
Cost merry-making, as a group (Loyalty ○○○)

Eira (lieutenant, cynical), Lowri (snores, sharp-eyed), Harri (skinny, old), Garet (dead), two others.

As the Marshal, Rhianna starts with a crew and gets to define who they are. Her crew are the town's hunters. We generally treat them as a group, but Eira, Lowri, Harri, and poor departed Garet have all been established as individuals.

After Garet's death, Rhianna recruited:

ANDRAS, apprentice hunter
Archer, *observant*, *eager*, *rookie*
HP 6; **Armor** 0
Damage hatchet 1d6 (*hand*) or bow 1d6 (*near*, ○ low ammo, ○ out)
Instinct to try to impress Rhianna
Cost recognition (Loyalty ○○○)

Young man, Padraig's son. Sweet on Blodwen. Tries real hard, asks lots of questions.

He caught her eye when she Mustered the village before a trip to Gordin's Delve. Over time, Andras became more and more competent, eventually merging with Rhianna's crew of hunters.

Here's another example:

FFLUR, a draft horse
Large, *powerful*, *keen-nosed*, *hardy*
HP 10; **Armor** 0
Damage hoofs 1d6+3 (*hand*, *close*, *forceful*)
Instinct to panic
Cost extensive care, grooming (Loyalty ○○○)

A chestnut mare, maybe 12 years old. Always hungry. More sensible than Celyn, but still a horse.

Fflur is one of the town's two horses, listed on the steading playbook as assets. The PCs Requisitioned her and a cart for their trip to Gordin's Delve, but it was Blodwen's player who named her.

The horses are important to the town, and Blodwen can talk to animals, so the players and I were interested in Fflur as a character. We decided to treat her as a follower. Because Blodwen can speak to her and she took the most interest, we agreed to treat Fflur as Blodwen's follower, specifically.

And one more:

ANDALAU OF THE FLUTE, dancing wind spirit
Spirit, *tiny*, *stealthy*, *mischievous*
HP 8; **Armor** 0
Damage none
Instinct to play and frolic
- ➤ Manifest as a fluttering gust of wind (harmed only by salt)
- ➤ Deliver a whispery message
- ➤ Throw things about (dust, leaves, etc.)
- ➤ Annoy or spook someone

Cost entertainment (Loyalty ○○○)

When you play a tune to make the wind itself dance, the andalau manifests, holding 1 Loyalty. When you dismiss the spirit while it holds no Loyalty, the flute splits and falls apart; the andalau is set free.

Vahid discovered a cracked flute of yew wood—a **minor arcana** (page 58)—in the Green Lord's tomb. After a few weeks of practice and misadventure, he can now summon the andalau that's bound to the flute. It'll generally do what he says, but it's a fickle thing and he has to keep it happy or the flute will shatter and become worthless.

Follower moves

These moves become relevant when PCs interact with their followers.

ORDER FOLLOWERS
When you ***direct your follower to do something that would trigger a player move***, and they do it, they trigger the move. If the move involves rolling, you roll for them. Instead of rolling +STAT, roll and…

… if they have at least one appropriate tag or move, add +1, or +2 if they're also *exceptional*;
… if they have no relevant tag or move, add +0; and
… if any of their tags would get in the way, roll with disadvantage.

When a follower is without orders or they act on their own initiative, the GM says what they do and decides how it goes.

Followers are NPCs—they don't usually trigger player-facing moves. You might **put them in a spo**t and have a follower rush in to attack a foe they can't beat, but that's just you making a soft GM move. You tell the players that this happens and ask, "What do you do?" No one rolls Clash for the reckless follower!

That changes, though, when a follower acts at a PC's behest. The follower is acting as an extension of the PC's will, and so we look to the dice and player-facing moves to find out what happens.

If a PC tells a follower to do something that they don't want to do, the PC must Persuade or otherwise convince them to do it—just like they would with any other NPC. **Loyalty** (page 464) makes this easier, but most followers won't charge a thunder drake without some convincing!

Assuming the follower *does* do what the PC says, and that action would trigger a player-facing move if a PC did it, then resolve the move normally. The player rolls on the follower's behalf, and makes any decisions they'd normally make if their PC triggered the move. If they roll a 6-, the player marks XP.

Followers don't have stats like STR or INT. If a move calls for rolling +STAT, the player looks at the follower's tags and moves. If any of them indicate that the follower is good at this, the player adds +1 (even if multiple tags or moves apply). Otherwise, they add +0.

If the follower is *exceptional*, AND they have another tag or move that applies, then the player rolls +2. But if no other tag or move applies, the player still rolls +0 for an *exceptional* follower.

If any of a follower's tags would actively hinder the move that they're making, the player rolls with disadvantage. A roll can get both a +1 (or +2) and disadvantage. If Vahid sends his *stealthy*, *mischievous* wind spirit to spy on someone, the *stealthy* tag helps (+1) but the *mischievous* tag means that it might get distracted and try to prank the target (imposing disadvantage).

Rhianna just saw Caradoc get smashed by the hagr, and she rushes to his side yelling, "Eira, Lowri—shoot!" They recover their wits, nock arrows, and Let Fly.

The crew have the archers *tag (but not the* exceptional *tag), so Rhianna rolls +1 and gets a 7. The crew deals damage but Rhianna has to pick: reduce ammo, hold steady, move closer, or rush their shots. "I think they take a bunch of shots," she says, and marks ○ low ammo on her crew's gear. She then rolls 1d6+1 (her crew's damage, +1 because there are two of them shooting) and gets a 5.*

"Nice!" I say. "It howls in pain and rears up, looking for what stung it, giving you time to reach Caradoc. Vahid, you've been watching this unfold, what do you do?"

Rhianna doesn't trust the hostler up in Gordin's Delve, so she tells Andras that he'll be sleeping in the cart and keeping an eye on it and the horse.

Andras is a follower and he'll be keeping watch off-screen, so I say, "I think you're having him Defy Danger, the danger being whatever the hostler gets up to. But don't roll it just yet." I have Rhianna roll the next day, after a few PC-focused scenes. Andras's observant *tag applies, so she adds +1 but she gets a 5. "Caradoc, a bloody-nosed Andras finds you at the inn, and he's like, They stole Fflur! What do we do?"*

Eira is all but dead, the Shadowy Presence having sucked the life out of her. Blodwen asks "Do we know how to treat this? I'll consult with Gwendyl and Seren." We all agree that Blodwen's Ordering Followers, but it's unclear whether she's having them Know Things, or Knowing Things and having her followers Aid her. We decide on the latter, as it keeps the focus on the PC.

So, Blodwen rolls +INT, with advantage. She gets a 12 and I tell her "Eira's soul has been wounded. Gwendyl can fortify her body, but to actually heal her you'll need to go into a trance, contact her spirit, and try to restore it with your own. It'll be hella dangerous. What do you do?"

Blodwen and Seren have found Eira's near-feral soul. Blodwen tries to Persuade Eira to let her help, but rolls a 4 and I put someone in a spot. "After some coaxing, she lets you approach. But as you do, Seren curses and shoots off. You see a pack of leering spirits emerging from the mists, and she's going to face them down!"

Blodwen asks if Seren is Defending or Clashing. "Neither," I say, "she's doing this on her own, not at your direction" Then I tell her the consequences. "She's holding them off for now, but she can't keep it up for long. You can help her, but Eira will run away. Or you can help Eira and hope you're quick enough to get Seren out of there. What do you do?"

Try to resolve follower actions with as few moves and rolls as possible. Zoom out and resolve complicated tasks with a single Defy Danger. If a follower takes the same action as a PC, treat that as the follower Aiding the PC rather than triggering a move of their own.

Note that followers don't have access to the PC's playbook moves. The Marshal can order a follower to give a rousing speech, but they won't trigger We Happy Few. The Ranger might have Big Game Hunter, but their pet wolf doesn't deal +2 damage vs. *large* foes as a result.

STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND
When you ***pay your follower's cost***, and you haven't done so recently, they hold +1 Loyalty (max 3).

Spend your follower's Loyalty 1-for-1 to have them:

- Overcome their fear to do as you say
- Resist acting on their instinct/tags/traits
- Do something they don't want to do (as long as it's not abhorrent or suicidal)

When a follower is without orders or they act on their own initiative, the GM says what they do and decides how it goes.

Each follower has a cost, like "genuine affection" or "coin, payment, treasure" or "training." When a PC pays that cost—when they provide it directly or ensure that the follower receives it—then the follower gains Loyalty.

Paying a follower's cost should be a meaningful moment. Ideally, it should involve intentional action taken by the PC. Put the onus on the player to point out when they've paid their follower's cost, but of course—as with any move—anyone can point out this move has been triggered. If anyone disagrees, talk it out.

The PC and/or follower should have a significant scene "on camera" before they can Strengthen Their Bond again. If a PC pays a cost like "training" multiple times over a stretch of downtime or loose play, then the follower holds only +1 Loyalty.

Loyalty

When a follower's cost is paid, they hold +1 Loyalty, up to 3. If a follower holds 3 Loyalty, then Strengthen Your Bond doesn't trigger.

The follower holds the Loyalty but the PC they follow (or rather, that PC's player) chooses to spend it. As a rule, a follower is tied to one PC, and only that PC can pay its cost or spend its Loyalty. But if an NPC follows the party as a whole, then any PC can generate or spend that follower's Loyalty.

A PC will typically spend a follower's Loyalty after you make a GM move and show that the follower is afraid, or about to do something dumb, or doesn't want to do as they're told. The player can spend Loyalty to resolve that problem without having to trigger a move like Persuade or Defy Danger.

A player can proactively spend Loyalty, too, but if they do, consider whether it's really necessary. If the follower wasn't going to balk or do something dumb, tell the player that there's no need to spend the Loyalty after all.

It's easy to think of a follower's cost and Loyalty as transactional: I did this for you, now you owe me. That's true for some followers, but for most, Loyalty represents trust, respect, fondness, or even just habit. **Ask the player what it looks like when they spend a follower's Loyalty**. Maybe the PC claps them on the shoulder and says something inspiring. Maybe they make eye contact and shake their head. Or maybe the follower just swallows hard and does what needs to be done. Work with the player to establish how this particular follower's Loyalty manifests.

The trip to Gordin's Delve takes four days, and the first day we establish that Blodwen is caring for Fflur. She's taking pains to groom her in the evening, brushing her down and keeping her company while she grazes. We agree that this pays Fflur's cost ("extensive care, grooming") and Blodwen's player marks 1 Loyalty for Fflur.

The next day of travel passes without any significant scenes. Blodwen takes care of Fflur again when they make camp, and asks if she Strengthens Their Bond again. "No," I say, "you just did, right? Like, yeah, a day passed in-game but you've basically been caring for her this whole time, right?" So Fflur still holds just 1 Loyalty.

The next day, a frythanc (a huge bird of prey) swoops low over the party. The magic of the roads will keep them safe if they stay put, but I ***show a downside*** *and play up Fflur's instinct ("to panic"). "Blodwen, Fflur bucks, rears, and knocks you back, tumbling onto the pavestones. She's still in the tackle, and if she keeps this up, she'll, like, break her leg. What do you do?"*

"I get up and calmly approach, hands out like 'whoa, girl." She's trying to use her Into the Lion's Den move, which lets her calm beasts with a touch.

"I know the move says she won't harm you, but she's still kicking and rearing. I think there's still a danger that you flinch or show fear. You'll be Defying Danger with WIS. Or you could spend Fflur's Loyalty to keep her from acting on her instinct."

Blodwen uses the Loyalty and I ask what this looks like. "I'm like whispering to her, hands out, 'shhh girl…" and she calms down. Does that work?" It sure does!

Things are getting creepy out in the woods. The sun just dimmed. Trees are bleeding. Ominous shadows flit just out of sight. Vahid is painting a sanctifying mark on Caradoc's shield, but it'll take time.

"While they do that, Rhianna, your crew is kind of freaking out. What do you do?" She whistles and directs them to encircle the PCs, intending to have them Defend.

"Yeah, but I think they're Defying Danger first," I say, "the danger being their own fear. You know how superstitious they are!"

"Uh, no," says Rhianna. "I'll spend their 1 Loyalty to overcome their fear to do as I say. I don't think it looks like much, that whistle just snaps them out of it. So… I roll for Defend, then?" She sure does!

Gwendyl hasn't shown up for Vahid's Breaking-of-Fast party, and Blodwen goes to her house to find out why. Gwendyl claims she doesn't hold with "those decadent southern ways," but really, she's feeling neglected by her favorite pupil.

I expect Blodwen to press Gwendyl and trigger Persuade. Instead, Blodwen gives her a hug, apologizes for not being around, and says, "We don't need to go. Plenty to be done here." They spend a few hours cutting and bundling herbs. Then Blodwen asks if this pays Gwendyl's cost of "consideration, affection." I sure think it does.

"You know, there might be some baklava left at Vahid's," says Blodwen. "I spend that Loyalty to get her to do something she doesn't want to do." But, now that she's feeling better, I think Gwendyl would be fine going to the party, and I tell Blodwen to hold onto that Loyalty.

Followers in play

Followers are NPCs. They fall on your side of **the Line** (page 195), and **it's your responsibility—not the players'—to portray them**, to say what they do and what they say. A little blurring of the Line is natural, but if a player portrays a follower like they're a second PC, pause the game and reset expectations.

As with any NPC, **use followers as part of the core loop** (page 169). Include them when you establish the situation. Make GM moves (soft or hard) with them or against them. Decide how they react to the PCs' words and deeds—and that goes for all the PCs, not just the PC they follow!

With that said, **followers generally do what their PC tells them to do, and they often look to the PC for direction**. It's perfectly fine to ask, "And what do you have your crew do?" or to say something like, "He looks at you expectantly, do you tell him to do anything?"

The more established the follower is, the more you should **ask questions and build on the answers**. If the Marshal's crew is like family, lean on them when fleshing out the individual members or even when deciding what they'd do. "Rhianna, how do you think Hari would react here?"

Remember, though: **Order Followers triggers only when the PC *directs* a follower**. If you ask the player what they think their follower would do, and you agree that, yeah, they do that—that's not Ordering Followers, and the follower doesn't trigger any moves. You just decide what happens.

The burden of leadership

Followers can be useful, but they should also be sources of stress and conflict.

For starters, **followers get scared**. They might freeze up when surprised, or flee from a *terrifying* foe, or panic in the face of supernatural horror. Tell the player when this happens, and ask what they do. If the PC gives them an order, the player can spend 1 Loyalty to have the follower overcome their fear and do as they're told. Otherwise, ask yourself: **would the follower do this willingly if they weren't scared?**

If they would, then the PC is having them Defy Danger (the danger being that they freeze up, panic, or screw up).

If they wouldn't, then the follower needs to be convinced, via Persuade or some other move.

Even when they aren't scared, **followers won't always do as they're told**. They might resist orders if...

… they're angry, miserable, shocked, or otherwise overwhelmed;
… the order is unreasonable, foolish, degrading, distasteful, etc.; and/or
… the order goes against the follower's instinct, tags, cost, or other traits.

For example, a *warrior* follower will usually be willing to go into battle, but if the odds are overwhelming, or they haven't eaten for a couple days and they're wet and cold and have had enough of this crap, well, they're probably going to need some convincing!

When you decide that a follower doesn't want to do as they're told, then reveal that to the player! "He looks at you with tired eyes and doesn't even get up, what do you do?" Or, "You want me to what? That's… no, no way." Or, "You can tell he doesn't want to, you're going to have to convince him—what do you do?"

The player can then choose to spend the follower's Loyalty (if they hold any) to have them "do something they don't want to do." Or the PC can Persuade the follower, or use a different move to convince them. Or they could let it drop and do something else. Whatever they do, **follow the rules** and the dice and portray the follower with integrity, and **play to find out what happens**.

Play up a follower's instinct, tags, and traits as a source of trouble for the PCs. Does the Ranger's wolf have an instinct of "to fill its belly?" Then have it chomp on the obvious bait, or refuse to leave a carcass uneaten. Is one of the Marshal's crew a gambler? Have her leave her post to join a game of dice, or have a creditor from Gordin's Delve show up to collect. The player can spend 1 Loyalty to have their follower "resist acting on their instinct/tags/traits," but if they don't, they need to convince them to stop or else deal with the consequences.

Emphasizing a follower's fear, foibles, and troublesome behaviors makes their Loyalty valuable! If a follower always just does what the PC says and never gets scared or acts up, then their player will see no reason to pay the follower's cost and Strengthen Their Bond.

Vahid walks down the road from the logging camp and plays a spritely tune, calling up the andalau that's tied to his flute. Wind gusts and swirls, and when Vahid stops playing I stage whisper, "More! More more more!"

Vahid wants the spirit to find those ruins that Iwan visited, and lead him to them. Given the andalau's instinct ("to play and frolic") and mischievous *tag, I don't think it wants to. I sigh and whisper, "Boooorrrrring."*

The Dancing Wind Spirit arcanum says that the andalau holds 1 Loyalty when it manifests; Vahid could just spend that. But the flute will break if the spirit has no Loyalty when dismissed. Vahid Persuades it instead. "Boring? Why, it'll be a fine game of hide and seek!" He rolls an 8.

"It's not convinced," I say, "but if you turn it into a game when it leads you to the ruins, it'd think that was fun. That'd even pay its cost." Vahid offers that and the spirit agrees. The next morning, the spirit returns. "Found it, found it, come, come, follow! Play!"

Vahid tells Rhianna that he can lead them to the ruins, and she has everyone get ready to go. But when her superstitious *crew realizes that they're following a fickle spirit on a game of "hot and cold," they dig their heels in. Now Rhianna has to convince them to go along with this plan. If she had let the crew celebrate last night, it would have paid their cost and she could just spend their Loyalty. But she didn't, and they hold no Loyalty, so now she's going to need to Persuade them.*

Off-screen orders

When a player sends a follower off-screen to do something, resolve it with a single move (at most!). The PC won't be there to give follow-up direction when things snowball, so zoom out and pick a single move to represent the off-screen action. Resolve that one move. Let all the other things that could go right or wrong color the outcome.

If you really can't decide which move the follower is making, it's Defy Danger.

In general, have the player roll for their follower's off-screen move when the PCs could learn the outcome. If a PC leaves their follower in Gordin's Delve to spy on Mutra the Teeth, have the player roll to Seek Insight when the PC gets back to Gordin's Delve.

Sometimes, though, you want to know the results up front, so that you can weave it into unfolding events. Say the Marshal has her crew sneak around to flank a foe. You might have the Marshal roll Defy Danger right away, and then reveal the results maybe a scene or two later. "A 7, huh? Okay, cool, cool." Then, after the PCs have snuck up on the bandit camp and are about to attack: "There's a commotion to the north, and one figure drags another out of the brush. Oh crap, they've got Hari! Everyone in camp is going to see what the fuss is about. What do you do?"

Followers in fights

Followers can have a big impact on fights. They can help even the odds or allow the PCs to overwhelm a single foe. But followers can also complicate the situation by panicking, getting into trouble, or acting rashly.

Keep followers in mind while you run fights. They might defer to the PCs or look to them for direction, but they'll rarely just stand there! When you establish the situation or make a GM move, think about what the followers have been up to while the spotlight was on the PCs. "You dispatch this crinwin, but see another one on top of Glaw. Hari's lining up a shot, but hesitating. That other crinwin is fleeing with your mess kit in its hands. What do you do?"

Remember, though, that followers only trigger player moves when directed to do so by their PC. If the PC ignores Hari and Glaw and chases after the fleeing crinwin, then it's your call whether or not Hari shoots. If he does shoot, you decide whether his shot lands, or misses, or hits Glaw instead. But if the PC shouts, "Hari, shoot, dammit!" while they rush after the fleeing crinwin—then they're Ordering Followers, and the player rolls to have Hari Let Fly.

Clear communication is hard during a fight! It's loud, you don't have much time (or breath!), and everyone is rather preoccupied with not getting killed. Don't let players give elaborate, detailed orders while a fight rages. A few words or hand signals is probably all they get!

If a PC's orders are vague, ask what they intend and how the follower would know that. Give them leeway if they've worked with the follower a long time. The Marshal's crew have drilled and fought side-by-side for years, so "Hari, behind you!" could convey "Hari, a foe is behind you, turn and attack it!" But with a new follower, a warning like that would only get them to dodge, at best!

For examples of **followers in fights**, see pages 213, 223, 415, 463, and 472.

When followers Defend

When a PC Orders Followers to Defend and gets a 7+, the *follower* holds Readiness but the player decides when and how they spend it.

When a player spends their follower's Readiness, consider whether the follower would actually do what the player wants. Would they really suffer this attack in place of their ward? Would they really draw all attention to themselves? If the answer feels like "no," then the player has to spend both 1 Readiness *and* 1 Loyalty—they're unlikely to have time to Persuade the follower!

When a PC Defends and a follower Aids them, that PC holds the Readiness but they can spend it to have the *follower* suffer the damage/effects of an attack, or to have the *follower* draw all attention from their ward to themselves. Ask the player what this looks like. If they're slyly using the follower as a meat shield, then the follower doesn't get much say in the matter (but they might have lots to say if they survive). If the player just expects the follower to take one for the team, well… that might require spending Loyalty, too.

Followers at 0 HP

When a follower is reduced to 0 HP, their fate is in your hands. If the source of damage was potentially lethal, then they're out of the action and you pick 1:

- They're dead, immediately
- They trigger Death's Door (even if they weren't directed to by their PC). Their PC's player rolls
- They're dying, and will either die or trigger Death's Door soon if no one intervenes

Remember: it's not your job to protect your NPCs, and followers are NPCs! **Let things burn**.

If the source of the damage wasn't lethal, then the follower is out of the action until you say otherwise or they regain HP (because of magic, someone's move, or because someone tends to their wounds and they Recover).

Note: a Ranger's animal companion is an exception. They get a special move, **Loyal to the End** (page 143), that dictates what happens when they reach 0 HP. No one wants to see the dog die.

Group followers

A follower with the *group* tag represents multiple individuals who share stats and often act as one. The Marshal's crew is the most obvious example. Other groups include the posse of villagers that the PCs recruit to deal with the crinwin, or the trio of wraiths bound to that tattered mantle (the one adorned with teeth).

Members of a group have the same tags, max HP, armor, damage, instinct, moves, and cost. They hold a common pool of Loyalty, but each have their own current HP. They typically Outfit with the same gear.

> *The PCs and Rhianna's crew have tracked the giant spiders through the Fae paths to an ancient ziggurat in the Great Wood. They think Nia is inside. The crew each have 8 HP and are carrying a ✓ bow with bronze arrows, a ✓ bronze hatchet, ✓✓ thick hides, and two undefined ✓. They currently hold 1 Loyalty as a group.*

The PC who leads a group follower will often **direct it to act as a whole**. If this leads to the group triggering a player move (per Order Followers), then the player rolls once, applying bonuses (and/or disadvantage) based on the tags shared by the group.

> *Rhianna says, "I signal my crew to sneak up and get in position. I want them covering us as we approach." She's Ordering Followers, having them Defy Danger (the danger is, they get noticed or even ambushed). She rolls for them, adding +1 for their* stealthy *tag, and gets a 7.*

When a group follower makes a move and suffers some sort of consequence, you can have that consequence affect the group as a whole, or individual members of the group.

> *I opt for a lesser success. "Okay, they slip forward and get into position, all except for one of them. They're half-way to the ziggurat, and looking down, like they're stuck on something. Oh, crap, you realize it's a web! And if they keep tugging at it like that, the spiders are sure to notice."*

When a member of the group first stands out, then flesh them out to whatever level of detail makes sense at the moment. Give them a name, a memorable trait, and maybe an extra tag. Ask questions about them. Take notes, or have the player do so!

> *I ask Rhianna which of her crew got stuck, and she decides that it's one of the heretofore undefined members. She looks at her Crew insert, which has potential names, tags, and traits. "Um, Glaw. He's* small, *like short and scrawny, and I think he's too serious. A bit of short-man syndrome going on." She adds him to her insert.*
>
> *"But he's a veteran hunter, right? So why do you think he's sorta freaking out right now?"*
>
> *"Oh, I think he's often the butt of the crew's jokes, and he just knows they aren't gonna shut up about this. So he's not like, panicking. But he's on the verge of cussing up a storm."*

When a PC directs an individual member of a group, they can trigger moves as if they were a follower themselves. The group's tags and moves apply, plus any unique tags or moves they have as an individual.

> *Rhianna creeps forward and helps Glaw cut himself free, Defying Danger herself with a 10. I then* ***offer an opportunity*** *and point out a tall, thin tree that leans over the clearing. It'd be a tricky climb, but offer a clear view into the hole on the ziggurat's roof. "What do you do?"*
>
> *"It's tall and skinny, you say? Sounds like a good job for someone… small. I have Glaw climb it. 'No need for the others to know about the webs, eh? I'm, uh, glad you spotted this tree and called me over.' I wink." She's asking him to do something dangerous, but I think she approached it really well. I see no reason for him to resist.*
>
> *"He looks up the skinny tree and nods, then drops his bow and extra gear and starts climbing. I think he's Defying Danger again; he risks falling, or making a lot of noise." We look at his tags and decide that either* stealthy *(from the group) or* small *(his personal tag) could apply, but that still means just a +1 bonus.*
>
> *Rhianna rolls an 11, so Glaw scurries up the tree, peers in, and comes back down without problem. He's pale as a sheet, though. "Nia's in there, yeah. She's… she's standing stock-still, just staring at this… tapestry? Of like a huge spider. And the tapestry's kind of… rippling. It's… it's real creepy."*

A group follower holds a common pool of Loyalty, which can be spent to affect either the entire group or individual members. The group's cost usually needs to be paid to the group as a whole, but if the player thinks it's valuable to spend Loyalty on one member of the group, they can!

> *Glaw just saw something creepy and supernatural, and Rhianna's crew has an instinct of "to hew to tradition and superstition." So, I* ***show a downside*** *and tell Rhianna that Glaw is clearly shaken, on the verge of panic. It's just him, though. "What do you do?"*
>
> *"I put a hand on his shoulder. 'Nia's in there, and she's one of ours. I'm going in with the Blessed, and Vahid, and Caradoc. But I need you sharp out here." I ask whether she's Persuading him to stay cool or spending Loyalty to have him overcome fear. "I'll spend the Loyalty. I'm not risking a 6- here." The crew only held 1 Loyalty to start with, and now it's gone. But Glaw will hold steady!*

Each member of a group has their own HP, and they take damage and lose HP individually. If multiple members of the group take damage at once, roll damage separately for each member and deduct it from their current HP.

The Mother-of-Spiders sends a wave of arachnids after the PCs as they flee the ziggurat with Nia. Rhianna's crew provides cover fire (Aiding the PCs as they Struggle as One), but that draws the attention of the swarm.

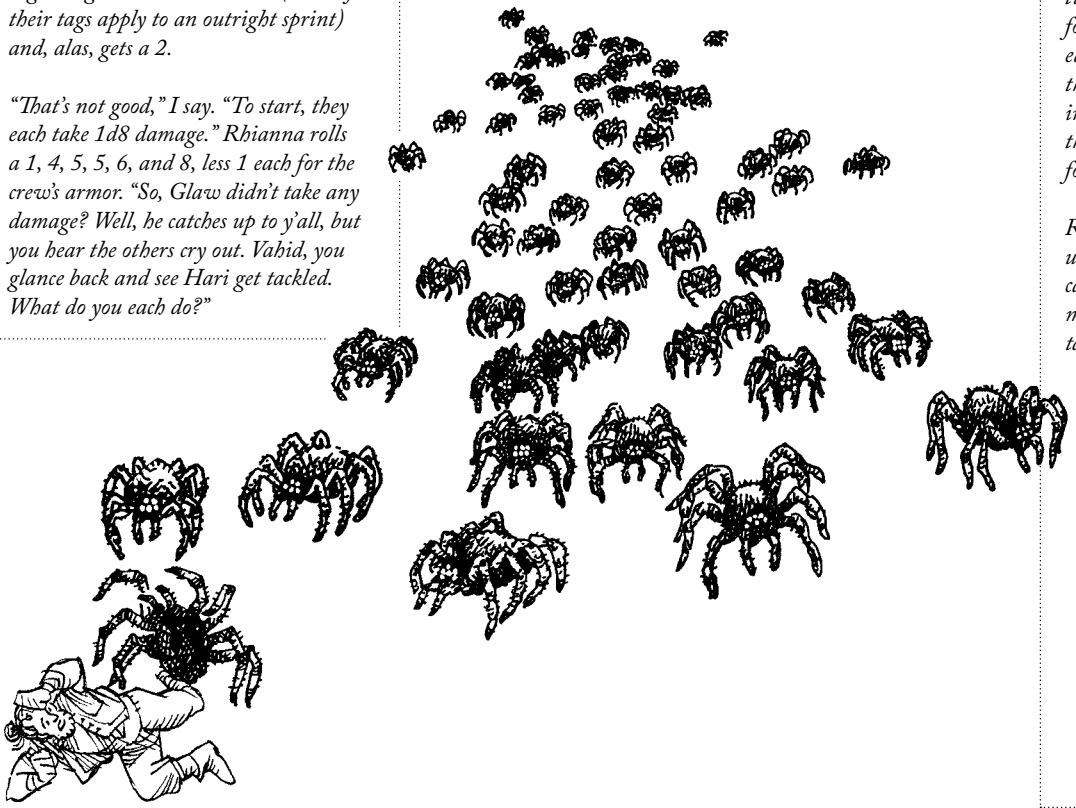
Rhianna yells for them to run for the waystone. We all agree that they're Defying Danger. Rhianna rolls +0 (none of their tags apply to an outright sprint) and, alas, gets a 2.

"That's not good," I say. "To start, they each take 1d8 damage." Rhianna rolls a 1, 4, 5, 5, 6, and 8, less 1 each for the crew's armor. "So, Glaw didn't take any damage? Well, he catches up to y'all, but you hear the others cry out. Vahid, you glance back and see Hari get tackled. What do you each do?"

Members of a group usually Outfit with the same gear, but the player can have individuals load up with different items if they're willing to do the extra bookkeeping.

Likewise, the PC can direct one crew member to Have What They Need and add an item to their inventory, without the rest of the crew each producing the same item. Keeping track of this is the player's responsibility, though!

In general, don't worry about small items or which member is carrying exactly how many uses of supplies. The players can track this level of detail if they really want to, but it's rarely worth the effort.



Vahid chases off the spiders by using his Fear of the Flame arcanum. Rhianna goes back and drags Hari out of there. Everyone makes it back to the waystone, where Thornthumb the spriggan has been waiting for them.

Before heading back through the Fae paths, Blodwen tends to Hari, restoring his HP and stabilizing him, but he's still paralyzed. Rhianna has Lowri turn his 2 undefined ⚒ into a roll-out litter to carry Hari. She writes "⚒⚒ litter (Lowri)" on her crew's inventory list.

She then has the rest of her crew each turn one undefined ⚒ into ⚒ supplies, for 20 uses total (five followers, 4 uses each). The four PCs then Recover, as do the four followers who are down HP, using bandages and whisky and food that the followers brought with them. The followers have 12 uses of supplies left.

Rhianna could decide that Glaw and Eira used up all their supplies and now each carry only five ⚒ total, but it doesn't really matter at this point. If it becomes important later (like, if one of the crew members gets separated from the group), we can decide then who was carrying what.

When a *group*...

… **Clashes or Lets Fly** (or Aids a PC in doing so), the attack can hurt multiple foes. They roll the move once, and roll damage separately against each foe (see page 414). Consider abstracting the exchange (page 416).

… **Clashes with or Lets Fly at a single foe** (or Aids a PC in doing so), they roll the move once (likely with advantage) and roll one attacker's damage, +1 for each additional attacker (see page 414).

… **Defends**, then the group holds a common pool of Readiness. The PC spends it on behalf of either the group as a whole or an individual member, whichever makes sense.

… **Recovers**, then each member who regains HP must consume 1 use of Supplies.

… **Seeks Insight**, then the PC can ask 3 questions or 1 question total, not 3 or 1 per member of the group.

… **Struggles as One** along with one or more PCs, roll once for the group. On a 6-, decide which member(s) of the group to put in a spot. On a 10+, ask the player who steps up to save someone, and how.

… **incurs a cost, suffers an attack, is put in danger, draws unwanted attention**, etc. you decide which member(s) are affected, and how.

Creating followers

PCs can gain followers...

… from a playbook, background, move, or special possession;
… by unlocking the mysteries of certain arcana; or
… organically through play.

When a game mechanic says that a PC gains a follower, it either provides the follower's stats or has the player choose stats from various prompts. Work with the player to flesh out the follower as you would any NPC. But you don't need to worry assigning them stats—the mechanic does that for you!

Followers who arise organically through play are a different story. They could come from anywhere and be just about anyone. An NPC might start following one of the PCs around and doing what they say. A PC might Trade & Barter to acquire a hound, or Requisition one of the town's horses. Maybe they recruit some villagers to hunt crinwin, or save a merchant from bandits, or team up with a Hillfolk rider to kill some fell beast.

Before you write someone up as a follower, ask yourself:

- Will they follow a PC's lead, and generally take orders from that PC?
- Do you and your players care enough about this NPC to give them stats?
- Do you want to let the dice decide their fate when their PC sends them into danger (as opposed to deciding what happens yourself)?
- Are you okay with the extra book-keeping, mechanics, and spotlight time that a follower entails?

If you answer "no" to any of the above, then don't treat the NPC as a follower. This is not a hard-and-fast rubric, though. Your group might want to treat the village horses as followers, but other groups might not.

The answers might also change over time. The troublesome refugee kid might not be a follower to start, but after a season of living with the Heavy, he might become one! Likewise, an NPC might act as follower while they're on a particular expedition with the PCs, but cease to be one once they get home.

The PCs are preparing for their trip to Gordin's Delve. They've Mustered the village and identified two useful NPCs: Elios (who Rhianna will leave in charge of the defenses while they're gone) and Andras (a new recruit for her crew). They've also Requisitioned one of the village's horses and a cart.

Elios isn't coming with them, and I don't see him as just doing what Rhianna asks; he's not her follower. Andras, though, is an eager kid hoping to join her crew. I'll definitely treat him as a follower.

The village horse has follower stats provided, but at first we don't think of it as a follower. But as the PCs head out, it becomes clear that Blodwen and the horse (Fflur) are quite close. I'd like to disclaim some decision making when it comes to Fflur's fate, and I'm happy to juggle an extra follower, so a follower she becomes!

If an NPC is not a follower, then they don't trigger moves when they act on the PC's orders, and they don't have a cost or hold Loyalty. They might still have stats, and they still might be **monsters** (page 391) or **threats** (page 277).

If you decide that an NPC is a follower, then figure out which PC they follow. Also, they need stats: tags, HP, armor, damage, instinct, cost, and maybe some GM moves.

Some followers will have stats already, from a *Book II* entry or a player handout. For example, the village horses have stats on the Stonetop steading playbook, and you can find follower stats for a dog, mule, or horse in the Moves & Gear handout. If you decide to treat these as followers, then use these stats.

Note: you don't have to treat someone or something as a follower just because they have stats in a *Book II* entry or on a handout. If a PC has just acquired a hound but hasn't had a chance to train it, it's not a follower. If you just don't have the energy to treat the fen-walker guide as a follower, then don't!

If you decide that a monster becomes a follower, then they already have stats. To convert a monster into a follower:

1) Add any tags that you see fit, to reflect its nature or capabilities.
2) Choose (or make up) a **cost**, using the examples on page 479 for guidance.
3) Add a spot to track its Loyalty (max 3).

Otherwise, use its stats as-is.

If stats don't already exist for the follower, then you need to make them. To do so:

1) Create them as an NPC (page 453).
2) Give them tags.
3) Calculate hit points.
4) Calculate armor.
5) Calculate damage.
6) Write their instinct.
7) (Optional) Write their moves.
8) Write their cost.
9) Equip them.

This procedure is detailed on the following pages.

1 Basics

If you haven't already done so, flesh this follower out as an NPC. Give them a name, develop their concept, and think about how you'll describe them. Add additional details if they seem important or valuable. See page 453 for guidelines.

Andras is a young lad who's eager to become one of the village hunters.

First, we flesh him out as an NPC. I ask some questions of the PCs, and we learn that he's Padraig's son and just a few months younger than Caradoc. Caradoc's player also suggests that he fancies Blodwen, but hasn't worked up the courage to say anything about it. That's plenty to work with!

2 Tags

Give each follower 2-4 tags, sometimes more. Tags are adjectives or nouns, and they should finish the sentence, "This follower is/is a __."

Tags **serve as a guide when you portray the follower**, informing how they act or what they will/won't want to do. Tags also affect **what a player rolls when they Order Followers** (page 462).

Avoid overly broad tags like *experienced*, *invincible*, *skilled*, *incompetent*, etc. You want tags that apply some of the time, not all of the time!

Give followers a mix of tags that are useful, problematic, and mixed blessings. More-competent followers should have more useful tags and fewer problematic ones, but even highly skilled followers can have some unpleasant quirks.

If the follower is truly outstanding, then give them the *exceptional* tag (see page 462). Such followers should be rare; save this tag for the best of the best.

If you're creating a *group* follower, then pick tags that apply to the entire group. As individual members stand out, consider giving each one a unique tag of their own.

I ask Rhianna to pick two of the crew's tags that Andras already has. "Hmm. I think he's already good with a bow, so archer. *And I think he's* observant. *That's one of those traits that's hard to teach, y'know?"*

Those are both useful traits, so I add eager *(a mixed blessing) and* rookie *(definitely problematic).*

Tag examples

Useful tags: *agile*, *archer*, *athletic*, *beautiful*, *brave*, *cunning*, *fast*, *fierce*, *hardy*, *healer*, *intimidating*, *magical*, *observant*, *organized*, *patient*, *respected*, *self-sufficient*, *sharp-eyed*, *stealthy*, *tireless*, *tracker*, *warrior*, ___*-wise*

Problematic tags: *bigoted*, *drunk*, *greedy*, *gullible*, *lecherous*, *naive*, *proud*, *rookie*, *reckless*, *short-fused*, *stubborn*, *frail*

Mixed blessing tags: *animal-lover*, *annoying*, *big*, *bully*, *callous*, *cautious*, *devious*, *eager*, *thieving*, *gossipy*, *honest*, *kind*, *little*, *shameless*, *terrifying*

3 Hit points

Determine the follower's maximum HP by answering the following questions:

How resilient are they? (pick 1)	HP
Weak/frail/soft	3
Able-bodied	6
Tough/strong/hard	9

What else applies? (pick all that do)	HP
They are *tiny*	-2
They are *large*	+4
The fates smile on them	+2

Andras strikes me as able-bodied—a healthy young man with the strength to pull a bow. He's not tiny *nor* large, *and I've no reason to think the fates smile on him, so he has 6 HP.*

4 Armor

Answer the following:

What protects them? (pick 1)	ARMOR
Naught but cloth and flesh	0
Leathers or thick hide	1
Mail, scale, or similar	2
Steel, boney plates, carapace	3
Potent magical wards or supernatural resilience	4

What else applies? (pick all that do)	ARMOR
They are *tiny*	+1
They bear a shield or similar	+1
They are skilled in defense	+1
They lack vital organs	+1

Andras is just a young man, with no special skills or protections. He has 0 armor unless Rhianna opts to Outfit him with thick hides or a shield.

5 Damage

Answer the following:

How dagerous are they? (pick 1)	DAMAGE
Not very	d4
Can defend themselves	d6
Veteran fighter or predator	d8

Range and other tags are based on their gear. For monstrous followers, use the damage guidelines for **monsters** (page 398).

Again, Andras is an able-bodied youth who's good with a bow. He's a rookie, but I think he can defend himself just fine. He does 1d6 damage.

6 Instinct

What does the follower do naturally that causes trouble for the PC they follow? Write their instinct in this format: "to [do something]." Example instincts for followers include:

- To take things too far
- To question leadership and authority
- To cling tightly to tradition
- To act impulsively
- To give in to temptation
- To not take things seriously
- To freeze up in the face of danger

I want to play up Andras's eagerness, which I like as a contrast to Caradoc, who's growing out of his "impetuous youth" shtick. I double-down on his eager *tag and give him an instinct of "to try to impress Rhianna." That should be slightly exasperating and it's likely to push him into doing some dumb stuff, without making him a complete liability.*

7 Moves (optional)

Write up to 3 GM moves. Write them so that they complete the sentence: "The follower can/will ___." For example:

- Sniff out trouble on the wind
- Weave a minor glamour
- Wander off on their own

A follower's moves can reflect abilities not covered by a tag, or how they use a specific tag, and/or common behaviors (good or bad).

These moves are mostly for you and this step is completely optional, but the player sees them and they can affect what the player rolls when they **Order Followers** (page 462).

I consider giving Andras some GM moves like "moon over Blodwen" or "make a rookie mistake," but frankly I don't feel like I need them. Those moves wouldn't affect any rolls that Rhianna makes on his behalf, and they aren't materially different from his tags or traits. So, no moves, at least for now.

8 Cost

A follower's cost describes what keeps them following a PC's lead. It's usually a few words, like "coin, payment, treasure" or "affection, respect" or "training."

Choose one from the list below, or make something up. When their cost is paid, they hold +1 Loyalty (max 3), per the **Strengthen Your Bond** move (page 464).

- Coin, payment, treasure
- Renown, public recognition
- Affection, respect (from you)
- Knowledge (about what?)
- Wrongs righted, good deeds done
- Amusement, entertainment
- Progress (towards a particular goal)

Andras is a young man, eager and a rookie, with an instinct of "to try to impress Rhianna." I think that a word of praise from Rhianna, especially in public, would mean the world to this kid. And so I make that his cost: "Recognition."

9 Equipment

Either decide what gear the follower is carrying, or ask the player to Outfit them as if they were a PC.

For this first expedition up to Gordin's Delve, I decide that he'll show up with his bow, a hand-me-down cloak, some ◇ supplies, and an iron knife.

I write this down on an index card and hand it to Rhianna's player when he shows up for their departure:

ANDRAS, APPRENTICE HUNTER
Archer, observant, eager, rookie
HP 6; Armor 0
Damage knife 1d6 (hand) or bow 1d6 (near, 0 low ammo, 0 out)
Instinct: to try to impress Rhianna
Cost: recognition (Loyalty 000)

Young man, Padraig's son. Sweet on Blodwen. Tries real hard, asks lots of questions.

◇ Bow & iron arrows (near)
◇ Old cloak (warm)
◇ Supplies (uses 0000)
Iron knife (hand)

Caradoc gives him some grief about bringing a cloak when the weather is still so warm (for autumn). Rhianna, though, nods approvingly. "You know how to cook, kid?" He starts talking up the (small) handful of dishes he can make and she's like "Yeah, great, kid," and she adds a ◇ mess kit and two undefined ◇s to his gear.

Updating followers

Followers can change over time. They might change mechanically, like when the Marshal takes the "Veteran Crew" move. But often, they'll change naturally over the course of play.

Between sessions, review any followers that the PCs have. For each one, if…

… **their instinct and/or cost no longer ring true**, then revise them.
… **any of their tags or moves no longer ring true,** then delete them or revise them, whichever makes more sense
… **they've shown a new aptitude, skill or behavior**, consider adding it as a tag or move.
… **they've become more resilient, or less so** (due to personal growth, injury, illness, etc.), then adjust their max HP accordingly.
… **they've become considerably more or less dangerous**, then adjust their damage die.
… **they've become a source of ongoing, active trouble** for one of the PCs or the village at large, write them up as a **threat** (page 277) in addition to or instead of being a follower.
… **it's a *group* follower**, did anyone leave the group, or join it? Update the group's roster to reflect this.
… **they no longer look to the PC for leadership, or would no longer take orders from them**, then they're not a follower anymore (see next column).
… **they shift their loyalty from one PC to another** (or their current leader passes off responsibility for them to another PC), then tell the players, and maybe demonstrate it via a scene in the next session. Tell the players to update their notes accordingly.

Losing followers

Followers might die, of course. But they might also stop being followers for a number of reasons.

The relationship between follower and PC might be temporary or situational. When it no longer makes sense for them to take orders from the PC, they stop being a follower. They might return to follower status again, but for now, they have their own life to live!

Fflur became Blodwen's follower on their trip to Gordin's Delve, but after they return home, that doesn't really make sense. The publican's son takes care of the horses, Fflur and Celyn, and they're often out in the fields.

Should the PCs bring Fflur on another expedition, we'll likely treat her as Blodwen's follower again. But around town, she's just a horse that Blodwen is friendly with.

A follower might change in a way that they no longer follow their PC. Maybe they lose their nerve, or move away, or have kids and settle down, or so forth. They might still be around as an NPC, but they're no longer a follower.

Eira survives her brush with death, and Blodwen heals her wounded soul, but she's never the same. It's like she aged 20 years in a week, and the next session, she tells Rhianna that she's done. It's an emotional scene, and we actually see Rhianna cry. When it's over, she erases Eira from her Crew insert and I add "retired" to her entry on the steading playbook.

Of course, it's not always amicable when a follower parts ways with their PC. If the breakup is messy, then the follower might very well become a **threat** (page 277). If the follower has been harboring growing resentment towards their PC, they might even betray them in sudden and dramatic fashion.

Vahid's put-upon wind spirit returns from spying on Thornthumb, full of news and playful energy—right as Vahid sits down for dinner with the widow Maire. He steps outside and pleads with the spirit to behave for now, and promises to play the flute out in the fields later, so that the spirit can dance and frolic.

The andalau is out of Loyalty, so Vahid rolls to Persuade. Alas, he rolls a 4. I ask Vahid how he thinks he screws this up, and he says that he loses his temper and starts shouting, trying to bully it into behaving.

I decide that the spirit has had enough. "It gets quiet and still. Then, hoo boy. The wind picks up, more and more, getting stronger. Gods, you didn't think it could be this strong. It howls, screams, and snatches at the flute." Vahid tries to hold on, but rolls a 3 to Defy Danger, and the flute gets smashed apart on the Stone.

The spirit was tethered to that flute, and now it's not. It's certainly no longer a follower. An untethered spirit would normally dissipate, but I think this one holds a grudge. It vanishes for now, but between sessions, I write it up as a threat (a magical entity, ***Instinct*** *to torment Vahid).*

Homefront

Bringing the village to life
Running the homefront
Homefront moves
The steading playbook
Seasons Change
Player moves
BOLSTER
CONVALESCE
DEPLOY
LEVEL UP
MAKE A PLAN
MEET WITH DISASTER
MUSTER
PULL TOGETHER
TRADE & BARTER

The **homefront** is what happens before, after, and between adventures. It's what happens in the village of Stonetop and its immediate surroundings. It's where you get to see the PCs living their lives, and the impact of the PCs' efforts.

Homefront play is often less focused and less intense than what happens while the PCs are on an expedition. You spend a lot more time in **loose play** (page 176), talking about what happens over days or weeks or months rather than what's happening *right here* and *right now*. And when you do zoom in on a homefront scene, the stakes are often quite small.

That's not to say the homefront doesn't matter. To the contrary, **the homefront is the heart of the game**. PCs in *Stonetop* undertake adventures on behalf of the village. They're protecting it from threats or securing resources for the folks who live there. The homefront provides context for everything the PCs do.

For the game to work, **the players need to care about the village**. Not just the PCs, the *players*. That means spending table-time getting to know it, getting invested in it. Let the players help you shape the village. Work with them to bring it to life. Let them see how it changes with the passing of time. Show them how their decisions and actions matter, how they shape the village for better or for worse.

Bringing the village to life

If you want the PCs to care about the village, it needs to feel real. It needs to feel *alive*.

Following your **principles** (page 192) will help you bring the village to life. As a reminder, they are:

- Follow the rules
- Begin and end with the fiction
- Address the characters, not the players
- Ask questions and build on the answers
- Be a fan of the player characters
- Embrace the fantastic and the mundane
- Exploit the setting guide
- Respect your prep
- Give your characters life
- Think offscreen, too
- Bring it home
- Let things breathe
- Let things burn

Follow the rules

Player moves—especially the **homefront player moves** (page 524)—will introduce unexpected opportunities, challenges, and turns of events. Let those surprises illuminate the village and make it feel real. Life is full of surprises. Your version of Stonetop should be, too!

Begin and end with the fiction

When players trigger a homefront move, ask how they do it. They Requisition the horses? Cool, who do they talk to and what's their pitch? They Muster the village? What does it look like? A town meeting? A speech at the public house? Or what?

Show the results of player moves in your descriptions, and in your portrayal of NPCs. The PCs Requisition the horses? Then describe folks hauling a cart themselves, glaring as the PCs leave town. A PC visits her sister after a Muster? Then portray the sister as tired and frazzled, and say how her shield and spear are by the door instead of hanging on the wall.

When the steading playbook changes, reflect those changes in the fiction, too. If Fortunes go up, describe the town's good mood. If you mark *diminished*, show how work isn't getting done. If Population goes up, discuss how the newcomers are settling in.

Show players how the game's mechanics change the village, and the village will feel dynamic and alive. Show players how their moves and their decisions affect the village, and they'll start to feel responsible for it.

Address the characters, not the players

Describe things from the characters' points of view. Direct questions to the characters rather than the players. Don't tell Brian that folks are scared of Vahid; say, "Vahid, you can tell you're making folks nervous—how so?" Focus on how the PCs experience the village, and the village will seem that much more alive.

Ask questions and build on the answers

Whenever you wonder something about the village or about daily life, consider asking the PCs about it.

Ask what they're up to as you frame the action. "Caradoc, what task or chore are you working on?"

Ask for details, to help paint the scene. "What's cooking on the hearth?" "Vahid, what makes this place feel like home?"

Ask them to editorialize. "What's the worst part of this chore?" "What do you love most about Stonetop in spring?"

Ask about their lives. "Rhianna, what's your morning routine like?" "Do you usually eat alone, or what?"

Ask about NPCs. "Blodwen, who taught you how to weave?" "Rhianna, who do the farmers typically listen to?"

Ask about traditions and practices. "Caradoc, how does the village mark one's coming of age?" "Blodwen, how does Stonetop mark or celebrate the coming of winter?"

Ask about gossip, stories, and lore. "Vahid, what do folks say about Gorlas behind his back?" "Rhianna, when did someone last break the compact and fell a tree in the Wood? What happened?"

When a player asks something about the village, maybe turn the question back on them or direct it to another PC. "I don't know! Caradoc, given the lack of timber, what *do* people use for doors?"

Build on their answers, now or later. Ask follow-up questions. Treat their answers as if they've always been true. Call back to them in later scenes. Show the players that their answers matter, that they shape the village, and you'll find that they can't help but care.

Be a fan of the player characters

If you want the players to care about the village, then you need to care about their characters, about their personal lives and their relationships. Get invested in the Fox's secret crush, the Heavy's fraught home life, the Seeker's web of lies. Put the PCs' dramas on screen, and **play to find out what happens**.

Embrace the fantastic and the mundane

Spend time establishing what life in Stonetop is like. **Talk about the weird stuff**: the quiet power of the Stone, the faded grandeur of the Maker-ruins, the gloomy menace of the Great Wood. But **talk about mundane stuff**, too! Crops. Weather. Livestock. Food and clothes. Chores, crafts, and pastimes.

Talk about the village's culture and social fabric. The game asserts that Stonetop is egalitarian, that everyone contributes and everyone shares. But what that looks like is up to your group. So are all sorts of details about village life. Kinship. Child care. Gender roles. Institutions and traditions. Holidays and celebrations. Myths and legends. Etc.

There's a balance to strike, of course. Focus on stuff your group cares about. But don't assume that mundane stuff is unimportant. **Portray a *rich* and mysterious world**, not just a mysterious one.

Exploit the setting guide

The Setting Overview handout and the **Village of Stonetop** entry (*Book II*, page 12) provide plenty of details that can help bring the community to life.

When you frame a homefront scene, skim **the Impressions section**. Pick one or two and incorporate them into the scene. It's spring? Set the scene in the fields, planting beans, the PCs coated in cold wet mud. A PC visits their sibling? Mention the smell of fat rendering on the hearth, the rush-lights hanging up to dry. Two PCs want a private moment? Frame a scene at night, with one of them manning a watchtower and the other one stopping by.

Extrapolate from what's established, especially with things that strike you and the players as odd or anachronistic. The villagers don't fell living trees from the Great Wood. How does that affect construction and tools? Do houses have doors? Where do folks get wood for spears, bows, and arrows? They can't *fell* trees, but can they coppice them? Decide for yourself or (better yet) ask the PCs!

It's okay to change or ignore things. *Exploit* the setting guide, don't feel constrained by it. With that said, think about what you're changing and what ripple effects that change might have. Little details (like swapping Stonetop's whisky for mead) are safer to change than core assumptions (like the village's egalitarian culture).

Handling misconceptions

Elements of *Stonetop*'s setting can be counterintuitive for players steeped in the tropes of more traditional fantasy RPGs. For example, you might find your players assuming that…

… locals pay each other with coin (coin is for outsiders; locals swap goods and favors, give gifts, owe each other, help each other out).

… folks need jobs to get by (you're expected to pull your weight, but folks help each other out; no one starves unless all are starving).

… the village boasts a variety of trades (there's only a few full-time tradesfolk; most crafts are done by homemakers or other folk as they have time).

… there are shops (nope), a mill (nuh-uh), an inn (no), multiple taverns (heck no), etc.

Watch out for such misconceptions. If a player mentions "needing coin," or says they run a shop, or otherwise reveals a disconnect between their assumptions and the default setting, then call attention to it. Don't just tell them they're wrong, talk it out!

"So, there aren't shops in Stonetop. Like, folks come to you if they want salt or spices, but I think they'd just come by your house. We can say it's set up like a shop, if you like, but few folks here know what a shop is."

Respect your prep

In particular: write up **threats** (page 282) and then use them in play. The town busybody might be an *institution*. The bright kid who idolizes the Seeker? A *wildcard*. The Stone itself? Probably a *MacGuffin*. Make binding decisions about these threats. Write impending dooms that involve the village and leave lasting marks upon it. Write stakes that involve NPCs that you and the players care about. And then put those threats on screen. See how the PCs react to them. Follow through.

Give your characters life

Populate the village with NPCs who are distinct and memorable, believable and compelling (see **Creating NPCs** for guidance, page 453). Keep track of the NPCs you establish, and bring them back into play over time. Show how they change and grow, how they're affected by the PCs' actions.

The PCs don't have to like or get along with everyone in the village. Some of the villagers should be threats! But give troublesome neighbors some nuance, some reason the PCs can't just ignore them or run them out of town, such as:

- A sympathetic motivation
- A redeeming quality
- A skill that the village needs
- A family member who loves them
- A position of leadership/influence
- The respect/loyalty of other NPCs
- Something to hold over a PC (an oath, a secret, a familial bond, etc.)

Think offscreen, too

When the PCs head home at the end of an expedition, think about what's been happening back in the village. What have folks been up to? What's morale been like? What rumors and gossip have spread? What threats have escalated in the PCs' absence? What projects have moved forward?

When the PCs arrive home, show the players what's been happening. Describe the tension in the watch-sentry's voice as the PCs approach, the haggard look in people's eyes. Mention how the fields have all been planted and now they're being harrowed. Say how Macsen's health has worsened, or how the palisade is coming together.

Show players that the village changes while the PCs aren't around, and it will feel much more real, much more alive.

Bring it home

Make the village the foundation of the game. Get the players to help create and define the village and the NPCs who live there. Give them a chance to care. Then threaten the village, offer opportunities to make things better, and **show how the PCs' decisions and efforts change the village**, for good or for ill.

With that said: don't just show how the PCs are important to the village. **Show how the village is important to the PCs**. Explore relationships between the PCs and the NPCs they care about. Have those NPCs support and care for the PCs. Have NPCs thank the PCs for their efforts. Have NPCs apologize for falling short, and try to do better.

Make it clear that the village of Stonetop isn't just a home base, it's *home*. And make it a home worth protecting, a home worth fighting for.

Let things breathe

Your job is to ***punctuate* the PCs lives with adventure**. There should be stretches of time in which very little happens. Gloss over days, weeks, or months. Let the PCs work on long-term projects or just live their lives. Maybe a season passes with no more than some description and a little Q&A. Stonetop comes to life over time, as the seasons change and characters age and long-term mechanics start to kick in.

Your players might fight this, wittingly or not. They might want to set right out on another adventure, or relentlessly work on some mystery or problem. If you aren't careful, you'll spend dozens of sessions on a single season.

Don't be afraid to zoom out, **remind them of their obligations**, and show the passing of time. If you want to get to the next season, don't ask what they do for the rest of the summer. Instead say, "The next few weeks pass uneventfully, until the days get shorter and the leaves start to change. What chores have eaten up your time these past few weeks?"

Let things burn

If you do your job, you'll end up with a village and a bunch of NPCs that the players care about. That you care about.

Do not protect them.

You have to be willing to let bad things happen to the village and to beloved NPCs. Stay within the boundaries of your group's **content guidelines** (page 66), but otherwise: take the gloves off. If the stakes aren't real, then the PCs' heroism isn't real, either.

Running the homefront

Homefront play is very loose. The PCs are often separated from each other, living their own lives and doing their own things. You need to decide what to gloss over vs. what scenes to play out.

Before the first adventure, you'll frame scenes that establish life in the village. You'll then drop the hook for the adventure, and follow the PCs around as they react to it, make preparations for the expedition, and head out.

In the **aftermath of an adventure**, you'll shift back into homefront play. You'll show how the villagers react to recent events and the PCs return. You'll give each PC a chance to process the adventure and reconnect with NPCs. You'll play out scenes that naturally follow, and then transition to downtime.

During downtime, you'll zoom way out. You'll describe time passing and drop into scenes only as needed. The PCs will make homefront moves like Bolster, Convalesce, or Level Up. Maybe they'll work on long-term projects or Make a Plan to do so. If enough time passes, the seasons will change.

Eventually, something will spur **the next adventure**. The PCs will identify something they want to do out in the world, or you'll introduce a threat that they feel compelled to deal with.

Throughout it all, you'll follow the **core loop** (page 169) and make GM moves—especially **homefront moves** (page 502).

Before the first adventure

Start the first session of actual play at home in the village. Frame mundane scenes that paint a picture of each PC's daily life. Explore the PCs' relationships, with each other and with important NPCs. Use these scenes to establish recent events and current concerns. Play out some daily dramas, but don't, like, *resolve* them.

Then, **drop the hook** for your adventure. Follow the PCs around as they decide what to do about it. Figure out what's important to them, and push them out into the field. Portray how NPCs react to both the hook and the PCs' plans.

The whole **First Adventure** chapter (page 251) sets you up to do this. Follow the procedures laid out in that chapter!

Aftermath

After each expedition, take time to:

1) Determine what's happened
2) Play out the return
3) See what follows

Don't skip this part! The PCs have been roughing it and putting themselves in danger on the village's behalf. Use their homecoming to demonstrate that their efforts matter, and to remind them of who and what they've been fighting for. **Bring it home**.

The same structure applies after a **crisis** (page 499) at home abates. Figure out what happened and who was affected, play out an initial post-crisis scene, and then see what scenes naturally follow.

1 Determine what's happened

As the PCs head for home, take a few minutes to consider how things have been going while the PCs were away. Think about the following.

How long were the PCs gone? What have folks been up to or dealing with? How's morale been? Who's been worried sick, or resentful, or stepping up while the PCs were away? If the PCs were gone longer than expected, how did folks react to their delay?

If anyone on the expedition was wounded or didn't make it home, who will be most upset or affected by that?

What sort of work has been going on? Refer to the Stonetop **impressions** (*Book II*, page 14) for ideas.

Did the PCs Requisition any town assets? How did the lack of those assets at home affect people's lives (if at all)?

Before they left, **did the PCs trigger any moves that took time to resolve** (like Pull Together)? Resolve them now and think about how you'll show the results, or make note of when and how you'll resolve them later.

Did any threats advance towards their impending dooms? If so, how will you reveal those grim portents to the PCs?

Take notes! If the return home happens mid-session, take a break to gather your thoughts. Make a list of details you want to establish in the upcoming scenes.

It's the summer following the PCs' first adventure. They've gone back to explore the Green Lord's tomb. On the way home, Garet (one of Rhianna's crew) was mauled by a drake. They pushed on, trying to avoid crinwin, but Garet didn't make it; he's dead.

As the PCs near home, we take a break and I think about what's happened.

They've been gone for four days. Things were quiet when they left, except that Rhianna had been drilling the militia on readiness and told them to run some patrols while they were gone. I think they'll encounter one of those on the way home. Otherwise, folks would be doing typical summertime stuff.

The PCs didn't Requisition any town assets, and I've got no homefront threats with impending dooms. But before they left, Blodwen asked Seren to talk some sense into Tegwen, triggering Order Followers (Seren was Persuading on Blodwen's behalf). We didn't resolve it at the time, so I ask Blodwen to roll now. She gets a 4. Tegwen will not, in fact, be seeing sense.

I make a quick list:

- Garet had sister: Cerys (widow, kids Wini & Hewyl, 12 and 9)
- Patrols in Wood, by the Stream
- Haymaking, weeding, plowing the fallows
- Seren's 4 to Persuade Tegwen

2 Play out the return

Frame the action with the PCs arriving back at the village, or at least on their last leg of travel. Say what time it is, what direction they're approaching from, what's obvious as they draw near.

Ask questions! What are they each thinking about or worrying about or looking forward to? Do they intend to keep any secrets about what happened on the expedition, or spin things in any way? Are they just trudging home, or putting on a bit of a show, or what?

Maybe have them meet an NPC before reaching the village proper. Such an encounter can help ease you all back into homefront play, and foreshadow the village's reaction to the PCs' return.

"It's early evening, four days after you left. The sun's low, casting long shadows through the Wood. You're almost home. So, what's on your minds? What are you all thinking about?" Everyone's answers are a bit somber, what with Garet's death and all.

Next, I frame a scene near the Stream, with a patrol trying to "ambush" the PCs. Rhianna spots them, calls them out into the open, and assigns one of them to go fetch Cerys.

Cerys arrives and we have an emotional scene where they tell her what happened. She breaks down crying, but eventually pulls herself together. There's some talk about funerals and wakes, and they decide to head up the switchback path to Stonetop, carrying Garet's shrouded form, singing a hero's funeral song as they go.

When the PCs get back to town, use the **impressions** of Stonetop (*Book II*, page 14) to set the scene. **Think offscreen, too.** Include details that point to what's happened while the PCs were away.

If the PCs are Returning Triumphant (page 339), then launch into what that looks like. Describe the news spreading, a crowd gathering, toasts, celebration! But also: say who hangs back, glaring, grumbling, still unhappy or just left out.

If the PCs' return would cause panic or reveal a calamity (for example, if they took the village's horses and lost them), **then the village Meets with Disaster** (page 532). Describe folks gathering to hear the bad news, their fearful eyes, the worried mumbles or the wails of grief. But also: say who steps up, who supports the PCs, who tries to talk sense.

If the PCs return *could* be triumphant, or *could* cause panic, but it's not a given either way, then set it up as scene. Frame the action, portray your NPCs, and make a GM move. Maybe **tell them the requirements** ("You're all gonna need to keep your stories straight to make this Return Triumphant") or **put them in a spot** ("Folks are grumbling, on the verge of panic"). Ask, "What do you do?" and see if the PCs can pull it off.

Otherwise, just describe their return home and how folks react, however it makes sense to do so. Ask questions as needed and build on the answers.

From there, ask, **"What do you do?"** Play out the situation until all the PCs have gone their separate ways.

What with Garet's death and the party singing a funeral hymn, there's no way this counts as Returning Triumphant. But at the same time, Garet's death isn't going to cause panic to spread—he was a hunter who was killed by drakes in the Great Wood, a sad but normal death. So, I just set the scene and describe how folks react.

"You reach the top of the switchback as the sun is just about to set. You can see a few haystacks silhouetted out on the Old Wall, and folks trudging back into town. But a small crowd has already gathered near the top of the path. Seren the Eldest is there, leading folks in the mourning hymn. Sawyl and Morwenna are here, clearly relieved to see Caradoc among the living. Rhianna, you spot others: Pryder and Rheinal, solemn and singing, Glenys holding Wynfor's hand, glaring at you. As you all make your way into town, towards the pavilion, other folks join you, taking up the hymn as they do."

I ask more questions about funeral rites. Blodwen says that they'd take the body to the pavilion of the gods, and someone would sit vigil with it all night, before a proper funeral pyre the next morning. Rhianna insists on keeping the vigil, so that Cerys can see to her kids. Vahid offers up a beautiful Lygosi song for the dead before heading home. The other PCs disperse as well.

3 See what follows

Once the PCs go their separate ways, frame a few more scenes and situations that play out over the next few days, before you transition to downtime. In particular, play out:

- **Anything obvious**, like a crisis to manage, a timely decision to make, or a conflict coming to a head
- **At least one scene with each PC and their family**, or whoever else is important to them
- **Anything that you want to put on screen** (in order to establish specific details, or make a GM move, etc.)
- **Any other scenes that the players want to play out**, with NPCs or with each other.

Some of these will intersect or overlap. If the Heavy had a big fight with her spouse before leaving on the expedition, then that's both an obvious scene to have and her "family" scene.

Actively manage the spotlight, hopping from PC to PC and scene to scene as you do this. Try to shift the spotlight every 15 minutes or so, to keep everyone engaged, even if that means shifting mid-scene. Try to do things roughly in order, but don't get hung up on it. Player engagement is more important than chronology.

Some of these situations will be full-on scenes: zoomed in, moment-to-moment, speaking in character. Others will be zoomed out, more loose play than actual scenes, with lots of Q&A and describing conversations rather than playing them out. Both are fine!

Everyone should get at least one scene with their family, or an NPC whom they value. These scenes help reinforce the PCs' ties to Stonetop. They create space for the PCs to process the adventure and to show how they've changed and grown. They don't need to be happy or affirming; they can be all sorts of fraught. If a "family" scene is especially painful, though, then maybe set up a bonus scene where someone is actually supportive or at least kind to that PC.

The other PCs leave Rhianna at the pavilion with Garet's body, and we zoom out and talk about what's next.

I say that Rhianna's crew and many villagers head to the public house, to tell stories and toast Garet. Blodwen and Caradoc join them. Vahid heads home.

*Caradoc gets a scene with Morwenna as they leave the public house. I **reveal simmering tensions**; she's a bit reserved and eventually Caradoc notices. He gets her talking, and she unloads about how worried she was and how she doesn't know if she can handle never knowing if her husband will come home and he's like "husband?" and finally has the nerve to kiss her and she kisses him back and its sweet and all but they don't actually address the issue, actually.*

Blodwen puts off going home as long as she can. She's expecting some badness with her mother, Tegwen (and rightly so, as she rolled a 4 to have her follower Persuade her to be less terrible). I think that conflict will wait until the morning, though, so I switch to Vahid.

*Vahid went home. He gives us a quiet little scene of him unpacking, settling in, puttering around and talking to his cats. He hasn't established any close ties to local NPCs, so I **introduce someone interesting**. The widow Maire stops by with some stew, some scritches for the cats, and some not-so-subtle flirting.*

We cut back to Rhianna keeping vigil. Cerys eventually returns with the kids, to say goodbye to the uncle who was like a father to them. The kids cry and ask why, want to see his face, don't really understand. As they go, Rhianna speaks up. "Cerys, I… I'm so sorry. We'll make sure y'all don't want for nothing. Cold comfort, I know. But Garet was one of us. You're family." Cerys acknowledges this numbly and leaves.

That was rough, so I have Eira (from Rhianna's crew) come by later, maudlin and drunk, to share a drink and assure Rhianna that Garet's death wasn't her fault. For all the good that does.

Before this next scene, I check our content guidelines and remind folks to call time out if needed. You'll see why.

*Blodwen wakes late to the smell of stew, and finds her mother cooking and oddly civil. When Tegwen asks her to "clean up out back," Blodwen realizes that her favorite old goat has been butchered. When she confronts Tegwen, her mother **wields guilt like a weapon**. "Well, we need to bring something to poor Cerys, what with her brother dying under your care. And you seemed to need your rest. So I picked one of the goats that had stopped giving milk." She then leaves Blodwen, numb and horrified, to clean up the remains of her pet.*

From there, we jump to Garet's funeral. We describe what it's like, riffing off each other's ideas to help paint the scene and say how everyone's involved.

*Blodwen's feeling pretty raw, so I frame a scene after the funeral, a chance for her to vent to Gwendyl and Seren (the other Initiates of Danu). She does, and at the end, I **offer an opportunity**. Seren says she could use a hand around the house, what with her old bones, and there's plenty of room for the goats, too. A teary-eyed Blodwen promises to give it some real thought.*

Downtime

When you've played out all the scenes and situations that immediately follow the PCs' return, transition to downtime.

Take care of logistics. Update the steading playbook. Discuss what to do with loot. Reset Inventory. Prompt folks to Level Up, if they can. If anyone needs to Convalesce, deal with that now.

Establish goals and intentions. Figure out what the players want to see in play. Figure out what each PC intends to do during this stretch of downtime.

Play out scenes or situations as needed. Follow your gut, your prep, and the players' moves and interests. Establish a situation or frame a scene when…

… you need to, in order to resolve a player's move or actions; or
… you want to, in order to make a GM move or resolve the stakes of a **threat** (page 277); or
… your players want to (unless they're hogging the spotlight or impeding someone else's fun).

Try to include multiple PCs in each scene or situation. Then play it out until its done, or until it snowballs—into another scene, situation, or adventure!

Describe time passing as you do all of this. Include details like how the weather changes, what other folks are getting up to, what traditions or celebrations folks are observing. Ask the PCs what this time looks like for them, too!

When enough time passes, have the **Seasons Change** (page 517).

After the scene with Blodwen and the other Initiates of Danu, we zoom out into downtime. Everyone resets their Inventory and their HP, and clears their debilities. The PCs all have enough XP to Level Up, so they do that now.

The PCs returned from the Green Lord's tomb with some sweet loot, which they divvy up like so:

- *Vahid takes the cracked flute (a minor arcanum)*
- *Vahid also keeps the spool of uncut table (?) silk; he'll try to find something to do with it*
- *The old bronze hatchets go to the smith, Taliesyn, for restoration; Caradoc, Rhianna, and Rhianna's crew will take them as personal possessions when they're ready*
- *Rhianna hangs on to the sphere of silver filigree for now, but she thinks of it as a village asset*

"Over the next few weeks," I say, "you all settle back in to daily life. The days are hot and muggy, with showers that just make it muggier. Cerys and her kids are sad, of course, but getting by. So… what does life look like for each of you now? How's it different from before?"

Caradoc says that he and Morwenna are openly courting now: holding hands, walks in the evenings, smooching, etc.

Rhianna continues the readiness drills she started in early summer. Her crew are back out hunting, alert for signs of crinwin. But they're also taking turns, helping Cerys and the kids with chores and food and whatnot.

Blodwen hasn't moved out, but she's avoiding her mother: grazing her goats, meals with Gwendyl or Seren, etc.

Vahid helps in the fields most days, and has dinner with the widow Maire every few nights. "But most nights, I head out to the Old Wall to work on mastering this flute!"

The "cracked flute" minor arcanum has a special move, "when you **spend a few days practicing**…*" Vahid's already told us how and where he's doing that, so I tell him to roll +CHA (per the move). He gets a 10, so he marks progress (he needs 3). I ask him what it looks like, and he gives us a quick scene of him playing in the moonlight and on the last night, he swears he can see the wind in the grass, dancing to his tune.*

"That only took a few days," says Vahid, "Can I try again?" I don't see why not, but I ask if there's anything that anyone else wants to get up to in the meantime.

Rhianna says she wants to try and trade the silver sphere for something useful, like spare wagon parts or a donkey. That triggers Trade & Barter, on which she gets a 7 ("you can sell it now, but won't get it's full worth"). I frame a scene with Ulna, a merchant in town on her way to Gordin's Delve. Rhianna fails to haggle her up, and she opts against the trade. "Maybe we'll head up to Gordin's Delve ourselves," she says. "But not now."

I ask what the other two PCs are up to. Caradoc is content to spend time with Morwenna, and Blodwen just wants to avoid her mother. Okay!

We go back to Vahid. He spends another few nights practicing the flute, and this time he rolls an 8. That means he makes progress but summons an irate zephyr spirit. We have a delightful scene where the spirit and Vahid interrupt Caradoc and Morwenna on a moonlit "walk."

Vahid tries one more time, to finish unlocking the arcanum. He wisely asks Blodwen to help, as she can speak with spirits. She Aids him, and sure enough, they get an 11. Vahid can now summon a zephyr spirit, an andalau, and we have a joyful scene where Blodwen dances with the wind under the stars.

We zoom out and I say that the days are getting shorter and cooler, the fields are heavy with crops. Summer is drawing to a close. Vahid asks if he can work on one more of his arcana, the richly woven rug. It would involve him getting badly burnt, then spending weeks in study. That's doable in the fiction, but the other players are getting antsy and we're nearing the end of the session. I push back. "Let's hold off. That deserves some on-screen time and it's getting late. Besides, you've got chores and scribing to do and you're helping in fields, you can't just go maiming yourself on a lark, y'know?" Vahid relents, for now.

No one else has anything they want to do this summer, so we do the Seasons Change move. Vahid strikes us all as the most determined, so he rolls. He gets an 8, which means a seasonal gain and a threat. I plan to start the next session introducing that threat, and setting up the next adventure.

The next adventure

Downtime ends with the next adventure, which might be an expedition or a crisis, and either spontaneous or prepped in advance.

Expeditions

Expeditions (page 301) involve the PCs making preparations, traveling towards a destination, having encounters, facing challenges, and eventually going home.

The PCs can always choose to launch an expedition, but they'll most often do so in response to a hook—some threat, opportunity, or requirement that you present to them, as the result of a player move or just because that's the GM move you chose to make.

Should the PCs propose an ill-conceived expedition, then push back. **Remind them of their obligations**. They have chores to do and obligations around town. **Tell them consequences/requirements.** Encourage them to wait for a hook or to seek one out.

After the PCs' first adventure, Rhianna wants to hunt down the crinwin that had been serving the swyn. "I know they were enthralled," she says, "but they're still a danger to us."

The crinwin scattered after the swyn's death, and I don't see how such a hunt would succeed. "Even if you went back to the tomb," I say, "you couldn't really track them—they're arboreal. You could spend a few days or weeks scouring the woods for signs, but without a solid lead you'd just be wasting time."

Expeditions should involve all the PCs, or at least **have the blessing of all the players who are present**. If only some of the group wants to go on an expedition, then you might…

... split the party, where some of the PCs go on the expedition while others work on projects at home;
... talk it out in-character, perhaps with PCs Persuading each other;
... discuss player-to-player how you all want to spend your game time, and what would be the most fun, and try to reach a consensus; or
... some combination of the above.

If you do split the party, make sure the PCs staying behind have interesting and meaningful things to do on-screen. Or plan the trip for a session they'll miss.

At the end of our last session, the Seasons Changed to autumn, Vahid got a 7-9, and I prepared a threat that I expected to kick off our next adventure.

Alas, Rhianna's player has to miss the next session, last minute. Rather than reschedule, Vahid's player suggests a quick, early-autumn trip to the Ruined Tower. "Just to explore the upper level, see if we can find any loot." It's a short trip and doesn't disrupt my plans at all, so I'm game. So is Caradoc. Blodwen's uninterested, but she's fine with staying home. She's got a mother to confront.

Vahid and Caradoc make preparations. I ask Caradoc how he tells Morwenna about this, which leads to a scene where she's not happy but Caradoc doesn't even notice. Then the two PCs head out!

Crises

A **crisis** means active, urgent badness in the village, here and now. A monster attacks. A house catches fire. Someone is murdered. Whatever it is, it's bad and it has the potential to get worse.

A crisis is usually a hard GM move, something you do when a player rolls a 6- or when the PCs ignore trouble. But a few player moves can generate crises even on a 7+. For example, when the Seasons Change to spring or autumn, a 7-9 says that "a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse," which could manifest as a crisis.

Resolve a crisis like any situation. Frame the action. Describe the environment. Add details as needed. Ask and answer questions. Portray NPCs. Make a GM move to put the crisis on screen. Ask, "What do you do?" Resolve their actions. Repeat. **Play to find out what happens.**

The village might Meet With Disaster. Maybe the PCs prevent calamity and panic, maybe they don't. It might not even be possible. If the crisis starts with two farmers slaughtered in the fields, then calamity has already struck.

After a crisis, the PCs might immediately launch an expedition in response (per the previous page).

If they don't head out immediately, shift back to homefront play and deal with the **aftermath** (page 490). Figure out what happened, who was affected, and how. Play out a scene immediately following the crisis as folks take stock. Play out some follow-up scenes, including a scene with each PC and their family or other close NPCs. Then transition back to downtime.

Rhianna's player is back this session and I still need to follow up on that 7-9 result from the Seasons Change move.

I frame the action in early autumn, a few days after Caradoc and Vahid got back from the Ruined Tower. "It's a cool, dark night, cloudy and breezy. What are each of you up to?"

We do a quick scene with each of them, ending with Caradoc on watchtower duty. I ask more questions, and we learn that Morwenna is still mad. He's braiding a leather bracelet as a peace offering.

*I kick off the crisis with a monster move, the crinwin's **mimic noises, words, cries for help**. "You hear… voices? On the wind, and like, from the Wood? But that makes no sense. What do you do?"*

Caradoc Seeks Insight and realizes that, yeah, crinwin are sneaking into the village. He raises the alarm! Rheinal dies in the fight, but they kill a bunch of crinwin and chase off the rest. The PCs manage to keep panic from spreading, so the village doesn't Meet with Disaster.

*By the time the action ends, it's near dawn and folks are exhausted. We shift to homefront play. I describe the aftermath—children crying, wounds being seen to, Pryder weeping over his dad's body. Each PC gets a short scene, and the next morning, Rhianna and her crew try to track the crinwin. Alas, she gets a 6 to Seek Insight, and I **reveal an unwelcome truth**. They find a few bodies, dead of their wounds, but no nests and no clear trail. "Crap," says Rhianna, as we shift back to downtime.*

Spontaneous adventures

An adventure might start mid-session, with no chance for you to prep. This can happen when…

... the players launch an expedition on their own initiative (to pursue a steading improvement, to unlock an arcanum, to investigate a site, etc.);
... a player's move prompts you to present a threat, an opportunity, or a requirement, and you present one that spurs an expedition;
... it's time to make a GM move, and you **announce trouble** or **offer an opportunity** or otherwise drop a hook, and the PCs act on it; or
... a player rolls a 6- or knowingly invites trouble, and your hard GM move manifests as a crisis or kicks off an expedition.

Don't panic. **Run the game.** Frame scenes. Manage the spotlight. Follow the core loop. Zoom out into loose play and identify the next scene or situation. **Ask questions and build on the answers.** Take a quick break if needed to collect your thoughts. **Respect your prep**, especially your threats. **Exploit the setting guide**, use it to improvise.

If you and the players want to cut to the action, then frame the next scene with PCs *already on the adventure*. Then, ask questions to establish what led them here and what's already happened. Have them Outfit retroactively, and go!

If a spontaneous adventure doesn't wrap up by the session's end, cool. Now you have time to prep! See "**Between sessions**" on page 575).

Vahid and Caradoc surprise me with their trip to the Ruined Tower, but no problem. They Chart a Course, and I use that move and Book II*'s entry for the Flats to plot out the trip. They head out, and I use impressions and questions from* Book II*, like, "What do wise travelers do to keep pack drakes away?" They arrive and we take a quick break. I look up the Ruined Tower, make some notes, and run the rest of the adventure from there.*

In the second spring of our game, a "family" of "laborers" moves to Stonetop from Gordin's Delve. Vahid suspects that they're agents of Mutra the Teeth. Caradoc goes to spy on them, but rolls a 2 and I opt to ***capture him****. "You hear something about Mutra being unhappy, and then there's a noise behind you and WHUMP everything goes dark."*

It's getting late, so I hard-frame the next scene. "Rhianna, Vahid, Blodwen… it's morning the next day. You're trudging through the Great Wood. Blodwen, when did you notice that Caradoc and Morwenna were missing? Rhianna, how'd you figure out that the laborers took them? Vahid, how do you know that they're heading for the tomb?"

They answer my questions, retroactively Outfit, and hatch a plan. Vahid has his wind-spirit take Caradoc a message: "Make camp at the old greenhouse. We'll find you." We cut to Caradoc getting the message, then trying to trick his captors without getting Morwenna killed.

We end there, and I prep the rest of the adventure before the next session.

Prepared adventures

If you expect to start an adventure in the next (or an upcoming) session, then spend some time prepping it.

Like, if the players told you that they want to go on an expedition, then Chart a Course, pick out points of interest and legs of travel, etc. If you plan to drop an adventure hook, then identify the core threat or opportunity, figure out how you'll present it to the players, and prep the expedition itself. If you're going to drop a crisis, then figure out what it is, why it's happening now, when and where exactly it will start, who'll be in its way, etc. See **Between sessions** (page 575) for guidance.

Spend some time preparing the start of the session, too. Do you want to kick things off with some pointed questions or **love letters** (page 568)? Are there any scenes or situations you want to play out before diving into the action?

Remember, though: prep only what's useful and valuable to you. Don't spend time mapping out a detailed site until you're sure that the PCs are heading there. Prep what you need for the next session, then flesh the rest out as you go.

When the Seasons Changed to autumn and Vahid rolled a 7, that meant that a threat would make itself known or get worse. They made the roll at the end of a session, so I spent time prepping a crisis: the crinwin raid on the village.

That Seasons Change result also meant they got a seasonal gain. They picked a "trade opportunity," which I think will lead to an expedition to Gordin's Delve. But the coming crinwin attack will take up most (if not all) of the next session. So, all I do is prep the hook—Ulna, that merchant for Marshedge, will come back through Stonetop with news that the Delve is desperate for food.

How many adventures per season?

As many as makes sense! Follow the fiction, the moves, and the wishes of your players. If the Seasons Change move results in threats abounding, the PCs might go on multiple expeditions to try to save the village. If the Seasons Change move generates no threats or hooks, they might have a few quiet months at home.

Ask your players what they want to see in the game, what they want to focus on. Make note of their wishes during the End of Session, and make decisions accordingly.

For example, if a player rolls a 7 to Pull Together (building a palisade), and picks a "cost, requirement, or challenge," you could decide that it's just a dispute among the workers. But if the group is antsy for adventure, you could have the foreman wander off into the Great Wood.

Likewise, if your group wants downtime to focus on improvements, but the Seasons Change says a threat presents itself, you can make the threat not especially urgent or actionable. **Let things breathe**, remember?

Homefront moves

When the PCs are in Stonetop (or on an expedition with NPCs from home), add these to your list of GM moves:

- Introduce someone interesting
- Reveal simmering tensions
- Present a want or need
- Show how others really feel
- Draw out their feelings
- Change a relationship
- Oppose their wishes
- Remind them of their obligations
- Start a conflict or crisis
- Play them against each other

➤ Introduce someone interesting

Put someone new in front of the PCs. It could be a stranger from out of town, someone out of a PC's past, or just a local we've not yet met in play.

You might just draw attention to the new person and see if the players interact with them. Or you might introduce them such that it'd be weird or rude for the PC(s) to ignore them. You can also use this move to interrupt or end the current scene.

Remember to add the new character to the steading playbook, or wherever you track NPCs.

"Half an hour later, Cerys comes down to the Stream. She's, like, in her early 30s, dark hair, bags under her eyes. Her dress is tied up and there's mud on the knees. Like she was gardening? Her eyes dart about, worried, looking for Garet you think. Rhianna, what do you do?"

"Before you even finish, there's a bit of a commotion. A small group of strangers is coming down the path from the West Road. Four of them, with a couple wheelbarrows piled with stuff. They've got the look of Delvers… and, gods above, that must be all of their worldly possessions there. Fion's already heading that way, what do you do?"

➤ Reveal simmering tensions

Use this move to set up a future conflict, either among NPCs or between NPCs and PCs.

"Tensions" don't necessarily mean that people dislike each other. Attraction, rivalry, poor communication, differences of opinion, misaligned expectations… these can all get tensions a-simmering.

As a hard move, either decide right now that tensions exist, and/or make it clear that the simmer is close to a boil.

"Her expression shifts to a forced smile. 'The… Ruined Tower, how… exciting.' And, like, her voice is cold. She is not happy, but she's trying not to show it. Do you think you notice?"

"Tegwen is just glaring daggers at Seren, y'know? And Seren's just blithely ignoring it, playing it off like she doesn't notice, and you think she's taking longer than she needs to, just to rile Tegwen up. She actually winks at you when she catches you watching. What do you do?"

➤ Present a want or need

Someone asks for help, or clearly needs it, or makes their wishes known. Someone's in a bad place, but doesn't know how to ask for help. Someone confronts the PCs and makes demands.

Use this move to **give your characters life**, to reflect steading debilities in the fiction, to **bring it home**. Use it to reveal what it'll take to Persuade an NPC. Use it to prompt hard choices. Use it to kick off adventures.

"'We… we need to get after them! Now! Just let me get my spear.' But when Rheinal tries to stand, he's wobbly and his eyes are unfocused. What do you do?"

"It's not much warmer inside. Cerys and the kids are all wrapped in blankets, and the hearth is banked low. They've all got that gaunt look, and little Hewyl's got a bad-sounding cough. What do you do?"

"Nia runs off to play, and Lewela's like, 'Mother stopped by. Which is always fun. She was asking after you. Got me to promise that I'd suggest you stop by and check in on her. So I'm suggesting it.' She shrugs, sips her tea. What do you do?"

➤ Show how others really feel

Reveal the inner lives of your NPCs, in a way that provokes a response or adds tension to a scene. Make it clear that someone is angry, or disappointed, or sad or scared or worried or all the above. Have someone declare their love. Have an NPC show a PC genuine affection, appreciation, or respect.

As a hard move, make the feelings ugly, strong, intractable. Maybe they're new, or maybe the PCs just never knew about them, but they're a problem.

"When you turn back, Andras is like, slack jawed and staring at Blodwen as she goes. Then he realizes you're looking at him and blushes. What do you do?"

"She doesn't say anything. She's just standing in the doorway, arms folded. She glances at the bandages on your arms, the scratches on your face, and just sighs and shakes her head. Even you can tell she's unhappy. What do you do?"

"Rheinal waits until you're done, and then he's like, 'I… heard about what you did out there, for my boy.' He pulls out this beautiful ermine fur, holds it out. 'It ain't much, but… I wanted to say thank you.' What do you do?"

"Lowri's eyes don't waver. 'You're a clever guy, Vahid, and sometimes useful. But you are trouble. And you are not one of us. I ain't dying for you. And if you try anything with Eira, I will slit your throat in your sleep. Got it?'"

➤ Draw out their feelings

Have an NPC invite or prompt a PC to open up, to talk, to process what they're going through. Or have an NPC show them kindness or concern, and ask what they do. Invite the player to **portray a compelling character**, and **give your characters life** by showing that they really do care about the PCs.

The hard version of this move looks like a confrontation or intervention. An NPC sits them down and draws out their feelings like poison from a wound. Or at least they try to, and we see how the PC reacts.

"Eira raises her drinking horn, and slurs, 'Ta Garet, ya poor basstard. We'll missya.' Minutes pass. Then she lolls her head towards you. 'Hey. Rhhhanna. Hey. You know, you know iss not your fault, right? Right? Iss not your fault.' She's staring right at you, waiting. What do you do?"

"Gwendyl takes one look at your face and drops what she's doing and just wraps you in this great big hug. 'Shh, it's all right. There, there.' What do you do?"

"A 6? Hmm, okay! Macsen like, stares for a few seconds, and finally he's like, 'I suspect she'll be home soon.' And he steps aside, inviting you in. You go? Cool. Once you're inside, he turns, folds his arms, and gives you that stare again. 'So, Caradoc. What exactly are your intentions towards my daughter?'"

➤ Change a relationship

A loved one grows distant. A friendship is lost. A peer becomes a rival. A couple calls it quits. Etc.

The relationships involved can be PC-to-NPC or between NPCs. The change can be big and dramatic, or subtle, or anywhere in between.

If the change means that an NPC will now be a source of ongoing trouble, write them up as a **threat** (page 282).

"Actually, Blodwen… over the next few weeks, you notice Tegwen and Elios talking a lot. Well, Tegwen's talking, mostly, but Elios does a lot of nodding. Which is odd, cuz those two never agree on anything."

"'I… I can't do this anymore. Can't keep waiting. Waiting for you to come home. Waiting for you to leave. Hoping for you to, gods, for you to get yourself maimed so you can't do this anymore. Because you will keep doing this, as long as you can. We both know it. I can't ask you not to. But… I just can't. I'm sorry, that can't be my life.' And she shoves the bracelet into your hands and runs away, crying."

➤ Oppose their wishes

Have NPCs object to the PCs' plans, or get in the way, or need to be convinced. Or have them do things on their own, something the PCs don't want them to do, and see how the PCs respond.

As a hard move, have someone with actual clout put their foot down and be unwilling to change their mind. The PCs can either accept the decision, or try to go around them.

"'What in Tor's name do you think you're doing?' It's Glenys, stomping towards you, one of the sanctified stones in her hand. 'I won't have your sorcery just out where anyone can stumble on it!'"

"'No. I forbid it! You're no hunter, you're just a silly girl who thinks she's special. And who would take care of your goats? Not me! Come on.' And she grabs at your wrist, presumably to drag you home. What do you do?"

"Fion clears her throat, and everyone turns. 'No matter what else, they walked four days to get here. They don't lack for courage. They asked for hospitality, and a chance to earn their keep. I will not just send them packing cuz you got a bad feeling about them, Rhianna. Let 'em fix up Teagan's old place, I say.' And most of the others are nodding, like it's decided. So, what do you do?"

➤ Remind them of their obligations

Point out something that needs doing or that is expected of them. Have an NPC make explicit demands on their time. Warn them of what might happen if they ignore their responsibilities. Show them the consequences if they do.

Use this move to make sure the PCs earn their keep and remain active in the community. Use it to limit their options and to **let things breathe**, ensuring that time passes between adventures. Use it to **embrace the mundane** and portray the richness of the world, by highlighting the concerns of daily life.

"Sawyl's got a pile of backed-up work, and he looks tired as hell. 'Oh, good, you're up. Gimme a hand with these, will you?' He hasn't noticed your gear or your traveling clothes. What do you do?"

"I mean, you can, but harvest is coming and there is so much work to do in the fields. If you spend the next few weeks studying that plaque, you'll be missed. And folks are already grumbling about you. What do you do?"

➤ Start a conflict or crisis

Bring simmering tensions to a boil. Have two NPCs start screaming at each other or come to blows. Have someone call out a PC, loudly and in public. Have panic spread.

Or: have a house catch on fire, a monster attack the village, a dead body turn up, the granary collapse, etc.

As a soft move, show the PCs the start of the conflict or crisis and give them a chance to do something about it. As a hard move, don't let the PCs learn about it or otherwise be able to act until things have gotten bad.

"There's a commotion over in the corner. 'Oh you son of a…' and, Rhianna, your crew is like holding Glaw back from Iwan, and Iwan's got his new buddies around him, and he's just sneering back like he wants Glaw to come at him, what do you?"

"Vahid, they're just not listening. Too many people have seen Padrig's body, and it's pretty grisly, and there's like a dozen conversations happening at once. Kids are crying and people are panicking and you just can't make yourself heard. I think we just Met with Disaster, folks."

➤ Play them against each other

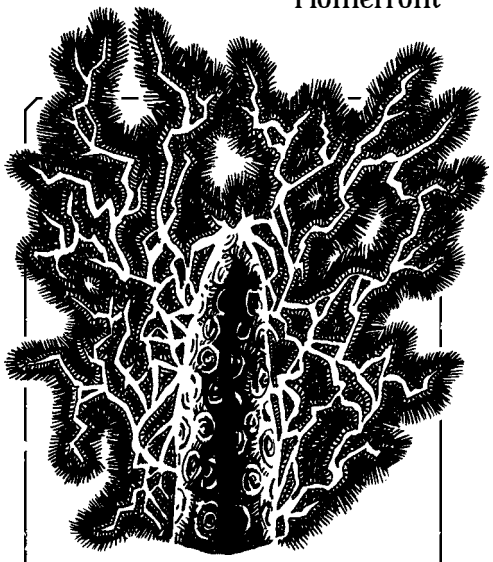
Set up a triangle between two PCs and an NPC. Have the smith ask the Judge to do something about the Fox. Have the Seeker's wife tell the Blessed what the Seeker is up to. Have the midwife gossip about the Heavy with the Fox.

Or, point out one PC's questionable actions to another PC, and ask what they think or do about it. Give them a chance to interfere (or Interfere) with each other.

As a hard move, maybe have an NPC make an ultimatum about a PC. Or pick that moment for an NPC to betray one PC's trust to the others.

"Blodwen… I know you fancy him. No, stop, I don't mind. I mean, of course I mind a little, but I made my choice. Just, some advice. Tell Caradoc how you feel. That boy is many things, but observant is not one of them."

"Elios fixes you with those sad eyes. 'I sure don't want your job, Rhianna. But if you don't do something about Vahid, and Caradoc, and get those boys in line, then folks are going to stop listening to you. Including me.' What do you do?"



Use other moves, too!

Just to be clear, you can and should use your standard GM moves during homefront play. **Announce trouble** ("Isn't it odd how Iwan is, like, charming and has friends now?"), **ask provocative questions** ("Who's going to be most opposed to this plan, do you think?"), **use up their resources** ("You're eating through your stores, lose 1 Surplus"), **offer an opportunity** ("You've got a couple of months, what do you each get up to?"), etc.

Use your threat moves, too! If there's a plague (an *affliction*), maybe have it **worsen or quicken** ("The sick house is soon past capacity and more folks fall ill every day"). If the Stone has become a *MacGuffin*, maybe have it **draw attention to itself** ("It glows for a few nights, until it shoots like a dozen lightning bolts into the clear summer sky… probably visible all the way up in Gordin's Delve, maybe even in Barrier Pass").

The steading playbook

The village of Stonetop gets its own playbook, reproduced starting on page 154. You'll use this document to track Stonetop's:

- Stats and tags
- Resources and fortifications
- Current debilities
- Improvements (and progress towards them)
- Communal assets
- Important NPCs

The steading playbook is a living document, shared by the group and changing throughout the game.

Other steadings

Other steadings have stats and details similar to Stonetop's, which you can find in *Book II*. Use those stats should the PCs end up Trading & Bartering in another steading, Mustering or Deploying its people, or having them Pull Together.

With that said: only track Fortunes and Surplus for Stonetop, the PCs' home. If the PCs end up calling a different steading home for a few seasons, then you would want to track Fortunes and Surplus there.

Fortunes

The **Fortunes** stat reflects the morale and social cohesion of the village, the favor of the gods, and just "how things are going." Fortunes start at +1, and can range from -1 to +3.

When Fortunes are high, people are (generally) happy and generous with each other. The future seems bright.

When Fortunes are low, people are (generally) grumpy or despairing. They talk of dark times ahead. They start looking to themselves and their own rather than the community at large.

Fortunes go up when the PCs **Return Triumphant** (page 339) or complete certain improvements (page 514). They go down when the village **Meets with Disaster** (page 532). Fortunes might go down when the PCs **Muster** (page 534), **Requisition** (page 308), or have the village **Pull Together** (page 536).

Players roll +Fortunes to **Requisition** (page 308). More importantly, they roll +Fortunes when the **Seasons Change** (page 517) to see what the season has in store for the village and the PCs.

After the players roll for Seasons Change, Fortunes reset to +1 (or +0 if the steading is *malcontent*). This means that changes to Fortunes themselves are passing, applying to only the next season.

Surplus

Surplus reflects stores of food and trade goods. It represents crops in the granary and in household larders, livestock ready for slaughter, whisky that's ready to drink, fur that's ready to trade or be fashioned into garments.

Surplus isn't a stat that's rolled; it's a resource that Stonetop accumulates, consumes, and spends. The village starts with 1 Surplus; there's no upper limit.

The steading generates Surplus each summer and autumn, and consumes Surplus each winter. PCs can gain more Surplus through trade, by going on an expedition to hunt big game, or as a **seasonal gain** (page 518). The PCs might spend Surplus to trade for other assets or to have folks **Pull Together** (page 536) on a project.

Should the PCs wish to Trade & Barter with or for Surplus, 1 Surplus is Value 2 (see **Value and coins**, page 542).

Size

Each steading has a **Size** tag, which describes the scale of its infrastructure: its permanent buildings, the size of its fields, the number of inhabitants it can comfortably support.

The tag is mostly descriptive, but it affects how much Surplus is consumed each **winter** (see page 518), as well as the **Muster** (page 534), **Pull Together** (page 536), and **Trade & Barter** (page 540) moves.

The possible values for Size are:

Hamlet (<50 people): Consume 1d2 +Population Surplus each winter; Muster, Pull Together, and Trade & Barter with disadvantage

Village (150-350 people): Consume 1d4 +Population Surplus each winter

Town (500-1500 people): Consume 2d6 +Population Surplus each winter; Muster, Pull Together, and Trade & Barter with advantage

City (2,500+ people): Tracking Surplus is out of scope for such a big place; Muster, Pull Together, and Trade & Barter with advantage

Stonetop starts as a *village*, home to about 300 souls. If things go very poorly in play, it could shrink and become a *hamlet*. If the PCs complete enough improvements, it can become a *town*. Becoming a *city* is beyond the default scope of the game.

Population

The steading's **Population** reflects the number of able bodies living there, relative to its Size.

Population starts play at +0, and can range from -1 to +3.

When Population is -1, buildings stand empty and key jobs go undone. Labor and free time are in short supply.

As Population rises above +0, quarters become more cramped and folks start living in makeshift homes. Some folks sit idle, looking for meaningful work.

Population can go down when:

- The steading **Meets with Disaster** (page 532)
- The steading runs out of Surplus in **winter** (see page 518).
- Fictional events dictate that they do (for example, if a plague kills a few dozen folks).

Population can go up as the result of a **seasonal gain** (page 518), or to reflect fictional events (like refugees settling in the village).

Players roll +Population to **Muster** (page 534) or **Pull Together** (page 536). But the steading also consumes extra Surplus each winter based on its Population.

Prosperity

Prosperity represents the goods that circulate in the steading, the number and variety of tradesfolk, and how often merchants pass through town.

While Surplus represents how much food and trade goods are in the town, Prosperity reflects the quality and variety of food and household goods, tools and weapons, finery and little luxuries.

Stonetop's Prosperity starts play at +0, and can range from -1 to +3.

When Prosperity is low, essential trades are lacking or done poorly. Roofs leak. Goods and tools are shabby, old, or just plain unavailable. A merchant might stop by once per season, if that.

As Prosperity increases, there are more full-time tradesfolk, more visits from merchants, more specialized tools. Homes are cozier. Goods are finer, herbs are more potent, and iron is stronger.

PCs can increase Prosperity by completing the Expanded Trades or Market improvements. If they want to raise it even higher, or raise it through some other means, then sit down with them and **Make a Plan** (page 530).

Players roll +Prosperity when they **Trade & Barter** (page 540) to acquire or sell special items. Prosperity also impacts the PCs' gear and **inventory** (page 86), affecting:

- How many small items they get when they **Outfit** (page 306)
- How many uses they get from ◇ **supplies** (page 89)
- How many HP they regain when they **Recover** in the field (page 328)
- The ***x* piercing** value (page 94) of their iron weapons

Resources

A steading's Prosperity is closely tied to its **resources**. On the steading playbook, these are listed to the right of the current Prosperity. At the start of play, Stonetop's resources include:

- Farming (beans, potatoes, oats, and barley)
- Hunting/trapping (fur, meat, hides)
- Distilling (whisky)
- Stone (collected from Old Wall)
- Cistern (filled with rain & snow)
- Tradesfolk (a midwife, a potter, a publican, a smith, a tanner)
- Trade with Gordin's Delve (for metal, tools)
- Trade with Marshedge (for textiles, herbs, glass)

Should Stonetop lose access to one or more of these resources for a season or so, then mark the ***lacking* debility** (page 513). If Stonetop permanently loses one or more of these resources, its Prosperity will go down as well.

Defenses

Defenses represent the martial prowess and readiness of the steading: how well-trained and well-armed the residents are, how many veteran warriors live there, how well-organized they are. Refer to a steading's Defenses to help decide how quickly and effectively they respond to an outside threat.

Defenses starts play at +0, and can range from -1 to +3.

When Defenses are low, there are few competent warriors in the steading. Arms and armor are limited and/or in poor repair. Folks tend to panic, and are easy to catch off guard.

As a steading's Defenses increase, there are more and more capable warriors, with better training, more experience, and/or better arms and armor. Folks are braver and more vigilant.

When a PC sends a steading's people into danger or rallies them against an attack, the player rolls +Defenses to see how it goes (see **Deploy**, page 526).

In Stonetop, every able-bodied adult is expected to train with the militia, maintain their spear and shield, and take shifts on the watchtowers. If Stonetop's militia suffers significant losses, then mark the *diminished* debility. If those losses are permanent (for example, death and dismemberment, not just injury), then Defenses goes down, as well.

To increase Defenses, the PCs should complete the Weapons of War or the Well-trained Militia improvements. Other improvements provide a bonus in certain circumstances. If the PCs want to raise Defenses even higher, or raise it via some other means, then they can **Make a Plan** (page 530).

Fortifications

Each steading has a list of fortifications and other resources that contribute to its Defenses. On the steading playbook, these are listed to the right of the current Defenses. At the start of play, Stonetop's fortifications (etc.) include:

- The village militia
- The Ringwall (low, stone)
- A trio of watchtowers
- Iron-tipped spears and wooden shields in every home
- Some bows

Debilities

During play, the steading can suffer debilities much like a PC can (page 241). There are three steading debilities:

- ***Diminished***, by injury, sickness, doubt. Players have disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, or Pull Together
- ***Lacking***, due to shortages, hoarding, distrust. Treat Prosperity as if it's 1 lower than it is.
- ***Malcontent***, from fear, anger, and/ or despair. Fortunes reset to +0 each season, instead of +1 (page 517), and folks need Persuading more often than usual

There's a space on the steading playbook to mark each debility.

Debilities both reflect the fiction and dictate it. If something happens that results in the village's capacity being reduced by injury, sickness, or doubt, then have the players mark *diminished* to reflect that. If they mark *diminished* because a move tells them to, then that means injury, sickness, and/or doubt plague the steading.

Steading debilities last until a move like **Return Triumphant** (page 339) says to clear them, or until the fiction changes such that the debility no longer applies.

Steading improvements

The steading playbook includes a number of potential improvements that can be unlocked in play. Each has a list of requirements and benefits that the steading gains upon completion.

Requirements

The requirements for each improvement vary from clear and obvious ("Impressing a band of Hillfolk") to the seemingly impossible ("Some method of making water flow uphill"). If the players don't know how to go about meeting such a requirement, **Make a Plan** (page 530) with them.

The PCs can complete requirements for an improvement in whatever order makes sense; they don't have to go in order unless an improvement specifically says they do.

Some improvements require individuals with specific skills, like "an *exceptional* engineer/foreman" or "a veteran warrior, able to command a crowd." This might be a PC, or an NPC who already lives in Stonetop. Otherwise, they'll either need to recruit someone from abroad or wait for such a person to move to town.

When an improvement requires Surplus or other materiel, it's used up or otherwise committed to the improvement. The Palisade improvement requires "lots of timber… (Value 3)." You can't use that timber for other projects without dismantling some or all of the palisade!

Many improvements involve **Pulling Together** one or more times. See page 536 for details.

Benefits

Once the PCs meet all the requirements for an improvement, the steading gains the listed benefit(s).

Many improvements include a benefit of "increase Fortunes by 1." This is a one-time gain; when **Seasons Change** and Fortunes reset (page 517), this benefit no longer matters.

Some improvements provide a passive, ongoing bonus to stats like Prosperity or Defenses.

Other improvements provide new player moves, triggered by a particular action or event. Many such moves are triggered when the Seasons Change (in general, or to a specific season); you might want to note these on the front of the steading playbook, as a reminder.

The benefits for each improvement are mostly mechanical, but don't forget about the fictional impact! If the PCs unlock the Aurochs Hunting improvement by cooperating with the Hillfolk, then they've not only gained a new move and resource, they've improved their relationship with the Hillfolk!

Losing improvements

Once an improvement is completed, assume that basic upkeep is done by the community as a whole. For example, once the Palisade is built, assume that the steading keeps it in good repair.

Some improvements have additional, ongoing costs, like the requirement to spend 1 Surplus every spring to maintain Weapons of War. If the PCs fail to pay that cost, they lose the improvement. Make a Plan with the PCs if they want to get it back.

You can and should threaten or harm improvements the same way you can threaten anything else the PCs care about. If they don't do something to save it, then it will be lost and they'll lose its benefits. Again, Make a Plan with the PCs if they want to get it back.

Other improvements

The improvements listed in the steading playbook aren't the only ones possible. You can find others in various entries of *Book II*, revealing them to the players as appropriate. Likewise, you might have an idea for an additional improvement yourself, or the PCs might propose one. Make a Plan to establish the requirements, and work with the players to establish an appropriate benefit and any ongoing costs.

The steading playbook includes a space for additional improvements. Record them there.

Assets

The steading playbook includes a section for recording assets that are owned by the residents of Stonetop in common. At the start of play, this includes:

- A pair of hardy draft horses
- A pair of horse-drawn plows (iron)
- A pair of carts (plus horse harness)
- A wagon (plus horse harness)

If the PCs want to take any of these assets on an expedition, they must first **Requisition** them (page 308).

There are also blank spaces where you can add new assets that the PCs acquire for the village. For example, if the PCs arrange to trade 1 Surplus for a sleigh (Value 2) that the villagers can use in winter, you'd add it here.

This section also includes boxes in which to record silver or gold coins. These start blank, but should the PCs acquire coins during play and turn them over to the village as a whole, you'd record them here. See page 542 for more on **coins**.

Residents & neighbors

The last two pages of the steading playbook are for tracking NPCs. Whenever you or a player introduces a new NPC, make note of them here: their name, pronouns, profession, and any notable traits and relationships. See page 453 for guidance on **creating NPCs**.

A game of *Stonetop* can easily involve dozens of NPCs, and space on the steading playbook is limited. As such, you might opt to use a digital tool for tracking NPCs, such as:

- A relationship map that visually organizes PCs, NPCs, and how they're connected to each other
- A spreadsheet, with a row for each PC or NPC, and columns for traits and relationships
- A wiki or database, with entries for each PC and NPC and links between them to record relationships

Even if you use the steading playbook to track all the established NPCs, you'll probably need to keep your own notes elsewhere for each NPC—especially if that NPC is a threat.

Seasons Change

The Seasons Change move creates the long-term rhythm of the game. It breaks up downtime. It requires the PCs to care about the steading's **Fortunes** (page 508) and **Surplus** (page 509). It makes many of the steading improvements important and valuable to pursue.

Making the move

The Seasons Change during downtime. When you've played out any activities, scenes, and situations you and the players are interested in, skip ahead in time and re-solve this move.

Aim to resolve the move towards the end of a session if you can, so that you can prep the next session based on the results. If you can't, cool, just be willing to improvise!

Rolling

Each season indicates who rolls for the move (whoever is most hopeful rolls in spring, whoever is most content rolls in summer, etc.). "Whoever" refers to the PC, not the player. If you really can't decide, pick randomly.

Whoever rolls also makes any choices required by the move. They can ask for input, but the final decisions are theirs.

Each season involves rolling +Fortunes, which results in some combination of seasonal gains, threats, and (in winter) the need to consume additional Surplus. More on that later.

After the roll, reset Fortunes to +1 (or +0 if the village is currently *malcontent*).

Generating Surplus

In summer, the village generates 1d4-1 Surplus (from pickled spring vegetables, surplus winter potatoes, summer fruits, whisky maturing, game, etc.). If they also get a seasonal gain, the player can wait to pick it until they see how much Surplus they generate.

When the autumn harvest is complete, the village gets another 1d4 Surplus (crops, garden produce, game, mature livestock, etc.). Harvest is a process that takes most of autumn. If something significantly disrupts it, have the player roll for Surplus with disadvantage and/or a -1 penalty. If the harvest fails entirely, they don't get any Surplus (and they Meet With Disaster).

Improving the rolls

PCs cannot Aid each other on either the +Fortunes roll or on rolls to generate Surplus. The move assumes that everyone is doing their part already.

PCs *can* Bolster for a coming season and spend the Preparation on the roll(s), but doing so should requiring a significant sacrifice to the gods (like 1 Surplus at least), and/or having the village Pull Together to make special preparations.

Handle other moves on a case-by-case basis, based on the fiction and what the whole group feels is right and fair.

SEASONS CHANGE

When ***spring bursts forth upon the land***, whoever is the most hopeful rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, pick 1 seasonal gain; **on a 7-9**, pick 1 seasonal gain, but a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse; **on a 6-**, threats abound (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, reset Fortunes to +1.

When ***the hot days of summer settle across the land***, whoever is most content rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, pick 2 seasonal gains; **on a 7-9**, pick 1 seasonal gain; **on a 6-**, a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, the steading generates 1d4-1 Surplus. Then, reset Fortunes to +1.

When ***autumn falls and the land is ripe for harvest***, whoever is most determined rolls +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, pick 1 seasonal gain; **on a 7-9**, pick 1 seasonal gain, but a threat to the steading makes itself known or gets worse; **on a 6-**, threats abound (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, reset Fortunes to +1.

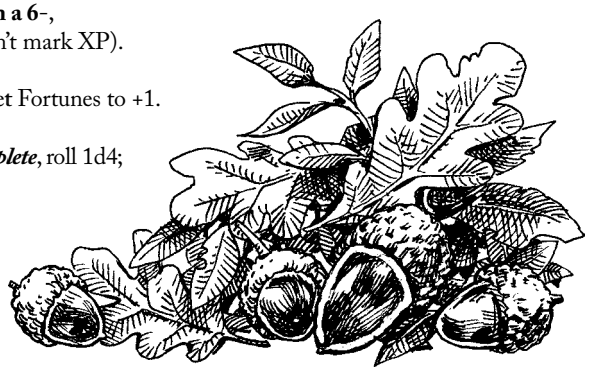
When ***the harvest is complete***, roll 1d4; the steading generates that much Surplus.

When ***winter grips the land***, whoever is weariest rolls 1d4+Population (min 0); the steading consumes that much Surplus. If there's not enough, reduce Surplus to 0, reduce Fortunes by 1, and pick 1:

- Reduce Population by 1 (min -1) due to death, decripitude, and departure
- An important resource (one of the horses, the cistern, etc.) is lost or not maintained
- An important NPC dies, their role unfilled
- Your PC dies, leaves, or retires from play

Then, roll +Fortunes: **on a 10+**, the winter is relatively mild, and each player can name a local NPC with whom their relationship improves at least a little (work together to figure out how); **on a 7-9**, the steading must consume additional Surplus equal to 1d4+Population before winter ends or suffer the consequences as above; **on a 6-**, as a 7-9, but also threats abound (and don't mark XP).

Whatever the result, reset Fortunes to +1.



Winter

In winter, the village consumes 1d4 + Population Surplus. If Stonetop has shrunk to a *hamlet*, it consumes only 1d2 + Population. If it has grown to a *town*, it consumes 2d6 + Population. If there's not enough, then Surplus drops to 0, the village Meets with Disaster, and the player picks a consequence.

Reflect such consequences in the fiction. Name specific folks who die or leave or grow infirm. Play out the scene where the granary's roof falls in. Make it clear how the smith's death will impact the village. (Note: the village is *already* Meeting with Disaster; these consequences don't trigger it again.)

If the player opts to have their PC die, leave, or retire, then let them have an **epilogue** (page 584) in this session or the next. Ask the player to make a new PC between sessions.

After consuming Surplus (and handling any fallout), the Fortunes roll indicates how the rest of the season plays out.

On a 10+, have each player pick an NPC, then work as a group to figure out how and why their relationship with the PC has improved. Play these changes out as scenes or just describe them in brief (in addition to any other downtime activities and scenes you play out).

On a 9 or less, the village must consume more Surplus by winter's end or suffer the consequences above. The PCs will likely try to prevent this (see page 98 for ways they can generate Surplus). **On a 6-**, they've also got to deal with threats to the village. Expect an eventful season.

Seasonal gains

On a 7+ in spring or autumn or a 7-9 in summer, the rolling player gets to pick a seasonal gain. On a 10+ in summer, they get to pick two. The choices are:

- **Population boom:** A number of youth come of age, and/or outsiders settle here. Increase Population by 1 (max +3).
- **Tor's blessing:** Fine weather abounds. Take +1 to Pull Together this season, and any time you roll the Die of Fate for weather, roll twice and take your pick.
- **Unexpected bounty:** A sudden influx of wild game, trade profits, or some other resource generates 1 Surplus, now.
- **Trade opportunity:** At some point this season, someone offers to trade something valuable at a good price or something unique/unusual at a reasonable price. Pay what they're asking and it's yours.
- **Interesting news:** There's an opportunity to improve your fortunes, knowledge, or relations, and/or to make progress towards a steading improvement.
- **Valuable insight:** You learn something that gives you a chance to address a threat that's been plaguing the steading.

If they pick a "population boom," ask or decide what the source of the boom is. If folks are growing up, include marriages and coming-of-age rites in the coming season. If outsiders are moving here, consider where they're from, why they've come, where they're living now, how well they're fitting in. Show off tensions that stem from cramped quarters, youthful ambitions, old ways vs. new. Name a few of the notable new faces and feature them in upcoming scenes.

If they pick "Tor's blessing," make a point of describing the weather this season. Ask the PCs how they/their neighbors are taking advantage of the weather. Ask what offerings or rites of gratitude they're making to Tor. Maybe put a sticky note on the Random Weather tables in your GM playbook, to remind yourself about the "roll twice" benefit.

If they pick an "unexpected bounty," the village has already gained 1 Surplus; the PCs don't need to actively claim it in play. Ask the player where the Surplus came from (game, trade, a lucky find, etc.). Ask follow-up questions to flesh out the specifics (the type of game, the nature of the trade and the merchant who made it, what they found and where, etc.). Call back to these details throughout the season, or tie them into larger events.

If they pick a "trade opportunity," ask the player what they hope to get out of this choice. With that in mind, either…

… identify something the PC wants (more Surplus, a special item, an arcanum, etc.) and then figure out who might offer it; or…

… pick a community you'd like to feature (Barrier Pass, the Hillfolk, etc.), look up their entry in *Book II*, and pick one of the listed Trade Opportunities for that group.

Decide how the opportunity presents itself. Does someone come to town with goods in hand? Or does someone bring word of the opportunity to Stonetop? The more effort or risk involved, the better the deal should be.

If they pick "interesting news," identify something valuable to the PCs, something they'd want to acquire or that would get them closer to achieving a goal (like a steading improvement). Ask the player if they had anything in mind.

Now, think of something that would put that valuable or goal in reach, and how the PCs could learn of that opportunity.

If they pick a "valuable insight," choose an established threat to the village. Why haven't the PCs done anything about it yet? What information would allow them to address it (a vulnerability, the location of its lair, its motives, etc.)? Think about how that information could be revealed to the PCs.

"A threat to the steading..."

On a 7-9 in spring or autumn, or a 6- in summer, either introduce a new threat to the steading or have an existing threat **advance towards impending doom**.

The threat you pick can be internal or external, imminent or distant, uncaring or actively malevolent. It might be either supernatural or mundane. But it must represent a threat to Stonetop, now or in the future if it goes unchecked.

Decide how you'll make the threat (or its escalation) known to the PCs. Will it manifest as a crisis in the village? Will a hunter stumble across it in the Wood? Will someone have a portentous vision or dream?

In spring or autumn, consider tying the threat to the seasonal gain. Like, maybe the same merchant who brought an unexpected bounty of grain, herbs, and textiles also brings news that Daedra the Red's gang have taken up resdience in the Ruined Tower. Or maybe that troublesome hagr attacks someone down by the Stream but it leaves a clear, muddy trail back to its lair (a valuable insight).

Threats abound

On a 6- in spring, autumn, or winter, "threats abound." Make things bad. A monster attacks the village, with little or no warning. Multiple threats **advance towards impending doom**. Simmering tensions boil over. The weather is bad, crops fail, infrastructure crumbles, etc.

You don't have to do all these things, but you can. The season should be one of crisis and peril.

Putting the results in play

Pick threats and opportunities based on the results of the Seasons Change move, the established fiction, the needs of your game, and the wants of your group.

As you make your decisions, consider:

- Are there any threats barreling towards their impending dooms?
- Does your game need more threats, or do you have enough already?
- If there's a seasonal gain, which one did the player pick and why?
- Is there a particular threat that the PCs want to deal with, or a goal that they want to work towards?
- Are your players looking forward to an expedition, or would they prefer a relatively quiet season at home?

Like, say that the Seasons Change to summer and the player rolls a 6- (a threat). If spring had multiple adventures, and the players say that they'd like some downtime this summer, then pick a threat that's real but not immediately urgent or actionable, like giant spiders at the northern edge of the hunters' range. Or pick an internal threat, like a conflict between the Disciples of Aratis and the newly arrived Hillfolk refugees.

Then, let's say that they roll a 10+ in autumn (a seasonal gain) and pick "trade opportunity." If the group is itching for adventure, maybe some Hillfolk offer a few horses if the PCs rescue their kids from the Ruined Tower. But if the group wants to keep plugging away at the homefront, maybe a merchant comes through with a few cartloads of timber that they're willing to trade for Surplus.

Tor's blessing covers the whole season, and an unexpected bounty has already happened. But for threats and other seasonal gains, **it's your call when and how to present them**.

For example, you might…

- … describe the threats/gains right after the Seasons Change roll; or
- … play out a few scenes in the new season, and then put the threat or gain into one of those scenes; or
- … introduce interesting news in early autumn, prompting the PCs to go on an adventure, and reveal a threat when they get home; or
- … let the PCs spend most of spring working on projects, and reveal a valuable insight at the end; or
- … ask the players to each describe one good day in winter, before threats start to abound and everything goes to hell; or
- … something else along those lines.

Use your discretion to set a pace that you and your group are happy with, but **be careful not to undermine the players' choices**. Like, say they get a 10+ in summer and pick "Tor's blessing" and "population boom" because they want to Pull Together on a project. Don't delay that population boom until summer's end where it's too late to help. Talk to your players about what they expect and what they want to see in the game, and respect their wishes.

SEASONS CHANGE EXAMPLES

It's the end of our first session, and we've just finished making and introducing characters. The group kept focusing on the recent crinwin raids, the abducted children, and the effect this has had on the village. The village starts with 1 Surplus and Fortunes +1.

The group decides that Vahid is the most hopeful (he recently had a breakthrough on his Sanctifying Mark arcanum). He rolls a 7 and picks "unexpected bounty" for the gain. But a threat is also going to make itself known or get worse.

Following the procedure in the ***First Adventure*** *chapter* (page 251), *I decide that the real threat is a swyn. It dominated the crinwin and is having them "collect" children. I prep an adventure hook: a trapper (Rheinal) and his son (Pryder) will be out trapping abundant game (the unexpected bounty), when crinwin attack them and drag off Pryder.*

During the first session of play, I ask some setup questions (including a love letter for Blodwen), we play out a few scenes to establish everyone's normal lives, and then I drop the hook: someone is shouting for help from the switchback path leading up from the Great Wood…

The PCs do in fact go after the crinwin, tracking them to a Green Lord tomb. They kill the swyn, send the crinwin running, and Return Triumphant with the kids in tow. There's some small-town drama, but the rest of spring is otherwise peaceful. They end the season with 2 Surplus and Fortunes +2.

The long hot days of summer settle upon the land, and the group decides that Rhianna (of all people) is most content. She rolls an 11, and the group talks about which two gains to pick.

"Can we roll to see how much Surplus we get?" asks Rhianna. They sure can. She rolls 1d4-1 and gets a 1. "Hmm. Okay, let's take another unexpected bounty, and Tor's blessing. I want to start drilling our militia this season."

We reset Fortunes to +1, and the village heads into summer with 4 Surplus.

We talk about what life in Stonetop looks like in summer, about the fine weather, and how that's affecting folk's lives. Rhianna convinces folks to pursue the Well-trained Militia steading improvement, focusing on readiness. This costs 1 Surplus and effectively eats up the village's (and most of Rhianna's) free time for the season.

Vahid reminds Rhianna of her promise to go back to the Green Lord tomb and explore it some more. They do! A missed roll to Seek Insight has me ***advance towards impending doom*** *and they find signs that the crinwin are still around and their numbers are growing. They reach the tomb, find some valuables, encounter some guardian Fae, and head home. Garet gets mauled by a drake, and dies on the way.*

They end the summer with 3 Surplus and Fortunes at +1.

Autumn comes and Vahid is deemed the most determined. He rolls an 8, a gain plus a threat. "Can we roll for Surplus before we pick?" he asks. No, that roll comes at the end of the season. "We're doing okay for Surplus anyhow. And we've got some loot. Let's go with a trade opportunity!"

For a threat, the crinwin are an obvious choice but I'm not keen on another trip into the Great Wood. During the End of Session, a couple players wished to see more of the world. So, the threat will be a crinwin raid on the village and the opportunity will be in Gordin's Delve.

Alas, Rhianna's player misses our next session. Instead of the crinwin raid, we do a short trip to the Ruined Tower and more of Blodwen's family drama.

The following session starts with the crinwin raid. The recent drilling pays off and they drive the crinwin away. At the end of that session, the merchant Ulna comes back through town with word that the Delve is more desperate for food than usual. The PCs decide to take 1 Surplus and some loot to trade.

Rhianna Muster's the village before they go, reducing their Fortunes to +0. But the trip is successful, and they Return Triumphant laden down with tools, parts, ore, etc. Fortunes goes back to +1.

There's some downtime, and the harvest is soon complete. Vahid rolls 1d4 and gets a 1. Yikes. They're heading into winter with 4 Surplus.

Winter grips the land, and the group decides that Caradoc—heartsick over Morwenna calling things off—is the weariest. He rolls 1d4 + Population (+0) and, oof, rolls a 4. That uses up all their Surplus.

I ask the group why they think they lost so much, and we say that early winter hammers the village with heavy storms and deep deep snow, followed by bitter cold. "But we're okay, right?" asks Blodwen. "We're out of Surplus but we have enough?"

That's true for now, but Caradoc still needs to roll +Fortunes. On a 10+, yeah, they'd be fine. The rest of the winter would be mild and each PC would get to improve a relationship (maybe Caradoc and Morwenna would get back together, or Blodwen would resolve things with Tegwen, or whatever). On a 6-, they'd be in trouble—not only would they need more Surplus, but threats would abound. I'd probably have the crinwin continue to raid the village while bravos from Gordin's Delve came down to extort Stonetop for food it didn't have.

As it happens, Caradoc rolls a 9. The village needs to consume another 1d4+0 Surplus or they'll Meet with Disaster and suffer an additional consequence. "But why bother rolling?" asks Caradoc. "We're already at 0." Ah, but they have until winter's end to come up with the extra Surplus "Oh!" He gets a 2.

"So where do we get more Surplus? In winter?" Well, there are some cave bears with a den not far from town…

Player moves

These moves become relevant during homefront play, or at least when the PCs are dealing with lots of folks from home. Some might also apply when the PCs travel to another community.

BOLSTER
When you ***prepare for what's coming or seek the favor of the gods***, say how and answer the GM's questions. Then, hold Preparation based on the amount of time you devote:

- A week or so: 1 Preparation
- A month or so: 2 Preparation
- The better part of a season: 3 Preparation

When you ***make any roll to which your efforts might apply***, you may spend 1 Preparation to add +1 to that roll, after it is made (maximum +1 per roll).

This move happens during downtime, when a PC dedicates time and effort to training or study, to the making of plans, or to religious ceremony or offerings, in preparation for some future challenge or undertaking.

The times listed assume that the PC is devoting themselves to Bolstering, to the exclusion of other projects, expeditions, or even day-to-day responsibilities. It should be noticeable and kind of a big deal. You can let them Bolster part time, if you want, but it should then take the better part of a season to gain just 1 Preparation.

Time spent Bolstering doesn't count towards other projects, and vice versa. When the Marshal runs drills to achieve the Well-trained Militia improvement, they're Pulling Together, not Bolstering. But if the steading already has the Well-trained Militia improvement, and the Marshal spends an extra week drilling folks on a tactic they've already learned, then they're Bolstering.

The player has to describe how they're Bolstering. Clarify exactly what they're preparing for. If you think their efforts are unequal to the task, push back and **tell them the requirements**. A week spent seeking out tales from the elders might be a good way to Bolster for a trip among the Fae, but it won't help them improve the autumn harvest.

Large-scale preparations require more than just the PCs' time and efforts. If the PCs want to Bolster for a coming Seasons Change roll or an upcoming battle, they need to involve the village as a whole. They might need to Persuade key NPCs, Pull Together, and/or spend 1 or more Surplus or similar resources.

Once you and the player have settled on how they're Bolstering and for what, discuss the impacts of doing so. How long do they plan to spend? What work goes undone? Who do they ask/expect to cover for them?

Frame a scene or two with the PC while they're Bolstering, to **bring it home** and show how their choices impact their house, their family, their neighbors, etc. The more time the PC spends, and the more folks they involve, the bigger a deal it should be.

Have the player record their Preparation and its source, like "2 Preparation (laying in extra stores for winter)." Preparation lasts until it is spent, until it no longer applies or makes sense, or until the PC Bolsters again.

Players usually spend Preparation on 2d6 rolls for moves, but they can spend it on any damage rolls, rolls for Surplus, or even Die of Fate rolls—as long as everyone agrees that the efforts involved with Bolstering would apply to the roll.

If it's unclear whether the player's efforts could apply to a given roll, discuss it with the table. Be generous and don't try to cheat the player out of the benefit of their efforts, but at the same time, don't let anyone be a weasel. If they Bolstered by sparring and exercising for a week, don't let them spend their Preparation on a Die of Fate roll for the weather, even if they say "I think Tor would be pleased with my efforts." When in doubt, poll the table. If anyone objects, the Preparation can't be spent.

The PCs are planning a bear hunt to feed the village through winter. Before they go, Blodwen wants to do a rite, to ask Danu for protection and forgiveness for killing the bears. She just intends to add color, but Rhianna says "Seeking the favor of the gods? That's Bolster, right?"

It's only Bolster if Blodwen dedicates a week or so to the ceremony. Vahid points out that a week's delay won't make much of a difference. "And it's not like folks are going to begrudge us these rites. Not if they want to eat." Fair enough.

I ask Blodwen what the rite looks like. "We isolate ourselves for a few days, in silence and fasting. The night before the hunt, we go down to the Stream to wash away our guilt in the cold water." Neat! And I say that each PC who participates (plus Rhianna's crew as a whole) holds 1 Preparation, to spend as they wish on the upcoming hunt.

After suffering a nasty burn, Vahid spends a few weeks studying the now-visible runes on his "richly woven rug" arcanum, and meditating upon it.

The last step to unlocking the rug is to let himself be burned by a terrible flame, without crying out. He'll be Defying Danger, for sure.

"I've been getting ready for this for like a month," says Vahid. "Isn't that Bolster?" Nope. That time was spent meeting one of the arcanum's requirements. Bolster will require another week spent making preparations. "Yeah, sure, let's do that."

He talks to Blodwen, who agrees to be there when he does this and dress his wounds. Then he spends a few days practicing self-control with his hearth fire, getting lots of little burns. I have Maire stop by and get all worried, but he deflects her concerns for now.

At week's end, Vahid has 1 Preparation. He and Blodwen build a bonfire by the Stream, and Vahid walks through it, trying to not cry out. He rolls +CON to Defy Danger, gets a 6, and happily spends his Preparation to make it a 7. He's badly burnt and will have some lasting scars, but he masters his fear and unlocks the arcanum.

CONVALESCE
When you ***rest for a few days, in safety and comfort***, recover all your HP and clear all your debilities. When you ***rest for a few weeks under the care of a healer***, heal any problematic wounds that can heal. If you ***have suffered a permanent injury or impairment***, either retire or Make a Plan to adapt to it.

This move is discussed in detail in the **Harm and Healing** chapter on page 249.

DEPLOY
When you ***send a steading's people into danger or rally them against an attack***, roll +Defenses: **on a 10+**, it goes as well as can be expected; **on a 7-9**, it works but someone picks 1 from the list below. If the steading is acting from a position of strength, you choose. Otherwise, the GM chooses.

- It's less effective than you expected
- Injuries abound; the steading marks *diminished* (disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, Pull Together)
- The GM picks a named NPC involved in the action; they die

Sending a steading's people into danger could mean a raid, a patrol, a pitched battle, or a trip through dangerous lands. Rallying them against attack might mean raising the alarm, or organizing a response, or standing shield-to-shield, blood splattered and weary, urging their neighbors to hold the line.

Deploy only triggers if the PCs take charge. When villagers go into danger on their own initiative, or come under attack with no PC to rally them, the move doesn't trigger—you decide what happens, based on your principles, your prep, and the established fiction.

Before the player rolls, say what a 10+ looks like. Does it mean winning the battle, or pulling off a single desperate ploy? Does it mean "rout the enemy, taking minimal casualties," or "fight to a draw but with heavy losses," or what? If there will be unavoidable costs, **tell them the consequences and ask** if they're sure.

On a 7-9, "a position of strength" means solid fictional positioning: the high ground, superior numbers, surprise, magic, etc. Or, it means using a tactic in which the village has trained (per the Well-trained Militia improvement), one that gives them an edge against their foe. Using "formations" against a rabble counts as a position of strength, but against an elite unit of legionnaires, it simply turns a slaughter into a fair fight.

On a 6-, the villagers might refuse the PC's orders. Or maybe they get out-fought or outflanked and suffer heavy losses (mark *diminished*). Or maybe you **put them in a spot**, and it'll be carnage unless the PCs step in and save the day.

If a PC (like the Marshal) sends a group of followers into danger, decide whether to resolve it with Order Followers or Deploy, or a mashup of the two. If you opt to use Order Followers, remember that you can choose to abstract exchanges between groups (page 416).

Caradoc bangs the alarm bell, yelling, "Crinwin! At the east wall! Awake! Crinwin from the east!" He's rallying the village against attack, so he rolls +Defenses to Deploy. It's too late to keep the crinwin out, but on a 10+, folks will be up and armed, with homes shuttered and children tucked away, the warriors gathered at a spot of Caradoc's choosing.

Alas, he gets a 7. The steading has the "readiness" tactic (from Well-trained Militia) and Caradoc is raising the alarm, so this counts as a position of strength; Caradoc picks the consequence. He opts for "it's less effective than you expected."

"Cries go up through the village. Folks stumble out in their nightshirts, spears and shields in hand, and good thing too, because the crinwin are among them. A number of small skirmishes start, and a crinwin is clambering up the tower towards you, Caradoc, what do you do?"

"Rhianna, Odrain's at his door, harried by three crinwin. Eira chops one down from behind. Rheinal and Pryder are fending a few off at the pavilion. But if this keeps up, you'll be taking casualties soon. What do you?"

*She bellows, "GRANARY! FORM UP ON THE GRANARY NOW!" She's Deploying (using **Stentorian**, page 127, to gain advantage). A 10+ will mean the militia safely rallies at the granary, getting a chance to organize a response. (And on a 6-, I think I'll have a crinwin tackle Rhianna mid-yell!)*

But she rolls an 8, so it works with a consequence. The villagers are no longer acting from a position of strength, so this time I pick. "Rheinal doesn't make it. He hangs back to cover Pryder, and like four crinwin dogpile him in a spray of blood. But the militia forms up in front of the granary, in good order, the crinwin circling warily. What do you do?"

"Okay, here's the plan," says Rhianna. "Half of us stay to guard the granary. We send out six groups, each with a hunter and four shields. We sweep the village. You hear someone call for help, remember, they mimic voices. Stay tight, stay cautious. No one plays hero. Got it?"

This is definitely Deploy, and Rhianna's having her crew of hunters Aid. I ask if she'd rather they grant advantage or a position of strength. She opts for the advantage and, hey, she gets a 12!

"It's a long, tense night, but when dawn arrives, the crinwin are long gone. There are a few injuries, but nothing bad. Rheinal's your only real casualty."

*The next spring, the crinwin are still a problem. Rhianna Musters the village and sends out patrols. That's Deploy, and a 10+ will both keep the crinwin at bay and give the PCs a lead on their nests. Alas, she rolls a 5 and I **advance towards impending doom**.*

"The third patrol, led by Lowri, doesn't come back until after sunset. 'Found 'em,' he mutters. 'Great big nests, more than I ever seen. But they got Leuca, Padrig, and Caron. It... it was bad, boss. It was bad.'

LEVEL UP
When you ***have a quiet stretch of time at home and XP equal to (or greater than) 6 + twice your current level***, follow these steps:

1) Subtract 6 + twice your current level from your XP.
2) Increase your level by 1.
3) Choose a new move from your class playbook, or an insert class that you've unlocked.
4) If you are the Blessed (or have a sacred pouch) and your new level is even, increase your max Stock by 1.
5) If you are the Lightbearer (or have Invoke the Sun God) and your new level is even, choose a new invocation.
6) Review your Instinct and Appearance (on the front of your playbook). Change anything that no longer applies. Feel free to make up new options.

PCs can't Level Up "in the field." They need to head home. If they accumulate more XP than they need to Level Up, encourage them to **Burn Brightly** (page 231) whenever they can—the rest of their expedition will go more smoothly.

"A quiet stretch of time" usually means a few days with no crises or adventures or significant risks. But don't be a stickler; if everyone has enough XP and they get just one quiet night before heading back out, let them Level Up. And if a session ends at home, any PC who gets enough XP from the End of Session move should Level Up between sessions, even if the session ended on a cliffhanger.

If a PC has enough XP to Level Up twice, then they Level Up twice right away. No need to wait for another quiet stretch of time.

Like any move, if you do it, you have to do it. Players can't delay Leveling Up in order to, say, Burn Brightly on a Seasons Change roll. But with that said, players will sometimes need to ponder their choice of new moves. That's fine! They can't delay Leveling Up to game the system, but they can take time to think. Encourage them to pick before the next session. But if they're stumped, they can pick a new move during play.

Players can pick any move from their playbook whose requirements they meet. They don't need to ask permission or justify their choice. If their pick asserts a fictional change (like the Seeker taking Initiate of Secret Arts and getting a sacred pouch), ask the player what that looks like and how that happened—not as a challenge, but to clarify the fiction.

If a player wants a move from another playbook, but doesn't have an option that explicitly allows it, they're welcome to pitch the idea to the table. If everyone (not just you) agrees, okay. But consider whether the choice makes sense for their character, whether it creates a weird rules interaction, whether it infringes on another PC's niche, etc.

A move that requires a specific playbook is never available to other playbooks. No one but the Heavy can take Dangerous, and no one but the Would-be Hero can have Potential for Greatness.

Players can take a move that requires a certain level as they achieve that level. For example, they can take Superior Stat when they Level Up to level 6.

If a move *replaces* a different move, then it requires the one it replaces. If a player takes such a move, they lose the original move and any benefits it conferred.

There's no maximum level, but you might find that players start to run out of playbook moves that they're interested in taking. If that happens, encourage them to browse unused playbooks for moves that might make sense, and have them pitch them to the group. Or, if you have the time and inclination, create a playbook **insert** (page 57) that expands their list of potential playbook moves.

The last step is for players to review their Instinct and Appearance, and to change them if they no longer feel right. To be clear, players can change these things at pretty much any time it makes sense for them to do so. The Level Up move just provides a formal reminder to consider doing so.

After killing the hagr and rescuing Rhianna's crew, the PCs stagger back to the logging camp. They set a watch order and settle in, and we end the session.

Caradoc is currently level 5. After the End of Session move, he's got 16 XP—just enough to Level Up. "Yeah, but," I say, "this isn't home and it certainly isn't a stretch of downtime. You'll need to get back to Stonetop before you Level Up."

The PCs wrap things up at the logging camp. We play out their return home and a few follow-up scenes. Then we shift to downtime. Everyone has enough XP to Level Up, so we do that now.

Blodwen is level 5 with 19 XP. She loses 16 XP (5 x 2, +6), leaving her at level 6 with 3 XP. For her new move, she takes "Suck the Poison Out" (a move that "Requires level 6+"). Level 6 is an even number, so she also increases the max Stock of her sacred pouch by 1 (it's now 6). She's happy with her instinct ("Preservation"), but she changes her appearance from "fresh faced" to "hale and hearty." The past year of adventures and hardship have scoured some of the softness from her.

MAKE A PLAN
When you ***wish to accomplish some project but don't know how to go about it***, tell the GM what you hope to achieve. They'll say what's required. If you're stumped on how to accomplish one of the requirements, tell the GM and Make a Plan for that.

Make a Plan is a formal way for a player to say "I want to accomplish X," and for you to **tell them the requirements** for accomplishing it. When a player wants to pursue a new long-term project, or doesn't know how to unlock an arcanum or complete a steading improvement, direct them to this move.

Clarify exactly what the PC wants to accomplish, what they hope to get out of it, and how they're thinking about going about it (if they have any ideas at all).

From there, tell them as many of the following as makes sense, connected with "and" and "or" as you see fit.

- ☐ You must learn/know/decipher ___
- ☐ You must find/locate/obtain ___
- ☐ You must create/design/fix ___
- ☐ You'll need the help/support/approval of ___
- ☐ You must wait until/for ___
- ☐ You must travel to ___
- ☐ It'll take days/weeks/months/years (which means ___ will go undone)
- ☐ The best you can get/do is ___
- ☐ It will cost ___
- ☐ You'll risk ___
- ☐ The steading must Pull Together ___ times, each requiring ___

Pick requirements and fill in the blanks based on the nature of the project; the PCs' current knowledge, capabilities, and standing in town; the season; recent events; active threats, etc. Rephrase or tweak the wording to suit. If it makes sense, create entirely new requirements. Ask the players for input as needed.

Answer any questions the players have. Clarify your statements. Don't be afraid to negotiate or change your mind.

If a requirement is itself a project, with multiple requirements of its own, then tell the players that they can Make a Plan for that step (now or later).

Write the requirements down with tick boxes next to them. Give the list to the player who's making the plan, or put it somewhere public for everyone to see. As they make progress, have them tick the boxes off.

If the players aren't sure how to get started on a requirement, then you can…

... clarify it, just tell them ("that means you'll have to Persuade Elios"); or
... ask them ("Who in Gordin's Delve do you know who could help?"); or
... suggest that they Know Things, or use some other move; or
... direct them to pick "interesting news" or a "valuable insight" when they get a seasonal gain; or
... suggest that they Make a Plan for that specific requirement.

If the players come up with a clever way to bypass a requirement, great! If they think of a feasible alternative way to accomplish their goal, update the plan!

After the disastrous patrol in early spring, Rhianna decides that the village needs a palisade (a steading improvement) to help protect against the crinwin. One of the requirements is "lots of timber, 20–25 wagonloads (Value 3)." She asks how they'd get that much timber from the Foothills, and we Make a Plan.

The Foothills *entry in* Book II *actually has a pre-made plan for this, on page 144. I summarize it on an index card and give it to Rhianna, adding the need to wait for summer (they can't spare 20 able bodies from the fields in spring).*

- You need to wait until summer
- You need ~20 able-bodied workers, a wagon, & two horses working for a season
- You must talk to a few town leaders, and get their support
- You risk accidents and attacks
- You must Pull Together, costing 1 season, 1 Surplus, and 1 Fortunes

"Do I need to wait until summer before talking to the leaders?" No, of course not. "Cool. Who do I need to talk to, exactly?" I turn it over to the table and ask who needs to be convinced. They identify Fion, Gwendyl and Seren, Owain (gulp), Elios, Taliesyn, and Thecla.

Rhianna arranges a sit-down with them all and makes her pitch, rolling an 8 to Persuade. They'll back the plan but only if she recruits the workers herself AND they provide a plan for protecting the village while so many fighters are gone. Rhianna nods. "Fair enough. I'll have to chew on that."

Vahid wants to lay down a perimeter of sanctified marks around the village, in order to help keep the crinwin at bay. "I'll carve marks in like two-dozen field stones, and add them to the Ringwall." Clever!

The sanctifying mark arcanum doesn't require a roll by itself, but it does turn part of Vahid paler each time he makes one. And folks are somewhat distrustful of his weird magic. So I write down the following requirements:

- You'll need to obtain two-dozen good stones
- It'll take a month or so to finish
- You'll risk (more) suspicion and distrust, accusations of sorcery
- A noticeable part of your body (your choice) will grow pale, then a shocking white

Vahid nods. "For the first part, is that really hard to do? We've got no shortage of stones in town. I'll just tell the kids what I'm looking for and make a game of it." Yeah, that makes sense. I tell him to mark that requirement as done.

He says that his hands fade to be a shocking white as he works over the month. And to avoid suspicion, he starts a habit of walking the Ringwall every dawn, quietly placing a newly warded stone each time. "Seems like Defying Danger with INT to me." He agrees, but rolls a 6. Just a few days into this new routine, I ***oppose his wishes*** *and have Glenys confront him, waving one of the sanctified stones around, yelling about sorcery and clearly not happy.*

MEET WITH DISASTER
When ***calamity befalls the steading or panic spreads***, reduce Fortunes by 1 (min -1).

When ***Fortunes would drop below -1 for any reason*** (not just calamity or panic), then the GM picks 1 instead:

- The steading marks diminished from injuries/sickness/doubt (disadvantage to Deploy, Muster, Pull Together)
- The steading marks *lacking* due to shortages/hoarding/distrust (treat Prosperity as 1 lower)
- The steading marks *malcontent* from fear/anger/despair (Fortunes reset to +0 each season, not +1; folks need Persuading more often than usual)
- Folks start to leave; reduce Population by 1

This move triggers when something clearly and undeniably bad happens to the steading: a building burns down, the village runs out of food, multiple people die suddenly, someone is killed or goes missing in a horrific or eerie way, etc.

Meet With Disaster doesn't trigger from mere rumor or bad news from abroad, nor from the day-to-day hardships of life. It doesn't trigger when Gorlas fails to come home from checking his traps, or when someone reports seeing a shadowy figure in the Wood.

Meet With Disaster *does* trigger when a threat looms, people freak out, and the PCs fail to do anything about it. So when Betrys finds poor old Gorlas's body just past the Stream—desiccated, skin slack and hand reaching towards home, every plant within five paces dead and brown and brittle—the PCs best act to prevent panic from spreading.

This sort of thing should never come as a surprise. **Show how others really feel** and **announce trouble**. Give the PCs a chance to take charge and calm folks down. But if they don't, or they fail, the steading Meets with Disaster.

Fortunes can't go below -1. If anything would push Fortunes lower than -1, then the steading Meets with Disaster and you choose the result. This applies even if the loss of Fortunes isn't itself particularly disastrous. For example, if Fortunes are already -1 and the PCs Muster the village, that's going to trigger Meet With Disaster unless they pick "everyone's willing to pitch in; don't reduce Fortunes after all."

Any given calamity might impact the steading beyond this move. Like, if Daedra the Red and her bandits raid the village, killing and injuring a number of folks, then you'd mark *diminished*. If they looted a number of homes, you'd mark *lacking*. And if they set fire to the granary, then the village's Surplus would be gone. Oh, and also, the village would Meet With Disaster.

It's the morning after the raid, and folks are exhausted, scared, on edge. They've tossed the crinwin corpses off the north-facing bluff, and they're building a pyre for Rheinal. I ***announce trouble*** *and say that his widow, Sianna, drops to her knees and starts keening. "You can see the fear and the despair catch in people's eyes, as the reality of what happened sinks in. What do you do?"*

Blodwen goes to comfort Sianna (and Pryder, who's joined her). Rhianna starts thinking about how to deal with this. But it's Caradoc who steps up. He gives a moving speech, assuring everyone that Rheinal didn't die in vain, how he wouldn't want them to live in fear, and so forth. That feels like Defying Danger with CHA, to me (the danger being that panic spreads), and what do you know, he nails it. A 12!

Folks nod and murmur and soon enough they're singing that same hero's song they sang at Garet's funeral, and building a pyre, and the village does not, in fact, Meet With Disaster.

The next spring, Rhianna Musters the village (reducing Fortunes from +1 to +0, but increasing Defenses to +1). She then sends out patrols, with her crew providing Aid. Nonetheless, she rolls a 5! One of the patrols, led by Lowri, finds a huge set of crinwin nests but they barely escape—and three of the villagers don't. "It… it was bad, boss. It was bad."

Rhianna starts doing damage control, pulling the survivors aside for a private debrief. "Sure, go ahead," I say. "But the village has Met with Disaster. They left three dead neighbors behind, and a number of folks saw them limp home. News is gonna spread." Fortunes goes from +0 to -1, and I give the players a zoomed-out account of the patrol.

When they step out of Rhianna's house, I ***present a want or need****, and describe the crowd that's gathered, including Leuca's and Padrig's families, faces drawn and afraid, murmuring nervously, expecting the worst. "What do you do?"*

"We know where the nests are," says Caradoc. "Can't we just gather up the militia, march in there, and burn 'em?"

"You can, but you'll be Deploying twice—once to get the militia out there, and once for the actual assault. And if you roll a 6- on either, it'll be bad. Like, 'mark diminished *and also Meet With Disaster' bad. And you're already at -1 Fortunes, so I'd pick a consequence. Probably -1 Population because of, y'know, deaths."*

"No," says Rhianna. "Too risky. It's got to be us. Vahid... what tricks do you have that can help?"

MUSTER
When you ***press every able body into the defense of a steading***, reduce Fortunes by 1 and roll +Population: **on a 7+**, the steading is alert and ready for action until the threat passes, the Seasons Change, or you cease to oversee the muster. **On a 10+**, also pick 2; **on a 7-9**, also pick 1.

- Increase Defenses by 1 as long as the muster holds
- Everyone's willing to pitch in; don't reduce Fortunes after all
- The muster holds together even without your presence
- 1 or 2 individuals show real potential; ask the GM who and how

When a PC Musters the village, they're having everyone focus on defense and readiness. It means regular drills, armed watches at all hours, weapons at the ready even while working in the garden. It means putting other work and long-term projects on hold, which reduces the steading's Fortunes and gets people grumbling. A steading can't maintain a Muster for long.

Folks will gladly Muster in the face of a clear and present danger, like when they expect an attack or they plan to launch a raid themselves. But if the danger is unseen or theoretical, a Muster will take some convincing.

If the PCs Muster a *hamlet*, they roll with disadvantage. If they manage to Muster a *town* or *city*, they roll with advantage.

Whoever takes the lead, rolls the move. On a 7-9, they can confer with other players, but the final choice is theirs.

On a 7+, the steading is alert and ready, unlikely to be caught off-guard. Reflect this in the GM moves you make. For example: nailadd are prowling around Stonetop. If the village Musters, the spiders might not even attack. And if they do, you should have villagers spot them early or even repel them outright. But without a Muster, the spiders might be in the village before anyone notices.

Once established, a Muster lasts until the threat passes, the Seasons Change, or the PC in charge ceases to personally oversee it for more than a day or so. If the PCs want to go on an expedition and leave a Muster behind, they need to pick "The muster holds together even without your presence."

If "1 or 2 individuals show real potential," that could be a new NPC, someone we've never seen on screen but who has talents or qualities useful to the current situation. Or maybe an existing NPC steps up. If no one springs to mind, ask the player what they're hoping for. Then pick or create an NPC to fit the bill. For guidance, see **"Creating NPCs"** (page 453) and **"Creating followers"** (page 474).

On a 6-, look to your threats and to your homefront moves. You might **oppose their wishes** and have folks ignore the PC's orders, or **start a conflict** between two (armed) rivals in the village, or fast forward a few weeks and have a rabble **overwhelm a position** and come boiling out of the Wood one night, right past the watchtowers and the patrols.

The PCs are planning a trade mission to Gordin's Delve, but crinwin attacked just a few weeks ago and Rhianna and her crew have failed to hunt them down.

"We can't leave the village undefended," says Rhianna. "I step up drills, double up the watches, and I think I'll have an armed guard patrol every night while we're gone." I note that this sounds like a Muster. "Yup! And don't I have a special move for that?" She sure does; Logistics gives her advantage to Muster. "Can I also have my crew Aid? Like, have them patrol the Wood?"

"Uh, sure," I say. "But since you already have advantage, how about this: if you roll at least a 7, and pick 'the muster holds,' then the village will be safe from crinwin while you're gone." Rhianna likes the sound of that. She reduces the villages Fortunes to +0 and rolls +Population (+0) with advantage.

She gets a 10! She picks "the muster holds together even without your presence" (of course), and "1 or 2 individuals show real promise." She says she's looking for someone to run things in her absence, and maybe a new member for her crew.

I don't have anyone established in mind, so I look at the list of Stonetop names and say "Uh... let's say Andras catches your eye to replace good old Garet. And, oh, Elios. He's someone you can leave in charge while you're gone."

"We need to send out larger patrols," says Rhianna. "Keep the crinwin away from the village. Maybe find their nests, and burn them." I tell her that doing so will trigger Deploy, and she might need to convince a few folks to go along with it.

"Sure, that makes sense. And if we're going to Deploy, we should Muster first. Get that +1 to Defenses. I'll go around and talk to Elios, Eira and the crew, probably Fion. Ugh, Owain, too. I'll lay out the plan: start up drills again, and nighttime patrols, and in a couple weeks we can start patrolling the Wood."

I nod, and say that if she successfully Musters the village, she won't need to convince folks to Deploy. She reduces Fortunes to +0 and rolls to Muster with advantage (from Logistics). She gets an 8. "Well, the whole point is to get that +1 to Defenses, so I'll pick that one." And, yeah, I say that everyone she talks to is onboard, even Owain, and soon enough, they're ready to send out patrols.

PULL TOGETHER
When you ***set a community to work on improvements***, to secure new resources, or to make major repairs, spend whatever the GM says is required (time, materiel, Surplus, etc.) and roll +Population: **on a 10+**, the job gets done; **on a 7-9**, pick 1:

- It gets done, but other work doesn't; reduce Fortunes by 1
- It gets done, but the work is shoddy, crude
- It gets done, but there's a consequence (bad blood, an injury, a threat unearthed, etc.)
- There's an unforeseen cost, requirement, or challenge; address it and the job gets done

The PCs might have the village Pull Together in order to:

- Complete a steading improvement
- Complete some other project (per Make a Plan)
- Bolster the entire village in advance of some other steading-level move (like Deploy or Seasons Change)
- Repair damage to an important resource or fortification
- Build new buildings, secure new resources, undertake significant new public works, etc.

The village doesn't need to Pull Together to plow the fields or plant crops or bring in the harvest, or to fix leaks in the granary roof. But if the granary roof collapsed in a heavy winter storm, then they'd need to Pull Together to fix it.

People of the community need to be willing to work on the project at hand. Folks will gladly pitch in rebuild the granary roof. But digging a reservoir down by the (haunted) Stream? The PCs will need to do some convincing.

If the PCs have a *hamlet* Pull Together, they roll with disadvantage. If they can get a *town* or *city* to Pull Together, they roll with advantage.

Each project requires time (days, a week, a month, a season, or multiple seasons), during which the village can't Muster or Pull Together again. If a project requires multiple seasons, the village must Pull Together (and roll) once per season.

Projects might also require Surplus (to feed folks who'd otherwise be producing food) and/or materiel (timber, textile, etc.). If the village doesn't already have these things, then the PCs must acquire them, perhaps via Trade & Barter. Such resources are used up as the project is completed.

Refer to the steading improvements for example requirements.

Whoever takes the lead, rolls the move. In general, have them roll as the project gets underway and let the result inform how things go. But if the PCs have the village Pull Together and then head out on an expedition, wait until they'd learn of the results before having them roll.

On a 10+, the job gets done! Maybe have each PC involved describe part of the process. Or ask the players if they want to Keep Company as they work.

On a 7-9, the player who rolled makes the choice. They can confer with other players, but the final choice is theirs.

If "the job gets done but other work doesn't," then reduce Fortunes and ask what's being neglected. Portray NPCs as getting grumpy about it.

If "it gets done, but the work is shoddy, crude," make a note of it. Weave the substandard work into your descriptions and the GM moves you make. Maybe write it up as a threat (like a *MacGuffin* or maybe even an *affliction*).

If "it gets done, but there's a consequence," think about the NPCs involved, the risks inherent to the project, the impact it will have (both intentional and not). Maybe write up a new threat, or have an existing one **advance towards impending doom**. To be clear, though, this choice doesn't prevent the project from getting done. And while the PCs can mitigate a consequence, they can't *prevent* it.

If there's "an unforeseen cost, requirement, or challenge," then present the PCs with a problem that prevents the job from getting done. It should be fairly focused, something that can be solved with a little diplomacy, ingenuity, expense, or at most a quick expedition (save genuine crises or adventures for a 6-). If the PCs solve the problem, the job gets done.

On a 6-, look to your threats and your homefront moves. Establish badness, probably something that interrupts the job and prevents it from getting done. Maybe work can resume if the PCs deal with the interruption, but maybe the job is scuttled and progress is lost.

Rhianna has recruited about 20 folks to go cut timber for the summer, but they only agreed if she sent her crew up with them. "Okay, here's the plan," she says. "They'll use a wayside as a camp, fill the wagon, and send it home. By the time the wagon gets here and back, they'll be ready to load up another shipment. Repeat. And my crew can work in pairs: two out hunting, two resting, two on watch or patrol."

I remind her that this will cost 1 Surplus and 1 Fortunes (because so many folk will be away from home for so long). She updates the steading playbook and rolls +Population, with a +1 bonus for Tor's blessing and advantage from Logistics. Alas, she still gets a 5.

I decide to ***announce trouble****. "Weeks pass. The first few shipments come down without a hitch. But the fourth shipment comes back early, light on timber with Reese—y'know, Llewellyn's kid—and like three others, all shameful and scared looking. And Andras is in the back, unconscious and pale with this nasty, crudely bandaged wound."*

Rhianna asks what the hell happened, and I reply in Reese's shaky voice. "Something's... out there. In the hills. I ain't seen it myself, but Terrwyn did. And Elios! A beast with three eyes, and a big horn, and... well, folks won't work no more. Eira and your boys been tracking it, but, well, it got Andras. She had us draw lots to see who'd bring him home, and, well, we got lucky."

The PCs sort things out with the logging camp. They kill the hagr, appease the shaksa, and poor Cadi (who stirred up the damn thing, along with Iwan) is the only one who got killed. Still, they've lost a few weeks and folks are spooked, so I ***tell them the requirements****. "If you stick around to manage things for the summer, you can try to finish on time. You'd have to Pull Together again, but it won't cost any additional Surplus or Fortunes. You do it?"*

Rhianna agrees, and rolls, and this time gets an 8. "Ugh... I just really want this to be done, and Fortunes is already +0. I guess there's a consequence. What is it?"

I tell her that she doesn't notice, but Iwan's been acting differently. "Weird, even. Like, not shaken up or remorseful about his part in this at all. He's almost, I dunno, happy? Excited? Regardless, you're too busy to notice and anyhow, who pays Iwan any mind?" (And I make a note to turn Iwan into a threat, a wildcard *to start but he might escalate to become a* villain*.)*

The Seasons Change to autumn and Rhianna is keen to get the palisade built. They've got the timber (from the summer's logging camp), a competent engineer (Vahid), and plenty of supplies from last year's trip to Gordin's Delve. The only step left is to Pull Together.

"It'll take a month or so, and 1 Surplus," I tell them. They just got an unexpected bounty, so they spend that Surplus. And the "month or so" doesn't cut into harvest, it just prevents folks from working on other projects or Mustering.

Rhianna goes to roll, but Vahid is the engineer and I think he's the one who should make the move. "Can I Aid, though? Vahid might be the engineer, but I'm good at bossing folks around." She sure is, and she sure can. Vahid gets to roll with advantage.

On a 10+, I'd maybe use Keep Company to create a montage of the palisade going up. And on a 6–, I'd probably have the crinwin attack, stealing supplies and tools and throwing things into chaos.

But Vahid gets a 7, and picks "an unforeseen cost, requirement, or challenge." I still consider a crinwin attack, but that's more of a crisis than a challenge. Instead, I use "distrust of the PCs" (an affliction*) from my homefront threats, and have it* ***cause stubbornness****.*

"Folks get to work and in just a week, the palisade starts to take shape. That's when Glenys shows up, with Owain and Tegwen and a few others in tow. 'So we're just going to wall ourselves off from the world? And for what? The crinwin climb trees, don't they? How's this gonna keep 'em out? It's foolishness!' Others grumble along and nod, and work stops, folks waiting to see what happens. What do you do?"

TRADE & BARTER
When you ***wish to acquire or sell a commonly available item***, you can. When you ***seek to acquire or sell a special item***, roll +Prosperity and subtract the item's Value. In winter, you have disadvantage. **On a 10+**, you can get it or sell it for a fair price; **on a 7-9**, when you're trying to buy, the GM picks 1:

- You can get it, but it'll cost more than usual
- ___ has it, but they aren't keen to give it up
- You can get something close, but not quite right

On a 7-9 when you're looking to sell, you can sell it now but you won't get its full worth.

On a 6- either way, don't mark XP. If you want to acquire/sell it, you'll need to travel to ___ or wait until next season.

For unique or truly exceptional items, don't Trade & Barter. Either get with the GM and Make a Plan or wait for a trade opportunity when Seasons Change.

"Commonly available" items include things on the Inventory insert or that could be found in any household (like a bucket or quern stone). See page 95 for a list of examples. Folks trade, loan, and gift these items all the time; no roll is required to acquire them (and there's no real point in "selling" them). If you like, ask the PC how they acquired it, from whom, in exchange for what, etc.

Unique and truly exceptional items—like arcana or "the key to Mutra's vault" are beyond the scope of this move. Should the PCs want to acquire such an item, or sell it for anything close to its real worth, they must Make a Plan or wait for a **trade opportunity** (page 518).

"Special items" are things in short supply. They're not necessarily valuable, but they're not freely available. See page 96 for a list of example special items.

PCs don't have to roll to acquire special items that they already own or have access to—a PC with the "smithy" special possession can just have a reasonable number of nails, metal tools, etc. But if a PC wants to acquire a special item that they don't already possess, or sell any special item, that requires a roll.

Players subtract a special item's **Value** (see page 542) from the roll, which makes high-Value items difficult to acquire or sell via this move. Even Value 0 special items will often be unavailable. That's intentional.

On a 10+, say who's able and willing to trade, and establish what the NPC is offering or willing to accept. Local NPCs might be willing to loan or just give the PC low-Value items. Otherwise, it should be a fair trade, within the same Value tier (see page 542).

On a 7-9 when the PC is looking to sell, present an NPC who's only willing to give something of lower Value. Like, if the PC is selling a Value 2 item, they might offer a few Value 1 items—or even just one such item! Maybe they don't really want what the PC is selling, or maybe they're angling for a good deal.

On a 7-9 when the PC is looking to buy...

... picking "it'll cost more than usual" means that the NPC wants something of a higher Value, or a really good exchange rate, or an added favor, debt, or service. Establish what they're asking, and make it clear that the NPC is willing to walk away from the deal.

... picking "___ has it, but isn't keen to give it up" means that someone currently in town has what the PC is after, but they don't want to trade (or at least, they don't want to let the PC have it). Say who it is and establish the nature of their objection.

... picking "something close, but not quite right" means that what the PC wants is unavailable, but there's a substandard alternative. Like if they want a good tracking hound, maybe they can get a half-feral cur. Or if they want a purse of silver coins, maybe they can get only a handful.

Feel free to offer the player a choice on a 7-9. "Well, you could borrow Gunter's blind old hound. Or you could ask Owain for one of his good boys. Except, he hates your guts. What do you do?"

Once you've established who's willing to trade and their initial position, ask the PC what they do. If they try to haggle, play out the scene. They might be able to Persuade or otherwise convince the NPC to accept better terms. Or they might reject the deal. Or they might try to steal what they're after. **Play to find out what happens**, no?

On a 6- to Trade & Barter, you do not get to make a hard GM move (and the PC doesn't mark XP). Instead, you just tell them no one in the village has the item to trade or is interested in what they're selling. Tell them where they could go and try again. If they don't want to make a trip, they can try again next season.

When the PCs visit another community, the Trade & Barter move still applies but what's commonly available changes. In Gordin's Delve, for example, bronze and steel weapons are common, as are weapons of war. But among the Hillfolk, even iron-tipped spears and arrows are special items, requiring a Trade & Barter roll to acquire or sell them.

When the PCs roll to Trade & Barter in another steading, they roll with that community's Prosperity. If the steading is a *hamlet*, they roll with disadvantage. If the steading is a *town* or a *city*, they roll with advantage.

Value and coins

The world of Stonetop has no central government, no common currency, and no standard exchange rates. So, what constitutes a fair trade?

Any given item has a Value from 0 to 4 (or rarely higher). Values are not linear; they are tiers. A single Value 2 item is worth about a dozen Value 1 items. Three individual Value 1 items don't add up to Value 3; they're just three Value 1 items.

"A fair price" means trading things with the same Value, but it might not be a 1-to-1 trade. It might be 2- or even 3-to-1 when trading a common, local resource for imported, desirable, or specialized goods (or vice versa).

Exchange rates are anything but standard, but...

A Value 0 item is generally worth:
- A ◇ purse of copper coins
- A single silver coin
- A favor
- A few days of unskilled labor
- A common, mundane item

A Value 1 item is generally worth:
- A handful of silver coins
- A season (or so) of unskilled labor
- A few days of skilled labor
- A unit of trade goods* (a sack of grain, a ◇ pouch of salt, a ◇◇ stack of pelts, etc.)
- A bit of finery (a ◇ richly embroidered cloak, a silk scarf, a silver comb, etc.)

A Value 2 item is generally worth:
- A ◇ purse of silver coins
- A single gold coin
- A Surplus (page 509)
- A year (or so) of unskilled labor
- A season (or so) of skilled labor
- A cartload of common trade goods*
- An item of luxury or status (a gold ring, an artful silver torc, a gemstone, etc.)

A Value 3 item is generally worth:
- A handful of gold coins
- A year (or so) of skilled labor
- A good, trained horse or mule
- A precious item (ruby ring, gold torc, etc.)

A Value 4 item is generally worth:
- A ◇ purse of gold coins
- A dozen or so good horses
- A "priceless" item (huge flawless gemstone, a ◇ gold statuette, a ◇ bejeweled scepter, etc.)

*Exotic trade goods are +1 Value

A ◇ **purse of coins** contains about 10 handfuls. A **handful of coins** is about 10 individual coins, and so a purse contains around 100 coins.

One **silver coin** is roughly worth a purse of coppers (or about 100 copper coins). And **one gold coin** is roughly worth a purse of silvers (around 100 silver coins, or an absolute pile of coppers.)

Coins are rarely used between the residents of Stonetop; they're mostly used for trade with outsiders.

"Hey, before we head out, can I get, like, a lantern?" asks Caradoc. "It's Value 0, so I can just have it, right?"

No, he can't. It's a special item, not on the inventory sheet, so he has to roll to Trade & Barter. He rolls +Prosperity (+0) and subtracts the Value of 0, and gets an 11. "I think Sawyl keeps a couple lanterns in the shop, you ask him for one?" He does. "Take it," Sawyl says. "Go save those kids."

After facing the swyn, Rhianna wants some bronze arrows (Value 0). She rolls to Trade & Barter and gets a 9. I pick "something close, but not quite right."

"You can't find bronze arrowheads, but you can scrounge up a few bronze pots that folks don't need. Taliesyn can recast them into arrowheads, but he's always so busy, it'll be next season before he gets to it. Or you could Persuade him to prioritize your work." She's happy to wait. "Cool, what little favors or promises do you end up making, in exchange for the bronze scrap and Taliesyn's time?"

Blodwen wants more bendis root before they head back to the Green Lord's tomb. "Don't you grow that in your garden?" asks Rhianna. She does, but only 1d4 uses each spring. She's all out.

She rolls to Trade & Barter, subtracting the bendis root's Value 1, and gets an 8. "Glenys has some," I say, "but isn't keen to give it up. It's the last batch in town, and she doesn't want to waste it. Or encourage this trip back to the tomb. Do you try to convince her otherwise? And if so, what do you offer in exchange?"

Blodwen pleads her case and offers a bezoar in trade (also Value 1). She rolls a 7 to Persuade, and so Glenys reveals something costly, tricky, or distasteful that could convince her. "She thinks this trip is just foolish curiosity. Which it is, right? But if she thought there was some lingering, unnatural evil out there, and that you were secretly going back to deal with it, she'd let you take the bendis root for sure. I don't think she'd even want the bezoar. What do you do?"

The PCs have brought 1 Surplus worth of food and whisky (Value 2) to Gordin's Delve. "This is a trade opportunity, so that 1 Surplus will get you three Value 2 items that are commonly available here. Plus you can each pick a commonly available Value 1 item, too." I give them the list (from the ***Gordin's Delve*** *entry in* Book II, *page 193).*

They pick some spare wagon/cart parts (Value 2). Rhianna asks if they can get, like, a whole bunch of iron tools, spears, and hatchets (Value 0) as one of their Value 2 items, and I'm fine with that. "What about a donkey?" she asks. That's still a special item, and she has to roll. She rolls +1 for the Delve's Prosperity, -2 for the donkey's Value, and with advantage because this is a town.

On a 10+, I'd say that sure, the donkey can be one of their Value 2 items. But she gets a 7, so I decide it'll cost more than usual. "The cartwright's got a donkey. You can't take it as one of your picks for the Surplus, but he'd sure take that silver filigree sphere for it. What do you do?"

What to prep

If you know that an upcoming session will involve the homefront, there's plenty that you can prepare in advance.

If the PCs are heading home, review the **Aftermath** section (page 490). Take some time to think through:

- What's happened while the PCs were gone?
- How is the village likely to respond to their return?
- How will specific NPCs respond to their return?
- What scenes or situations are likely to follow, including at least one with each PC and their family?

Make note of any outstanding player moves that you need to resolve before the PCs get home (like a Pull Together that they triggered before they left). Maybe ask the player to roll the move between sessions so that you can work the results into your prep.

If you're heading into a stretch of downtime, then review the "Downtime" section (page 496). Try to identify:

- Logistics that need to be dealt with
- Moves that the players have said they want to make
- Projects you expect the PCs to undertake

If your group is amenable, try to hash these things out between sessions. Like, message everyone and remind them to Level Up if they can, or ask what they want to get up to in the next session. Maybe have the players resolve certain moves between sessions (like Trade & Barter or even Seasons Change), if the results of that move would impact your prep.

If the PCs intend to pursue a long-term project (like a steading improvement, unlocking an arcanum, etc.), then look over the requirements. If any of them seem unclear, Make a Plan in advance, drafting up a list of requirements.

If you owe the players something from the Seasons Change move, like a threat making itself known or some interesting news, then figure out the specifics and think about how you'll introduce them in play. If you expect this to prompt an expedition, then prep for that (see page 340) or at least as much of it as you expect to use in the next session.

Look over your threats and update them if needed (page 298). Ask yourself:

- Do any of them have stakes that you can/want to try to resolve? How could you put that in play?
- Have any of their grim portents come to pass while the PCs were focused elsewhere? How will you reveal that in play?
- Are there any GM moves you want to make with these threats? What would that look like in play?

Review your End of Session notes, particularly the wishes each player made.

Flip through the "village of Stonetop" entry (*Book II*, page 12). Pick a few impressions or other details you want to feature, and/or some questions you want to ask.

Consider writing love letters (page 568) to kick off the session and quickly establish things that have happened since the last session.

Use all of the above to **create a "to-do list" for the next session**, including:

- Player moves that need to be resolved (including any love letters)
- Decisions the players need to make
- Questions you want to ask the PCs
- Details that you want to establish
- Scenes you want to frame
- GM moves you'd like to make

Put these items in roughly the order you expect them to come up, grouped however makes sense to you. Put tick boxes next to each item. During play, tick off the items as you introduce them. But stay loose! You might not get to them all, and some might cease to be relevant as the session plays out.

For any scenes or situations you expect to frame, write down the details you think will help during play: when and where, activities, impressions, questions, GM moves, lines of dialogue, etc.

Think about how you can involve PCs in each others' scenes, or create interesting PC-PC-NPC triangles.

If you plan to introduce any new NPCs, create them now to whatever level of detail you find valuable (page 453).

If you expect the next session to feature any established NPCs, review your notes on them or just think about how you portray them. Think about how they'll act in the upcoming session. Add details to their description if needed, or change established details if it feels right. Maybe stat them up as **monsters** (page 391), as **threats** (page 282), and/or as **followers** (page 474).

The first adventure is over! The PCs have killed the swyn, driven off the crinwin, and rescued the kids. At the end of the last session, they decided to head home. We'll play out their return in this coming session.

They'll get home five days after they left. Folks have been worried, right on the edge of despair, but they've also been getting on with spring chores. There are no outstanding player moves to resolve, and no threats that advanced while the PCs were gone.

The PCs will Return Triumphant, but two of the kids have been touched by their time with the swyn. I imagine a general celebration, with Glenys and Owain quickly souring about their kids being "not right."

Thinking about follow-up scenes, I'm spoiled for choice with Caradoc (flirting with Morwenna, working with Sawyl, visiting grandma). Same with Blodwen (talking to Gwendyl and Seren, checking up on Pryder, dealing with Tegwen). Rhianna has deep ties to the village but not much close kin left, so I imagine that her crew serves as family (and she'll want to build up some Loyalty with them anyhow). Vahid, I'm realizing, doesn't have any close NPCs, so I think I need to work on fleshing that out.

I don't expect the next session to have much downtime. If we do have some, I'll just zoom out, ask folks about the shift back to "normal" life, and then have the Seasons Change to summer. They can Level Up between sessions.

I don't expect the PCs to undertake any long-term projects before the Seasons Change, and I don't owe them anything from last season.

I update my threats and look over the ones that remain. Tegwen (Blodwen's mother, a wildcard*) might try to put Blodwen in her place and insist that she start thinking about a husband ("Old Garet certainly seems interested"). I think that "Distrust of the PCs," an* affliction*, is likely to come up and I think its stakes ("Can Rhianna regain Owain and Glenys's respect?" and "Will Glenys ever forgive Caradoc?") would be fun to try and answer. But maybe not this session?*

At the end of the last session, Caradoc wanted to see how he chafed at going back to his mundane life after this big adventure. Rhianna wanted to flesh out her crew and their families. Vahid wanted to commune with the Mindgem about the Green Lords tomb and all that they've learned. Blodwen (a glutton for punishment) wanted to deal with her mom, but also to explore that whole "Pryder is beloved of Danu" thing.

I look through the "Stonetop" entry in Book II*, and pick out some impressions and activities for spring. I also note some good questions to ask as the PCs settle back into daily life, like, "What about this place makes it feel like home?" or, "What game or pastime is unique to Stonetop?"*

I ponder a bit and make a rough to-do list for the session:

Approaching home
- ☐ Keep Company on way home?
- ☐ En route: traps & snares sprung, game gone uncollected
- ☐ Anti-crinwin charms strung up by the Stream, swaying in breeze
- ☐ Folks trudging in from the fields and gardens; somber & on-edge

Return Triumphant
- ☐ Excited cry as PCs are spotted
- ☐ Crowd gathers in celebration
- ☐ Tearful reunions: Rheinal hugs Pryder, Glenys scoops up Wynfor
- ☐ Wynfor's weird, unfocused gaze
- ☐ Rheinal toasts the PCs; cheers!
- ☐ Morwenna embraces Caradoc, happy, proud; stops short of a kiss
- ☐ Tegwen basks in Blodwen's glory

Put them in a spot
- ☐ Glenys: demands to know what's wrong with Wynfor
- ☐ Owain blames Rhianna for his daughter's condition ("none of this would've happened if you weren't a coward last winter!")

"Family" scenes
- ☐ Rhianna celebrating with her crew; bit of a crowd gathered; Garet talks up the PCs, talks smack about Owain
- ☐ Blodwen with Seren & Gwendyl: debrief, discuss what's to be done about the kids
- ☐ Caradoc with his grandma; a rare moment of lucidity ("Why, look how you've grown.")
- ☐ Vahid: How did you end up living in this house? What makes it feel like home? Which of your neighbors is friendliest?

Potential GM moves
- > Offer an opportunity: Vahid has time to talk to Mindgem; get info dump about Green Lords, etc.
- > Remind them of their obligations: Sawyl is proud of Caradoc, but there's work to do, boy!
- > Play them against each other: Eira & Lowri talk about "creepy Vahid;" Rhianna overhears
- > Show how others really feel: Rheinal gives Blodwen a gift when she checks on Pryder
- > Present a want: Owain wants Blodwen and Gwendyl to "fix" his daughter
- > Announce trouble: Caradoc sees Glenys shouting at Wynfor, very frustrated with him
- > Provide unwanted (?) advice: Tegwen approaches Garet while he's talking to Rhianna, invites him to woo Blodwen

The only new NPC here is Caradoc's grandma, so I do a little work to prep her (mostly, questions to ask Caradoc about her). I'm not too worried about portraying Pryder or Wynfor or anyone from Rhianna's crew (as they've been part of the past few sessions already), but I review my notes on Tegwen, Rheinal, Glenys, Owain, Seren, and Gwendyl.

I've probably got way more than I'll use in one session, but that's fine. I'm sure that some of these notes will still apply in the next session/season as well!

Writing
Moves & Love Letters

Writing moves
Writing love letters

Player moves are little blocks of rules. Each move kicks in at certain times and says what happens. Between "standard" moves like Defy Danger and Seasons Change, playbook moves, arcana, and all the custom moves in *Book II*, *Stonetop* has hundreds of player moves.

And yet, you might write new player moves for a variety of reasons!

You might write **custom moves as part of your prep**, as a way to resolve a specific situation that you expect to come up in play, or as part of writing up a threat, a site, a danger, or a discovery.

You might write moves as **new options**, like as a new move that a specific PC can take when they Level Up, or as part of a new insert or arcanum. You might even write a whole new playbook!

You might write or modify moves to **change how the game works** for you and your table, to match your preferences or to meet your specific needs.

You might also write **love letters**, single-use moves addressed to a specific PC, used to gloss over certain events and/or frame new situations. See page 568 for details.

Before you endeavor to write new moves, **study the game's existing moves**. You should be familiar with the moves that are already in play, how they work and how they work together. You should have a sense of what moves can look like and what they can do.

If you're thinking about making a new playbook, insert, or major arcanum, then you should **actually play or run a lot of *Stonetop***, or at least games like it. You need to understand the flow of the game, and how moves fit into and shape that flow, before you make something big.

Creating new moves is an artform. **They take time, effort, and practice to write well.** You might take to it naturally, or need lots of practice to develop your craft. Some moves you write will be clunky, or even bad! Many will be serviceable. But some of them, a blessed few, will be like poems—polished gems of language and rules, sparkling with potential play.

Writing moves

To write a new player-facing move:

1) Take stock
- What does the move reflect/model?
- What constraints do you have?
- What are your goals for the move?
- Do you really need the move?

2) Draft the trigger(s)
- When does the move kick in?
- Do you need multiple triggers?
- Do the triggers need limits?

3) Brainstorm results
- What definitely happens?
- What maybe happens?

4) Decide how you'll pick between results
- A roll
- Player's choice
- Target's choice
- GM's choice
- A procedure
- Consensus
- Mix and match

5) If there's a roll, decide how it works
- Should you define a 6- result?
- What should be added to the roll?
- Are there any other modifiers?
- What does each tier look like?
- Alternative roll structures

6) Write a full draft

7) Review and revise
- Imagine it in play
- Make sure it meets your goals
- Check for common pitfalls
- Punch it up
- Edit for length and clarity
- Check grammar and formatting
- Get feedback

Naming moves

Give your move a name if…

… it's an option in a playbook, an insert, or a major arcanum;
… you want other moves/rules to reference it (e.g. "When you ***Haggle with Grimstew***…");
… you just want to name it.

A move might even start as nothing more than a cool name, one that inspires you to write something worthy of it. "'Breaker of Chains?' That's hardcore. But what does it do?" Many of *Stonetop*'s playbook moves started this way.

You might not need this whole process. A move might spring to mind and you can jump straight to drafting it. Or, you might see how an existing move's structure could apply to whatever you're creating, and just write a quick variant. If you're pressed for time, and you'll only use the move once, then that might suffice!

But if you're stumped, or you want to hone your move or just practice your craft, then try working through this process. The more moves you write and see in play, the more intuitive this process becomes and the less rigorous you'll need to be.

1 Take stock

Think through the following. Take notes as you go, at least the first few times you do this.

What does the move reflect or model?

Think about what the move represents. In what circumstance does it apply? What questions does it (help) answer? What sort of conflict does it resolve? What fictional situation, trait, or ability does it model via rules? For example:

- "This move lets a PC see the future."
- "What happens when you're near a thunder drake as it bellows?"
- "If the PCs chase someone through Gordin's Delve, will they catch them?"
- "I'd like a more formal way to deal with resisting mind control."

You might find yourself writing the move's trigger as you do this. If you do, great, but it's just an idea right now. You might very well revise it as you go.

What constraints do you have?

What practical concerns and limitations do you need to work within? Does this move need to fit in a limited space? What other PC moves might interact with it? How much time are you willing to spend on this move in play? How much time do you have to write it?

You're probably already aware of these constraints, at least at a gut level. But it can help to acknowledge them, and keep them in mind as you design your move.

The preferences, personalities, and quirks of your players are constraints, too. Keep your specific group in mind!

What are your goals?

Think about what you want this move to add to the game. For example, your new move might…

... grant permission, like how **Spirit Tongue** (page 106) lets the Blessed talk to spirits and natural beasts.

... establish how stuff works, like how the "**attempt to commit violence on the roads**" move (page 234) says what happens when someone does just that.

... encourage certain behavior, like how **Better Part of Valor** (page 138) pushes the Would-be Hero to avoid fights.

... establish risks and stakes and serious consequences, like how the **"fall from the boughs of the tree" move** (page 388) says just how bad it'll be.

... streamline play, like how **Outfit** (page 306) and **Have What You Need** (page 326) make packing for a trip easy.

... embellish parts of play, like how **Keep Company** (page 332) fills in scenes that might otherwise be glossed over.

... shape or frame play in a particular way, like how **Burgle** (page 110) deals with a Fox sneaking off on their own.

... reinforce a theme or mood, like how **Haggle** (*Book II*, page 107) makes deals with the Fae always feel fraught or how **Drowning** (*Book II*, page 54) creates tension as PCs hold their breath.

... get players to buy into adversity, like how the **"call of the nosgalau"** move (*Book II*, page 272) has players say what compels them to leave the roads.

... push players into making interesting, meaningful decisions, like how **Forage** (page 336) has players pick between food, a discovery, and safety.

... explore a PC's feelings, thoughts, or past, like how the **"Hall of Humility" move** (page 389) has them reveal a moment of humility or one of pride.

... prompt you to think more about the world/characters, like how **Persuade vs. NPCs** (page 224) forces you to consider whether an NPC has reason to resist, and what could convince them.

You'll probably have an instinctive sense of your goals when you start writing (otherwise, you probably wouldn't have thought, "I should write a move for this"). But as with constraints, it can help to name them and consciously design towards them.

Do you really need this move?

Whatever you intend your new move to reflect or model, how would you handle it in play without this new move? Would it even be possible? What questions might you ask the PCs? What GM moves might you make? How might the PCs respond? What existing player moves might that trigger? How would those moves likely play out?

If you realize that you don't need a move, great, you've just saved yourself some time!

If you move forward with writing a move, you've now got a benchmark to measure your move against. If it doesn't improve on what you'd do with the core loop, GM moves, and existing player moves, then why are you writing it?

The PCs are planning to take the Fae paths again (to find and destroy the tether of the shadowy presence that haunts the Great Wood). They'd prefer not to indebt themselves to Thornthumb again, and so they intend to access the waystones by taking hallucinogenic mushrooms under a full moon.

There's already a move for ***walking the paths*** *once they access them* (Book II, page 479)*, but I'd like a custom move to resolve what happens when they take shrooms together in the Great Wood. (Hey look, a trigger!)*

Because I expect to use this move only once or twice, I don't want to spend too much time writing it. But I am willing to spend a fair bit of table-time using it. It shouldn't overlap significantly with the "walking the paths" move. And, oh yeah, Rhianna's bringing her crew, so I need to account for them.

Not all of my players have experience with psychedelics, so I'd like the move to model how a shroom trip might go. The move should also communicate the stakes and risks of taking shrooms, especially in a haunted forest! And because shrooms can bring strong emotions to the surface, this seems like a great time to explore the PCs' inner feelings.

Without a custom move, I'd probably fall back on having everyone Defy Danger with CON or WIS, the danger being that they get sick or overwhelmed or have a really bad trip. Then I'd probably prompt them to Keep Company while hallucinating. Which ain't bad, but I bet I can do better with a move!

2 Draft the trigger(s)

If you haven't already done so, write a draft of the move's trigger. Ask yourself the following.

When does the move kick in?

Most moves trigger when a PC does something specific, or something general under particular conditions. For example:

- "When you ***press or entice someone***…"
- "When you ***raise your voice***…."
- "When ***danger looms, the stakes are high, and you do something chancy***…"

But moves can also trigger when…

... a PC makes a certain, other move, like "When you ***Seek Insight***…."

... a player does a thing in the real world, like "When you ***write up detailed session notes and share them***…."

... a player gets a certain result on a roll, like "When you ***Clash and get a 7+***…."

... something happens to or near a PC, like "When you ***are near a rage drake as it bellows***…."

... specific conditions are met, in-fiction or in the real world or both, like "While you ***are touching the ground***…" or "When ***a session ends***…."

... a player wants them to, like "When you ***decide that you had something all along***…"

... a player/PC first gains the move, like **Improved Stat** (page 106);

... some combination of the above.

Pick a trigger that makes sense for your move and what it's doing. If your move is meant to reflect a PC being especially good at reading people, you might use a "when a PC acts" trigger, such as "When you ***size up an NPC***…." But if that move will modify how Seek Insight works, then a better trigger might be, "When you ***Seek Insight against an NPC***…."

If a move is meant to grant permission and imply that something is possible, you can use the move's trigger to convey that. For example, the Fox's **Light Fingers** move (page 110) starts with, "When you ***perform a sleight of hand***…." That implies that a PC with this move can do such tricks, without having to specifically say so.

Do you need multiple triggers?

A move might need multiple triggers, each with its own result(s), if…

... it covers multiple related but distinct activities, like how **Recover** (page 328) has one trigger for restoring HP and another for treating debilities/wounds.

... it's a playbook move that grants two or more related benefits, like how **Catlike** (page 110) allows the Fox to both move silently and hide in shadows.

... it operates in phases, like how **Wards & Bindings** (page 107) has one trigger for placing the boundary and another trigger for when it's put to the test.

... you want a certain result to be conditional, like how **Make Camp** (page 334) grants advantage on the next roll if the rest is especially pleasant.

... you need to put a limit on the trigger (see next page).

Do the triggers need limits?

Is your trigger too broad? If read literally, will it apply even when you don't intend it to? Revise the trigger to avoid such problems. You might do this by…

... using more-specific language. The original trigger for **Clash** (page 214) was, "When you attack a foe…", which applied even if that foe could not fight back. So now the trigger is, "When you fight…", which better reflects when the move is intended to apply.

... adding a qualifier, like how **Defy Danger** (page 210) has you first check whether another move applies.

... checking for player intent, like how **Seek Insight** (page 228) clarifies that the player is "looking to the GM for insight," or how **Keep Company** (page 332) has the players ask each other if they want to invoke the move.

... splitting the move into multiple parts, each with a sperate trigger. When a PC **Persuades vs. NPCs** (page 224), for example, the move has the player say what they want the NPC to do. It then has a second trigger, "If they have reason to resist…", which prompts you, the GM, to consider whether the NPC would just go along with the PC or if the player needs to roll.

You don't need to get this "right" just yet. You might not realize that you need limits until you get feedback on your move or see it in play. But give it some thought. Take your best shot at identifying and fixing any obvious mismatches between the trigger you intended and what you wrote.

> *For my mushroom-trip move, I already have a trigger in mind:* "When you take shrooms together in the Great Wood."
>
> *I'm quite happy with that! It's nice and specific, based on the PCs acting as a group in a particular way. I consider making it more general, like just* "When you take shrooms," *but I don't think I'd bother with this move if someone took them alone, back home in safety.*
>
> *Is my trigger too broad? Hmm. Maybe. I'm writing this move for a very specific situation: the PCs addling their minds under a full moon in order to access to the Fae paths. That might have more specific results than just taking shrooms in the forest.*
>
> *I adjust my trigger to:* "When you take shrooms together near a waystone, under a full moon." *But depending on the results that I come up with, I might reconsider.*

3 Brainstorm results

Think about what happens when the move's trigger is met. What definitely happens? What might happen? If the move has multiple triggers, then think about what could happen as a result of each.

A move's results can be…

… **fictional**, where something happens or is avoided, someone reacts in a certain way, something becomes possible, facts are established, etc. For example, see **Know Things** (page 220), **Persuade vs. NPCs** (page 224), or **Magpie** (page 134).

… **mechanical**, involving a bonus/penalty to a roll, a change to another move, damage, debilities, HP, XP, hold-and-spend, etc. For example, see **Bolster** (page 524) or **Perceptive** (page 111).

… **player-level**, with questions asked and answered, feedback given, revelations made, etc. See **Keep Company** (page 332) or **All Is Illuminated** (page 122).

… **immediate**, like how **Clash** (page 214) says what happens here and now.

… **ongoing**, like how **Defend** (page 216) gives a player Readiness to spend in a scene, or how a **Muster** (page 534) lasts until certain conditions are met.

… **delayed**, like how the **Six Locks of Sajua** (*Book II*, page 515) can lead to a looming visit from the Pale Hunter.

… **combinations of the above**, like how **Aid** (page 212) can grant advantage or a fictional change of scope, or how **Seek Insight** (page 228) has the player ask the GM questions and roll with advantage to act on the answers.

If it helps you to think of these as 10+ or 7-9 results, or items that a player might pick from, then great. But hold your ideas lightly. The goal right now is to identify interesting, potential outcomes.

Don't force it. Sometimes there's really just one possible result, and that's fine! You can skip to **step 6** (page 562) and write your draft.

If you identify multiple possible results:

- Look for similarities and consolidate where you can
- Which results are mutually exclusive?
- Which could happen together?
- Which results definitely happen?

Revise your list, breaking it down into "definitely" and "maybe" results. Further split the "maybe" results into those that are good or desirable for the PC, and which are bad or unwanted. This helps clarify your thinking, and will help you pick an appropriate structure for the move.

Writing Moves & Love Letters

Things that could happen when the PCs take shrooms near a waystone:

- Feel a profound connection to each other/the world/themselves
- Hallucinate stuff that isn't real
- See into the spirit world
- Need a bigger dose
- Get sick, nauseous, shaky
- Get confused, overwhelmed
- Freak out, have a bad trip
- Draw attention from hostile spirits (maybe the shadowy presence!)
- Access the Fae paths

The "get sick" and "get confused" options could be consolidated into "mark a debility."

The "feel a profound connection" result seems mutually exclusive with the "freak out, have a bad trip" result. It doesn't really fit with the "mark a debility" result, either.

The "hallucinate" result is basically a given. And I can probably combine that with "see into the spirit world." "Access the Fae" paths should also be a given—I don't want some of the PCs or followers to be left behind.

My revised list of results looks like this:

Definitely
- Access the Fae paths
- Hallucinate/see spirits

Maybe (good!)
- Feel a profound connection to each other/the world/themselves

Maybe (bad!)
- Need a bigger dose
- Mark a debility
- Freak out, have a bad trip
- Draw attention from hostile spirits (maybe the shadowy presence!)

4 Decide how you'll pick between results

If you've identified multiple results that your move could have, then how will you decide between those potential results?

Have the player roll

Use a roll to reflect uncertainty or risk, or if you want there to be multiple tiers of success. The result of the roll can dictate the results directly, as with **Know Things** (page 220). Or it might affect the choices that get made, like how **Seek Insight**'s (page 228) roll determines how many questions the player gets to ask.

"A roll" usually means that the player rolls 2d6 and adds a stat, with different results on a 10+, 7-9, and 6-. But see **step 5** (page 560) for other options.

Have the player pick

When there are multiple equally attractive (or repellant) options, have the player pick between them. For example, when a player gets a 10+ to **Clash** (page 214), they pick between striking hard or avoiding their foe's attack. When they **Forage** (page 336), they decide which benefit(s) to gain.

Letting the player pick gives them agency over their PC's behavior and fate. It helps players accept the bad stuff that happens to them. It allows them to say something about their PC, about what's important to them and how they handle trouble. And sometimes, a player will pick an outcome that you'd never choose to inflict on them.

Also, practically, it's just easier to have the player making the move make the choices, rather than having them read or pass the move's text to the GM or another player.

Have the target pick

When a move forces another character to feel or react in a particular way, then the move should have that character's player (the GM for NPCs) pick between options. This maintains a player's agency over their PC, and allows the GM to maintain the integrity of NPCs.

For example, on a 10+ to **Persuade vs. PCs** (page 226) the targeted player still decides whether to agree (and mark XP) or reveal how they could be convinced. When the Ranger uses **Alpha** (page 131), the beast or spirit decides how to react. When a PC uses the Red Scepter to **Inflame** (*Book II*, page 558) and gets a 10+, the victim picks whether to act as compelled or resist and suffer terrible burns.

Have the GM pick

Use this option sparingly. Reserve it for moves where you're in the best position to choose, based on your agenda, principles, prep, and knowledge of the situation—or when you want to emphasize a PC's lack of control.

For example, because **Defy Danger** (page 210) can apply to so many situations, it makes sense for you, the GM, to decide whether a 7-9 leads to a lesser success, a cost, or a consequence, and what exactly that means. And because **Trade & Barter** (page 540) involves deciding what is or is not available—something entirely outside the PCs' control—it makes sense for the GM to pick between the 7-9 results.

Decide by procedure

Your move can have different results based on the fiction, like how **Take the Measure** (page 127) lets the Marshal ask an extra question if the target fears or respects them. Or your move can have results based on mechanical interactions, like how **Meet With Disaster** (page 532) has a different result when Fortunes would be reduced below -1.

Decide by consensus

A few moves call on the group as a whole to choose an outcome, like how **End of Session** (page 232) has everyone answer the XP questions together.

This approach produces a "writer's room" effect, where the players talk about the game at a meta-level. It's a natural fit for End of Session, because the whole point of that move is to get the players to reflect on recent events. But you could certainly write a move in which the group decides between fictional outcomes by vote or by consensus. Just make sure that's something your players are into!

Mix and match

Many moves combine these approaches. **Clash** (page 214) has the player roll to see if their maneuver works, and has them make a choice on a 10+. **Invoke the Sun God** (page 122) has the player pick a consequence on a 7+, but the GM picks a second consequence on a 7-9. **Deploy**'s 7-9 result (page 526) has the player pick if the village is acting from a strong position, and the GM picks otherwise. **Have What You Need** (page 326) lets the player decide what they're carrying, but gives the GM and other players veto power.

Do something else

You can probably come up with variations on these methods, or entirely new ways to choose between the potential results.

> *For my "take shrooms near a waystone" move, I've identified a potential good result (feeling a profound sense of connection) and a number of potential bad results. Seems like it'd make sense to have each player roll (+CON, maybe?). On a 10+, they get the good result. On a 7-9, they pick one of the bad results. On a 6-, multiple bad results. (Maybe? I'll come back to this later.)*
>
> *But no matter what they roll, they'll be hallucinating and be able to both see (some?) spirits and access the Fae paths.*

5 If there's a roll, decide how it works

The standard structure for a move with a roll is: "When you ***trigger the move***, roll 2d6 + STAT: **on a 10+**, you get the best result; **on a 7-9**, you get a result that's not as good." But you can modify this structure to meet the needs of your move and your goals for writing it.

Should you define a 6- result?

Most moves don't say what happens on a 6-, which means that the player marks XP and you make a hard GM move—one that flows from the established fiction and that follows your principles.

Write a 6- result for your move only when you have a good reason to do so, when you judge it to be preferable to making a hard GM move on the spot, and when you can be sure that the result will make sense whenever the move gets made.

For example, **Death's Door** (page 245) tells us what happens when a PC is dying. On a 6-, the PC either dies or clings to the world via undeath—which frees you (the GM) from having to decide the PC's fate.

Meanwhile, **Struggle as One**'s (page 328) 6- limits you to a specific GM move, **put someone in a spot**. It has you zoom in from a group action to a specific situation, which is then resolved by either another player's 10+ or by playing out the scene.

As a final example, **Trade & Barter** (page 540) says "don't mark XP" on a 6- and the PCs can't get or sell the item here and now. It's intended to be low-risk with a high chance of failure. The 6- result both establishes and reflects that lack of risk—nothing risked, no XP gained.

What should be added to the roll?

Most moves have the player add a specific stat (STR, DEX, etc.). See page 52 for guidance on what each stat represents.

If different stats could apply based on how the PC approaches the move, then provide guidance on when to use each stat, like how **Defy Danger** (page 210) does. Or just say "roll +STAT (per Defy Danger)".

If the move reflects the members of a community doing something, rather than a specific PC, use one of the community's **steading stats** instead (page 66).

Another option is to build up a modifier based on things that are true, like how the **"stand at the Crossroads" move** (page 234) has the player add +1 if they bring a possession of the deceased, another +1 if they bring food or drink that the deceased loved in life, and a final +1 if they are tied to them by blood. This approach takes extra time to resolve, but it can encourage players to engage with the specifics of the fiction. It also works well for moves that apply to everyone in the party, or those that resolve the actions of NPCs (who don't have their own stats to roll).

Your move could have the player add a held currency (per **Hold and spend**, page 563) in lieu of a stat. No standard moves in *Stonetop* do this, but it's a valid approach!

Finally, your move might have them roll +nothing, with no modifier at all. Death's Door takes this approach to make the move feel impersonal and arbitrary.

Are there any other modifiers?

Consider whether any modifiers should be baked into the move, to reflect something important about how the move works. For example, **Trade & Barter** (page 540) has players subtract the item's Value to reflect availability, and has them roll with disadvantage during winter to reflect the lack of traveling merchants.

What does each tier look like?

Typically, a 10+ is a clean success, a 7-9 is a limited or costly success, and 6- is bad news. But your move might…

… still have a downside on a 10+, like how **Invoke the Sun God** (page 122) still has the player pick a consequence as a way to limit how often the Lightbearer can use their magic.

… grant a full success on a 7-9 and a little extra on a 10+, as a way to reflect a PC being extra good at something (like **Expert Tracker**, page 130) or otherwise acting from a position of strength.

… establish an especially mild or brutal result on a 6- (see the examples on the previous page).

… include an extra tier, like how **Haggle** (*Book II*, page 107) has separate results for 12+ and 10-11, to reflect the full range of possible outcomes.

… invert the tiers entirely, like how the **howling curse** (*Book II*, page 492) is permanent on a 10+, temporary on a 7-9, and fleeting on a 6-. This works because the PC adds +1 for each benefit they gain from the howling curse.

Set the results for each tier however works best for your move.

Alternative roll structures

A few moves use a totally different type of roll, and yours can too. For example:

- **Wishing Candles** (*Book II*, page 530) has the player roll a Die of Fate to see what their wish costs them, emphasizing the candles' fickle nature.
- **Fear of the Flame** (*Book II*, page 512) uses a risk roll, where the player rolls a d6 and a bad thing happens if they roll under some number that grows each time. This a good way to reflect magic that's increasingly risky/costly to use.
- The **Horn of Storms** (*Book II*, page 535) has the player roll a pool of dice and assign one die each to the storm's onset, intensity, reach, and duration, with an outcome for each based on the result of the assigned die. This allows you to have multiple axes of effect, each with a different tier effect.
- The **Blackened Splinter** (*Book II*, page 75) has the player roll 3d6, with the effect depending on whether they roll over or under the target's current HP. This is a good trick for effects that can straight-up defeat a foe.

You can combine alternative rolls with standard rolls, too, like how the **Power of the Lidless Orb** (*Book II*, page 541) has the player roll +CON to call on an effect, and one of those effects involves a roll vs. the victim's current HP.

Feel free to experiment, and try other types of rolls for your moves, too!

For my shrooms move, I've decided that the PCs will roll to see what happens. I'm initially thinking that they'll roll +CON. On a 10+ they'll experience a profound sense of connection; on a 7-9, they'll pick between a debility, a bad trip, or needing to take a bigger dose.

For a 6-, I think I'll have them pick two of the 7-9 results and draw unwanted attention from the spirit realm.

Is CON the right stat, or would WIS be a better choice? Or should I build up the modifier from things that are true, like "+1 if you've taken shrooms before" and "+1 if you practice meditation."

I decide to go with +WIS, as I feel like this is more about knowing your own mind than, like, resisting poison. And I'm not sure how I'd apply the "build the modifier" method to Rhianna's crew.

Someone's first shroom trip does tend to be the riskiest, as they don't know what to expect. I think I'll add a modifier like, "If you've taken shrooms before, roll with advantage." It's a nice chance to learn a bit about each PC's past. And given that everyone is going to be making this move, there's still a good chance that someone will roll low even if everyone has advantage.

6 Write a full draft

Write out the move, beginning to end, keeping in mind everything you've done so far. Don't worry about polished language or formatting yet, unless that helps you write. Your goal here is to see how it all fits together.

As you write, you might rethink decisions you made earlier. Something might not work as well as you thought it would, or you might think of a better way. Great. Change it. Creativity is often messy.

Keep your goals and constraints in mind. Let them guide your decisions, your choices, your words.

If your move involves someone picking between results, you can either write the choices inline, or you can make a pick list.

An inline choice looks like this: "on a 7-9, you either succeed OR no one's the wiser (your choice)". This approach saves space, so it's useful when brevity is a concern. But it's often less clear than a pick list.

Use a bulleted pick list any time there are 3 or more options to pick from, unless you have a very good reason to do otherwise. Even with 2 options, a pick list can often be clearer and easier for players to process.

With that said, keep your pick lists short. 2-4 is ideal. 5 or 6 can work, but see if you can condense them. 7 or more options in a single move is usually a bad idea, as it can lead to decision paralysis.

Try to make the different choices parallel, in their language and their scope, scale, timeframe. Don't make one of the choices obviously and always better than the rest. If you have a pick list, consider whether any of your options would benefit from an "else" statement at the end. For example, one option for **Forage** (page 336) is "you avoid danger or risk (else, there is some)." The "else" there clarifies that if they don't pick this option, there will be danger or risk. You can also use "else" statements to establish a baseline result in a succinct way, which can be quite useful for magical effects. See **Ice Weaving** and **Impudent Polymorph** for examples (*Book II*, pages 515 and 525).

Okay, here's my full draft:

When you take shrooms together near a waystone, under a full moon, roll +WIS. If you've taken shrooms before, roll with advantage. On a 10+, you experience a profound sense of connectedness to your companions and the world; on a 7-9, pick 1:

- Mark a debility
- It's a bad trip, and you're kind of freaking out
- You're not really feeling it—you need to take another dose and roll again at disadvantage

On a 6-, pick 2 from the list above and you draw unwanted attention from the spirit world.

Regardless, you're hallucinating now, and your eyes are open to the spirit world and the Fae paths. Have fun!

Hold and spend

Some moves have the player "hold *x* currency," where the currency is something specific like "Readiness" or "Nerve." The move then says how the player can spend that currency, and what happens when they do. That could be a mechanical bonus (as with **Bolster**, page 524), something happening in the fiction (like with **Silver Tongued**, page 111), or some combo of the two (see **Defend**, page 216).

Hold-and-spend is a good choice for moves that…

… reflect a PC's preparations, like **A Safe Plac**e (page 130) does;
… provide a limited, ongoing bonus, like **Anger Is a Gift** (page 138);
… need to limit how often a PC can use them, such as **Stentorian**, page 127); and/or…
… reward behaviors, like **Chronicler of Stonetop** (page 118) does.

Your move might grant a set amount of currency each time it's triggered (see **Piety**, page 123), or a variable amount based on a roll (see **Silver Tongued**, page 111), fictional details (see **Prepare a Welcome**, page 126), or both (see **Defend**, page 216).

Name the currency something unique, or at least something that isn't being used in your game. Include a place to track currency on whatever handout you give the players, usually with a series of Os. Consider whether you need to spell out when the player loses all held currency, or if that's obvious from context.

7 Review and revise

Read your drafted move. Revise it. Make it better!

Imagine it in play

Envision a situation where this move could come up in play. Picture your players triggering it. Run through the move. Try to read it with fresh eyes. Imagine your players' reactions. If anything strikes you as unclear, confusing, or awkward, then fix it.

Run through the possible outcomes. Do they all make sense in this scenario? If you can't envision what a given result (or combination of results) would look like, then something's wrong. Rethink the result(s), or how it prompts you to pick them.

Repeat this process a few times, imagining a different potential situation each time.

Make sure it meets your goals

Think back on what you intended this move to do (see page 552). Is it doing that? Is it doing it better than what you'd get if you just relied on the core loop, your GM moves, and the player moves already in play? If not, why not? How can it better meet your goals?

Consider your constraints for this move. Does it fit in the space you have? Does it account for the needs and preferences of your group? If not, revise until it does.

Check for common pitfalls

Is the trigger too broad or too specific, such that the move will trigger more often or less often than you want? If so, fix it.

Does your trigger confound outcome with intent? Have you written "When you ***solve the puzzle***" instead of "When you ***try to solve the puzzle***"? If so, clarify the trigger.

Does your move apply player mechanics to monsters/NPCs? For example, does it say, "Your foe has disadvantage on their next move" or "They mark *dazed*." Monsters and NPCs don't use those rules! Rewrite the result to impose a fictional limitation, or to grant PCs an opportunity or bonus against it. (It is okay to modify the damage rolls of monsters or NPCs, or to apply modifiers or debilities to followers.)

Does your move refer to "rounds," "turns," or other concepts that don't exist in *Stonetop*? Use fictional equivalents instead (like "for a few moments," or "until they can clear their head").

Are any of the results boring? Do they amount to "nothing happens," or "try again?" If so, try to restructure the move so that there's a meaningful result or change every time it triggers.

Is the move purely mechanical? Sometimes this makes sense, like with **Improved Stat** (page 106). But most moves should prompt interesting fiction via their triggers and/or generate it via their results.

If the move involves a pick list, are all the options equally appealing (or equally bad)? For each option, can you imagine a time when a player would pick this over one of the others? If not, either make the option more appealing or cut it entirely.

Does the move blatantly cross **the Line** (page 195) of GM/player authority? Does it have the player decide what NPCs or other PCs do, or invent new details about the current situation that their PC would have no influence over or prior knowledge of? If so, change what decisions get made, or who makes them.

Is this a playbook or arcanum move, or some other move meant to give the PC an edge? If so, make sure it's actually letting them do something they couldn't do without the move, or letting them do it better. If it's just a more-specific version of Defy Danger, then what's the point?

Is the move overly complex? Does it have too many variations or variables? Does it have a lot of steps or dependencies? If so, simplify it. Rein in its scope if you need to. Cut any decision that isn't crucial. Reorder the procedure so that it flows naturally and intuitively. If need be, split this out into multiple moves.

Is the move written defensively? Does it use legalistic language to prevent abuse or loopholes? If so, does it need to? Can you rely on context and the **players' agenda** (page 37) **and principles** (page 44) to prevent such abuse? You do sometimes need to clarify intent and establish what a move can't do, but keep it short and sweet.

Punch it up

Look for ways to make the move grabbier, more exciting, more thematic. **Formidable** (page 114) doesn't trigger "when a battle starts." It triggers "When you ***wade into battle***." When the Lightbearer gets a 10+ on **Guiding Light** (page 122), "you all make it through (Helior be praised)." That little prayer at the end adds a lot!

Edit for length and clarity

Cut any word that's unneeded. Read each sentence, look for a cleaner way to phrase it. Reduce the move to its simplest version, while maintaining clarity and impact.

Check grammar, formatting

Make sure you're using the right words, that your subjects and verbs agree, that your bullet lists use parallel language. Check your spelling. If typing them out, put triggers in ***bold and italic text***. Put thresholds in bold, like, "**on a 10+:**…"

Grammar and formatting are less crucial for a move you'll use just once at your own table. But the more you plan to use it or share it, the more important this becomes.

Get feedback

Ask others for feedback. Share your move online, with other *Stonetop* players and GMs. Share it with your players, too (unless you want it to be a surprise).

Call out specific areas where you'd like input, but be open to any feedback you get. You need not take the advice of strangers on the internet, but at least consider whether they have a point.

Remember: you can revise your move once you see it in play. Even a move that you use only once can be clarified in play. Your move doesn't need to be perfect before you use it.

If you're creating something to publish or share with other groups—like a playbook, arcanum, or supplement—then seek feedback widely and playtest the moves as much as you can. Adjust them based on how they actually perform in play.

I frame a scene in my mind: the Great Wood at night, the party encamped near a waystone. They've been here for hours, waiting for moonrise. It's time! They get a little solemn as Blodwen passes out the shrooms. They trigger my move!

I haven't really accounted for Rhianna's crew, but do I need to? Order Followers will have Rhianna roll the move for them. They're a group, so they'll roll just once and we'll apply the results to specific individuals. That works, I'm good.

I imagine we'll go around asking who's taken shrooms before, to see who rolls with advantage. That'll be fun.

The players will each roll +WIS. Someone (let's say Blodwen) would get a 10+. "You experience a profound sense of connectedness to your companions and the world." Which is… boring, actually! Reviewing my goals, I planned for this move to explore the PCs' emotions and relationships. Without it, I'd use Keep Company to do just that. So, I revise the 10+ result to have them ask each other (and the world) a meaningful question.

I imagine Rhianna rolling a 7-9. Hmm. She'd probably pick "It's a bad trip, and you're kind of freaking out," which I realize overlaps with marking dazed. *And I could use that "bad trip" choice to explore some darker emotions.*

Let's say Caradoc gets a 6-. He'd draw unwanted attention from the spirit realm, mark a debility, and have a bad trip. So: he'd see the shadowy presence in his mind's eye, it would see him back, and he'd be left shaken by it. Cool!

Then I imagine Vahid getting a 6- and picking "bad trip" and "not really feeling it." He'd maybe draw the ire of some spiteful nature spirits, and freak out, and… need a bigger dose? That doesn't feel right. And it'd lead to just rerolling, and maybe picking the same thing. No, the "not feeling it" option has to go.

I think a bit and rewrite the move. As I do, I simplify the trigger—it didn't need to be so specific after all! I also run it by a player and incorporate some of their feedback. I end up with this:

When you **take shrooms in the Great Wood**, roll +WIS. If you've taken them before, you have advantage. On a 10+, ask one of these to one other player, and one to the GM who will answer for the world at large:

- What do you love most about me?
- What saddens you about me?
- What is your dearest hope for me?

On a 7-9, pick 1; on a 6-, all 3:

- Mark a debility
- Guilt and shame boil up within you; describe the vision/memory that comes with them
- You draw unwanted attention from the spirit world

Regardless, you're hallucinating now, and your eyes are open to the spirit world and the Fae paths. Have fun!

I run through all the combinations again and they all feel good. I consider posting it online for feedback, but the game starts in an hour. This is good enough!

More examples

Here's another example of a situational move, this one written to reflect the party's current, sour mood. (That last bullet was originally "What do you do that I find so annoying?" But a fellow GM suggested this replacement. Hooray for feedback!)

MISERY LOVES COMPANY
When you **keep Company while discord plagues the party**, take turns asking the following questions instead:

- What duty are you/we neglecting?
- What's eating at you, and how do you take it out on others?
- How do I make things worse?
- What little thing do we find ourselves bickering about?
- What old crap do you just have to bring back up?

Here's an example of a hazard move, a ward that scares intruders off with their own fear. It's meant to serve as a legitimate barrier, but also to bring the PCs' fears to the forefront as they enter this haunted barrow mound.

When you **approach the threshold with the intent to cross**, it fills you with dread. If you persist, roll +WIS: on a 10+, describe a deep fear from your past and how you overcame it, then cross; on a 7-9, mark a debility and tell us of an unconquered fear that lurks in your heart, then cross if you wish; on a 6-, mark a debility and describe the fear that overcomes you—you will not cross willingly while the ward persists.

Here's a new expedition move, written for specific players in a specific game. It's a riff on **Burgle** (page 110), and was prompted by players hogging the spotlight with solo missions. They'd push their luck until disaster struck, and play was grinding to a halt. So: new move, everybody!

SCOUT AHEAD
When you **go off on your own into a dangerous place**, the GM can have you Scout Ahead. If they do, say how you do it and roll +STAT (per Defy Danger). On a 7+, you make it back and the GM says where you got to and what you learned. Then, on a 10+: also pick 2; on a 7-9, also pick 1:

- You got away clean, rousing no suspicion or alarm
- You set something up to exploit upon your return
- Ask a Seek Insight question about what you saw

On a 6-, you either make it back to the others with trouble in tow, or you're missing in action (your call).

Of course, if any PC can Scout Ahead then Burgle is worthless. If there was a Fox in the group, I'd also change Burgle to something like this:

BURGLE
When you **Scout Ahead**, you can pick 1 extra option (even on a 6-, pick 1), and add this to your list of options:

- You swiped something useful and/or valuable

Writing love letters

Love letters are like single-use custom moves, addressed to a specific PC. Write them as part of your prep and hand them out at the start of a session (or whenever it makes sense). They're especially useful for:

- Glossing over downtime
- Resolving individual PC projects, or giving them a chance to make progress
- Filling in periods where a PC is "off camera," like if they take a solo trip or their player misses a session
- Wrapping up a situation that the group doesn't want to play out in detail
- Starting a session with momentum, hard-framing a scene or situation and jumping to the "good stuff"
- Digging into a PC's backstory, relationships, or inner thoughts
- Giving players setting info without it being a one-sided lore dump (see page 266 for an example)

You might write a love letter to just one PC (like when their player missed the last session). But often, you'll write each PC a love letter and run through them in turn.

Love letters are an investment. They take time to write, and skill to write well. They get used only once. But they're powerful tools, and writing them is great practice for writing moves in general.

To write a love letter, consider first and foremost **what you're trying to establish**: what you need the letter to declare as true.

Given that, ask yourself:

- What elements do you want to hand over to the player to define?
- What could go well for the PC?
- What could go poorly?

As far as structure goes:

- Love letters don't have triggers; start them with "Dear <PC>"
- Follow that with as much context as you need (though keep it tight)
- Give the player specific prompts for the details you want them to add, as part of either the setup or the results
- **Decide how you'll pick between results** (page 558), and if there's a roll, **what that roll looks like** (page 560)

Pick a structure that seems to fit your needs, and start writing. Don't force it—if the structure isn't working, try something else. Get a working draft, then tweak the language and details as time and interest permit. Don't stress over it too much. A love letter gets used only once, and if it doesn't land, you can clarify it in play.

Print the love letter out or write it on an index card, or send it to the player online. During play, have them read the letter aloud and do what it says. If you write love letters for multiple PCs, you can set them up to be read in a specific order, or let the players choose who goes when.

Take notes! Incorporate the results into this and future sessions. Make the results and their choices matter.

Some examples:

Dear Rhianna,

You got back from a few days hunting to find everyone talking about Caradoc, Vahid, and their trip to the Tower. As if you didn't have enough to worry about. Speaking of worries, roll +Fortunes: on a 10+, pick 1; on a 7-9, pick 2; on a 6-, mark XP and all 3.

- Owain's been calling for folks to "do something" about Vahid—who has been agreeing with him, that you would not have expected?
- Wini (Cerys's eldest) has been acting out, badly—how so?
- Crinwin jumped one of your crew while out hunting (who?); they're home, but badly hurt (how so?)

XOXO – your GM

Dear Caradoc,

You and Morwenna are still tied up, but you're at the greenhouse. Tell us what unpleasant truth you had to reveal to seal the deal, then roll +CHA: on a 10+, pick 2; on a 7-9, pick 1; on a 6-, pick 1, mark XP, and your captors clearly know they're being followed—they're laying a trap!

- You've slyly loosened your bonds
- Morwenna's calm & playing along (else, she's freaking right out)
- They haven't separated you and Morwenna yet (else, they have)

XOXO – your GM

Dear Vahid,

It's been a quiet, cozy winter, with plenty of time inside. What unlikely aspect of a personality has the Mindgem revealed, now that you've spent so much time with it?

Now, ask the Mindgem a question about the Makers, their history, or their arts. You've gleaned a clear and useful answer, and even a few follow-up questions. But also, roll +WIS: on a 10+, you've not neglected anyone nor anything; on a 7-9, tell us who you've let down in some little way; on a 6-, mark XP, and tell us who you've let down and why they're still upset.

XOXO – your GM

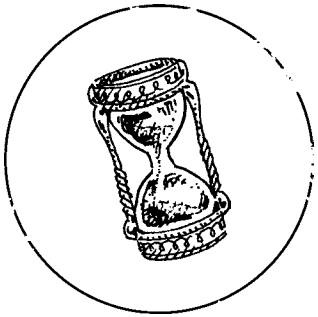
Dear Blodwen (read after Rhianna),

Dawn finds you all hiding in a cart, rattling out into the fields after a sleepless night tending to Tierny and the others (with Brin's able help). What personal advice did you give Brin before you left?

As for Tierny, roll +INT. If Rhianna's turn led to casualties, then roll with disadvantage. On a 10+, Tierny has made a full recovery and few will know how close she was to death; on a 7-9, she's up and will recover, but your name will spread as a miracle-worker; on a 6-, either she dies and becomes a martyr, or lives on as a husk of her former self (your call).

XOXO – your GM

The Game Ongoing



Ending a session
Between sessions
Starting a session
Pacing
Advancement
Retiring PCs
New PCs
Conflict between PCs
Time skips
Shake-ups
Ending your game

Stonetop is built for long-term play. You can get a satisfying experience in as few as 3-5 sessions, but it's best when you and your group commit to an ongoing game.

In this chapter, we'll discuss:

- Managing the game across sessions
- How the game itself changes over time
- Issues you might encounter on the way
- Bringing your game to a satisfying end

This chapter contains no rules, no new mechanics (save one). It's a collection of advice, tools, and practices to help you and your friends get the most out of your game.

Ending a session

Do the move

Make time for the **End of Session** move (at right) each time you play. Start to wrap up the action 30 minutes before folks need to leave, and give yourselves at least 15 minutes to do the End of Session move. Set a timer. It's important.

Take notes! Not just the wishes, but all of it: the times where each PC engaged with their instinct, the changes to relationships, what the group learned and accomplished, and what each player praised. These notes are invaluable between sessions, as you reflect and try to recall what happened.

The last two steps of the move—praise and wishes—are the most important. They allow you to calibrate the game and create space for everyone to give feedback.

If the move reveals a larger issue—like a conflict between players or dissatisfaction with the game—then do a **check-in** (page 580). If it involves the whole group and you've all got time and space, then do it now. If that's not practical, or just one or two players are involved, then take it as a follow-up to discuss the issue later.

END OF SESSION

When a ***session ends***, point out how you demonstrated or struggled with your instinct. If you can, mark XP.

Say how your relationship with or opinion of a PC, NPC, or group has changed. If you can, mark XP.

Answer these questions as a group. For each "yes," everyone marks XP.

- Did we learn more about the world or its history?
- Did we defeat a threat to Stonetop or the region?
- Did we improve our standing with our neighbors?
- Did we make a lasting improvement to Stonetop, or tangible progress towards doing so?

Praise something about the session (in the fiction or around the table) that you enjoyed or appreciated.

Finally, offer up a wish for future sessions: more __, less __, a chance to __, handling __ in a different way, etc. Wishes can be about what happens in the fiction or around the table. The GM will take notes.

For more guidance, see page 232 of the **Player Moves** chapter.

Handle logistics

Schedule the next session if you can. If not, pick a tentative date or two and make plans to confirm. Games die more often from scheduling neglect than from lack of interest.

Identify follow-up tasks. Who needs to do what between now and next time? Assign responsibilities and when they need to be done by. For example:

- ☐ All: Confirm availability (tomorrow)
- ☐ Hobbes: Pick date for next session, send invites (following day)
- ☐ Jamie: Level Up (by next session)
- ☐ Jeremy: Make a Plan for Vahid's gizmo (by next session)
- ☐ All: Post goals for winter (by Friday)

Ask one of your players to track these tasks and follow up, ensuring that they get done. You've got enough to juggle. Let someone else do the badgering.

Finally, help the host clean up. It's basic courtesy, and shows respect for the space and the people you're sharing it with.

Take notes

What happened this session that you don't want to forget? What are your next steps? Write that stuff down. Now. While it's still fresh in your mind.

You don't need to write a full session recap right now (it's late, you're probably tired). But try to capture:

- Your personal follow-up tasks ("Make a Plan for Vahid's gizmo," or "Talk to Bob about kibitzing")
- NPCs you introduced and their key details ("Stamat: sadistic mercenary; flamboyant; scarred, dead eye")
- Important decisions you made on the fly, especially those not yet revealed in play ("Callum is dead" or "Nanzl knows Brynmor is lying")
- Consequential events that you want to make relevant in future sessions ("Nanzl got a lock of Kios's hair," or "Sawyl is pissed at Nolwen").
- What you had in mind when you dropped a hint or introduced some provocative detail ("Silver goo is sign of the corrupted hagr," or "Una's fiery gem = heart of the Mighty Servant")
- Decisions you know you need to make ("What is in Piotr's cellar?")
- Prep you know you'll want to do ("Draw a map of the barrow")

Between sessions

Use the time between sessions to tend to the game: to reflect, take notes, prep, and make plans.

Reflection

Remember: **GMing is a practice** (page 203). You get better at it by doing it, and by trying to do better next time.

Spend time after each session reflecting on the previous one. Ask yourself:

- What goals had you set for yourself? Did you meet them? If not, why not?
- What went well? What are you proud of? What did your players praise?
- What did your players wish for? How can you make those wishes come true?
- Where did the game falter or drag? Where did you feel uncertain? What would you do differently, in retrospect?
- Did you pursue your **agenda** (page 168)? Did you follow your **principles** (page 192)? If not, how was the game impacted? What would it have looked like if you had?

You might do this formally, sitting down and taking notes. Or maybe you just think about it while you commute or do chores. However you go about it, reflect on the session. Don't beat yourself up, but be honest. Consider what worked and what didn't. Think about why, and about how you can do better.

Write down 1-3 goals for the next session. As you prep, keep these goals in mind. During the session, put them somewhere you can see them. Try to meet them.

Session recap(s)

Every session should get a written recap, an official history of what happened. Few people can recall the events of a session a few days later, much less after weeks or months. So make sure the key moments of each session get written down.

If one of your players takes session notes, then ask them to post those notes somewhere public. Review them before you start prepping for the next session, and make corrections or additions as needed.

You might find it helpful (or necessary) to make a session recap yourself. Maybe your players don't take notes, or their notes are so detailed that the other players will never read them. Maybe they leave out stuff that you think is important.

There's no one right way to do this. Some groups like a detailed, scene-by-scene breakdown. Others prefer a bullet-point of key events, like this:

Caradoc and Vahid:
- Went to Ruined Tower
- Ghost stories at the Crossroads!
- Explored outer ruins, got makerglass shard and bronze plaque w/spell
- Beznpol attacked; took its hide

Blodwen:
- Big public fight with Tegwen, renounces her as kin
- Moves out, moves in with Seren
- Tegwen is petty & mean (surprise!)
- Lewela visits, tearful support

Rhianna (not present, off hunting?)

Do whatever works for your table, but make sure a running record of play exists, and that it's available to all the players.

Bookkeeping

Pull out your notes, the steading playbook, your threat tracker—whatever tools you're using—and bring them up to date.

1) **Update your threats**, following the procedure on page 298.

2) **Update your NPCs**, wherever you track them. Cross off those who've died, update notes for existing ones, and add new NPCs from the previous session. See **Creating NPCs** (page 453) for guidance.

3) **Update followers.** If you expect an NPC to start acting as a follower, then write them up using the steps on page 474. Then review and update any existing followers, per page 480.

4) **Update the steading playbook** (page 154), to reflect changes to Fortunes, Surplus, debilities, resources, fortifications, and assets. Mark progress made towards improvements.

5) **Review content guidelines** (page 66) and update them if needed, based on player discussions and your own needs. If you realize that the guidelines need to change, or that your group has been deviating from them, **check in** with the players (page 580) or make a note to do so.

6) **Review any loot the PCs acquired.** Make sure it's on someone's inventory insert or otherwise accounted for. If you need to provide players handouts or write-ups, make a note to do so. If you haven't revealed what the loot is or does, consider how you will—see **"Identifying artifacts"** (page 430) and **"Identifying arcana"** (page 440).

7) **Update your "I wonder…" list** (page 33). If you've answered any of these questions, then jot the answer down and cross off the question. Have any of the questions changed, evolved, gained clarity or nuance? Update them. Have any new questions occurred to you? Add them to the list.

Follow-ups

As the session ended, you likely found yourself with some follow-up tasks. As you reflect and take care of bookkeeping, you'll likely identify more. Review your to-do list and prioritize:

- Start with time-sensitive tasks, stuff that needs to happen before the next session (like confirming availability, proposing a big retcon, or reviewing a player's special request).
- Next, focus on tasks relevant to the upcoming session (like making a key decision about a threat, or writing up an artifact that the PCs acquired).
- For everything else, work on them only if you feel inspired to do so and you know you have time. Otherwise, keep them on your to-do list until they become timely. Don't Make a Plan now for a player whose PC will be busy for the next few sessions.

Prep

As the next session approaches, make time to sit down and prep. Think about where things left off last session. Where are the PCs and what are they up to? What do you expect to happen in the next session? Prep for that.

If the PCs are…

… **embarking on a journey**, then see the **What to prep** section of the Expeditions chapter (page 340).

… **already on a journey**, review your prep. Where are the PCs? What are the next legs of travel, points of interest, and challenges? Which encounters are most likely to come up in the next session? Flesh them out if you need to.

… **about to explore a site**, then prep it to whatever level of detail you find useful and have time for. See **Creating sites** on page 355.

… **exploring a site already**, what are they likely to encounter next? Flesh that out if you need to.

… **likely to face any dangers or make any discoveries**, then prep those if you have not already. Find stuff from *Book II* and review those entries, or make your own. For guidance, see:

- **Preparing hazards** (page 384)
- **Monsters** (page 391)
- **Clues** (page 424)
- **Encounters** (page 426)
- **Opportunities** (page 428)
- **Artifacts** (page 434)
- **Minor arcana** (page 444)
- **Major arcana** (page 446)

… **likely to interact with NPCs**, review your notes on them. If you think you'll introduce new NPCs, see **Creating NPCs** (page 453) for guidance.

… **likely to gain a new follower**, then find their stats in *Book II* or make them from scratch (page 474).

… **heading home or into a stretch of downtime**, then prep for a homefront session. See "**What to prep**" on page 544 of the Homefront chapter.

Other things you might prep

- An **adventure hook** to kick off a new adventure (page 578)
- **Custom moves** (page 551) to use in a specific situation.
- **Love letters** (page 568) to use at the start of a session.
- **Setup questions** (page 262) like those you asked at the start of the First Adventure, as a way to warm players up, establish details, tie back to prior events, or foreshadow future ones.
- **Start of session moves.** For example, if you have a Would-be Hero with the **Destined** background (page 137), prep a vision or omen for them!
- **Specific scenes** you'd like to play out: their purpose, descriptions, lines of NPC dialogue, GM moves, etc.
- **Play aids** like maps, visuals, player handouts like arcana cards, etc.
- Stuff to support player **wishes** and your **personal goals** (page 578).

Adventure hooks

If the last session ended in downtime, you might want to kick off a new adventure. Maybe the Seasons Changed and you owe the players an opportunity or threat. Maybe they got a 7-9 to Pull Together and choose "unforeseen cost, requirement, or challenge." Maybe the Ranger tried to Persuade Gorlas to leave that haunted ruin alone, but rolled a 4, and so old Gorlas—he ain't gonna listen.

To prep for a new adventure, follow the process laid out in the **First Adventure** chapter (page 251). Or, if it makes sense, prep a full-on **crisis** (page 499) instead.

Wishes and personal goals

Look over the wishes that your players gave you at the end of the last session, or any unmet wishes from before that.

Look over the goals you wrote down as part of your **reflection** (page 575), or write 1-3 goals for yourself now—things you'd like to work on, do better, or just remember to do. It's fine (ideal, even) if these overlap with your players' wishes.

For each wish or goal, what would help you achieve it? Work that into your prep! This could mean:

- Prepping a specific hook, site, danger, etc., or prepping it in a certain way
- Making a list, reminder, or cheat sheet and keeping it somewhere visible
- Writing a to-do list for the session, with scenes to frame, GM moves to make, questions to ask, etc.
- **Writing a custom move** (page 551) to handle a specific situation
- Brainstorming possible impressions, GM moves, bits of NPC dialogue, ways to resolve player moves, etc.

During the End of Session, Vahid's wish is for a lead on completing the Mighty Servant. So between sessions, I prep a hook: a traveler selling an old scroll that describes a fiery glass "heart," powering a device in the fallen city of Tierstered.

One of my goals is to use multiple senses when describing environments. So, I write "SOUND • SMELL • FEEL" across the top of my GM playbook.

During some homefront sessions, I've struggled to engage Blodwen's instinct of Preservation ("to protect the natural world"). So, I add this to my prep:

☐ Play them against each other: Glennys objects to Blodwen about Rhianna's plans for palisade.

Don't over-prep!

Remember why you prep: to give yourself cool stuff to say, to speed up play, to shore up weaknesses, to hone your craft, and to give yourself permission to play hard and inflict real consequences. With that in mind, prep only:

1) **What you *need* to prep**, like stats for a monster the PCs will fight, or a love letter to a player who missed a session
2) **What you can't easily improvise**, like a map, a threat's impending doom, or a complex political web
3) **What you *want* to prep**, because it brings you joy, reduces stress, or helps you meet a goal or grant a player's wish

Specifically, resist the urge to prep a plot or every potential path the PCs might take. Prep what you need, what you can't improvise, and what helps you be your best. Then play to find out what happens.

Check-ins

Play with any group long enough, and you're bound to have issues. Players who get on each other's nerves. Mismatched expectations. Disruptive behaviors. Hurt feelings. Miscommunications. Etc.

When there's a player-level issue, talk to them about it. Don't let things fester, and for Tor's sake don't try to "fix" the issue with game mechanics or fictional "consequences" (punishments). There is no in-game solution for a player-level problem.

Stonetop includes tools to facilitate this kind of communication. **Content guidelines** (page 66) help set expectations and boundaries. Reviewing them at the start of each session (see opposite page) keeps them top-of-mind. Calling "time out" gives you a way to course correct mid-session. And the End of Session move invites players to ask for things to change. (And if your group finds other communication or safety tools to be helpful, then by all means, use them!)

Some issues, though, are best handled with a check-in: outside of a session, one-on-one or with only the relevant players. Maybe you do this in person, right after a session, or over a drink, or on a walk, or whatever. Maybe it's a call or an online chat. Pick an approach that feels comfortable for all involved.

Encourage your players to initiate check-ins, too, with you and with each other. If they have a concern, the best thing to do is talk about it.

If you suspect that a player is unhappy, then let them know what you've noticed and give them space to respond. "Hey, you seemed uncomfortable during that scene with Iwan. Did we cross a line there?" See where the conversation goes. Sometimes, it's unrelated to the game, or you misread the situation, or they just don't want to talk about it.

When a player says that they're unhappy with something about the game, *listen*. Ask for clarification and specifics, but don't argue or defend yourself. Thank them, and ask them what they'd like to see change.

Can you make or facilitate that change? If so, great—do it. If you can't, or don't want to, that's okay too. But be honest about it. Have a calm conversation about why. Look for a compromise that works.

If a player is causing trouble, then point out what they're doing. Focus on behaviors and impact, not personality. "When you keep canceling last-minute, I can't prep effectively. Or I have to prep more, in case you're not there." Say what you'd like to see change. Ask if they're able to make that change, and how they plan to do so. Try to find a solution if you can.

Sometimes, the solution is "stop playing together," or to stop playing *Stonetop* and play something else. That's okay—you and your players are more important than the game! But you'll never figure that out without talking to your players. So check in with each other, often.

Starting a session

Folks arrive at a session carrying their week with them—work, kids, traffic, etc. Give everyone a chance to settle. Chat and catch up. Let the noise of the world fade a bit before you start to play.

Have a checklist of things to do at the start of each session. Once everyone is settled, start to work through that list. This serves as a ritual. You're drawing a magic circle and stepping back into the fictional world you've made together. Each group's checklist will be different, but common items include:

☐ Logistics

What are your plans for food and drink? Who's taking notes? When do folks need to leave? When should you take breaks? Etc. Set timers as needed. Be sure to save time for the End of Session move!

☐ Recap

Remind everyone what happened last time, and where things left off. If possible, get the players to do this themselves. Ask the notetaker to give a recap, or ask players to take turns doing so. Add details and make corrections as needed, but don't nitpick. Listen to what your players say—it's a good indicator of what's important to them!

☐ Content guidelines

As a group, read the "Content" section on your steading playbook. If you think this session might bump against these guidelines, say so now. Ask if anyone wants to add or change something. Remind folks to call "time out" if a guideline is broken, if they need a break, or if they want to talk things over. See page 18 for guidance.

☐ Highlighting

Go over stuff that you want everyone to keep in mind or at least be aware of. This might include:

- PC and/or follower instincts
- Relationship changes from the end of last session
- Outstanding wishes
- Goals you're working on, that you'd like the players to help you with

Customize this list to match your needs and preferences. Not every group highlights the same things.

☐ Bookkeeping

Have players update their playbooks and inserts if needed. Like, if they've had a few days at home since the last session, have them reset HP and clear debilities. If someone Leveled Up, make sure they've updated their XP and marked a new move. That sort of thing.

☐ Starting moves, questions, love letters

If any PCs have moves that trigger at the start of session (like the Would-be Hero's "Destined" background), or if you've written setup questions or love letters, do them now. Let them serve as a final shift into actual play.

☐ Opening scene(s)

Address one or more PCs. Say (or ask) where they are, who they're with, what they're up to. Describe the environment, ask some questions. Portray NPCs.

Make a soft GM move, something that propels the PC into action or conflict. Ask, "What do you do?" **Play to find out what happens**.

Pacing

Stonetop tends to be slower-paced than many RPGs. It has its moments of drama and intense action. But it also encourages you to dwell on the details of daily life and to spend time chewing the scenery. Finding the right pace and rhythm for your group is important.

Adventures vs. homefront

A key tension in the game is how much time to spend on adventures (expeditions and crises) vs. homefront play. The game won't always tell you when it's time to switch, and that's intentional.

Use your players' wishes from the End of Session to calibrate the pace of the game. If the players are itching for adventure, nudge them towards letting the Seasons Change, or offer an opportunity to make progress towards some goal. If they want more downtime but the Seasons Change and a threat worsens or makes itself known, maybe telegraph a threat that they can't do anything about right now (like growing unrest in Marshedge or some fell beast spotted in the Flats).

The game mechanics will sometimes drive play in a particular, unavoidable way. If the Seasons Change and threats abound, then there's no way folks are getting a quiet winter. But maybe you can give each PC one pleasant day before the trouble starts?

If your players want to constantly work on projects or head off on multiple adventures each season, don't be afraid to pump the brakes. Remind them of their obligations, and if they ignore them, start to oppose their wishes. **Tell them the consequences** of rushing off on a half-baked expedition with no chance of success. Etc.

Increasing the pace

If you're not getting as much done in a session as you and your players would like, then try some of these:

Skip the familiar. If you've played out trips on the West Road before, you don't need another montage. Say, "Four days later, you see the smoke from Gordin's Delve," and move on.

Zoom out. Resist the instinct to play out every interaction or decision, every setback, every room of a site. Establish the PCs' general intentions, then gloss over the obvious, the trivial, the stuff that's just color. Resolve a whole course of action with a single move and some description.

Frame scenes aggressively. Start late, end early. Have a purpose for every scene you frame—a question to answer, a conflict to resolve, something to convey, etc.—and cut away as soon as that purpose is met. Use **love letters** (page 568) to set up strong opening scenes.

Push towards resolution. Resist the urge to complicate, escalate, or otherwise draw out a situation. Have foes flee or surrender when the fight turns against them. When you get the chance to make a hard GM move, end the current situation and push the PCs into a new one. Don't put them in a spot when you can capture them. Don't pick a lesser success when they can succeed with a cost and move on.

Prevent swirl. If the players start to spin their wheels, intervene. Help them identify what they want to accomplish, rather than keep talking about what they might do. Then lay out some ways to accomplish their goals. If they keep swirling, make a GM move that forces them to act.

Advancement

To start, PCs earn enough XP to Level Up every 2-4 sessions. It takes more sessions to Level Up as PCs advance—the XP cost increases, and players roll 6- less often.

A PC can Level Up only at home, which encourages players to return to Stonetop once they've accumulated enough XP. PCs can also Burn Brightly at this point, which lets them exchange excess XP for success (or fewer complications).

Slowing the rate

Ideally, PCs should Level Up only once between adventures. You want players to see each new move in play before they gain another. If your players often Level Up multiple times between adventures, consider some of the following.

Reset XP to 0 on Level Up. The simplest tweak, but some players might hate it. It also undercuts XP incentives once a PC has enough to Level Up.

Increase the XP requirement. The default requirement is 6 + (2 × level). Increase 6 to a 10 to add an extra session to most levels. Multiply their current level by 3 instead of 2 to really slow the rate of advancement at higher levels.

Adjust the End of Session questions. Be stricter about what counts as a "Yes," or rewrite questions to be harder to achieve. For example, "Did we learn more about the world or its history?" could become "Did we unearth any secrets of the past?"

Let players always Burn Brightly, even if they lack the XP to Level Up. (If you have a Would-be Hero with the Driven background, you'll need to tweak that move.)

Higher-level play

Past level 6, PCs become increasingly competent and harder to challenge. They have better stats, more ways of generating advantage, and lots of tools for overcoming challenges and mitigating dangers. They can start to feel invincible.

To continue challenging higher-level PCs:

Up the stakes. Use foes with *messy* attacks and moves that inflict lasting harm. Don't just threaten the harvest, threaten Stonetop itself. Don't just threaten the village, threaten the region as a whole.

Make 6- results hurt. High-level PCs roll low less often, so go hard when they do. Capture them. Reveal a betrayal. Destroy a prized possession. Sever a limb. Kill a loved one. Be irrevocable.

Be aggressive. Keep making soft GM moves, any chance you get. Make moves that affect multiple PCs. Make moves that force them to react before they can do what they want.

Hit them where they're weak. Look for ways to make them roll their lower stats. Threaten vulnerable NPCs and resources.

Make them choose where to focus their efforts, and make those choices matter. Present threats on multiple fronts. Whatever they don't deal with should escalate, go poorly, or have repercussions.

But also—and this is important—**let them enjoy their wins**. Give them chances to steamroll challenges that previously would have given them pause. Celebrate their competence and their accomplishments. Then, when you do challenge them, it'll feel all the more dire.

Retiring PCs

A PC might exit play because:

- They die and pass through the Last Door
- They retire after a lasting injury, as per **Convalesce** (page 249)
- Surplus runs short in **winter** (page 518), and the weariest PC's player has them die, leave, or retire
- They cross the line from protagonist to villain (page 587)
- Their player decides to have them leave Stonetop or retire from adventuring
- Their player leaves the game

Becoming a threat

When a PC descends into villainy and monstrosity, they stop becoming a PC and become a threat under the GM's control. Write them up as both a **threat** (page 282) and a **monster** (page 391), using their established moves, possessions, and abilities as inspiration. Don't worry about replicating their playbook abilities exactly, and feel free to make them scarier than they were as a PC.

Retirement

If a PC retires from play but stays in the village or the region, then turn them into an NPC. By default, their portrayal falls to you. But if everyone agrees, their original player can portray them.

Whoever portrays them, don't let them overshadow the PCs. They're retired! It's okay for them to advise and support the PCs, or to help meet the requirements of a plan. But they shouldn't act as followers or solve the PCs' problems. If need be, ask the ex-PC's original player why they can't or won't help with any given problem.

Epilogues

When a PC retires or passes away, give them an epilogue: a scene or two to send them off and say goodbye.

If the PC died, play out the funeral or wake. Establish the local traditions, if you haven't already. Show how NPCs react. Ask the surviving PCs to say some words. Let the dead PC's player savor the farewell to their fallen alter ego.

If the PC leaves Stonetop, then have the player narrate their departure, as well as a glimpse of their future—a "Where are they now?" moment. On the road to Lygos, wandering among the Hillfolk, stepping on the Fae paths to never be seen again… That sort of thing.

If the PC retires, play out their decision to do so. Then, now or later, have the player describe a typical day in their new life. Who are they with and what are they up to? How do they seem to be getting on? What do they seem to be enjoying? What regrets weigh them down?

Invite the other players to contribute, by asking questions, suggesting details, or playing out their own scenes of grief and loss, of absence and new beginnings.

Epilogues should skip game mechanics. These aren't scenes with conflict or even stakes. They're just vignettes, meant to give a sense of closure to a PC's tale.

New PCs

You might need to introduce a new PC to an ongoing game when:

- A new player joins your group
- A PC dies, retires, or otherwise leaves play (see previous page), and the player creates a replacement PC

If you're adding a player to an ongoing game, then brief them on the game so far. Have them read the Setting Overview and Moves & Gear handouts. Ideally, have them read the group's session logs and look over the steading playbook. Schedule time to answer any questions they have.

Creating the character

Have the player pick one of the unused playbooks. They should also pick a background that reflects either a new arrival in Stonetop or a local NPC stepping up to PC status—each playbook has at least two such backgrounds. You don't want this new, highly-skilled PC to have been here all along without ever getting involved.

When the player gets to the "worldbuilding" part of their playbook (back page, left column), help them make choices that fit with the established lore of your game.

As a rule, new PCs start play at level 1, no matter how seasoned everyone else is. Don't worry about "balance." A level 1 PC in *Stonetop* is plenty competent, and starting fresh lets the player learn the playbook and develop their character through play.

That said: it's okay to start a new PC at a higher level if there's a compelling reason (like the PC is an ancient hero freed from stasis), the player is familiar with *Stonetop*, and the whole group is cool with it.

Introductions

Have the player stop at the Introductions part of their playbook. Decide together how you'll bring them into the game. There are two basic approaches:

Play it out. Introduce the new PC in play. Frame a scene with them arriving in town, or have them be there when the PCs get home from an adventure. Or, like, have that clumsy kid get struck by lightning during a crisis and become the Storm-marked Heavy just in time to save the day. Skip the formal Introductions on their playbook, but ask questions as needed. This approach can be fun and visceral, but it can also take up a lot of game-time and inadvertently set up PC-PC conflicts.

Time skip. The new PC appears (or steps up) between sessions, during a stretch of downtime. Establish that they've been here (or been active) a while. Have the new PC do **Introductions** (page 56) more or less normally at the start of the next session (or between sessions, if that works for your group). Maybe write a **love letter** (page 568) to each existing PC that both covers events during the time skip and that establishes their connection to this new PC.

Getting them involved

Once they're in play, make sure the new PC matters. Prepare hooks that touch on their background, instincts, or unresolved questions. Work their worldbuilding elements into the game. Give them a little more spotlight, and allow them to find their place in the game.

Handled well, the introduction of a new PC is not disruptive. It deepens and adds new texture to your game.

Conflict between PCs

One of your players' agendas is to **portray a compelling character** (page 37), and such characters won't always agree. That's okay. Actually, that's great! Handled well, conflict between PCs can be high drama and some of the most memorable parts of the game.

Most PC conflicts are just disagreements, or one PC trying to stop another PC from doing something rash. The Would-be Hero goes to charge the corrupted boar, but the Marshal Interferes and stops them. The Blessed wants to subdue the beast and heal it if she can, and Persuades the other PCs to let her try.

Encourage players to argue in character, not to "win" but to establish their positions and their values. Use moves like Persuade (vs. PCs), Interfere, and Seek Insight to keep things moving.

Intractable differences

Over time, disagreements can grow into ongoing conflicts. The Judge won't stand for the Fox's deceit. The Fox can't forgive the Heavy for his husband's death. The Lightbearer frets over the state of the Seeker's soul.

When you first sense such tensions, check in with the players. Make sure that the frustrations and emotions are felt by the characters and not the players. If the players are getting upset with each other, take a step back and look for a solution. Update your content guidelines, fix the fiction if you need to, and commit to whatever changes you've all agreed upon.

If everyone is on board, though, then lean into the conflict. Ask folks what they're looking for. Escalation? Resolution? Heartbreak? Use their answers to guide what comes next.

Open conflict

When PCs directly oppose each other—through violence, subterfuge, sabotage, or whatever—then slow down. A lot.

First, do a temperature check. If things feel heated between the players, then call time out. Check in. Make sure everyone wants to proceed. A little conversation can go a long way towards preventing hurt feelings, resentment, and distrust.

If everyone is on board with the conflict, then give everyone involved a chance to declare their intent. When one PC does something that actively affects another PC or their interests, tell the targeted player what they perceive. Ask what they do in response. If any other PCs are present or involved, ask what they do as well. Figure out what moves are being triggered, and in what order. Very often, someone will end up Interfering.

Use the results of PC actions and player moves to inform what comes next. Keep checking in with the players. Move the spotlight and give other PCs chances to get involved. If someone rolls a 6-, push things to their logical (if unfortunate) conclusion, or interrupt the whole conflict with some unrelated but pressing problem.

Descent into villainy

Sometimes, a PC starts down a dark path. Maybe they keep using a major arcanum and racking up consequences. Maybe they are corrupted by the Things Below. Maybe they die but refuse to pass on, and linger as a **Ghost** (page 148), **Revenant** (page 150), or **Thrall** (page 152). Maybe they just make one grim choice after another.

It's usually okay for a PC to be wayward or wicked, but not both. If a PC schemes, lies, and causes trouble for the other PCs but their heart is in the right place, that's interesting. And if a PC relies on foul magic or despicable acts, but does so in alignment with the other PCs' goals, then that can be compelling. But a PC who's both evil and opposed to the other PCs is no longer a protagonist. They're a villain.

When a PC crosses the line into villainy, or just cozies up to it, check in. Does this PC's player think they can be redeemed? Do the other players want to try? If not, does everyone want to play out one last conflict or scheme? If the answer to any of these is "No," then the PC should **become a threat** (page 584). If the answer to all three questions is "Yes," then focus on that confrontation in an upcoming session. If the party fails to redeem their one-time ally, then that PC becomes a threat.

Regarding secrets

When PCs come into conflict, it's natural that they will start lying to each other, or keeping secrets. Great! More drama! But don't let players keep secrets from each other. Don't accept notes they pass you. Don't have private chats or huddles in the hall. Encourage everyone to keep in mind what they know vs. what their character knows, and then enjoy the dramatic irony.

The Game Ongoing

Time skips

Stonetop often has you gloss over stretches of time. You might cover days, weeks, or months of travel or downtime with little more than a brief description and a few questions for the PCs. But sometimes, you want to zoom way out and jump farther forward in time. Maybe you reach the end of a story arc and you'd like to **let things breathe**, or let the PCs age and mature. Perhaps your group takes a break for real-world reasons, and you want to reflect that in the fiction. A PC might head off to Lygos and you want to jump ahead to their return. Or maybe there's a big **shake-up** (page 590) and you want to skip the immediate aftermath.

How you handle a time skip depends largely on its length.

Months, seasons, years

If you're skipping a few months, seasons, or years, then write **love letters** (page 568) to cover the gap. These can be fairly involved, including not only a roll and its results, but also invitations to narrate events and/or to involve the other players. "Dear Marshal, it's been a peaceful year but tell us—what trouble has stemmed from having a standing watch that you never predicted? Then, ask each of the other PCs one of the following …"

If the time skip straddles the change of just one season, have the players make the Seasons Change move and incorporate its results into your letters. For a skip that spans multiple seasons, work changes to steading elements (Fortunes, Surplus, improvements, etc.) into the love letters. Either way, prep a new **adventure** (page 251) to bring things back with a bang.

Up to a decade or two

If you're skipping more than a few years, up to a decade or two, take a session off from actual play. Instead, discuss:

- How long, exactly, are you skipping?
- Who wants to continue playing their current PC? How might they change?
- Who wants to make new PCs?
- What NPCs and setting elements should continue to be important?
- How has the setting changed?

Have anyone who wants to play a new PC create them now, picking any background that makes sense given the time skip. Do **Introductions** (page 56) as normal, with the existing PCs each taking turns during steps 6-7 (PC connections). Pick a starting season and do the Seasons Change move. Use the result to craft a **First Adventure** (page 251), writing love letters to existing PCs to help fill in the skipped-over time.

Generations

If you jump ahead generations, then you're starting a whole new game. Hold a new **first session** (page 32). Discuss how the setting has changed in light of the game that just ended. Make and introduce new PCs, keeping those changes in mind. Ask questions about the timeline between the prior game and this one. Have spring burst forth, and prep a first adventure.

In play, continue to ask questions and fill in the timeline between games. Sprinkle this game with connections to the prior one. Encourage players to do the same. Revisit the ruin where the previous Heavy died. Reveal that this Fox's father was that kid who tagged along after the old PCs. Gasp when the Marshal anoints her crew with red pigment, to honor the scar borne by the last generation's Would-be Hero.

Shake-ups

The PCs all die, or leave Stonetop for good. The village is razed and its people scattered. A cataclysm is unleashed upon the world. Big changes like these can upend your game. Don't panic. Talk to the players about how they'd like to proceed.

You have two basic options:

Option 1: End the game

The right answer is often the simplest: call it quits. If the story feels complete, or the shake-up has stolen the game's momentum, then let the game end. Consider using the **Denouement** (page 595) move if that kind of closure feels right.

Take a break. Play something else for a while. You can always come back to *Stonetop* later, either with a whole new game or by doing a time skip and starting up a few decades or generations later.

Option 2: Pivot

Keep playing, adjusting the game to reflect the shake-up. Skip forward an appropriate amount of time (see previous page). Make any mechanical changes you need. The specifics will vary case by case.

Pivots like this can be hard. They make you rethink the game's core assumptions. You have to update rules and handouts. You're basically designing a new game. But if you and your players are down for it, it can be rewarding and fun as hell.

The PCs have left Stonetop to help allied Hillfolk clans in a war against their rivals. I write up a new steading playbook for the ally's war-camp, skip ahead a few months, and write love letters to establish the new situation. The next few seasons might involve stealth missions, attempts to secure resources, and pitched battles. When the war ends and the PCs head home, I'll write love letters to determine what happened while they were gone.

The PCs have all died trying to stop the release of ***Y'aaw'kara*** *(*Book II, *page 421). A new ice age is unleashed and the Howling Curse plagues the land. We decide to skip ahead a decade or so and start fresh with all new PCs, and discuss how Stonetop has adapted to the harsh new climate, updating its resources and potential improvements accordingly. I rewrite the Seasons Change move, update the inventory inserts and gear lists, and give everyone a custom insert for tracking the* ***Howling Curse*** *(*Book II, *page 492).*

The PCs have been exiled from Stonetop and have taken up lives as wandering adventurers. The steading playbook will no longer be relevant to them; most of the Homefront moves no longer apply, or would be much harder to trigger, so I rewrite some of the questions in the End of Session move, and update Level Up to require "a quiet stretch of downtime," instead of "a quiet stretch at home." All in all, the game will now play out more like a traditional fantasy-adventure RPG.

Ending your game

All stories end. Maybe the story of your Stonetop burns bright and fast. Maybe it stretches on for years.

Maybe it just… fizzles out. And that's fine. Not every story gets a good ending.

Ideally, though, you'll see the end coming. Maybe real life forces your hand, and one or more of your players are moving, or having a kid, or starting school or a new job and they can't play anymore. Maybe you sense the game's story arcing towards its conclusion. Or maybe you or some of your players are just getting the itch to play something else.

Planning for the end

When you see the end coming, you have an opportunity. An opportunity for climax, denouement, and a fitting farewell. A chance to give your shared story the final chapter it deserves.

1 Schedule a planning session

Once you realize it's time to start ending the game, schedule a planning session with your players. Expect it to take an hour or two, so it might just be part of a normal session.

Try to make sure everyone can be there. If you can, give yourself some lead-time so that you and your players can prep.

2 Prepare

Ask your players to review the questions below, and give them some thought before the planning session. If they can't attend, ask them to send you their wish lists beforehand. Encourage everyone else to come with notes, or at least thoughts.

Before the game ends:

- What arcs do you want resolved?
- What questions do you want to see answered?
- What scenes do you hope to have?
- Are there any moves, artifacts, or arcana you'd love to see in action?
- What goals do you want a chance for your PC to accomplish?

If you have time, provide the players with a list of hanging threads for reference. That includes active **threats** (page 277), stuff from your **"I wonder…"** list (page 33), unsolved mysteries and unfished projects, player wishes yet to be granted, and so forth.

Give these questions some thought, yourself. You're allowed to have opinions!

3 Assemble the wishlist

Once you've gathered for the planning session, refer to the questions from step 2, above. Print them out if playing in person, or post them somewhere everyone can see. The goal here is to establish each player's wishlist of things they'd like to do, resolve, or see in play before the game ends.

If anyone is absent and sent you their wish list, read it off now. After that, go around the group and have each player share their list. Ask for clarification if needed, but try to limit discussion. You want everyone to freely share what they want.
Take notes, ideally somewhere public.

Keep track of which players wished for what. If you have ideas about how you'll accomplish these things, great—maybe jot that down privately. But keep the focus on what folks want for now.

If you have any of your own wishes that haven't been mentioned, share those now.

Open the floor for discussion. Let folks ask questions, make suggestions, endorse other folk's wishes, and reconsider their own. If your players wish for conflicting things, talk it over and come to a compromise. If they wish for something infeasible in the time you have, try to identify what is feasible instead.

Prioritize. Everyone (including you) can pick one "must-have" item, and up to two "important" items. Give folks the chance to strike off items they added earlier that they don't actually care about. Everything else is low priority, a "nice to have."

To be clear: this is a wish list, not a list of promises. You're all agreeing to try and fit these things in the game, but there's no guarantee how exactly they'll play out when that happens. "Deal with Brennan & the trade embargo" just means a chance to tie off those threads. Hopefully the PCs will succeed. But they might not!

Driving toward resolution

From now on, push play towards those must-have and important wishes. Work them into your prep. Keep the wish list handy as a reference during play, and get to the "nice to have" wishes as you can.

Make use of techniques for **increasing the pace** (page 582). Skip over the familiar. Zoom out and gloss over stuff where you can. Frame scenes aggressively. Make GM moves that resolve situations, rather than escalating or drawing them out. Resist the urge to introduce new threads or complications unless they directly relate to an item on the wish list. Step in when the players start to swirl.

Focus. You're in the endgame, now.

I'm starting a new job soon, and won't be able to keep running the game. I reckon we have time for maybe four more sessions. Prior to the next session, I send out the questions and my list of hanging threads, and ask folks to create wishlists. During our planning session, our discussion results in these priorities:

MUST-HAVES

- Deal with Brennan & the trade embargo (Rhianna, me)
- See the Mighty Servant in play (Vahid)
- Tell Caradoc how I feel (Blodwen)
- Prove himself to the village, once and for all (Caradoc)

IMPORTANT

- Resolve Nia's spider connection (me, Blodwen)
- Try to make peace with Owain (Rhianna)
- Settle things with Maire (Vahid)
- Use Big Damn Hero (Caradoc)
- Have it out with Vahid (Rhianna)

NICE TO HAVE

- Tegwen gets her comeuppance (Blodwen, Rhianna)
- Get back at Mutra (Vahid)
- See Eira in retirement (Rhianna)
- Morwenna's wedding (Caradoc)
- Punch Brennan's face (Caradoc)

If we're going to see the Mighty Servant on-screen, Vahid will need to acquire its aetherium helm and spend time with its chassis, assembling it. Dealing with Brennan and the trade embargo implies a direct confrontation. And if Caradoc is going to prove himself to the village, it should happen near Stonetop.

We've got only two sessions left, so we jump to spring and I use love letters to set the scene: Morwenna's wedding (a subdued affair), Blodwen and Caradoc dancing, Brennan's goons blockading the West Road, a skeevy adventurer sneaking past to sell the aetherium helm to Vahid.

During the session, Rhianna and Vahid have a row over his obsession with the Servant. The PCs and Rhianna's crew kill most of Brennan's men and drive off the rest. Caradoc uses Big Damn Hero and crosses "Would-be" off his playbook. Vahid heads north to assemble the Mighty Servant. The session ends there.

For the final session, we skip ahead to summer. Another round of love letters establish that Vahid is still assembling the Servant. Blodwen's and Caradoc's romance is going well. And Brennan is marching towards Stonetop with a force of Manmarcher mercenaries, intent on beating Stonetop into submission.

Will Rhianna and Caradoc rally the village? Will Blodwen convince Nia to call on the spiders for aid? Will Vahid return with the Mighty Servant and help turn the tables? Will Caradoc punch Brennan in the face?

I don't know, but we'll play to find out!

The final sessions

Figure out when your last session will be, and how many sessions you have before then. As you prep for those final sessions, keep the wishlist forefront in your mind.

Look at what you need to cover and how many sessions you have left. Use **time skips** (page 588), **love letters** (page 568), and aggressive scene-framing to get the wishes on screen. If you don't see a way to do so, talk to your players and ask for ideas. If you think you have an idea, but it involves committing the PCs to a certain course of action, check in and make sure everyone is on board.

Ignore moves, procedures, and rules that don't help you hit the wish list items in the time that remains. If the last session will hinge on a battle with Yaarowslow the Many in the ruins of Vor Svetelik, then don't bother with Seasons Change or the journey there or how many supplies the PCs have left.

During the finale, especially: **go big and don't hold back**. Make bold GM moves that force the PCs to make hard choices, take desperate risks, and put it all on the line. When they roll a 6-, make it hurt. Now more than ever, **let things burn**.

But also: **be a fan of the player characters**. Encourage boldness. Present them with opportunities. Give them all a chance to be heroes, one last time.

The end

When the final conflict ends and the dust starts to settle, take a breath. Then wrap up the current situation to whatever level of detail makes sense.

Don't use any moves or mechanics. Just describe the scene and give the players space to say what they do, what happens next. If there are moments they want to play out, let them. If they have questions, answer them.

Use what time remains to do this one last move, together.

DENOUEMENT

When ***the game comes to an end***, go around the table. On your turn, pick a scene below and ask the player or the GM to describe it.

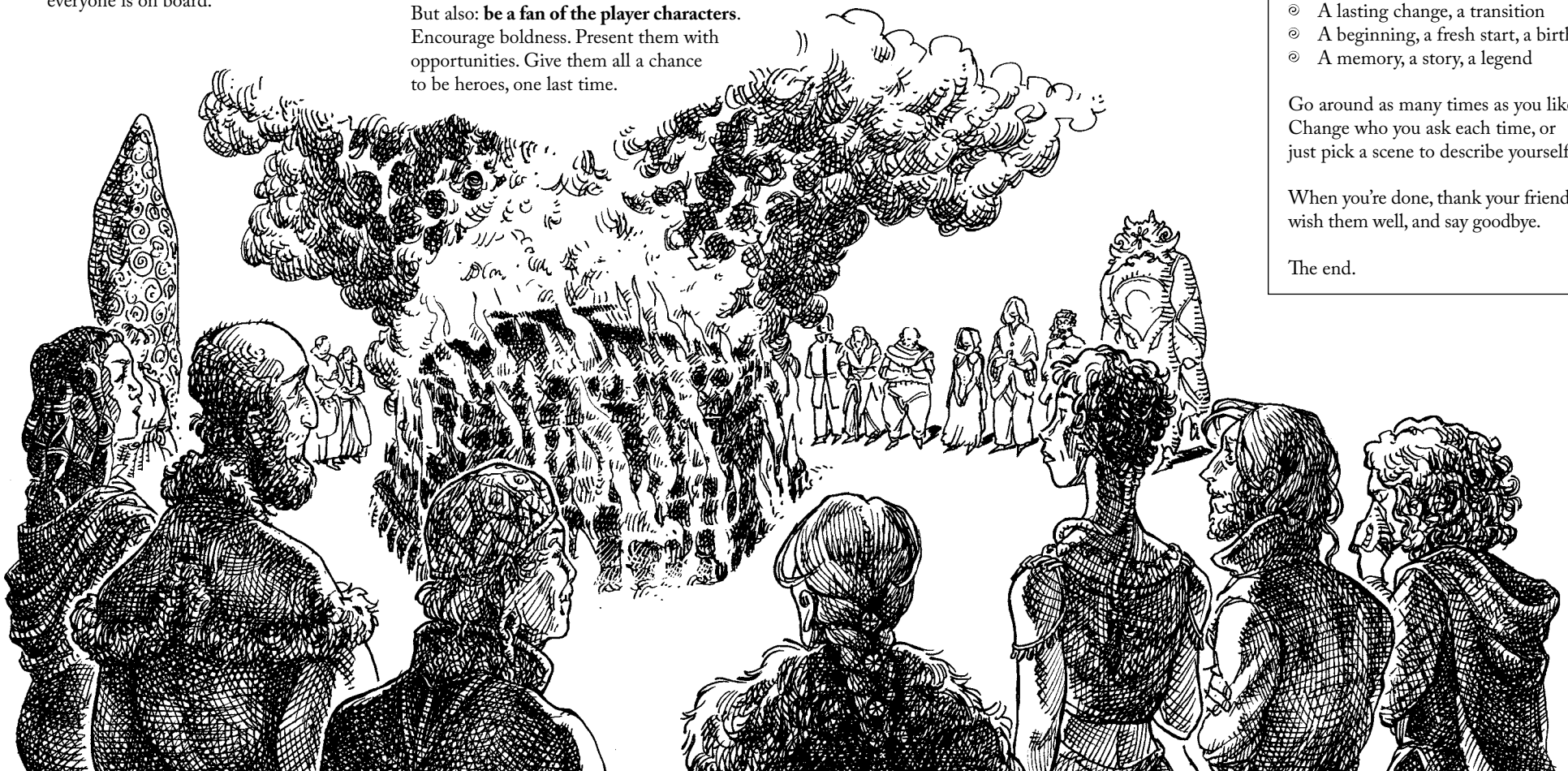
When you ***describe a scene***, make it involve your PC, an NPC important to them, or (if you're the GM) any NPC you like.

- A return home
- A funeral, a farewell, an ending
- A struggle, an absence, grief
- A time of rebuilding, renewal, hope
- A lasting change, a transition
- A beginning, a fresh start, a birth
- A memory, a story, a legend

Go around as many times as you like. Change who you ask each time, or just pick a scene to describe yourself.

When you're done, thank your friends, wish them well, and say goodbye.

The end.



Acknowledgements

Jeremy

Thanks to all the folks in the Dungeon World Tavern back on G+, where this version of *Stonetop* was born. And thanks to the playtesters, backers, and folks who pre-ordered. Your feedback has been invaluable. Your patience and support have been humbling.

Big thanks to the folks in my home games: Aubs Johnson, Brian Gratrix, Christian Herro, Josh Geurink, Josh Whelan, Kat Winters, Michael Donnelly, Priti Srivastava, Ryan Engel, Ryan Hansen, Ryan McDonald, and Sterling Lynk.

Enormous gratitude to Jason and Lucie for bringing this thing to life. To Luke Jordan, some rando on the internet who became a mentor and a friend. And to my mom, Patricia, for teaching me to dream.

Extra special thanks to Hobbes, Breaker of Chains, my personal ~~Would-be~~ Hero. I did it, Hobbes. I finished my damn game.

And of course: thank you, Angel, my love. For everything. My heart is bound to yours.

Lucie

I would like to thank our backers for their patience and support, and for making this book a reality.

My mentors and teachers from the Gottferdom Studio, for teaching me all about illustrating fantasy.

My mum and dad, for a childhood spent reading, and for bookshelves that touched the ceiling.

Most importantly, I would like to thank Jeremy and Jason for finding me, and for inviting me to be part of this extraordinary adventure.

Jason

Thanks to Jeremy, for accepting my invitation to turn his unique vision into a standalone game; to Lucie, whose beautiful drawings imbue these books with warmth and life; to JP Coovert, for being awesome; to Tony Vasinda and Richard Ruane, for their vital expertise; to Quintin Smith, for taking note of our labors; and to our backers, who stuck with us through thick and thin. Much like the village itself, this project would not exist without the enthusiasm, faith, and good will of the entire *Stonetop* community.

Mediography

Immediate game influences

The following works directly inspired *Stonetop*'s mechanics, techniques, setting, themes, and approach to information design.

- *Dungeon World*, Adam Koebel & Sage LaTorra, Sage Kobold Productions, 2012
- *Apocalypse World*, D. Vincent Baker & Meguey Baker, lumpley games, 2010
- *Storming the Wizard's Tower*, D. Vincent Baker, unpublished, 2008
- *Dungeons & Dragons* (4th Edition), Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt; Wizards of the Coast, 2008
- *Blades in the Dark*, John Harper, Evil Hat Productions, 2017
- *Beyond the Wall and Other Adventures*, John Cocking & Peter S. Williams, Flatland Games, 2013
- *The Perilous Wilds*, Jason Lutes, Lampblack & Brimstone, 2016
- *20 Dungeon Starters*, Marshall Miller & Mark Tygart, Lampblack & Brimstone, 2016
- *Trilemma Adventures*, Michael Prescott, Trilemma Adventures, 2019
- *Ars Magica*, Mark Rein-Hagen & Jonathan Tweet, Lion Rampant Games, 1987

Blogs

You can find a lot of writing about *Stonetop* and its development at Jeremy's blog, *Spouting Lore* (2018-2023). Additionally, the following essays and series either influenced techniques and approaches presented in this game or demonstrate the game in action.

- "*Apocalypse World*: Crossing the Line," John Harper, *The Mighty Atom*, 2010
- "Paint the Scene," Jason Cordova, *The Gauntlet Blog*, 2018
- "The 7-3-1 Technique," Jason Cordova, *The Gauntlet Blog*, 2018
- "A 16 HP Dragon," Stras Acimovic, reposted by Sage LaTorra, Latorra.org, 2012
- "Powered by the Apocalypse" (12-part series), D. Vincent Baker, *lumpley games*, 2019-2025
- *A Collection of Unmitigated Pedantry*, Bret Devereaux, 2019-present (especially the "Practical Polytheism" series and the "Iron, How Did They Make It?" series)
- "Xandering the Dungeon," Justin Alexander, *The Alexandrian*, 2010
- "Dungeon Checklist," Arnold K., *Goblin Punch*
- "PTFO: Stonetop" (solo actual-play series), SGH, *PTFO* on Substack, 2022-present

Touchstones

There's no one thing you can point at and say "*Stonetop* is just like this." But here's some stuff that you might look to for vibes.

- *Barbarians* (TV series), Andreas Heckmann et al, Gaumont Germany, 2020-2022
- *The Bear and the Nightingale* (book; and to a lesser extent the whole *Winternight* trilogy), Katherine Arden, Del Rey, 2017
- *The Chronicles of Prydain* (book series), Lloyd Alexander; Holt, Reinhart, and Winston; 1964-1968
- *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (book series), Susan Cooper, Random House, 1965-1977
- *The Demon Cycle* (book series), Peter V. Brett, Penguin Random House, 2010-2017
- *Farseer* (book trilogy), Robin Hobb, Spectra, 1995-1997
- *The First Law* (book series), Joe Abercrombie, Orbit Books, 2006-present
- *The Hobbit* (book), J.R.R. Tolkien, George Allen & Unwin, 1937
- *King of Dragon Pass* (video game), David Dunham, A Sharp, 1999 (or anything else related to the Glorantha setting by Greg Stafford (so I'm told))

- *The Last Kingdom* (TV series), Stephen Butchard et al, Carnival Film and Television, 2015-2017
- *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (film), Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, 1984
- *Northlanders* (comic book series), Brian Wood, Vertigo, 2008-2012
- *Princess Mononoke* (film), Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, 1984
- *Redwall* (book series), Brian Jacques, Penguin Books, 1986-2011
- *Rome* (TV series), John Milius et al, HBO, 2005-2007
- *The Secret of Kells* (film), Tomm Moore & Nora Twomey, Les Armateurs, 2009
- *The Sharing Knife* (book series), Lois McMaster Bujold, HarperCollins, 2006-2019
- *Shattered Sea* (book trilogy) Joe Abercrombie, Del Rey, 2014-2015
- *Vikings* (TV series), Michael Hirst, TM Productions et al, 2013-2021
- *A Wizard of Earthsea* (book), Ursula K. Le Guin, Parnassus Press, 1968
- The Driftless region of Wisconsin, and Texas Hill Country

And also...

The following influenced or inspired certain specific elements of *Stonetop*, or resonate strongly with some of its themes. Maybe they'll inspire you, too.

- *At the Mountains of Madness* (novella), H.P. Lovecraft, *Astounding Stories*, 1936 (and other stories by Lovecraft)
- *The Black Company* (book series), Glen Cook, 1984-present, Tor Fantasy
- *Black Spot* (TV series), Mathieu Missoffe, Ego Productions et al, 2017-2019
- *Chronos* (film), Guillermo del Toro, Fondo de Fomento Cinematográfico et al, 1992
- The "Conan" stories (books and adaptations); Robert E. Howard, L. Sprague de Camp, and Lin Carter; various publishers, 1950-1977 (especially "Red Nails")
- *Deadwood* (TV series), David Milch, Roscoe Productions et al, 2004-2006
- *Discern Realities* (podcast), Jason Cordova & David LaFrieniere, The Gauntlet, 2015-2019
- *Gentleman Bastard* (book series), Scott Lynch, Bantam Books, 2006-2013
- *Gladiator* (film), Ridley Scott, DreamWorks Pictures et al, 2000
- *Heart Shaped Box* (book), Joe Hill, William Morrow, 2007
- *Hillfolk* (RPG), Robin Laws, Pelgrane Press, 2013
- *A History of Violence* (film), David Cronenberg, BenderSpink et al, 2005
- *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* (book), Susanna Clarke, Bloomsbury, 2004
- *Legacy: Life Among the Ruins* (RPG), Minerva McJanda, UFO Press, 2015
- *Little House on the Prairie* (book series), Laura Ingalls Wilder, Harper & Brothers, 1932-1971
- *Low Country* (album), The Sword, Razor & Tie, 2016
- *The Magnus Archives* (podcast), Jonathan Simms & Alexander J. Newall, Rusty Quill, 2016-2021
- *Mouse Guard* (comic book series), David Petersen, Archaia Studios Press, 2006-present
- *Monster Man* (podcast), James Holloway, 2018-present
- *No Country for Old Kobolds* (RPG), Steve Wallace, Steve Wallace Art, 2016
- *Old Gods of Appalachia* (podcast), Steve Shell & Cam Collins, Deepnerd Media, 2019-present
- *Pan's Labyrinth* (film, 2006), Guillermo del Toro, Estudios Picasso et al, 2006
- *Prey* (film), Dan Trachtenberg, 20th Century Studios et al, 2022
- *The Revenant* (film), Alejandro González Iñárritu, Regency Enterprises et al, 2015
- *The Ritual* (film), David Bruckner, The Imaginarium, 2017
- *Sagas of the Icelanders* (RPG), Gregor Vuga, 2013
- *The Secret of NIMH* (film), Don Bluth, United Artists, 1982
- *Under Hollow Hills* (RPG), Meguey Baker & D. Vincent Baker, lumpley games, 2021
- *The Wardstone Chronicles* (book series), Joseph Delaney, Greenwillow Books, 2004-2013

CAVEAT EMPTOR

All of the above are relevant and potentially useful as inspiration, but they're not necessarily all good. And some of the creators held and espoused hurtful beliefs, which permeates their work. Others have done or been accused of terrible things. People, like art and our consumption of it, are complicated.

For any topic with multiple page references, a **bold** page reference indicates a definitive entry for that topic.

A

Address the characters, not the players. *See* GM principles
Advance towards impending doom. *See* GM moves
Advantage 21, **40**, 43, 59, 70, 72–74, 79, 97, 99, 105, 106, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 123, 126, 127, 130, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 143, 149, 151, 153, 157, 158, 159, 183, **209**, 212–213, 219–220, 222, 227, 228, 228–229, **230–231**, 248, 309, 323, 334–335, 382–383, 408, 415–416, 428, 441–442, 463, 473, 509, 527, 534, 535–536, 538–539, 541, 543, 554, 556, 562, 562–563, 566, 583
Advantage/Disadvantage. *See* Player moves
Adventure 8, 13, 16–17, 21–22, 32–33, 45, 177, 189, 196–199, 203, 252–256, 259–261, 266, 270, 273–275, 280–281, 288, 307, 332, 338–339, 342, 350, 356, 385, 392, 427, 484, 488–489, 491, 494, 496–498, 500–501, 503, 506, 521–522, 528–529, 537, 546, 577–578, 582–583, 585, 588–589, 597. *See also* Punctuate the characters' lives with adventure
First **251–275**
Background 255–261
Dropping the hook 270–273
Goals 252–253
Heading out 274–275
Setting the scene 268–269
Setup questions 262–265
Structure 254
Hook. *See* Hooks
Starters 16, 21, 22, **254**, 356
Affliction. *See* Threats
Agenda 17, 35, **37**, 44, 47, 49, 167–168, 192, 203, 208, 210, 254, 290, 324, 558, 565, 575
GM 37, **168**. *See also* GM principles
Player **37**. *See also* Player principles
Aid. *See* Player moves
Animal companion 26, 64, 129, 130, 141, **143**, 184, 469
Announce trouble. *See* GM moves
Aratis 24, 28, 117, 118, 119, 120, 256, 285, 348, 426, 436–437, 521
Arcana 16–17, 20, 26, 29, **58–63**, 90, 101, 136, 141, 192, 205, 230–231, 362, 369, 422–423, 428, 431, **438–447**, 461, 474, 497, 540, 550, 576–577, 591
Consequences 442
Identifying 440
Major 20, 29, **60–63**, 369, 438, 440, 443, 446–447, 577
Creating 446–447
Minor 29, **58–59**, 60, 136, 369, 438, 440, 444–445, 461, 577
Creating 444–445
NPCs using 443
Placing 438
Sharing 442
Unlocking 440
Armor 20–21, 50, **53**, 54, 64, 92, 94–97, 106, 110, 111, 114, 115, 118, 119, 122, 126, 130, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 152, 153, 182–183, 185, 187, 191, 214–217, 222–224, 238, **239**, 243–244, 256, 309, 354, 383, 385, 388, 390, 392, 397–398, 400, 405, 415–416, 437, 439, 447, 453, 459–461, 461, 470, 472, 475, 477, 479, 512
Artifact 87, 234, 294, 353, 422–423, **428–437**, 438–439, 443–444, 576
Buying 433
Creating 434–437
Identifying 430
In play 431
NPCs using 443
Placing 429
Selling 432
Ask a provocative question. *See* GM moves

Ask questions and build on the answers. *See* GM principles
Assets. *See* Steading

B

Barrier Pass 10–11, 105, 109, 117, 121, 129, 133, 137, 165, 290, 394, 453, 507, 519
Be a fan of the player characters. *See* GM principles
Beast. *See* Threats
Be bold, take risks. *See* Player principles
Begin and end with the fiction. *See* GM principles; *See* Player principles
Blessed, the 12, 20, 23, 28, 30, 47, 57, 64, 81, 104, **105–108**, 131, 134, 141, 145, 189, 292, 309, 418, 471, 507, 528, 552, 586
Initiates of Danu. *See* Initiates of Danu
Bolster. *See* Player moves
Bring it home. *See* GM principles
Bronze 11, 87, 91, 93, 96, 114, 118, 126, 145, 309, 353, 365, 374, 412, 429, 430, 438–439, 470, 496, 541, 543, 575
Build on what others have said. *See* Player principles
Burn Brightly. *See* Player moves

C

Capture someone. *See* GM moves
Characters 7–9, **12–13**, 16, 20, 28, 32–33, 36, 47, 51, 69, 108, 112, 116, 120, 124, 128, 132, 136, 140, 168–171, 175–178, 188, 192–195, 197–199, 202, 212, 238, 241, 243, 245, 249, 252, 254–255, 264, 270, 273, 302, 304, 308, 310, 312–313, 316, 328–329, 332, 338, 341, 381, 404, 406, 411–412, 418, 427, 438, 441, 444–445, 450–454, 484–488, 503–504, 522, 553, 586, 594
Creating **20–21**, 51
Non-player. *See* NPCs
Player. *See* PCs
Charisma (CHA) **52**, 71–73, 106, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 118, 122, 123, 126, 127, 130, 134, 138, 149, 210, 213, 218–219, 224–227, 241, 294, 311, 497, 533, 569
Chart a Course. *See* Player moves
Chronicle, the 24, 28, 31, 68, 101, 117, **120**, 285, 310, 346, 426
Clash. *See* Player moves
Combat 42, 214, 215, 379, 406, **406–419**, 408, 414, 416, 418
Abstracting groups 416
Fighting spirits 413
Foes they can't hurt 412
Maps, tokens, and minis 419
Multiple combatants 414–415
Connect with the other PCs. *See* Player principles
Constitution (CON) 41, **52**, 53, 59, 62, 71–72, 72, 106, 110, 113, 114, 118, 122, 126, 130, 134, 138, 150, 210, 216–218, 241, 323, 331, 388, 439, 441, 525, 553, 559, 561–562
Content 9, 16, **18–19**, 20–21, 49, 66, 156, 488, 495, 576, 580–581, 587
Guidelines 18–21, **66**, 488, 495, 576, 580–581, 587
Convalesce. *See* Player moves
Core loop, the 169–174, 177, 179, 203, 322, 349, 423, 427, 450, 452, 466, 489, 500, 553, 564
Crew 12, 25, 29, 32, 57, 64, 125, 126, 127, 128, 141, **144**, 159, 187, 189, 190, 213, 221, 223, 225, 229, 247, 252, 261, 265, 271, 273, 305, 307, 309, 310, 318, 321, 330–331, 333, 414–416, 424, 450, 460, 463, 465–474, 476, 480–481, 491, 494, 495–496, 499, 506, 525, 527, 529, 533, 535, 538, 546–547, 553, 562, 566, 569, 589, 593
Crinwin 10, 33, 112, 116, 128, 163, 171–172, 179, 180, 183, 192, 201, 208, 211, 215, 217, 221, 223, 225, 229, 255–263, 265, 268–271, 273, 280, 283, 287, 289–291, 294–296, 299, 305,

317–321, 330–331, 339, 342–343, 350, 353, 356–358, 360–361, 364–365, 367, 370–377, 385–388, 390, 392, 414–416, 427, 429, 453, 468, 470, 474, 491, 496, 498–499, 501, 522–523, 527, 531, 533, 535, 539, 546–547, 569

D

Damage 20–21, 39, 41, 43, 48, 50, **53**, 62, 64, 70–72, 74, 78, 94–97, 106, 107, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 118, 119, 122, 123, 126, 127, 130, 131, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 161, 173, 179, 182, 184–185, 187, 191, 193, 202, 213–217, 222–223, 230–231, 234, 238, **238–240**, 243–248, 310, 320, 323, 328, 337, 354, 372, 374–375, 383, 385–388, 390–392, 395, 398–399, 401–402, 405, 407–411, 413–418, 439, 442, 444, 453, 459–461, 463, 469–470, 472–473, 475, 477, 479–480, 525, 533, 536, 556, 564
Dangers 38, 52, 179, 192, 195–197, 205, 210–211, 221, 235, 239, 254, 260, 274–275, 278, 288, 315, 317, 319–320, 323, 328–331, 334–337, 340–343, 347–348, 350–353, 355, 357, 362–363, 366, 368–369, **379–419**, 422, 426, 447, 465, 534, 550, 553, 577–578, 583
Hazards **381–389**
Monsters **390–405**
Danu 23, 28, 30, 32, 64, 105, 107, 108, 141, 145, 287, 338, 365, 373, 495–496, 525, 546
Initiates of. *See* Initiates of Danu
Death's Door. *See* Player moves
Debility 41, 50, 52, 61–62, 65, 67, 78–80, 104, 106, 110, 114, 115, 118, 121, 122, 123, 126, 130, 131, 134, 135, 138, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 158, 184–185, 230–231, **241–242**, 243, 246–249, 328, 334–336, 339, 389, 442, 447, 496, 503, 508, 511–513, 526, 554, 556–557, 562–564, 566–567, 576, 581
PC
Dazed 41, 52, 106, 110, 114, 118, 122, 126, 130, 131, 134, 138, 185, 191, 214, 234, **241**, 242–243, 247–248, 354, 389, 564, 566
Miserable 52, 106, 110, 114, 118, 122, 126, 130, 134, 138, 185, **241**, 242–243
Weakened 52, 62, 106, 110, 114, 118, 122, 126, 130, 134, 138, 184–185, 211, **241**, 242–244, 248
Steading
Diminished 67, 79, 81–82, 154, 156, 339, 485, 512, **513**, 526, 532–533, 533
Lacking 67, 79, 82, 154, 339, 511, **513**, 532
Malcontent 67, 79, 82, 154, 339, 508, **513**, 516, 532
Defend. *See* Player moves
Defenses 66–68, 81, 99, 154, 156, 159, **512–513**, 514, 526–527, 533–535
Defy Danger. *See* Player moves
Demonstrate a downside. *See* GM moves
Deploy. *See* Player moves
Deprivation **335**
Dexterity (DEX) 21, **52**, 53, 62, 71–72, 106, 110, 111, 114, 118, 122, 126, 130, 134, 138, 147, 149, 192, 202, 209–211, 218–219, 222–223, 241, 330, 408, 560
Dice 8–9, 21, 35–37, 39–40, 42, 45, 49, 74, 147, 168, 193, 201, 208–209, 218, 230, 247, 293, 322, 330, 357, 406, 462, 467, 474, 561
Notation **9**
Die of Fate, the 42, 85, 89, **201**, 221, 231, 323–324, 335, 341, 369–370, 376, 518, 525, 561
Disadvantage 21, **40**, 41, 43, 52, 67, 71, 74, 76, 79, 81–83, 106, 110, 111, 114, 115, 118, 119, 122, 126, 127, 130, 134, 138, 139, 143, 144, 145, 146, 153, 154, 156, 183, **209**, 216–219, 222, 227, **230–231**, 234, 241, 241–242, 249, 297, 325, 331, 335–336, 382–383, 441, 462, 470, 509, 513, 516, 526, 534, 536, 540–541, 561, 563–564, 569

E

Embrace difficulty, setback, and failure. *See* Player principles
Embrace the fantastic and the mundane. *See* GM principles
End of Session. *See* Player moves
Expeditions 8–9, 20–21, 58, 67, 69, 77, 86–89, 98, 101, 161, 171, 179, 203, 205, 231, 233, 249, 270, 272–275, 299, 301, **301–343**, 346, 351, 355, 380, 384, 392, 423, 427, 474, 479–480, 484, 488–490, 492, 494, 498–502, 509, 515, 521, 524, 528, 534, 537, 545, 567, 577, 582
Going home 338–339
Moves 326–337
Points of interest 315
Preparations 302–311
Prepping 340–343
Running 312–325
Weather 324–325
Exploit the setting guide. *See* GM principles

F

Fae 10, 10–11, 49, 101, 105, 112, 131, 133, 135, 137, 145, 163, 194, 196, 220–221, 229, 253, 258, 266, 286–287, 290, 320, 342–343, 356, 356–357, 360–361, 364–365, 370, 373, 377, 389, 392–397, 400, 405–406, 427–431, 434, 437, 446, 470, 473, 522, 524, 552–553, 555, 557, 559, 563, 566, 584
Flashback **311**, 326
Followers 59, 64, 76, 97, 101, 107, 123, 139, 141, 143, 144, 153, 184, 186, 192, 205, 212, 214, 234, 240, 242, 290, 310, 314, 326–328, 333, 343, 414, 419, 445, 450, 453–454, 457, 459, 460, **460–481**, 494, 576–577, 581
Creating **474–479**
Moves. *See* Moves, Follower
On expeditions 310
Follow the rules. *See* GM principles
Forage. *See* Player moves
Forest Folk 10–11, 17, 23, 26, 33, 105, 163, 232, 257, 343, 356–357, 360–361, 364, 371, 390, 394, 405, 423
Fortifications 65, 67, 154, 158, 159, 310, 508, **513**, 536, 576
Resources and 67
Fortunes 32, 66–68, 77, 79, 82–84, 98–99, 106, 154, 156, 157, 158, 182, 259, 308–309, 339, 485, **508**, 513–514, 516–518, 522–523, 531–539, 559, 569, 576, 588
Fox, the 12, 23, 28, 47, 109, **109–112**, 115, 126, 131, 171, 179, 196, 356, 381, 414, 450, 455, 458, 486, 507, 552, 554, 567, 586, 589

G

Ghost 16, 57, 62, 75, 112, 141, **148–149**, 150, 201, 233, 245, 347, 356, 359, 406, 413, 424, 575, 587
Give others a chance to shine. *See* Player principles
Give your characters life. *See* GM principles
GM moves 64, 172–173, 176, **178–191**, 197, 202, 205, 241, 244, 268–270, 273, 273–275, 279, 282, 284, 284–287, 290–291, 294–298, 302–303, 306, 312, 314, 317, 321–322, 324, 335, 349, 352, 354, 369, 384, 386, 388, 391–392, 401, 411, 417–418, 443, 451, 453, 460, 466, 475, 478, 489, 502, 507, 534, 537, 545, 547, 553, 564, 577–578, 583, 592, 594
Advance towards impending doom **188**, 229, 291, 387, 520, 522, 527, 537

Announce trouble **180**, 188, 190, 202, 219, 222, 229, 391, 410, 418, 424, 500, 532, 533, 538
Ask a provocative question 178, **181**, 189, 269, 274
Be a fan of the player characters 192, 195, 197, 412, 484, 486
Capture someone 175, 178, **186**
Demonstrate a downside 178, 179, **183**, 221, 241, 244, 354, 414
Hard. *See* Hard moves
Hurt someone 178, **184**, 185, 336, 441
Offer an opportunity 178, 190, 191, 211, 221, 222, 230, 254, 271, 310, 410, 424, 428, 430, 471, 495, 500, 507, 547, 582
Offer an **187**
Put someone in a spot 178, **181**, 188, 191, 222, 244, 463, 560
Reveal an unwelcome truth 178, **180**, 188, 214, 215, 221, 222, 225, 229, 244, 254, 271, 282, 327, 336, 412–414, 499
Separate them 175, 178, **186**, 321, 324, 354
Soft. *See* Soft moves
Tell them the consequences/requirements 172, 178, **187**, 190, 210, 214, 221–222, 231, 241, 244, 254, 303, 308–309, 321–323, 326, 331, 334–335, 354, 381–382, 412, 414, 492, 524, 526, 530, 538, 582
Turn their move back on them 178, **183**, 221, 226, 229
Use up their resources 178–179, **182**, 185, 214, 222, 229, 239, 243–244, 304, 321, 334, 351, 354, 391, 507
GM principles **192**
Address the characters, not the players 192, **193**, 195, 484–485
Ask questions and build on the answers 171, 192, **194**, 310, 466, 484, 485, 500
Be a fan of the player characters 192, **195**, 197, 249, 412, 484, 486, 594
Begin and end with the fiction 147, 192, **193**, 216, 228, 310, 339, 419, 424, 440, 442, 484
Bring it home 192, **198**, 306, 339, 440, 442, 484, 488, 490, 503, 524
Embrace the fantastic and the mundane 192, **196**, 484, 486, 506
Exploit the setting guide 192, **196**, 355, 357, 423, 426, 484, 486, 500
Follow the rules **192**, 441, 467, 484
Give your characters life 192, **197**, 452–453, 484, 487, 503, 504
Let things breathe 192, **199**, 314, 441, 452, 484, 488, 501, 506, 588
Let things burn 192, **199**, 211, 240, 386, 406, 441, 469, 484, 488, 594
Respect your prep 192, **197**, 412, 484, 487, 500
Think offscreen, too 192, **198**, 484, 488, 492
Gordin's Delve 10–11, 19, 77, 93, 100–101, 109, 113, 117, 121, 125, 129, 133, 137, 154, 157, 165, 198, 225, 256, 279, 295, 302, 308, 334, 346, 394, 407, 426, 453–454, 460–461, 463, 465, 467–468, 474, 479–480, 497, 500–501, 507, 511, 523, 530, 535, 539, 541, 543, 552, 582
Great Wood, the 6, 10–11, 23, 27, 112, 128–129, 132, 177, 189, 198, 256, 258–259, 288, 290, 297, 312, 342–343, 356, 360, 427, 470, 486, 493, 500–501, 522–523, 553, 566

H

Hard moves 169, **173**, 179–180, 184, 190–191, 209, 214, 216, 218, 223, 312, 314, 317–318, 320, 322, 353, 381, 409, 419, 442, 499–500, 503–507, 541, 560, 582
Have goals and pursue them. *See* Player principles
Have What You Need. *See* Player moves
Hazards. *See* Dangers
Heavy, the 12, 21, 24, 28, 53, 57, 110, **113–116**, 126, 131, 141, 179, 183, 202, 230, 239, 241, 270, 287, 438, 455, 474, 486, 494, 507, 528, 585–586, 589
Helior 25, 29, 121, 122, 123, 124, 565
Hillfolk 11, 19, 32, 58, 100, 105, 112–113, 117, 125, 128–129, 132–133, 137, 156–157, 163, 165, 198, 281, 284, 286–287, 297, 320, 323, 337, 339, 348, 355, 394, 414, 423, 453, 455, 474, 514, 519, 521, 541, 584, 590, 599
Hit points (HP) 41, 50, **53**, 59, 62, 64, 66, 75, 78–80, 86, 89, 95, 97, 104–107, 110, 114, 115, 118, 122, 123, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 134, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 161, 182, 184, 185, 197, 222, 233–234, **238–240**, 243, 245–249, 297, 310, 328, 334, 374–375, 383, 390, 392, 395–396, 400, 405, 409–411, 413, 415–417, 442, 447, 453, 459–461, 469–470, 472–473, 475, 477, 479–480, 496, 511, 526, 554, 556, 561, 581
Homefront 32, 80, 179, 224, 233, 249, 254, 268, 270, 274–275, 281, 288, 309, 440, **483–547**, 577, 579, 582, 590
Downtime 496–497
Moves. *See* Player moves
Prepping 544–547
Running the 489–497
Seasons Change 516–523
Hooks 32, 205, 253, **254–261**, 262–264, 268, 270, 270–273, 280, 288, 489, 498, 500–501, 522, 577–579, 585
Hurt someone. *See* GM moves

I

Ignores armor 97, 106, 118, 135, 146, 148, 152, 153, 234, **239**, 243, 354, 383, 385, 388, 398, 437, 439
Improvements 45, 68, 85, 98–100, 255, 257, 431, 436, 443, 500, **514–515**, 518–519, 522, 524, 526, 530–531, 536, 544
Improvisation & prep 170
Initiates of Danu 32, 64, 105, 141, 145, 495, 496
Institution. *See* Threats
Intelligence (INT) 40, 49, **52**, 61–62, 71–72, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111, 114, 118, 119, 122, 125, 126, 129, 130, 134, 135, 138, 149, 190, 210–211, 218, 220–221, 241, 247, 266, 279, 296, 330, 395, 462–463, 531, 569
Interfere. *See* Player moves
Inventory 16, 20–21, 54, 57, 64, 77–78, **86–97**, 108, 110, 114, 118, 123, 126, 134, 141, **142**, 144, 159, 304, 306–307, 326–327, 330, 428, 437, 472–473, 496, 511, 540, 543, 576, 590
Invocations 81, 122, 123, 141, **146**, 241, 528
Iron 11, 39, 66, 86, 95–96, 110, 114, 115, 118, 119, 126, 127, 139, 142, 144, 145, 159, 161, 183, 220, 307, 308, 377, 397, 400, 405, 413, 434, 479, 511, 513, 515, 541, 543
Items
Common 86, 90–91, **95**, 159
Special 77, 83, 91, 93, **96–97**, 306, 309, 326, 432, 511, 519, 540–541, 543
Special possessions. *See* Special possessions

J

Judge, the 12, 24, 28, 49, 68, 104, **117–120**, 126, 287, 346, 437, 440, 507, 586

K

Keep Company. *See* Player moves

L

Labyrinth, the 112, 323, 393
Let Fly. *See* Player moves
Let things breathe. *See* GM principles
Let things burn. *See* GM principles
Level Up. *See* Player moves

Lightbearer, the 12, 20, 21, 25, 29, 53, 57, 81, 104, **121–124**, 141, 146, 241, 413, 528, 565, 586
Invocations of. *See* Invocations
Line, the **195**, 348, 454, 466, 564, 598
Loose play 38, **176–177**, 189–190, 291, 309, 312, 314, 452, 464, 484, 494, 500
Love letters 254, 262, 266, 338, 430, 501, 522, 545, 550, **568–569**, 577, 579, 581–582, 585, 588–590, 593–594
Loyalty 64, 76, 107, 126, 127, 143, 144, 145, 147, 182, 415, 450, 460–462, **464–465**, 466–467, 469–471, 475, 479, 481, 546

M

MacGuffin. *See* Threats
Magical entity. *See* Threats
Make a Plan. *See* Player moves
Make Camp. *See* Player moves
Makers' Roads 11, 234, 334, 423
Makers, the **11**, 26, 87, 93, 101, 120, 133, 135, 137, 188, 196, 221, 234, 257–259, 263, 278, 283, 288–289, 334, 343, 346, 356–357, 361, 382, 385, 389, 392, 423, 426, 431, 438, 442, 486, 569
Roads. *See* Makers' Roads
Marshal, the 12, 19, 25, 29, 32, 57, 64, 104, 110, 115, **125–128**, 131, 141, 144, 310, 414, 416, 450, 460, 463, 466, 467–470, 480, 524, 526, 559, 586, 588–589
Crew of. *See* Crew
Marshedge 11, 33, 100–101, 109, 113, 116–117, 121, 125, 128–129, 133, 137, 154, 157, 163, 165, 196, 248, 258, 285, 296–297, 305, 309, 323, 327, 335, 337, 346, 394, 426, 453, 501, 511, 582
Meet With Disaster. *See* Player moves
Monsters. *See* Dangers
Moves
Basic 48, 70–73, 192, **208–229**. *See also* Player moves
Custom **234–235**, 235, 294, 335, 350, 377, 388–389, 428, 430–431, 436, 438, 443–445, 447, 550, 553, 568, 578
Expedition 77–79, 233, 302, 312, **326–337**. *See also* Player moves
Follower 76, 192, 233, 449, **462–464**. *See also* Player moves
GM. *See* GM moves
Homefront 80–85, 179, 224, 249, 254, 268, 270, 489, **524–543**. *See also* Player moves
Player. *See* Player moves
Special 74–75, 192, **230–233**, 282, 452. *See also* Player moves
Writing **551–567**
Muster. *See* Player moves

N

Names 18, 20, 22, 48, 50, 51, 105, 109, 113, 117, 121, 125, 129, 133, 137, 144, 200, 205, 283, 394, 427, 453, 470, 535
NPC 453
NPCs 22, 30, 32–33, 45, 47–48, 56, 59, 63–64, 69, 73–74, 78, 81, 84, 90, 111, 123, 126, 127, 139, 156, 162–163, 172, 179, 181, 184, 186, 190, 195, 197, 200, 205, 217, 224, 232, 234–235, 238, 240, 243, 249, 271, 273, 278, 281, 287–288, 292–293, 309–310, 314, 316, 320, 332, 341, 369, 424–425, 427, 433, 443, **450–459**, 462, 464, 466, 474–476, 481, 492, 494, 503–507, 514–515, 517–518, 526, 534, 540–541, 545, 547, 553–555, 573, 576–578, 584–585, 595
Creating 453–459
Damage to 240
Establishing 69
Multiple NPCs at once 451
Persuade vs. 224–225
Portraying 314, 316, 451, 457
Prepping 205
Tracking 69
Using artifacts and arcana 443

O

Offer an opportunity. *See* GM moves
Opportunity 8–9, 32–33, 79, 83, 85, 98, 101, 109–110, 135, 151, 172, 178, 187, 190–191, 196, 198, 205, 210, 211, 218, 221–222, 230, 240–242, 249, 254–258, 261, 270–271, 273, 273–275, 302, 310, 314, 316, 318, 339, 352–353, 406, 410–411, 417, 422, 424–425, **428**, 429–430, 432–433, 471, 495, 498, 500–501, 507, 518–519, 521, 523, 540, 543, 547, 564, 578, 582, 591
Offer an **187**, 240, 310, 314, 316, 410, 417, 424, 471, 495, 500, 507, 547
Trade. *See* Trade, Opportunity
Order Followers. *See* Player moves
Outfit. *See* Player moves

P

Participate in the conversation. *See* Player principles
Participate in worldbuilding. *See* Player principles
PCs 7–9, 11, 18, 22, 27, 30, 31–33, 36–41, 43–52, 54, 56–57, 59, 63–65, 67–70, 72–74, 78, 84, 86–88, 90, 99, 104, 108, 112, 116, 120, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 132, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 147, 168–177, 179–181, 184, 190, 195–200, 202, 204–205, 207–210, 212–215, 218, 220–222, 224–226, 228–229, 231–232, 234–235, 238–243, 245–246, 248–249, 252–261, 263, 266, 268–271, 273–275, 278–281, 284–285, 287–294, 296–299, 302–304, 306, 308–316, 318–323, 326, 328, 331–332, 334–335, 338–340, 342–343, 346–356, 358, 362–363, 365, 365–366, 368–372, 374–377, 380–381, 383–388, 391–392, 403–404, 406–409, 412–414, 416–419, 422–447, 450–476, 478–481, 484–494, 496–509, 511–530, 532, 534–543, 544–547, 550, 557, 560–568, 571, 573, 576–577, 579, 581–595
Creating 50–57
Introducing 22–31
Vs. PC 43
Persuade (vs. NPCs). *See* Player moves
Persuade (vs. PCs). *See* Player moves
Piercing 21, 66, 86, **94**, 95–96, 115, 123, 127, 131, 142, 143, 144, 153, 159, 213, **239**, 383, 398–399, 414, 437, 511
Playbook 9, 12, 27–28, 30–32, 37, 39–40, 46, 48, **50–57**, 65–69, 81, 90, **104**, 105–152, 148, 150, 152, 192, 271, 278, 306, 309, 350, 431, 438, 445–446, 453, 455, 460–461, 463, 474–475, 481, 485, 496, 502, 508, 511, 513–515, 519, 528–529, 538, 550–551, 554–556, 576, 579, 581, 584–585, 590, 593
Blessed, the 105–108
Fox, the 109–112
GM 16, 104, 156, 278, 288, 519, 579
Heavy, the 113–116
Judge, the 117–120
Lightbearer, the 121–124
Marshal, the 125–128
PC **50–63**, 105–140
Ranger, the 129–132
Seeker, the 133–136
Steading 16–20, 22, 27, 30–32, 48, 51, 65–69, 108, 112, 116, 117, 120, 124, 128, 132, 136, **154–165**, 271, 431, 453, 455, 461, 475, 481, 496, 502, 508, **508–515**, 538, 576, 581, 585, 590
Would-be Hero, the 137–140
Player moves 192, 203, **207–233**, 240, 242, 282, 302, 312, 388, 391, 411, 436, 443, 445, 447, 460, 468, 484–485, 499, 514, 544, 546, 550, 553, 564, 578, 587
Advantage/Disadvantage 74, **230–231**
Aid 59, 70, 126, 207, **212–213**, 215, 227, 230, 245, 328–329, 337, 412, 414–415, 442, 463, 516, 527, 533, 535, 539, 556
Bolster 80, 233, 489, 516, **524–525**, 536, 556, 563

Burn Brightly 53, 74, **231**, 528, 583
Chart a Course 77, 205, 233, 254, **302–305**, 303, 322–323, 338, 340, 342, 500, 501
Clash 39–44, 52, 70, 111, 115, 123, 126, 179, 184, 191, 193, 202, 208, 210, **214–215**, 216–217, 219, 222, 230–231, 408–417, 450, 462, 554–556, 558–559
Convalesce 80, 121, 148, 150, 240, 242, **249**, 489, 496, 526, 584
Death's Door 43, 62, 75, 114, 137, 138, 141, 185, 201, 231, 233, 240, **245**, 375, 383, 387–388, 469, 560
Defend 41, 52, 71, 95, 106, 111, 114, 115, 118, 119, 126, 139, 142, 144, 175, 191, 208, **216–217**, 465, 469, 556, 563
Defy Danger 43, 48, 52, 59, 71, 78, 111, 114, 115, 119, 130, 131, 135, 139, 147, 151, 153, 179, 184, 192, 202, 207, **210–211**, 214, 216, 233, 241, 244, 270, 310, 328–329, 335, 350, 354, 381–382, 386, 388, 410, 412, 463–464, 466, 468, 470, 481, 525, 550, 553, 558, 560, 565, 567
Deploy 66–67, 81–82, 99, 127, 130, 154, 156, 158, 159, 233, 295, 512–513, **526–527**, 532, 535–536, 559
End of Session 45, 53, 74, **232**, 501, 523, 528–529, 545, 559, 573, 579, 580–583, 590
Forage 79, 89, 105, 108, 131, 233, 303, 322–323, **336–337**, 422, 424, 429, 553, 558, 563
Have What You Need 78, 86, 88–90, 95, 100, 121, 134, 142, 158, 159, 233, 306, **326–327**, 552, 559
Interfere 43, 72, 111, **218–219**, 226–227, 230, 507, 586
Keep Company 78, 233, 313, **332–333**, 334–335, 338, 351, 537, 539, 547, 553, 555–556, 566–567
Know Things 49, 52, 72, 89, 90, 100, 101, 117, 118, 119, 121, 123, 125, 129, 130, 131, 134, 135, 180, 190, 213, **220–221**, 245, 270, 274, 302, 309–310, 318, 350, 352, 404–405, 418, 425, 430, 432–433, 435, 440, 445, 463, 530, 556, 558
Let Fly 43, 52, 72, 94, 130, 191, 213, **222–223**, 249, 408, 412, 414, 416, 463, 468
Level Up 50, 53, 54–55, 74, 81, 231, 233, 339, 489, 496, **528–529**, 544, 546, 550, 574, 583, 590
Make a Plan 68, 80–81, 83, 90, 91, 100–101, 135, 233, 249, 431–433, 436, 440, 442–443, 445, 489, 511, 513–515, 526, **530–531**, 536, 540, 544, 574, 576
Make Camp 52–53, 79, 86, 89, 95, 121, 130, 142, 148, 150, 153, 171, 233, 240, 242, **248**, 304, 323, 332, **334–335**, 336, 341–342, 342, 554
Meet With Disaster 82, 233, 259, 273, 499, 516, **532–533**, 559
Muster 66–67, 81–82, 99, 101, 126, 154, 156, 159, 233, 274, 310, 484–485, 508–510, 513, 523, 526, 532, **534–535**, 536, 556
Order Followers 64, 76, 127, 143, 144, 145, 233, 234, **462–463**, 466, 470, 476, 478, 491, 526, 566
Outfit 21, 77, 86–88, 88, 90, 95, 100, 110, 142, 158, 159, 233, 254, 274, 297, 302–304, **306–307**, 309–310, 326, 339, 470, 472, 477, 479, 500, 511, 552
Persuade (vs. NPCs) 48, 52, 73, 91, 97, 101, 106, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 118, 121, 123, 127, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 149, 151, 189, 197, 213, **224–225**, 226–227, 270, 274, 308, 310–311, 332, 410–411, 452, 458, 462–467, 469, 481, 491, 494, 503, 524, 530–531, 541, 543, 553, 556, 578, 586
Persuade (vs. PCs) 43, 48, 52, 73, 97, 106, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 118, 123, 127, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 149, 151, **226–227**, 332, 558, 586
Pull Together 66–67, 81–83, 85, 99, 126, 130, 154, 156, 157, 159, 233, 274, 310, 491, 501, 508–510, 513, 516, 518, 521, 524, 526, 530–532, **536–539**, 544, 578
Recover 52–53, 66, 78, 86, 89, 142, 148, 150, 233, 240, 242, **246–248**, 297, 304, 328, 469, 473, 511, 554
Requisition 66, 69, 77, 126, 157, 161, 233, 254, 274, 302–303, **308–309**, 474, 484–485, 491, 508, 515
Return Triumphant 67, 79, 98, 233, **339**, 492, 508, 513, 522–523, 546–547
Seasons Change 32–33, 66–67, 83–84, 99, 134, 157, 158, 233, 255, 260–261, 280, 291, 324, 429, 432–433, 497, 499, 501, 508, 514, **516–523**, 524, 528, 534, 536, 539, 540, 544–546, 550, 582, 588–590, 594
Seek Insight 43, 52, 73, 109, 110, 111, 115, 118, 119, 130, 131, 134, 135, 139, 172, 177, 180, 183, 190–191, 194, 202, 213, 219, **228–229**, 230, 270, 274, 309–310, 318, 332, 334, 350, 352, 407–408, 413, 424–425, 430, 432, 450, 468, 499, 522, 554–556, 558, 567, 586
Strengthen Your Bond 64, 76, 143, 144, 145, 233, 460, **464–465**, 479
Struggle as One 78, 115, 118, 130, 131, 177, 190, 233, 323, 328, **328–331**, 332, 381, 382, 419, 472, 560
Trade & Barter 66, 77, 83, 90–93, 96, 159, 233, 274, 306, 309, 326, 432–433, 440, 474, 497, 509, 511, 536, **540–543**, 544, 558, 560–561
Player principles **44**
Be bold, take risks 44, **45**, 49
Begin and end with the fiction **44**, 147, 192–193, 216, 228, 310, 339, 419, 424, 440, 442, 484
Build on what others have said 44, **47**, 147
Connect with the other PCs **44**
Embrace difficulty, setback, and failure 44, **45**, 49
Give others a chance to shine 44, **47**
Have goals and pursue them 44, **45**
Participate in the conversation 44, **47**
Participate in worldbuilding 44, **46**, 147
Population 66, 82–85, 99, 154, 156, 158, 159, 485, 509, **510**, 517–518, 523, 532–536, 538
Prep 8–9, 104, 170, 179, 190, 192, 197, 200–201, 203, **204–205**, 211, 228, 262, 264, 270, 273–275, 280–281, 288, 314–315, 329, 340–343, 350–351, 355–359, 362, 366, 369–370, 380, 384, 386, 392, 404, 412, 422–427, 429, 453, 456–458, 484, 487, 496, 500–501, 516, 522, 526, 544–547, 550, 558, 568, 574–575, 577–580, 588–589, 591–592, 594
Between sessions 577–579
Expediton 340–343
Homefront 544–547
Improvisation and 170
Principles 17, 35, **44**, 49, 167, 171, **192–193**, 203, 208, 210, 214, 243, 254, 310–311, 324, 329, 453, 484, 526, 558, 560, 565, 575
GM. *See* GM principles
Player. *See* Player principles
Prosperity 21, 66–68, 77–78, 82–83, 86, 88–89, 94, 99, 142, 144, 154, 157, 158, 159, 246–247, 304, 306, 328, **510–511**, 513–514, 532, 540–541, 543
Pull Together. *See* Player moves
Put someone in a spot. *See* GM moves

INDEX

R

Rabble. *See* Threats
Range **94**, **398**, 437. *See also* Tags: hand, close, reach, near, far
Ranger, the 13, 26, 29, 47, 57, 64, 104, 107, 110, 115, 126, **129–132**, 131, 141, 143, 222, 274, 304, 306, 328, 414, 423, 463, 467, 469, 558, 578
  Animal companion of. *See* Animal companion
Recover. *See* Player moves
Requisition. *See* Player moves
Residents. *See* Steading
Resources 8, 65–67, 80, 83, 154–158, 310, 428, 436, 484, 508, **511**, 513, 524, 536, 576, 583, 590. *See also* GM moves, Use up their resources
Respect your prep. *See* GM principles
Return Triumphant. *See* Player moves
Revenant 16, 57, 75, 141, **150–151**, 233, 245, 587, 599

S

Sajra the Swyn 229, **260**, 279, 283, 288–292, 294, 294–295, 343, 356–357, 360–361, 364–365, 367, 370, 372–376, 385, 387, 389, 392, 394, 427, 429
Scene 8, 38, 44–45, 47, 168–172, 174–175, **176–177**, 179–180, 186, 189–190, 194, 199, 201, 205, 220, 224, 228, 232, 245, 249, 252, 254, 261–262, 268–270, 272–273, 291, 303, 306, 309, 311–312, 314–316, 320, 322–323, 329, 331–334, 337–338, 340, 342, 347–351, 363, 380–381, 384, 389, 406, 414, 426–427, 440, 440–441, 450–452, 456–458, 463–465, 468, 480–481, 484–486, 489–502, 494, 504, 516, 518–519, 521–522, 524, 529, 541, 544–547, 552, 556, 560, 566, 568, 575, 577–578, 580–582, 584–585, 591–595
  Setting the 268–269
Seasons Change. *See* Player moves
Seeker, the 9, 13, 20, 26, 29, 31, 57, 58, 64, 87, 90, 104, 110, 115, 126, **131–134**, 141, 196, 222, 339, 418, 438, 455, 486–487, 507, 528, 586
Seek Insight. *See* Player moves
Separate them. *See* GM moves
Setting 8, **10**, 15, 17–18, 20–22, 28, 46, 170, 192, 196, 201, 205, 256, 258, 262–263, 314, 337, 355, 357–359, 423, 426, 438, 484, 486, 500, 568, 589
  Guide 17, 170, 192, 196, 205, 256, 314, 355, 357, 423, 426, 484, 486, 500
    Exploiting 196, 357, 486
  Reviewing 17
Sites 179, 275, 315, 317, 334, 341–343, 345, **345–377**, 423, 426, 429, 439, 444, 500–501, 550, 577–578, 582
  Creating 355–377
  Exploring 350–354
  Green Lord's Tomb, the 371–377
  Running 349–354
Size 65, 66, 154, 159, 509, 510
Soft moves 169, **172**, 174–175, 179, 182, 189–191, 202, 212, 222, 312, 314, 316, 322, 351, 408–409, 417–418, 427, 452, 462, 506, 581
Special possessions 20–21, 27, 50–51, 54, 86, 88, **90**, 107, 109, 111, 115, 117, 119, 123, 127, 131, 135, 139, 306, 326, 327, 428, 474, 540
Spotlight 8, 38, 46–47, 168, 173, **175**, 181, 190–191, 201, 218, 245, 252, 316, 408, 411, 416, 418–419, 452, 468, 474, 494, 496, 500, 567, 585, 587
Stats 37, 40, 48, 50, 52, 55, 64–66, 68, 104, 106, 107, 110, 111, 114, 115, 118, 119, 122, 123, 126, 127, 130, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 149, 205, 230, 239, 242, 294, 381, 400, 404, 453, 459–460, 462, 470, 474–475, 508, 514, 560, 577, 579, 583
  Follower 64, 460, 462, 470, 474–475, 577
  NPC 453, 459
  PC
    Charisma. *See* Charisma (CHA)
    Constitution. *See* Constitution (CON)
    Dexterity. *See* Dexterity (DEX)
    Intelligence. *See* Intelligence (INT)
    Strength. *See* Strength (STR)
    Wisdom. *See* Wisdom (WIS)
  Steading 66, 68, **508–513**
Steading 16–20, 22, 27, 30–32, 45, 48, 51, 65–69, 77, 79–82, 84–85, 94, 98, 100, 106, 108, 112, 116, 117, 120, 124, 126, 128, 132, 136, 156, 157, 158, 159, 179, 192, 200, 246, 246–247, 255–257, 259, 271, 304, 306, 308, 339, 428, 431, 436, 443, 453, 455, 461, 475, 481, 485, 496, 499–500, 502–503, 508, 510–520, 522, 524, 526–527, 530–532, 534, 536, 538, 541, 544, 560, 576, 581, 585, 588, 590
  Assets 65–67, 69, 77, 157, 161, 274, 308, 338, 428, 461, 491, 496, 508–509, **515**, 576
    List **161**
  Defenses. *See* Defenses
  Fortunes. *See* Fortunes
  Improvements. *See* Improvements
  Playbook. *See* Playbook, Steading
  Prosperity. *See* Prosperity
  Residents 22, 32, 126, 162, 271, 453, **515**, 542
  Resources. *See* Resources
  Size. *See* Size
  Stats 66, 68, 560
  Surplus. *See* Surplus
Steel 11, 92, 126, 127, 139, 186, 256, 377, 397, 477, 541
Stonetop 6–13, 16–32, 36–37, 42, 44–46, 50–51, 56–57, 65–67, 74, 86, 88–89, 91, 93, 103, 105, 108, 109, 112, 113, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 124, 125, 126, 128, 129, 132, 133, 136, 137, 140, 144, 154–165, 168, 192, 195, 196, 198, 201–203, 231–232, 252–253, 255–259, 263, 268, 279, 290, 290–291, 295–297, 302, 305, 308, 312, 331, 338, 340, 342, 346, 356–357, 361, 393–394, 408, 433, 436, 438, 453, 475, 484, 485–488, 491–492, 494, 500–502, 508–515, 518–520, 522–523, 529, 534, 535, 542, 545–546, 550–551, 560, 563–565, 572–573, 580, 582–585, 588, 590–591, 593, 597, 598, 599
Strengthen Your Bond. *See* Player moves
Strength (STR) 21, 39, 40–41, 48, **52**, 53, 62, 70–72, 106, 110, 111, 113, 114, 118, 122, 125, 126, 130, 134, 138, 209–211, 213, 213–215, 218, 241, 331, 410, 462, 560
Struggle as One. *See* Player moves
Surplus 83–85, 92, 97, 98, 106, 154, 156, 157, 158, 159, 295, 304, 308–309, 428, 507–508, **509**, 510, 514–519, 521–525, 531–532, 536, 538–539, 542–543, 543, 576, 584, 588
Swyn 215, 219, 221, 227, 229, 257–260, 262–263, 266, 280, 283, 288–289, 292, 294, 342–343, 356–357, 360, 364, 367, 375–376, 385, 387, 391–392, 394, 427, 429, 498, 522, 543, 546

T

Tags **21**, 64, 76, 106, 107, 110, 114, 118, 125, 126, 130, 143, 144, 215, 239, 242, 249, 390, 395–396, 399, 412, 414, 437, 441, 462–463, 467, 470, 470–471, 476, 478, 480, 509
  Area **94**, 95–97, 107, 111, 114, 123, 130, 135, 142, 215, 349, 363, 375, 387, **398**, 414, 437
  Awkward 21, 61, **94**, 95, 119, 142, 349
  Cautious 97, 143, 367, 370, 376, 390, **395**, 476
  City 65, 154, **509**, 534, 536, 541
  Close 21, 94, 95–97, 107, 111, 115, 119, 123, 127, 142, 143, 144, 145, 153, 161, **349**, **398**, 399, 402, 405, 437, 461
  Construct **395**, 400
  Corrupted **395**
  Crude 21, **94**, 95, 142, 183, 234, **349**, **398**, 435

Cumbersome 21, **94**, 96, 114, 118, 126, 438
Cunning 144, **395**, 476
Dangerous 21, **94**, 95, 97, 135, 142, **349**, 441
Devious 145, **395**, 476
Example tags 476
Fae 145, **395**, 405
Far 21, **94**, 96, 115, 123, 127, 131, **398**
Forceful 21, **94**, 95–97, 114, 115, 119, 138, 142, 143, 149, 153, 161, 184, 193, 213, 216, 239, 375, **383**, 385, 387, 388, **398**, **399**, 405, 414, 461
Fragile 58, **94**, 96, 432, 435
Grabby 97, 107, 131, 139, 143, 153, **398**
Group 64, 144, 147, 151, 390, **395**, 396, 398–399, 405, 414, 416, 470, 471–474, 476, 480, 566
Hamlet 65, 154, **509**, 518, 534, 536, 541
Hand 21, **94**, 95–97, 107, 111, 123, 131, 139, 142, 144, 145, 153, 161, 234, **349**, 374, 390, **398**, 399, 412, 460–461, 479
Hoarder 390, **395**, 427
Horde 374, 390, **395**, 396, 398
Huge 130, 131, 390, **395**, 396, 398, 412
Immobile **94**, 96–97, 374, 435, 437
Large 97, 130, 131, 143, 161, 311, 390, 393, **395**, 396, 398–399, 405, 463, 477
Magical 61, 107, 108, 134, 145, 370, **395**, 405, 428, 437–438, 476
Messy 21, **94**, 95–96, 114, 115, 127, 142, 143, 153, 184, 213, 216, 243, 383, **398**, 583
Near 21, **94**, 95–96, 110, 118, 123, 142, 144, **398**, 437, 460, 479
Organized 390, **395**, 405, 476
Primordial **395**
Reach 21, **94**, 95, 97, 107, 123, 127, 142, 153, **349**, **398**, 399, 402, 405, 412
Reload **94**, 95–96, 115, 142, 249
Slow **94**, 95, 97, 134, 142, **349**
Small 20, 142, 304, 374, **395**, 396, 398, 435, 470–471
Solitary 375, 390, **395**, 396, 398
Spirit 375, 390, **395**
Stealthy 64, 143, 144, 145, 151, 153, 320, 330, 367, 370, 390, **395**, 407, 460–462, 470–471, 476
Terrifying 143, 390, **395**, 466, 476
Thrown 21, **94**, 95, 97, 110, 135, 142, 144, 145, 234
Tiny 143, 151, 390, **395**, 396–398, 461, 477
Town 65, 154, 159, **509**, 518, 534, 536, 541, 543
Undead 390, **395**
Village 65, 154, **509**
Warm 21, **94**, 95–96, 114, 118, 126, 142, 144, 183, 303, 305–307, 479
Tell them the consequences/requirements. *See* GM moves
Things Below, the 11, 75, 124, 133, 135, 137, 152, 196–197, 233, 245, 286, 360, 393, 395, 423, 434, 587
Think offscreen, too. *See* GM principles
Thrall 16, 57, 75, 141, **152–153**, 233, 245, 587
Threats 8–9, 29, 32–33, 41, 71, 74, 79, 82–85, 114–115, 117, 127, 131–132, 139, 152, 173, 179, 184, 190, 196, 199, 205, 216, 224, 226, 232, 243, 245, 255–263, 270, 273–275, **277–299**, 302, 312, 314, 323, 335, 339, 353–354, 356, 380, 392, 401, 407, 410, 414, 427, 432, 441, 443, 447, 453–454, 457, 459, 480–481, 489, 496–501, 505, 507, 512, 515, 517–523, 532, 534, 536–537, 539, 545, 550, 573, 576, 578–579, 582, 584, 587
Affliction 245, 260, **284**, 288, 295, 297, 299, 335, 432, 441, 443, 507, 537, 539, 546
Beast 279, **284**, 296
Danger vs. 380
Institution 125, 281, **285**, 296–297, 487
MacGuffin **285**, 297, 432–433, 443, 487, 507, 537
Magical entity 245, 279, 281, 283, **286**, 297, 432, 443, 481
Moves 179, 282, **284–287**, 299, 354, 507
PC as 584
Rabble 260, 280, **286**, 289, 294–296, 299, 526, 534
Types 284–287
Villain 260, 279, 280, 283, **287**, 288–289, 294–295, 539
Wildcard 278–280, **287**, 295–296, 299, 459, 487, 539, 546
Tor 10, 32, 85, 113, 124, 189, 258, 505, 518–519, 521–522, 525, 538, 580
Trade 23, 27, 67, 83, 85–86, 90–93, 96–98, 100–101, 168, 196, 255–256, 258, 284, 295, 297, 309, 389, 407, 428–429, 432–434, 453, 497, 501, 509–510, 515, 518–519, 521, 523, 535, 540–543, 592–593
Goods 92–93, 97, 428, 434, 509–510, 542
Mission 100, 196, 309, 453, 535
Opportunity 32, 83, **85**, 98, 101, 255–256, 258, 429, 432–433, 501, **518–519**, 521, 540, 543
Trade & Barter. *See* Player moves
Turn their move back on them. *See* GM moves

U

Use up their resources. *See* GM moves

V

Villain. *See* Threats

W

Weather 36, 42, 85, 94, 168, 196, 201, 253, 258, 268, 274, 285, 312–314, **324–325**, 341, 380, 436, 479, 486, 496, 518–520, 522, 525
Wildcard. *See* Threats
Wisdom (WIS) 43, **52**, 59, 71–73, 79, 106, 107, 109, 110, 114, 117, 118, 119, 122, 123, 126, 129, 130, 131, 134, 138, 152, 210, 218, 227–229, 234–235, 241, 330–331, 335–337, 389, 405, 465, 553, 562–563, 566–567, 569
World's End, the 10, 200, 340
Would-be Hero, the 13, 27, 29, 41, 47, 52, 87, 104, **137–140**, 270, 306, 450, 456, 528, 552, 577, 581, 583, 586, 589, 597