Raiders in the Dark™

Raiders in the Dark

Version 0.5 (beta)

Legal Stuff

Credits

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◆ **Typefaces:** BlackBeard and Minion Pro.

◆ **Software:** Adobe Creative Suite and Google Sheets.

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The Basics

1. The Basics

The Game

Raiders in the Dark is a tabletop roleplaying game about a crew of desperate adventurers trying to make their fortune by exploring strange places that fight back. Each barrow they enter is full of weird magic, terrifying creatures, and valuable loot. In between delves, they must contend with competing crews, conniving factions, and the grinding fear that makes them wonder if the next expedition will be their last.

The Setting

Characters move between two settings in this game: Athland, the regular world from which the player characters come, and the barrows they go to explore.

- **Athland** is a large island about two days sail eastward from the larger continent of Estrenta. Until a generation ago, Athland was held under magical thrall by rulers called the Yethri in a state called the Dreaming. Then, without warning, they disappeared and the population Awakened. There has been chaos, famine, war, and banditry since that time, although some semblance of order and hierarchy have been achieved in many locations.

- **Barrows** are bizarre, dangerous, magical places that are strewn about the land. Each barrow is haunted by a wight, who uses magic and cunning to defend it from invasion. Barrows also have traps, creatures, and monsters, as well as various kinds of valuables. A successful delve into a barrow can yield great riches.

The Players

- Two to five players will take the role of player characters (PCs) in the story. These are the protagonists. The job of each player is to create and embody an engaging person who is desperate or crazy enough to risk their lives, over and over, in the terrifying weirdness of barrows.

- One player will take the role of Game Master (GM). The job of the GM is to manage the world around the player characters. This includes presenting non-player characters (NPCs) and all the important details about the land of Athland and the barrows that the PCs explore. When the PCs take risks or engage in conflicts with those they encounter, the GM manages the action and makes judgments about what happens.

All the players work together to create a fun and engaging story.

The Characters

The PCs are barrow raiders. They specialize in finding, entering, and looting the resources of barrows. As they do so, they must manage relationships with various NPC factions—any of which might seek to aid, hire, exploit, or destroy them.

There are several character playbooks to choose from, each of whom represents a different style or specialization for a raider:

Armiger	**Scholar**
Artificer	**Strategist**
Hunter	**Thief**
Mage	

Players can choose whichever types they wish. It's fine if more than one player (or everyone) wants to play the same type.

The Crew

In addition to creating characters, the group will also create a crew by choosing which sort of raiding the group specializes in:

Breakers   **Explorers**

Burglars   **Scavengers**

The type of crew you choose won't keep you from other kinds of activities, but it does provide you with a focus on what you are best at.

Touchstones

- *Conan* (story series by Robert E. Howard).
- *Dungeons and Dragons* (role playing game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson).
- *Elric of Melinboné* (story series by Michael Moorcock).
- *Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* (story series by Fritz Leiber).
- *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (story series by J.R.R. Tolkien).
- *The Odyssey* (epic poem by Homer).
- *Neverwhere* (novel by Neil Gaiman).
- *Princess Mononoke* (movie).
- *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (movie).
- *The Witcher* (story series by Andrzej Sapkowski, video roleplaying game series, and TV series).
- *Willow* (movie).

Theme Song

- "Down In the Ground Where the Dead Men Go," by The Pogues.

What You Need To Play

What you need depends on how you play. Nowadays, people play games like this in two general ways.

If You're Playing in Person

- Six sided dice. Four or so per player is best. You could also use a dice rolling app, but that's less tactile.
- A printed or easily accessed digital copy of this book for reference.
- Printed copies of character sheets, crew sheets, and quick reference guides. You can find those at this link: https://bit.ly/2zUEmJh
- Blank paper, index cards, writing implements.

If You're Playing Online

- A communication system. This could be via text chat, voice only, or audiovisual. There are many options available (see page 121).
- A digital copy of these rules for reference.
- An online dice roller (you can use the roller built into the digital character sheets for the game).
- Digital character sheets can be found and copied from this link: https://bit.ly/2zUEmJh

Game System

This game is derived from the *Forged in the Dark* system by John Harper. *Forged in the Dark* was first introduced in the game *Blades in the Dark* and has since expanded into a number of other games and hacks. More information, resources, and a discussion community can be found at bladesinthedark.com.

You don't need to already know *Blades in the Dark* to play this game. This book includes all the rules you need to play.

But if you are familiar with *Blades*, you can find a list of how the rules in this game are different at the end of the book on page 186.

The Core System

The Conversation

Most of the game is simply a matter of conversation among the players. The players each manage the actions of a player character, saying what those characters are doing and asking questions about the world. The GM says what's happening in the world and asks questions about what the PCs are doing. As the PCs, the players interact with each other and with non-player characters (NPCs) who are usually played by the GM. The GM and the other players together build consensus and make judgments about what makes sense in the fictional story being told. In the process, they collaborate in making a story together, with the feeling of discovering the fiction, moment to moment, as it unfolds.

Because we don't know what will happen, no one is in charge of the story. The GM doesn't know what the players will do. The players don't know what will happen in the world around them or what the other players will do. When we roll the dice, we introduce another element of uncertainty into the evolving fiction. Everyone has a degree of control, while at the same time everyone has to let go and play the game to find out what will happen.

Judgment Calls

When you play, you'll make several key judgment calls. Everyone contributes, but there are some specific decisions that either the GM or the players have final say on.

◆ Which actions are reasonable as a solution to a problem? *Can this person be swayed? Must we get out the tools and tinker with this old rusty lock, or could it also be quietly finessed?* Each player can choose which action rating to use to try to accomplish a problem.

◆ How dangerous and how effective is a given action in this circumstance? *How risky is this? Can this person be swayed very little or a whole lot?* The GM has final say over the position and effect of an action that calls for a die roll.

◆ Which consequences are inflicted to manifest the dangers in a given circumstance? *Does this fall from the roof break your leg? Do the guards merely become suspicious or do they already have you trapped?* The GM has final say.

◆ Does this situation call for a dice roll, and which one? *Are you in position to make an action roll or must you first make a resistance roll to gain initiative?* The GM has final say.

◆ Which events in the story match the experience triggers for character and crew advancement? *Did you express your character's beliefs, drives, heritage, or background? You tell us.* The players have final say.

Rolling the Dice

Raiders in the Dark uses six-sided dice. You roll multiple dice at once and read the single highest result. The other dice don't matter, but the more dice you roll the better your chances of getting a good outcome.

◆ If the highest die is a **6**, it's a **full success**—things go well. If you roll more than one **6**, it's a **critical success**—you gain some additional advantage.

◆ If the highest die is a **4 or 5**, it's a **partial success**—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences: trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.

◆ If the highest die is **1–3**, it's a **bad outcome**. Things go poorly. You probably don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications, too.

  If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a **critical** *when you have zero dice.*

All the dice systems in the game are expressions of this basic format. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll to judge how things go. Look up the exact rule later when you have time.

The most common result is **4/5:** partial success. That means that PCs will usually succeed, but at a

cost. Siometimes they get exactly what they want, or even more, but most of the time, they will have to pay a cost. That's one of the things this game is about—finding out what it costs for the characters to succeed. Other times, the dice go against them and they have to figure out what to do when their first attempt doesn't work out or an opponent gets the upper hand.

To create a dice pool for a roll, you'll use a **trait** (like your **Finesse** or your **Prowess** or your crew's **Tier**) and take dice equal to its **rating**. You'll usually end up with one to four dice. Even one die is pretty good in this game—a 50% chance of success. The most common traits you'll use are the **action ratings** of the player characters. A player might roll dice for their **Sway** action rating when negotiating with barrow raiders from another crew, for example.

There are four types of rolls that you'll use most often in the game:

◆ **Action roll.** When a PC attempts an action that's dangerous or troublesome, you make an action roll to find out how it goes. Action rolls and their effects and consequences drive most of the game.

◆ **Downtime roll.** When the PCs are at their leisure after a job, they can perform downtime activities in relative safety. You make downtime rolls to see how much they get done.

◆ **Fortune roll.** The GM can make a fortune roll to disclaim decision making and leave something up to chance. How loyal is an NPC? How much does the plague spread? How much evidence is burned before the baron's troops kick in the door?

◆ **Resistance roll.** You can make a resistance roll when you suffer a consequence you don't like. The roll tells us how much stress the character suffers to reduce the severity of a consequence. When you resist that "Broken Leg" harm, you take some stress and now it's only a "Sprained Ankle" instead.

Dice	Critical	Success	Partial	Fail
0	0%	3%	22%	75%
1	0%	17%	33%	50%
2	3%	28%	44%	25%
3	7%	35%	45%	13%
4	13%	39%	42%	6%
5	20%	40%	37%	3%
6	26%	40%	32%	2%

If you're a numbers person, here's a table of probabilities for the different outcomes, depending on how many dice you are rolling.

(From an analysis by Jeremy Friesen.*)*

Game Structure

Raiders in the Dark has a structure to play, with four parts. By default, the game is in **free play**—characters talk to each other, they go places, they do things, they make rolls as needed.

When the group is ready, they choose a target for their next *delve*, then choose a type of *plan* to employ. This triggers the *engagement roll* (which establishes the situation as the delve starts) and then the game shifts into the **delve** phase. (Sometimes, they might engage in an operation away from a barrow. An operation works basically the same as a delve.)

During the delve, the PCs make rolls, overcome obstacles, call for flashbacks, traverse through the barrow, and complete the delve (successfully or not). When the delve is finished, the game shifts into the **downtime** phase.

During downtime, the GM engages the systems for **payoff**, **trouble**, and **entanglements**, to determine all the fallout from the delve. Then the PCs each get their *downtime activities*, such as seeking reprieve to remove stress or working on a long-term project. When downtime activities are complete, the game returns to **free play** and the cycle starts over again.

The phases are a conceptual model to help you organize the game. They're not meant to be rigid structures that restrict your options. Think of the phases as a menu of options to fit whatever it is you're trying to accomplish in play and to allow for the progression of time for the crew. Each phase suits a different goal.

Free Play
Character Scenes
Actions and Consequences
Gather Information

Choose a Target
Choose a Plan
Choose your load
Engagement Roll

Delve (or Operation)
Actions and Consequences
Flashbacks
Traversal
Rest
Exit

Downtime
Payoff
Trouble and Entanglements
Downtime Activities

Actions and Attributes

There are 12 **actions** in the game that the player characters use to overcome obstacles.

Each action has a rating (from zero to four) that tells you how many dice to roll when you perform that action. Action ratings don't just represent skill or training—you're free to describe how your character performs that action based on the type of person they are. Maybe your character is good at **Command** because they have a scary stillness to them, while another character barks orders and intimidates people with their military bearing.

Attune
Command
Consort
Finesse
Hunt
Prowl
Skirmish
Study
Survey
Sway
Tinker
Wreck

You choose which action to perform to overcome an obstacle, by describing what your character does. Actions that are poorly suited to the situation may be less effective and may put the character in more danger, but they can still be attempted. Usually, when you perform an action, you'll make an **action roll** to see how it turns out.

Action Roll

You make an **action roll** when your character does something potentially dangerous or troublesome. The possible results of the action roll depend on your character's **position.** Position identifies how dangerous the action is: *if it goes poorly, how bad will it be?*

There are three positions: **controlled, risky**, and **desperate**. If you're in a **controlled** position, the risk is low. If you're in a **desperate** position, the consequences can be severe. If you're somewhere in between, it's **risky**—usually considered the "default" position for most actions.

If there's no danger or trouble at hand, you don't make an action roll. You might make a **fortune** roll or a **downtime** roll or the GM will simply say that you accomplish your goal without any roll.

Attribute Ratings

There are three **attributes** in the game system that the player characters use to resist bad consequences: **Insight**, **Prowess**, and **Resolve**. Each attribute has a rating (from zero to 4) that tells you how many dice to roll when you use that attribute.

Insight
Prowess
Resolve

The rating for each attribute is equal to the number of dots in the **first column** under that attribute (see the examples, below). The more well-rounded your character is with a particular set of actions, the better their attribute rating.

Resistance Roll

Each attribute resists a different type of danger. If you get stabbed, for example, you resist physical harm with your **Prowess** rating. Resistance rolls always succeed—you diminish or deflect the bad result—but the better your roll, the less **stress** it costs to reduce or avoid the danger.

When the enemy has a big advantage, you'll need to make a resistance roll before you can take your own action. For example, when you duel the master sword-fighter, she disarms you before you can strike—unless you make a **resistance** roll to keep hold of your blade.

The GM judges the threat level of the enemies and uses these "preemptive" resistance rolls as needed to reflect the capabilities of especially dangerous foes.

Find out more about resistance rolls on page 18.

Actions

◆ When you **Attune**, you open yourself to magical power.

You might communicate with a strange, ghostly being or try to figure out whether an item you've found is magical. You could try to perceive beyond sight in order to better understand your situation (but Surveying might be better). Those with magical training can Attune to cast spells and achieve other occult effects.

◆ When you **Command**, you compel swift obedience.

You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You might lead a gang in a group action. You could try to order people around to persuade them (but Consorting might be better).

◆ When you **Consort**, you socialize with friends and contacts.

You might gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with your heritage or background. You could try to manipulate your friends with social pressure (but Sway might be better).

◆ When you **Finesse**, you employ dexterous manipulation or subtle misdirection.

You might pick someone's pocket. You might handle the controls of a vehicle or direct a mount. You might formally duel an opponent with graceful fighting arts. You could try to employ those arts in a chaotic melee (but Skirmishing might be better). You could try to pick a lock (but Tinkering might be better).

◆ When you **Hunt**, you carefully track a target.

You might follow a target or discover their location. You might arrange an ambush. You might attack with precision shooting from a distance. You could try to bring your weapon to bear in a melee (but Skirmishing might be better).

Example Action and Attribute Ratings

INSIGHT
- ● ○ ○ ○ Hunt
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Tinker

PROWESS
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Finesse
- ● ○ ○ ○ Prowl
- ● ● ○ ○ Skirmish
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Wreck

RESOLVE
- ● ● ○ ○ Attune
- ● ● ○ ○ Command
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Consort
- ○ ○ ○ ○ Sway

*This character has a **Hunt** action rating of 1 and **Insight** attribute rating is 1 (the first column of dots).*

*The character also has **Prowl** 1, **Skirmish** 2, and a **Prowess** attribute rating of 2.*

◆ When you **Prowl**, you traverse skillfully and quietly.

You might sneak past a guard or hide in the shadows. You might run and leap across the rooftops. You might attack someone from hiding with a back-stab or blackjack. You could try to waylay a victim in the midst of battle (but Skirmishing might be better).

◆ When you **Skirmish**, you engage a target in close, brutal combat.

You might brawl or wrestle. You might hack and slash or slam with the edge of your shield. You might seize or hold a position in battle. You could try to fight in a formal duel (but Finessing might be better).

◆ When you **Study**, you scrutinize details and interpret evidence.

You might gather information from documents and books. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You might closely analyze a person to detect lies or true feelings. You could try to examine events to understand a pressing situation (but Surveying might be better).

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- When you **Survey**, you observe the situation and anticipate outcomes.

  You might spot telltale signs of trouble before it happens. You might uncover opportunities or weaknesses. You might detect a person's motivations or intentions. You could try to spot a good ambush point (but Hunting might be better).

- When you **Sway**, you influence with guile, charm, or argument.

  You might lie convincingly. You might persuade someone to do what you want. You might argue a compelling case that leaves no clear rebuttal. You could try to trick people into affection or obedience (but Consorting or Commanding might be better).

- When you **Tinker**, you fiddle with devices and mechanisms.

  You might create a new item or alter an existing item. You might pick a lock or crack a safe. You might disable an alarm or trap. You could try to use your technical expertise to control a chariot (but Finessing might be better).

- When you **Wreck**, you unleash savage force.

  You might smash down a door or wall with a sledgehammer, or use an explosive to do the same. You might employ chaos or sabotage to create a distraction or overcome an obstacle. You could try to overwhelm an enemy with sheer force in battle (but Skirmishing might be better).

As you can see, many actions overlap with others. This is by design. As a player, you get to choose which action you roll, by saying what your character does. Can you try to **Wreck** someone during a fight? Sure! The GM tells you the position and effect level of your action in this circumstance. As it says, **Skirmish** might be better (less risky or more effective), depending on the situation at hand (sometimes it won't be better).

Stress and Trauma

Stress

Player characters in *Raiders in the Dark* have a special reserve called **stress**. When they suffer a consequence that they don't want to accept, they can take stress instead. The result of the **resistance roll** determines how much stress it costs to avoid a bad outcome.

During a knife fight, Daniel's character, Cross, gets stabbed in the chest. Daniel rolls his Prowess rating to resist, and gets a 2. It costs 6 stress, minus 2 (the result of the resistance roll) to resist the consequences. Daniel marks off 4 stress and describes how Cross survives.

The GM rules that the harm is reduced by the resistance roll, but not avoided entirely. Cross suffers level 1 harm ("Cut Across Chest") instead of level 3 harm ("Punctured Lung").

Pushing Yourself

You can use stress to push yourself for greater performance. For each bonus you choose below, take **2 stress** (each can be chosen once for a given action):

- Add **+1d** to your roll. (This may be used for an action roll or downtime roll or any other kind of roll where extra effort would help you).
- Add **+1 level** to your effect.
- Take action when you're incapacitated.

Trauma

When a PC marks their last stress box, they suffer a level of **trauma**. When you take trauma, circle one of your trauma conditions like *Cold, Reckless, Unstable*, etc. They're all described below.

When you suffer **trauma**, you're taken out of action. You're "left for dead" or otherwise dropped out of the current conflict, only to come back later, shaken and drained. When you return, **you have zero stress** and your reprieve has been satisfied for the next downtime.

Trauma conditions are permanent. Your character acquires the new personality quirk indicated by the condition, and can earn **xp** by using it to cause trouble. **When you mark your fourth trauma condition,** your character cannot continue as a barrow raider. The character must retire to a different life.

Trauma Conditions

- **Cold:** You're not moved by emotional appeals or social bonds.
- **Haunted:** You're often lost in reverie, reliving past horrors, seeing things.
- **Obsessed:** You're enthralled by one thing: an activity, a person, an ideology.
- **Paranoid:** You imagine danger everywhere; you can't trust others.
- **Reckless:** You have little regard for your own safety or best interests.
- **Soft:** You lose your edge; you become sentimental, passive, gentle.
- **Unstable:** Your emotional state is volatile. You can instantly rage, or fall into despair, act impulsively, or freeze up.
- **Vicious:** You seek out opportunities to hurt people, even for no good reason.

Progress Clocks

A **progress clock** is a circle divided into segments (see examples at right). Draw a progress clock when you need to track ongoing effort against an obstacle or the approach of impending trouble.

Sneaking into the watch tower? Make a clock to track the alert level of the patrolling guards. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill in segments on the clock until the alarm is raised.

Generally, the more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock.

A complex obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A more complicated obstacle is a 6-clock. A daunting obstacle is an 8-clock.

When you create a clock, make it about the **obstacle,** not the method. The clocks for an infiltration should be "Interior Patrols" and "The Tower," not "Sneak Past the Guards" or "Climb the Tower." The patrols and the tower are the obstacles—the PCs can attempt to overcome them in a variety of ways.

Complex enemy threats can be broken into several "layers," each with its own progress clock. For example, the blue men's lair might have a "Perimeter Security" clock, an "Interior Guards" clock, and an "All Hands Alert" clock. The crew would have to make their way through all three layers to reach the blue men's cache of magical books and artifacts.

Remember that a clock tracks progress. It reflects the fictional situation, so the group can gauge how they're doing. A clock is like a speedometer in a car. It shows the speed of the vehicle—it doesn't determine the speed.

Simple Obstacles

Not every situation and obstacle requires a clock. Use clocks when a situation is complex or layered and you need to track something over time—otherwise, resolve the result of an action with a single roll.

Examples of progress clocks follow, but this is not an exhaustive list. Use clocks however you want, in whatever way makes sense.

Danger Clocks

The GM can use a clock to represent a progressive danger, like suspicion growing during a seduction, the proximity of a monster closing in on a fleeing PC, or the alert level of guards on patrol. In this case, when a complication occurs, the GM ticks one, two, or three segments on the clock, depending on the consequence level. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition—the monster catches up, activate an alarm, release the hounds, etc.

Racing Clocks

Create two opposed clocks to represent a race. The PCs might have a progress clock called "Escape" while the soldiers have a clock called "Cornered." If the PCs finish their clock before the soldiers fill theirs, they get away. Otherwise, they're cornered and can't flee. If both complete at the same time, the PCs escape to their base, but the hunting soldiers are right behind them!

You can also use racing clocks for an environmental hazard. Maybe the PCs are trying to complete the "Search" clock to find the lockbox on the sinking ship before the GM fills the "Sunk" clock and the vessel goes down.

Linked Clocks

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it's filled. For example, the GM might make a linked clock called "Trapped" after an "Alert" clock fills up. When you fight a veteran warrior, she might have a clock for her "Defense" and then a linked clock for "Vulnerable." Once you overcome the "Defense" clock, then you can attempt to overcome the "Vulnerable" clock and defeat her. You might affect the "Defense" clock with violence in a knife-fight, or you lower her defense with deception if you have the opportunity. As always, the method of action is up to the players and the details of the fiction at hand.

Mission Clocks

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive mission, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the mission is scrubbed or changes—the target escapes, the household wakes up for the day, etc.

Tug-of-war Clocks

You can make a clock that can be filled and emptied by events, to represent a back-and-forth situation. You might make a "Revolt!" clock that indicates when the peasants start to riot over poor treatment. Some events will tick the clock up and some will tick it down. Once it fills, the revolt begins. A tug-of-war clock is also perfect for an ongoing turf war between two crews or factions.

Long-term Project

Some projects will take a long time. A basic long-term project (like tinkering up a new feature for a device) is eight segments. Truly long-term projects (like creating a new alchemical concoction) can be two, three, or even four clocks, representing all the phases of development, testing, and final completion. Add or subtract clocks depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project.

A long-term project is a good catch-all for dealing with any unusual player goal, including things that circumvent or change elements of the mechanics or the setting.

Faction Clocks

Each faction has one or more long-term goals. When the PCs have **downtime**, the GM ticks forward the faction clocks that they're interested in. In this way, the world around the PCs is dynamic and things happen that they're not directly connected to, changing the overall situation in the region and creating new opportunities and challenges.

The PCs may also directly affect NPC faction clocks, based on the missions and scores they pull off. Discuss known faction projects that they might aid or interfere with, and also consider how a PC operation might affect the NPC clocks, whether the players intended it or not.

Action Roll

When a player character does something challenging, we make an **action roll** to see how it turns out. An action is challenging if there's an obstacle to the PC's goal that's dangerous or troublesome in some way. We don't make an action roll unless the PC is put to the test. If their action is something that we'd expect them to simply accomplish, then we don't make an action roll.

Each game group will have their own ideas about what "challenging" means. This is good! It's something that establishes the tone and style of your game.

To make an action roll, we go through six steps. In play, they flow together somewhat, but let's break each one down here for clarity.

1. The player states the **goal** for the action.
2. The player chooses the **action rating**.
3. The GM sets the **position** for the roll.
4. The GM sets the **effect level** for the action.
5. Add **bonus dice**.
6. The player rolls the dice and we judge the **result**.

1. The Player States The Goal

The goal is the concrete outcome you will achieve if the obstacle at hand is overcome. Usually the goal is pretty obvious in context, but it's the GM's job to ask and clarify the goal when necessary.

"You're punching him in the face, right? Okay… what do want to get out of this? Do you want to take him out, or just rough him up so he'll do what you want?"

2. The Player Chooses the Action Rating

The player chooses which **action rating** to roll, following from what the character is doing on-screen. If you want to roll your Skirmish action, then get in a fight. If you want to roll your **Command** action, then order someone around. You can't roll a given action rating unless your character is presently performing that action in the fiction.

3. The GM Sets the Position

Once the player chooses the action rating to use, the GM sets the position for the roll. The position represents how dangerous or troublesome the action might be. There are three positions: **controlled, risky,** and **desperate**. To choose a position, the GM looks at the profiles for the positions below and picks one that most closely matches the situation at hand.

By default, an action roll is risky. You wouldn't be rolling if there was no risk involved. If the situation seems more dangerous, make it desperate. If it seems less dangerous, make it controlled.

4. The GM Sets the Effect Level

The GM assesses the likely effect level of this action, given the factors of the situation. Essentially, the effect level tells us "how much" this action can accomplish: will it have **limited**, **standard**, or **great** effect?

*The GM's choices for effect level and position can be strongly influenced by the player's choice of action rating. If a player wants to try to make a new friend by **Wrecking** something—well… maybe that's possible, but the GM wouldn't be crazy to say it's a desperate roll and probably limited effect. Seems like **Consorting** would be a lot better for that. The players are always free to choose the action they perform, but that doesn't mean all actions should be equally risky or potent.*

5. Add Bonus Dice

You can normally get two bonus dice for your action roll (some special abilities might give you additional bonus dice).

For one bonus die, you can get **assistance** from a teammate. The assistant takes **1 stress**, says how they help you, and gives you **+1d**.

For another bonus die, you can either **push yourself** (take **2 stress**) or you can accept a **Devil's Bargain** (you can't get dice for both, it's one or the other).

The Devil's Bargain

PCs in *Raiders* are reckless adventurers who take terrible chances—they don't always act in their own best interests. To reflect this, the GM or any other player can offer you a bonus die if you accept a Devil's Bargain.

Common Devil's Bargains include:

◆ Collateral damage or unintended harm.

◆ Sacrifice **coin** or an item.

◆ Betray a friend or loved one.

◆ Offend or anger a faction.

◆ Start or tick a troublesome clock.

◆ Add **trouble** to the crew due to evidence or witnesses.

◆ Suffer harm.

The Devil's Bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die.

The Devil's Bargain is always a free choice. If you don't like one, just reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just push yourself for that bonus die instead.

If it's ever needed, the GM has final say over which Devil's Bargains are valid.

6. Roll the Dice and Judge the Result

Once the goal, action rating, position, and effect have been established, add any bonus dice and roll the dice pool to determine the outcome. (See the sets of possible outcomes, by position, in the table.)

The action roll does a lot of work for you. It tells you how well you perform as well as how serious the consequences are in the event of failure or partial success. You might succeed at your action without any consequences (on a **6**), or you might succeed but suffer consequences (on a **4/5**), or it might just all go wrong (on a **1–3**).

On a **1–3**, it's up to the GM to decide if the PC's action has any effect or not, or if it even happens at all. Usually, the action just fails completely, but in some circumstances, it might make sense or be more interesting for the action to have some effect even on a **1–3** result.

Each **4/5** and **1–3** outcome lists suggested **consequences** for the character. The worse your position, the worse the consequences are. The GM

can inflict one or more of these consequences, depending on the circumstances of the action roll. PCs have the ability to avoid or reduce the severity of consequences that they suffer by **resisting** them.

When you narrate the action after the roll, the GM and player collaborate together to say what happens on-screen. *Tell us how you vault across to the other rooftop. Tell us what you say to the guard captain to convince her. The GM will tell us how she reacts. When you face the Bluejack duelist, what's your fighting style like? Etc.*

Action Roll Summary

◆ A player or GM calls for a roll. Make an **action roll** when the character performs a dangerous or troublesome action.

◆ The player chooses the **action rating** to roll. Choose the action that matches what the character is doing in the fiction.

◆ The GM establishes the **position** and **effect level** of the action. The choice of position and effect is influenced strongly by the player's choice of action.

◆ Add up to two bonus dice. 1) **Assistance** from a teammate. 2) **Push yourself** (take **2 stress**) or accept a **Devil's Bargain**.

◆ Roll the dice pool and judge the outcome. The players and GM narrate the action together. The GM has final say over what happens and inflicts consequences as called for by the position and the result of the roll.

Double-Duty Rolls

Since NPCs don't roll for their actions, an action roll does double-duty: **it resolves the action of the PC as well as any NPCs that are involved**. The single roll tells us how those actions interact and which consequences result. On a **6**, the PC wins and accomplishes the goal (the effect). On a **4/5**, it's a mix—both the PC and the NPC accomplish something (effect + consequence). On a **1–3**, the NPC wins and imposes a consequence on the PC.

Action Roll

1d for each **action rating** dot.
+1d if you have **assistance**.
+1d if you **push yourself** *–OR–* you accept a **devil's bargain**.

Controlled

You act on your terms. You exploit a dominant advantage.

Critical: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a **minor complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer **harm**, you end up in a **risky position**.

1-3: You falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

Risky

You go head to head. You act under fire. You take a chance.

Critical: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a **consequence**: you suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you end up in a **desperate** position.

1-3: Things go badly. You suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate** position, you **lose this opportunity**

Desperate

You overreach your capabilities. You're in serious trouble.

Critical: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it, but there's a **consequence**: you suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**.

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs, you **lose this opportunity** for action.

Effect

Your character achieves goals by taking actions and facing consequences. How many actions does it take to achieve a particular goal? That depends on the **effect level** of what you are attempting.

The GM judges the effect level using these effect level profiles. Which one best matches the action at hand—**great**, **standard**, or **limited**? Each effect level indicates the questions that should be answered for that effect, as well as how many segments to tick if you're using a **progress clock**.

Effect Levels		Ticks
Great	*You achieve more than usual. How does the extra effort manifest? What additional benefit do you gain?*	3
Standard	*You achieve what we'd expect as "normal" with this action. Is that enough, or is there more left to do?*	2
Limited	*You achieve a partial or weak effect. How is your efficacy diminished? What effort remains to achieve your goal?*	1

Assessing Effect Level

To assess effect level, first start with your gut feeling, given this situation. If you're not sure, assume standard effect. Then, if needed, consider three factors that may modify the effect level: **potency**, **scale**, and **quality**. If the PC has an advantage in a given factor, consider a higher effect level. If they have a disadvantage, consider a reduced effect level.

Potency

Potency considers particular weaknesses, taking extra time or a bigger risk, or the influence of outside powers. An infiltrator is more potent if all the lights are extinguished and they move about in the dark.

Quality/Tier

Quality represents the effectiveness of tools, weapons, or other resources, usually summarized by Tier. **Fine** items count as +1 bonus in quality, stacking with Tier.

Halen is picking the lock to a manor house. Her crew is Tier I and she has fine lockpicks—so she's effectively Tier II. The faction that owns the manor is Tier III. Halen is outclassed in quality, so her effect upon achieving success will be limited on the lock. What does that mean? Maybe picking the lock requires a series of actions (a clock), and a success only ticks one segment. Or she can't open the lock without setting off a trap—she can't do both.

Scale

Scale represents the number of opponents, size of an area covered, size of a monster, scope of influence, etc. Larger scale can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the situation. In battle, more people are usually better. When infiltrating, more people are usually a hindrance.

Range of Effect Levels

When considering factors, effect level might be reduced below limited, resulting in **zero effect**— or increased beyond great, resulting in an **extreme effect**.

If a PC special ability gives "+1 effect," it comes into play after the GM has assessed the effect level. For example, if you ended up with zero effect, the +1 effect bonus from your **Bodyguard** ability would bump them up to limited effect.

Also, remember that a PC can **push themselves** (take **2 stress**) to get +1 effect on their action.

For a master table of factor examples, see **Magnitude** on page 99. Every factor won't always apply to every situation. You don't have to do an exact accounting every time, either. Use the factors to help you make a stronger judgment call— don't feel beholden to them

When There Is One Dominant Factor

Sometimes, there are different factors that all combine together for a final effect level. But not necessarily. Sometimes one factor is so great or so important that it's the only significant consideration. It overrides any others.

For example, if you're fighting a band of 20 warriors by yourself, it doesn't matter that you have a fine blade—the scale of their numbers completely overwhelms any value you might usually gain from having a well made weapon.

Trading Position for Effect

After factors are considered and the GM has announced the effect level, a player might want to trade position for effect, or vice versa. For instance, if they're going to make a risky roll with standard effect (the most common scenario, generally), they might instead want to push their luck and make a desperate roll but with great effect.

This kind of trade-off isn't included in the effect factors because it's not an element the GM should assess when setting the effect level. Once the level is set, though, you can always offer the trade-off to the player if it makes sense in the situation.

Player: *"I Prowl across the courtyard and vault over the wall, hiding in the shadows by the crate of relics."*

GM: *"I don't think you can make it across in one quick dash. The size of the courtyard is a factor here, so your effect will be limited. Let's say you can get halfway across with this action, then you'll have to Prowl through the other half of the space (and the rest of the guards there) to reach the other side."*

Player: *"I didn't realize it was that far. Hmmm. Okay, what if I just go as fast as I can. Can I get all the way across if I make a desperate roll?"*

GM: *"Yep, sounds good to me!"*

Consequences

When a PC suffers an effect from an enemy or a dangerous situation, it's called a consequence. Consequences are the companion to effects. PCs have effect on the world around them and they suffer consequences in return from the risks they face.

Setting Position and Effect

The GM sets position and effect for an action roll at the same time, after the player says what they're doing and chooses their action. Usually, Risky/Standard is the default combination, modified by the action being used, the strength of the opposition, and the effect factors.

The ability to set position and effect as independent variables gives you nine combinations to choose from, to help you convey a wide array of fictional circumstances.

For example, if a character is facing off alone against a small enemy gang, the situation might be:

◆ *She fights the gang straight up, rushing into their midst, hacking away in a wild Skirmish attack. In this case, being threatened by the larger force lowers her position to indicate greater risk, and the scale of the gang reduces her effect (Desperate / Limited).*

◆ *She fights the gang from a choke-point, such as a narrow alleyway where their numbers can't overwhelm her at once. She's not threatened by several at once, so her risk is similar to a one-on-one fight, but there's still a whole gang of enemies to deal with, so her effect is reduced (Risky / Limited).*

◆ *She doesn't fight the gang, instead trying to maneuver her way past them and escape. She's still under threat from many enemy attacks, so her position is worse, but if the ground is open and the gang can't easily corral her, then her effect for escaping isn't reduced (Desperate / Standard). If she had some immediate means of escape (like leaping onto a speeding carriage), then her effect might even be increased (Desperate / Great).*

◆ *The gang isn't aware of her yet—she's set up in position on a nearby roof with her repeating crossbow. She takes a shot against one of them. Their greater numbers aren't a factor, so her effect isn't reduced, and she's not immediately in any danger (Controlled / Great). Maybe instead she wants to fire off a salvo of suppressing fire against the whole gang, in which case their scale applies (Controlled / Limited). If the gang is on guard for potential trouble, her position is more dangerous (Risky / Great). If the gang is alerted to her shots, then the effect may be reduced further, as they scatter and take cover (Risky / Limited). If the gang is able to shoot back while they fall back to a safe position, then things are even worse for our hero (Desperate / Limited).*

Consequences and Harm

Enemy actions, bad circumstances, or the outcome of a roll can inflict consequences on a PC. There are five types of consequences (at right).

> Reduced Effect
> Complication
> Lost Opportunity
> Worse Position
> Harm

A given circumstance might result in one or more consequences, depending on the situation. The GM determines the

consequences, following from the fiction and the style and tone established by the game group.

Reduced Effect

This consequence represents impaired performance. The PC's action isn't as effective as they'd anticipated. You hit him, but it's only a flesh wound. She accepts the forged invitation, but she'll keep her eye on you throughout the night. You're able to scale the wall, but it's slow going—you're only halfway up. This consequence essentially reduces the effect level of the PC's action by one after all other factors are accounted for.

Complication

This consequence represents trouble, mounting danger, or a new threat. The GM might introduce an immediate problem that results from the action right now: the room catches fire, you're disarmed, the crew takes **+1 trouble** from evidence or witnesses, you lose status with a faction, the target evades you and now it's a chase, reinforcements arrive, etc.

Or the GM might tick a clock for the complication, instead. Maybe there's a clock for the alert level of the guards at the manor. Or maybe the GM creates a new clock for the suspicion of the noble guests at the masquerade party and ticks it. Fill one tick on a clock for a minor complication or two ticks for a standard complication.

A serious complication is more severe: reinforcements surround and trap you, the room catches fire and falling ceiling beams block the door, your weapon is broken, the crew suffers **+2 trouble**, your target escapes out of sight, etc. Fill three ticks on a clock for a serious complication.

Don't inflict a complication that negates a successful roll. If a PC tries to corner an enemy and gets a **4/5**, don't say that the enemy escapes. The player's roll succeeded, so the enemy is cornered…maybe the PC has to wrestle them into position and during the scuffle the enemy grabs their weapon.

Lost Opportunity

This consequence represents shifting circumstance. You had an opportunity to achieve your goal with this action, but it slips away. To try again, you need a new approach—usually a new form of action or a change in circumstances. Maybe you tried to Skirmish with the noble to trap her on the balcony, but she evades your maneuver and leaps out of reach. If you want to trap her now you'll have to try another way—maybe by Swaying her with your roguish charm.

Worse Position

This **consequence** represents losing control of the situation—the action carries you into a more dangerous position. Perhaps you make the leap across to the next rooftop, only to end up dangling by your fingertips. You haven't failed, but you haven't succeeded yet, either. You can try again, re-rolling at the new, worse position. This is a good consequence to choose to show escalating action. A situation might go from **controlled**, to **risky**, to **desperate** as the action plays out and the PC gets deeper and deeper in trouble.

Harm

This consequence represents a significant debility (or death). When you suffer harm, record the specific injury on your character sheet equal to the level of harm you suffer. If you suffer lesser harm, record it in the bottom row. If you suffer moderate harm, write it in the middle row. If you suffer severe harm, record it in the top row. See examples of harm and the harm tracker, below.

Your character suffers the penalty indicated at the end of the row if any or all harm recorded in that row applies to the situation at hand. So, if you have "Drained" and "Battered" harm in the bottom row, you'll suffer reduced effect when you try to run away from the guards. When you're impaired by harm in the top row (severe harm, level 3), your character is incapacitated and can't do anything

unless you have help from someone else or **push yourself** to perform the action.

Harm			
3	*Shattered Right Leg*		Need Help
2			-1d
1	*Drained*	*Battered*	Reduced Effect

This character has three harm boxes marked: a "Shattered Right Leg" (level 3) plus "Drained" and "Battered" (level 1). If the character suffers another level 1 harm, it will move up to level 2.

If you need to mark a harm level, but the row is already filled, the harm moves up to the next row above. So, if you suffered standard harm (level 2) but had no empty spaces in the second row, you'd have to record severe harm (level 3), instead. If you run out of spaces on the top row and need to mark harm there, your character suffers a catastrophic, permanent consequence (loss of a limb, sudden death, etc., depending on the circumstances).

Harm Examples

◆ **Fatal (4):** *Decapitated, Drowned, Stabbed in the heart.*

◆ **Severe (3):** *Impaled, Broken Leg, Arrow Shaft In Chest, Badly Burned, Cowering in Fear.*

◆ **Moderate (2):** *Exhausted, Deep Cut to Arm, Concussion, Panicked, Seduced.*

◆ **Lesser (1):** *Battered, Drained, Distracted, Scared, Confused, Charmed.*

Harm like "Drained" or "Exhausted" can be a good fall-back consequence if there's nothing else physically threatening a PC (like when they spend all night **Studying** those old books, looking for any clues to their enemy's weaknesses before he strikes).

Long- and Short-Term Harm

By default, harm is **long-term**. That means it continues until it is healed via Recovery in downtime (see page 111) or healed by some special action such as magic or divine intervention. Sometimes, however, it makes sense for an instance of harm to be identified as **short-term**. If the GM tells you harm is short-term, put an asterisk (*) next to it when you write it on the harm tracker on your character sheet. The GM will tell you how the harm can be cleared:

◆ **Until you catch your breath:** The harm will last until you have a short time out of action to get yourself back together. *You'll recover from being Winded when you get a few minutes to breathe.*

◆ **Until you rest:** If the crew takes a Rest during the delve (page 79), that will clear most kinds of short-term harm. *You'll recover from being Panicked after a rest.*

◆ **Time:** The harm will last for a set period of time. *After imbibing all that whiskey you're going to be Drunk for a couple of hours.*

◆ **Special action:** There might be some action that needs to be taken to clear the harm. *Your arm will be Swollen until you take the sting antidote.* Generally, if you don't manage to take the necessary action during the delve, temporary harm will either be cleared automatically at the beginning of downtime or transition into long-term harm that can be cleared by seeking treatment during downtime. In some cases, you might take some unusual kind of harm that can't be healed except through some special activity. *You will have a Weakened Soul until an appropriate ritual is cast.*

Level 2 or 3 short-term harm can be either cleared or reduced a level. For example, level 2 Terrified might be reduced after a rest to level 1 Edgy. The reduced harm could itself either be long- or short-term.

The GM has final say over what kinds of harm should be short- or long-term, and how short-term harm can be cleared or reduced.

Resistance and Armor

When your PC suffers a consequence that you don't like, you can choose to resist it. Just tell the GM, "No, I don't think so. I'm resisting that." Resistance is always automatically effective—the GM will tell you if the consequence is reduced in severity or if you avoid it entirely. Then, you'll make a **resistance roll** to see how much stress your character suffers as a result of their resistance.

You make the roll using one of your character's **attributes** (**Insight**, **Prowess**, or **Resolve**). The GM chooses the attribute, based on the nature of consequences:

◆ **Insight:** Consequences from deception or understanding.

◆ **Prowess:** Consequences from physical strain or injury.

◆ **Resolve:** Consequences from mental strain or willpower.

Your character suffers **6 stress** when they resist, **minus the highest die result from the resistance roll.** So, if you rolled a **4**, you'd suffer **2 stress**. If you rolled a **6**, you'd suffer zero stress. If you get a **critical** result, you also **clear 1 stress**.

Ian's character, Silas, is in a desperate fight with several animated skeletons and one of them lands a blow with its sword. Since the position was desperate, the GM inflicts severe harm (modified by any other factors). She tells Ian to record level 3 harm, "Chest Wound" on Silas's sheet. Ian decides to resist the harm, instead. The GM says he can reduce the harm by two level if he resists it. Ian rolls 3d for Silas's Prowess attribute and gets a 5. Silas takes 1 stress and the harm is reduced to level 1, "Cut to the Ribs."

Usually, a resistance roll **reduces the severity** of a consequence. If you're going to suffer fatal harm, for example, a resistance roll could reduce the harm to moderate, instead. Or if you got a complication when you were sneaking past the Neeblings, and the GM was going to mark three ticks on the "Alert" clock, she'd only mark one if you resisted the complication. The default is for resistance to reduce the severity by two levels (from level 3 to level 1 harm, for example), but the GM has final say.

You may only roll against a given consequence once.

The GM also has the option to rule that your character **completely avoids** the consequence. For instance, maybe you're in a sword fight and the consequence is getting disarmed. When you resist, the GM says that you avoid that consequence completely: you keep hold of your weapon.

The GM may also threaten several consequences at once, then the player may choose which ones to resist (and make rolls for each).

GM: *"She stabs you and then leaps off the balcony. Level 2 harm and you lose the opportunity to catch her with fighting."*

Player: *"I'll resist losing the opportunity by grappling her as she attacks. She can stab me, but I don't want to let her escape."*

Once you decide to resist a consequence and roll, you suffer the stress indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take, then decide whether or not to resist.

Resistance Roll	
1d for each **Attribute** rating.	You reduce the effects of the consequence by 2 levels or **avoid** it (GM chooses). **Suffer 6 stress minus the highest die result.** **Critical:** Clear **1 stress**.

If you took a devil's bargain on your roll, you can't resist it. A devil's bargain is not a consequence.

Armor

If you have a type of **armor** that applies to the situation, you can mark an armor box to reduce or avoid a consequence, instead of (or in addition to) rolling to resist.

Silas is taking level 3 harm, "Bashed in the Head," and the fight isn't even over yet, so Ian decides to use Silas's armor to reduce the harm. He marks the armor box and the harm becomes level 1, "Bruised Temple" If Silas was wearing heavy armor, he could mark a second armor box (or resist) and take no harm at all.

When an armor box is marked, it can't be used again until it's restored. All of your armor is restored when you **rest** (page 79) or choose your **load** for the next delve.

Death

There are a couple ways for a PC to die:

◆ If they suffer level 4 fatal harm and they don't resist it, they die. Sometimes this is a choice a player wants to make, because they feel like it wouldn't make sense for the character to survive or it seems right for their character to die here.

◆ If they need to record harm at level 3 and it's already filled, they suffer a catastrophic consequence, which might mean death (depending on the circumstances).

When your character dies, here are your options:

◆ In most cases, when your character dies, you will create a new character to play. Maybe you "promote" one of the NPC gang members to a PC, or create a brand new character who joins the crew.

◆ This is a fantasy setting with gods and magic. Perhaps your companions can find a way to bring you back (one way is through a ritual accessible to a character with the Death Magic commitment, page 157). If return from death is possible, there will be a great cost.

Fortune Rolls

A fortune roll is a tool the GM can use to disclaim decision making. You use a fortune roll in two different ways:

When you need to make a determination about a situation the PCs aren't directly involved in and don't want to simply decide the outcome.

Two rival gangs are fighting. How does that turn out? The GM makes a fortune roll for each of them. One gets a good result but the other gets limited effect. The GM decides that the first gang takes over some of their rivals' turf but suffer some injuries during the skirmish.

When an outcome is uncertain, but no other roll applies to the situation at hand.

While pilfering the workshop of an alchemist, Cross is possessed by a vengeful ghost. As control of his body slips away, Cross grabs a random potion bottle and drinks it down. Will the arcane concoction have an effect on the spirit? Will it poison Cross to death? Who knows? The GM makes a fortune roll to see how it turns out.

When you make a fortune roll you may assess **any trait rating** to determine the dice pool of the roll.

◆ When a faction takes an action with uncertain outcome, you might use their **Tier** rating to make a fortune roll.

◆ When a gang operates independently, use their **quality** rating for a fortune roll.

◆ When a supernatural power manifests with uncertain results, you might use its **magnitude** for a fortune roll.

◆ When a PC **gathers information**, you might make a fortune roll using their **action rating** to determine the amount of the info they get.

If no trait applies, roll **1d** for sheer luck or create a dice pool (from one to four) based on the situation at hand. If two parties are directly opposed, make a fortune roll for each side to see how they do, then assess the outcome of the situation by comparing their performance levels.

The fortune roll is also a good tool to help the GM manage all the various moving parts of the world. Sometimes a quick roll is enough to answer a question or inspire an idea for what might happen next.

Fortune Roll	
1d for each **Trait** rating.	**Critical:** Exceptional result / Great, extreme effect.
+1d for each **Major Advantage**.	**6:** Good result / Standard, full effect.
-1d for each **Major Disadvantage**.	**4/5:** Mixed result / Limited, partial effect.
	1-3: Bad result / Poor, little effect.

Other examples of fortune rolls:

◆ *The PCs instigate a fight between a giant ghost viper and a band of six legged purple ape monsters, then sit back and watch the fireworks. How does it turn out? Does one side or the other dominate? Are they both made vulnerable by the conflict? Make a few fortune rolls to find out.*

◆ *A strange sickness is sweeping the town. How badly is a crime ridden district hit by the outbreak? The GM assigns a magnitude to the arcane plague, and makes a fortune roll to judge the extent of its contamination.*

◆ *The Hunter stakes out a good spot and makes a sniper shot against a faction leader when he enters his manor house. The controlled Hunt roll is a success, but is the arrow shot great effect enough to instantly kill a grizzled gang leader? Instead of making a progress clock for his mortality, the GM decides to use a simple fortune roll with his "toughness" as a trait to see if he can possibly survive the attack. The roll is a 4/5: the arrow misses his heart, but hits him in the lung—it's a mortal wound. He's on death's door, with only hours to live, unless his gang can get an expert physicker to him in time.*

◆ *The PCs face off in a skirmish with a veteran barrow raider captain and her crew. The tide of battle goes in the PCs' favor, and many crew members are killed. One of the players asks if the captain will surrender to spare the rest of her crew's lives. The GM isn't sure. How cold-hearted is this veteran delver? She's stared giant demons in the eye without*

*flinching … is there anything Human left inside her? The GM makes a **2d** fortune roll for "Human feelings" to see if a spark of compassion remains in heart. If so, maybe one of the PCs can roll to **Consort**, **Sway**, or **Command** her to stand down.*

Gathering Information

The flow of information from the GM to the players about the fictional world is very important in a roleplaying game. Normally, the GM just tells the players what their characters perceive and what they know about the fictional world. Not everything (too many details are overwhelming and not interesting), but enough to understand the world and make know how to make relevant decisions.

When you want to know something specific about the fictional world, your character can **gather information**. The GM will ask you **how** your character gathers the info (or how they learned it in the past).

If it's common knowledge, the GM will just answer your questions. If there's an obstacle to the discovery of the answer, an action roll is called for. If it's not common knowledge but there's no obstacle, a simple fortune roll determines the quality of the information you gather.

Each attempt to gather information takes time. If the situation allows, you can try again if you don't initially get all the info that you want. But often, the opportunity is fleeting, and you'll only get one chance to roll for that particular question.

Some example questions are on the bottom of the character sheet. The GM always answers honestly about what the character knows, but with a level of detail according to the level of effect.

The most common gather information actions are **Surveying** the situation to reveal or anticipate what's going on and **Studying** a person to understand what they intend to do or what they're really thinking.

Sometimes, you'll have to maneuver yourself into position before you can gather information. For example, you might have to **Prowl** to a good hiding place first and then **Study** the cultists when they perform their dark ritual.

Investigation

Some questions are too complex to answer immediately with a single gather information roll. For instance, you might want to discover the network that is smuggling corpses down to the docks. In these cases, the GM will tell you to start a **long-term project** that you work on during **downtime**.

You track the investigation project using a progress clock. Once the clock is filled, you have the evidence you need to ask several questions about the subject of your investigation as if you had great effect.

Gather Information	
Ask a question and make an action roll or a fortune roll. The GM answers you honestly, with a level of detail depending on the effect level.	**Great:** You get exceptional details. The information is complete and follow-up questions may expand into related areas or reveal more than you hoped for.
	Standard: You get good details. Clarifying and follow-up questions are possible.
	Limited: You get incomplete or partial information. More information gathering will be needed to get all the answers.

Examples and Questions

◆ You might **Attune** to see echoes of recent magical activity. Have any spells been cast here? How can I find the magical artifact that I suspect is in this room? What kinds of supernatural effects should I be worried about?

◆ You might **Command** a local barkeep to tell you what he knows about the secret meetings held in his back room. What's really going on here? What's he really feeling about this? Is he part of this secret group?

◆ You might **Consort** with a well-connected friend to learn secrets about an enemy, rival, or potential ally. What do they intend to do? What might I suspect about their motives? How can I discover leverage to manipulate them?

◆ You might **Hunt** a courier traveling from a town to a rival faction's base, to discover who's receiving satchels of **coin** from the baron. Where does the package end up? How can I find out who handed over the package?

◆ You might **Study** ancient and obscure books to discover an arcane secret. How can I disable the runes of warding? Will anyone sense if they're disabled?

◆ Or you might **Study** a person to read their intentions and feelings. What are they really feeling? How could I get them to trust me?

◆ You might **Survey** a barrow to plan a delve. What's a good point of infiltration? What's the danger here?

◆ Or you might **Survey** a charged situation when you meet another crew. What's really going on here? Are they about to attack us?

◆ You might **Sway** a powerful lord at a party so he divulges his future plans. What does he intend to do? How can I get him to think I might be a good partner in this venture?

◆ Or you might **Sway** his bodyguard to confide in you about recent events. Where has he been lately? Who's he been meeting with?

Chapter 2
Characters

2. Characters

Character Creation

Choose a Playbook

Armiger	Armigers are experts at weapons, leadership, tactics, and battle.
Artificer	Artificers make and break things, fix wounds, and brew strange substances.
Hunter	Hunters find the path, live in the wild, set up ambushes, and fight at range.
Mage	Mages study the arcane, create magical rituals, and cast spells.
Scholar	Scholars explore, conduct research, collect things, and study tomes.
Strategist	Strategists create plans, negotiate with factions, and deceive enemies.
Thief	Thieves skulk in the shadows, steal treasure, and ambush enemies.

A playbook is what we call the sheet with all the specific rules to play a certain character type. Rather than a general "character" sheet, the game has seven customized playbooks. By choosing a playbook, you're choosing which type of adventurer your character is.

Picking a playbook doesn't mean you can only do those things. A Mage can fight with a sword; an Armiger can sneak past the guards. The playbook gives you certain abilities and specializations.

Choose a Heritage

Your character's heritage describes where their family line is from. When you choose a heritage, write a detail about your family life as well (*example:* countryfolk—vegetable farmers, mother died young).

◆ **Countryfolk:** Your people are farmers, herders, or other agriculturalists, living in small villages or on farms.

◆ **Fisherfolk:** Your people live along the seacoast, making their living a harvest of fish, crabs, clams, lobster, and other bounty from the sea.

◆ **Townfolk:** You're from a city or large town.

◆ **Manorfolk:** You grew up on a manor, perhaps holding on to the old ways of the servants of the Yethri. Manors are fortified house complexes, each usually connected to several villages to provide them with protection, oversight, and governance.

◆ **Wildfolk:** You grew up among the people of the forests and wild places, perhaps brigands or perhaps just independent hillfolk.

◆ **Cambri:** You're a foreigner from the continent. You have come to Athland somehow—perhaps with invaders, missionaries, or traders.

◆ **Dandreen:** You are from the islands to the Northeast. Your people are thought by Athlanders to be strange and wild. They are fond of tattoos and exotic hairstyles.

Choose a Background

Your **background** describes what you did before joining the crew. Choose a background and then write a detail about it that's specific to your

character (*example:* labor—sailor on a mutiny ship with few survivors).

◆ **Academic:** A scholar, clerk, teacher, astrologer, engineer, artist, tutor, alchemist, mage, etc.

◆ **Labor:** A servant, blacksmith, mason, carpenter, butcher, fisher, teamster, nanny, wainwright, cook, sailor, etc.

◆ **Merchant:** A shopkeeper, merchant, crafter, trader, tinker, etc.

◆ **Military:** A knight, soldier, mercenary, guard member, intelligence operative, war leader, fight instructor, etc.

◆ **Peasant:** Farmer, herder, beekeeper, orchardist, etc.

◆ **Noble:** A member of a high, noble, or fallen house; an heir, scion, courtier, illegitimate child, etc. In Athland, the nobility are mainly derived from the servants and soldiers who directly served the Yethri before the Awakening.

◆ **Religious:** A priest, priestess, acolyte, temple guard, temple servant, or cult member.

◆ **Underworld:** A street urchin, gang member, robber, beggar, prostitute, thug, thief, cutpurse. brigand, smuggler, or other outcast.

Assign Four Action Dots

Your playbook begins with three action dots already placed. You get to add four more dots (so you'll have seven total). At the start of the game, no action rating can have more than two dots (unless a special ability tells you otherwise). Assign your four dots like this:

◆ Put one dot in any action that you feel reflects your character's **heritage**.

◆ Put one dot in any action that you feel reflects your character's **background**.

◆ Assign two more dots anywhere you please (max rating is 2, remember).

The more dots you have in an action rating, the more effective your character is at taking that action.

Choose a Special Ability

You get the signature ability for your playbook automatically, as well as one special ability of your choice. If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. It is also OK to wait on selecting a special ability until you have a better sense of who your character is—you can even select it during the game session if you want.

Mixing playsheets: What if you have an idea for a character that's sort of between two different playbooks? That's not a problem. As your character advances, you'll be able to choose the Veteran special ability, which means taking an ability from any other playbook. Over time, you'll be able to mix and max abilities. You could, for example, play an Armiger/Artificer with some abilities from one playsheet and some from the other. When you start, though, pick one playsheet as most reflective of who the character is.

Special Armor

Some special abilities refer to your **special armor**. Each character sheet has a set of three boxes to track usage of armor (standard, heavy, and special). If you have any abilities that use your special armor, tick that box when you activate one of them. If you don't have any special abilities that use special armor, then you can't use that armor box at all.

Choose One Close Friend and One Rival

Each playbook has a list of NPCs, Your character knows them all. Choose one from the list who is a close relationship (a good friend, a lover, a family relation, etc.). Mark the upward-pointing triangle next to their name. Then choose another NPC on the list who's your rival or enemy. Mark the downward-pointing triangle next to their name.

If you and another player choose the same playbook, you will share the same list of potential friends and rivals. That means you run in the same social circle and are sure to have some kind of history (siblings,

rivals, buddies, comrades, cousins, etc.). If you don't like that idea, one of you can come up with some new NPCs and switch them with the default ones on the character sheet. Check with the GM to make sure the new NPCs fit the setting.

Choose Your Reprieve

Barrow raiding is a harrowing occupation. Each character needs some way to recover from the terror and horror of the delve. Choose a **Reprieve** from the list, and describe it on the line above with the specific details and the name and location of those with whom you recover from stress. (It's OK to hold off for now on choosing a source of reprieve, but you'll need to identify one after your first delve, during the downtime phase).

◆ **Family:** You're devoted to loved ones. They may be blood relatives or an adopted family.

◆ **Gambling:** You crave games of chance, betting on sporting events, etc.

◆ **Luxury:** You love the high life—fancy clothes, good food, pleasant companionship.

◆ **Pleasure:** You gain solace from lovers, food, drink, drugs, art, theater, etc.

◆ **Religion:** You are a person of faith who finds solace in the worship of the gods. You may have deep devotion to one or several gods in the standard pantheon, or perhaps you belong to some heretical or foreign sect.

◆ **Stupor:** You seek oblivion in the abuse of drugs, drinking to excess, getting beaten to a pulp in the fighting pits, etc.

◆ **Weird:** You experiment with strange essences, consort with rogue spirits, observe bizarre rituals or taboos, etc.

Commitments (optional): Later on, during character advancement, you might decide to choose a commitment (page 154). Your source of reprieve can point you toward a an eventual commitment, if you wish. To work toward the Companion of the Black Rose commitment, choose Family as a source of reprieve, with the Order of the Black rose as the source. If you are interested in Devout, choose Religion as your reprieve, with the temple of your preferred god as the source. If you are interested in the Death Magic or Feral commitments, choose Weird as a reprieve with an appropriate source.

Record Your Name and Look

Choose a name for your character If your character uses an alias or nickname, make a note of it. Record a few evocative words that describe your character's look.

Names

If you can't think of a name, here are some ideas:

Athlish names: Alren, Alturius, Benit, Bideloth, Bondren, Chenri, Danren, Darcy, Delilah, Dindro, Eelen, Erik, Feather, Feth, Forthrast, Gimbet, Gori, Gullen, Haney, Horan, Hust, Iria, Isander, Jadocar, Jak, Jenev, Jeth, Jon, Kulen, Lance, Landri, Lanreer, Marcus, Memren, Mesia, Mikah, Oria, Oprin, Phythelia, Pico, Peen, Quaren, Rath, Reesla, Rincover, Sakri, Seeli, Seth, Shas, Slain, Teleen, Timen, Telerian, Tristan, Ulrik, Una, Vikran, Wiklas, Xanian,Yanra, Zander.

Cambri names: Bolisti, Chenokren, Heeloran, Ikori, Jastel, Lilonan, Manmath, Nalothrel, Shenesti, Testen, Valdomen, Yedori.

Dandreen names: Andocar, Halohel, Lokheel, Mandoc, Opiri, Shador, Talidok, Uluvrin.

Family Names

You can be "of" a place, or you can go by a family name, such as:

Ash, Bannerman, Brokeban, Byrnier, Crockler, Denian, Ekfel, Felander, Fisher, Genren, Gorriger, Hapler, Ilius, Janren, Jonas, Kintroth, Luniter, Morick, Nelanin, Orieth, Pequanim, Rostren, Slenith, Smith, Taylor, Ulven, Vulpine, Worener, Xaster, Young, Zengith.

Looks

Pick a few words to describe your look, such as:

Man, woman, ambiguous, concealed.

Red belt, heavy boots, nondescript tunic, white baldric, ragged clothes, fancy embroidery. bushy beard, threadbare, wide hat, coat of mail, long dress, dragon torc, crooked staff, embossed scabbard, thick mustache, hooded cloak, heavy belt, leather jack, fine sandals, kilt, sailor's garb, weathered brigandine, leather cap, fancy hat, dented helm, fine necklace, many rings, exotic sword, several knives, pointed shoes, strange tattoos, shaven head, long braids, well dressed.

Alert, angry, athletic, avuncular, blue eyed, bow legged, broad shouldered, brown eyed, calculating, cheerful, confident, dark, defensive, dirty, dusky, excitable, fat, fair, fiery, friendly, flamboyant, focused, foul mouthed, handsome, haughty, injured hand, jovial, laconic, languid, lean, limping, long legged, melancholy, muscular, noble, open, pasty, poised, pretty, quick, relaxed, reserved, rigid, scarred, short, squat, squinting, stolid, strange, striking, stuttering, swarthy, talkative, tall, timid, twitchy, unmemorable, warm, weathered, wide, wrinkled, youthful.

Loadout

You have access to all of the items on your character sheet. At the start of each delve (when the engagement roll is made), decide what your **load** will be (*how much* you are carrying), but you don't have to decide until later exactly *what* you are carrying.

Your load determines your movement speed and conspicuousness.

- ◆ **1–3 load: Light**. You're faster and less conspicuous; you blend in with regular folk.

- ◆ **4/5 load: Normal**. You look like a soldier or bandit, ready for trouble.

- ◆ **6 load: Heavy**. You're slower. You're carrying a lot and you look like you're on some kind of mission.

- ◆ **7–9 load: Encumbered**. You're overburdened and can't do anything except move very slowly.

During the delve, you can declare that your character has an item on hand by checking the box for that item—up to a number of load slots equal to

your chosen load. You can pick any item on the standard item list on page 54 or any item on your playsheet item list. If you're not sure what an item is or does, check the more detailed description in this rule book.

Most items use up one load slot, but some use two (they have two boxes on the sheet). Once you've used up all of your load slots, that's the limit on items you have with you on that delve. Some items have a load cost of zero (those are in *italics* on the character sheet).

If an item has zero load cost, you can declare at any time that you have it with you (or that you don't).

Some special abilities (like the Armiger's Mule ability) increase your load limits.

Character Creation Summary

1 **Choose a playbook.** Your playbook represents your reputation in the among barrow raiders, your special abilities, and how you advance.

2 **Choose a heritage.** Detail your choice with a note about your family life. For example, Cambri: now missionaries in Trenghall.

3 **Choose a background.** Detail your choice with your specific history. For example, Labor: Sailor, mutineer.

4 **Assign four action dots.** No action can begin with a rating higher than 2 during character creation. (After creation, action ratings can advance up to 3. When you unlock the Mastery advance for your crew, you can advance actions up to rating 4.)

5 **Choose a special ability.** They're in the gray column in the middle of the character sheet. If you can't decide, choose the first ability on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.

6 **Choose a close friend and a rival.** Mark the one who is a close friend, long-time ally, family relation, or lover (the upward-pointing triangle). Mark one who is a rival, enemy, scorned lover, betrayed partner, etc. (the downward-pointing triangle).

7 **Choose your reprieve.** Pick your preferred type of reprieve, detail it with a short description and indicate the name and location of those with whom you recover from stress.

8 **Record your name, alias, and look.** Choose a name, an alias (if you use one), and jot down a few words to describe your look. Examples are provided on the preceding page.

Armiger

Armiger

A hardened and dangerous warrior.

Most crews of barrow raiders include professional fighters. The Armiger specializes in use of weapons to threaten or harm others.

When you play an Armiger, you earn XP when you address a challenge with violence or coercion. Threaten, intimidate, ambush, command, skirmish, wound, or kill. It's all part of the job.

Who taught you the arts of war? Were you a soldier? A pit fighter? An enforcer? Have you fought in battles or only taken on enemies one at a time?

Starting Actions

- ● ● ○ ○ **SKIRMISH**
- ● ○ ○ ○ **COMMAND**

Starting Builds

If you want guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Commander.** Command +1, Study +1, Survey +2. **Warleader**.
- ◆ **Soldier.** Command +1, Consort +2, Sway +1. **Battleborn**.
- ◆ **Street tough.** Prowl +2, Wreck +2. **Not To Be Trifled With**.

Armiger Signature Ability

Bodyguard

When you protect a teammate, take **+1d** to your **resistance roll**. When you gather info to anticipate possible threats in the current situation, you get **+1 effect**.

Friends and Rivals

- ◆ **Cormac**, a fight master with an injured leg. *Perhaps your mentor and teacher. Or maybe he's lame as a result of dueling you*.
- ◆ **Ilsa**, an assassin. *Have you hired her to do your dirty work? Is there a contract on you that she plans to fulfill?*
- ◆ **Tenebrin**, a member of the Ducal Guard. *Perhaps your blood brother. Or you and he love the same person.*
- ◆ **Erik,** a merchant. *Perhaps he buys and sells many things and is a good connection for you. Or he might have cheated you (or you him).*
- ◆ **Deeren,** a priestess. *Are you a devout worshiper of the god she represents? Or did she leave you to join the clergy?*

The Protect teamwork maneuver lets you face a consequence for a teammate. If you choose to resist that consequence, this ability gives you +1d to your resistance roll. Also, when you read a situation to gather information about hidden dangers or potential attackers, you get +1 effect—which means more detailed information.

Armiger Special Abilities

Monster Hunter

You have extensive experience with killing monsters. You gain **potency** in combat vs. monsters. When you **Study** a monster as a setup maneuver, take **+1d**.

"Monster" is an arbitrary name for creatures that Athlanders find strange and unnatural. It includes supernatural entities and dangerous non-sentient creatures found in barrows. It doesn't include non-supernatural humanoids that Athlanders would consider "people." See page 132 for more information on the difference between monsters and people in Athland culture.

Battleborn

You can expend your **special armor** to reduce harm from an attack in combat or to **push yourself** during a fight.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you reduce harm that means the level of harm you're facing right now is reduced, usually by two levels. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Mule

Your load limits are higher. *Light:* 5. *Normal:* 7. *Heavy:* 8.

This ability is allows you to wear heavy armor and pack a heavy weapon if you want to attract less attention and move faster. Since your exact gear is determined on-the-fly during an expedition, having more load also gives you more options to get creative with when dealing with problems during a delve.

Not To Be Trifled With

You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: perform a feat of physical force that verges on the super Human *or* engage a small gang on equal footing in close combat.

When you push yourself to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) in addition to the special ability.

If you perform a feat that verges on the super Human, you might break a metal weapon with your bare hands, tackle a galloping horse, lift a huge weight, etc. If you engage a small gang on equal footing, you don't suffer reduced effect due to scale against a small gang (up to six people).

Vigorous

You recover from harm faster. Take **+1d** to healing treatment rolls. Once per delve, when you **rest**, you clear any level 1 harm box or, if you have no level 1 harm, reduce one level 2 harm to level 1.

During a rest (see page 79), you can clear or reduce long-term harm that would otherwise not be cleared until you get treatment during downtime.

Warleader

When you **Command** a **cohort** in combat, they continue to fight when they would otherwise **break** (they're not taken out when they suffer level 3 harm). They gain **+1 effect** and **1 armor**.

This ability makes your cohorts more effective in battle and also allows them to resist harm by using armor. While you lead your cohorts, they won't stop fighting until they take fatal harm (level 4) or you order them to cease. What do you do to inspire such bravery in battle?

Armiger Items

◆ **Fine hand weapon:** A finely crafted one-handed melee weapon of your choice. Is this a well-crafted standard weapon, like a perfectly-balanced longsword, or something exotic, like a flail or metal-banded war club? [**1 load**]

◆ **Backup weapon:** A smallsword, a dagger, or other easily carried and drawn secondary weapon that does not have the heft or range of your primary weapon, but it's good in close quarters and keeps you armed should that one be dropped, lost, or broken. [**0 load**]

- ◆ **Fine heavy weapon:** A finely crafted two-handed melee weapon of your choice. A pollaxe, a great spear, a two handed sword, a battleaxe, etc. A heavy weapon has more reach and hits harder than a standard weapon. This might give you **potency** when the power or reach of the weapon is a factor. [**2 load**]

- ◆ **Scary weapon:** A scary-looking hand weapon such as a maul or spiked club. This item grants increased effect when you intimidate, not increased harm in combat. [**1 load**]

- ◆ **Silver edging:** A vial of alchemical silver. Can be applied to the edge or striking head of a weapon, giving it potency against supernatural enemies. Takes a short time to apply and wears off after 30 minutes or a few hits. Your vial has enough for 3 applications. [**0 load**]

- ◆ **Caltrops:** A set of small, nasty, area denial weapons made up of several spikes arranged so that one is always pointed upward. Enough to spread out over an area of about 2 square yards/meters. Stepping on one or more caltrops is likely to result in a serious foot wound. [**1 load**]

Artificer

Artificer

An occult engineer.

The Yethri knew many subtle arts of creating, healing, and engineering. Alchemists study their methods and attempt to replicate them. They know how to make and break things.

When you play an alchemist, you earn xp when you address a challenge with technical skill or mayhem. Artificers can change the elemental properties of materials and achieve astounding effects thereby.

The extensive training that makes an Artificer is rare and strange in the chaos of Athland—how did you learn your arts, and how did you end up a barrow raider?

Starting Actions

- ● ● ○ ○ **TINKER**
- ● ○ ○ ○ **STUDY**

Starting builds

If you want guidance when you assign your four action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Doctor.** Consort +1, Finesse +1, Study +2. **Physicker**.
- ◆ **Sapper.** Study +1, Survey +2, Wreck +1. **Structural Engineer**.
- ◆ **Brewer.** Attune +2, Study +2. **Alchemist**.

Friends and Rivals

- ◆ **Meriwen**, a sage. *How much does she know of the Yethri and their arts?*
- ◆ **Rincover**, a dealer. *What shady things does he sell? Has he stolen something from you?*
- ◆ **Trenian**, a town elder. *He's connected to everyone important in the barony. How could that help you?*
- ◆ **Ilen**, an artificer's apprentice. *Who teaches her? Who would she betray?*
- ◆ **Tolik**, a knight. *What does Tolik want from you?*

Artificer Signature Ability

Maker

When you **research** or **craft** a *mundane* gadget, you get **+1 result level** to your roll (a **1–3** becomes a **4/5**, etc.). You begin with one special design already known.

Follow the Researching procedure with the GM (page 113) to define your first mundane design.

Artificer Special Abilities

Alchemist

You can **invent** or **craft** items with *alchemical* features. You begin a with a standard set of formulae already known. These are available to you and can be replenished between delves.

> Alchemical Silver
> Black Lyptus
> Black Salt
> Blinding Powder
> Flash Powder
> Fire Oil
> Night Balm
> Oil of Fire Resistance
> Smoke Bomb
> Sweetbush Draught

See page 115 for descriptions of standard alchemical items and other items you can learn to craft. You can carry these items on a special artificer's bandolier (page 34).

Analyst

During downtime, you get two ticks to distribute among any long term project clocks that involve researching a new formula or design plan.

You get these extra ticks regardless of what other downtime activities you engage in.

Fortitude

You can expend your **special armor** to resist a **consequence** of fatigue, weakness, or chemical effects, or to **push yourself** when working with technical skill or handling alchemicals.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you "resist a consequence" of the appropriate type, you avoid it completely. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Physicker

You can **Tinker** with bones, blood, and bodily humours to treat wounds or stabilize the dying. You can **Study** a malady or corpse. Everyone in your crew (including you) gets **+1d** to their healing treatment rolls.

*Knowledge of anatomy and healing is a rare and esoteric thing in Athland. Without this ability, any attempts at treatment will often fail or make things worse. You can use this ability to give first aid (rolling **Tinker**) to allow your patient to ignore a harm penalty for an hour or two.*

Structural Engineer

When you reinforce or break into a structure (building, door, wall, etc.), you get **+1d** or **+1 effect level** (your choice).

You can reinforce a door, drill holes in things, melt stuff with acid, use a muffled explosive, make sure the troll will not be able to knock down the tower you're in, etc.

Venomous

Choose a drug or poison (from your artificer's pack stock) to which you have become immune. You can **push yourself** to secrete it through your skin or saliva or exhale it as a vapor.

When you push yourself to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) if you're making a roll, in addition to the special ability.

You choose the type of drug or poison when you get this ability. You can change the drug or poison by completing a long-term project. Only a single drug or poison can be chosen—you can't become immune to any essences, oils, or other alchemical substances.

Artificer Items

◆ **Fine tinker tools:** A finely crafted set of tools for mechanical work. A magnifying lens. Clamps. A small saw. Measuring devices. [**1 load**]

◆ **Fine sapper's tools:** Tools for breaking through walls and obstacles. A small hand drill with alchemical bits. A mallet and steel spikes. A heavy pry bar. Vials of acid. [**2 load**]

◆ **Hand Cannon:** Heavy and slow to reload, but makes a lot of noise and packs a big punch. [**2 load**]

◆ **Bandolier:** A strap worn across the body, fitted with specially-padded pouches to hold three alchemical items. If you have the Alchemist special ability, you can use any of the standard alchemicals from the list at the right (or use one of your own custom-made formulas). See page 115 for more on alchemicals. *During downtime, you automatically refill your bandoliers, so long as you have reasonable access to a supplier or workshop.* [**1 load per bandolier, up to 2**]

◆ **Medical kit:** Bandages, needle and thread, poultices, pain killers. *If you have the Physicker special ability, a medical kit is useful in emergencies (without that ability, you can still use a medical kit, but you might have limited effect).* [**1 load**]

Hunter

Hunter

A skilled tracker and archer.

You are comfortable in the wilderness, leading the crew through difficult terrain and past danger. If it comes to a fight, you are best with a bow or other ranged weapon.

When you play a Hunter, you earn XP when you address a challenge with stealth or ranged violence. Find the lay of the land, hunt, set an ambush.

- ● ● ◦ ◦ **HUNT**
- ● ◦ ◦ ◦ **PROWL**

Starting Builds

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Bounty Hunter**. Consort +1, Prowl +1, Skirmish +2. **Scout**.
- ◆ **Ranger**. Prowl +2, Finesse +1, Survey +1. **Survivor**.
- ◆ **Sniper**. Skirmish +1, Study +1, Survey +2. **Focused**.

Hunter Signature Ability

Deadshot

You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: make a ranged attack at extreme distance beyond what's normal for the weapon or hit the weakest spot on a well protected target.

Where did you learn your skills? Who taught you? Did you grow up in the woods, perhaps with refugees from the chaos following the end of the Dreaming? Or did you learn your skills by hunting in the Baron's private woods?

Starting Actions

Friends and Rivals

- ◆ **Teal**, a warden. *Perhaps your mentor and teacher. Or perhaps the two of you are hunting the same creature*.
- ◆ **Micah,** a mercenary. *A strong friend or fearsome enemy.*
- ◆ **Zek,** a tinker. *What does Zek hear and see while traveling from place to place?*
- ◆ **Tendril,** a forest spirit. *Are you the only one who knows of Tendril's existence?*
- ◆ **Minerva,** a priestess. *What god does she serve?*

When you push yourself to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) in addition to the special ability.

The first use of this ability allows long-range shots that would otherwise be impossible with your weapon. The second use allows you to improve your position or effect when presented with well armored enemies or monsters who might otherwise be immune to penetration by arrows or bolts.

Hunter Special Abilities

Focused

You can expend your **special armor** to resist a consequence of surprise or mental harm (fear, confusion, losing track of someone) or to **push yourself** for ranged combat or tracking.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you "resist a consequence" of the appropriate type, you avoid it completely. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Predator

Gain **+1d** to rolls against weakened or vulnerable targets. Whenever you **gather information** on a weakness or vulnerability, the worst you can get is a **4/5** result.

Like a wolf picking out the weakest member of a herd, you know how to find and make use of any advantage you might have over an enemy or prey.

Scout

When you **gather information** to discover the location of a target, you get **+1 effect**. When you hide in a prepared position or use camouflage you get **+1d** to rolls to avoid detection.

A "target" can be a person, a destination, a good ambush spot, an item, etc.

Survivor

From hard-won experience, you are comfortable in lands outside of civilization. You get **+1 stress box** and you get **+1d** for any rolls (including resistance rolls) related to surviving in dangerous environments.

This ability gives you an additional stress box, so you have 10 instead of 9. The maximum number of stress boxes a PC can have (from any number of additional special abilities or upgrades) is 12.

Tough as nails

Penalties from **harm** are one level less severe (though level 4 harm is still fatal).

With this ability, level 3 harm doesn't incapacitate you; instead you take -1d to your rolls (as if it were level 2 harm). Level 2 harm affects you as if it were level 1 (less effect). Level 1 harm has no effect on you (but you still write it on your sheet, and must recover normally to clear it). Record the harm at its original level—for healing purposes, the original harm level applies.

Mystic Hunter

Your animal companion is imbued with spirit energy. It gains **potency** when tracking or fighting the supernatural, and gains one arcane ability of your choice: ghost-form, mind-link, or arrow-swift. Take this ability one or two more times to add additional arcane abilities to your companion.

Your companion functions as a cohort (Expert: Hunter). This ability gives them potency against supernatural targets and an arcane ability of your choice. Ghost-form allows the companion to transform into magical vapor as if it were a spirit. Mind-link allows the companion and hunter to share their senses and thoughts telepathically. Arrow-swift allows the companion to move extremely quickly, outpacing any other mundane creature or vehicle. For more details about cohorts, see page 60.

Hunter Items

- **Fine longbow:** A finely crafted bow, taking great strength to pull and deadly even at long range. [**2 load**]
- **Fine shortbow:** A smaller bow, with shorter range and less penetration than a longbow, but more easily carried and concealed. [**1 load**]
- **Monster killing arrows:** You have a stash of arrows with occult properties that give them **potency** against inhuman monsters and magical creatures. *What is the source of this power? Are they blessed by a god? Enhanced with alchemical metallurgy? Prepared with a special charm you learned from a forest witch?* [**1 load**]

- **Animal companion:** Your animal friend obeys your commands and anticipates your actions. This can be any natural beast, smaller than you, such as a falcon or hound. *Cohort* (*Expert: Hunter*). *What kind of creature is this?*

- **Wilderness kit:** A pack of items useful for wilderness survival: flint, steel, and tinder, needles and thread, fishhooks, a rain poncho, etc. [**1 load**]

- **Spiritbane charm:** A small charm that repels hostile spirits of the sort sometimes encountered in the deep wilderness. [**0 load**]

Mage

Mage

A specialist in the supernatural.

Athland is filled with magi. You can feel that force and manipulate it. With that power come many dangers, both occult and mundane.

When you play a Mage, you earn XP when you address a challenge with mystical powers. Cast spells, research arcane rituals, connect with otherworldly beings.

How did you learn the arts of magic? Did you apprentice to a powerful sorcerer? Did you have to study intensely or did it come naturally to you?

Starting Actions

- ● ● ○ ○ **ATTUNE**

- ● ○ ○ ○ **STUDY**

Starting Builds

If you want guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Court mage:** Consort +1, Finesse +1, Survey +1, Sway +1. **Glamour.**

- ◆ **Practical mage:** Consort +1, Tinker +1, Sway +1. **Enchanter.**

- ◆ **War mage**. Consort +1, Prowl +1, Skirmish +2. **Elementalist**.

Mage Signature Ability

Third Eye

You can see or sense supernatural entities effects in your presence, even if they are normally invisible. Gain **+1d** when you **gather information** about the supernatural.

What does it look and feel like when you sense something supernatural?

Friends and Rivals

- ◆ **Immir**, a sage. *Perhaps your mentor and teacher. Or perhaps you stole his most prized book.*

- ◆ **Nel,** a dealer in arcane items. *Does he have things you want? Or vice versa?*

- ◆ **Ithili,** a fellow mage. *Were you apprenticed together? Is she your best friend or a dangerous rival?*

- ◆ **Ben,** a monster hunter. *What kinds of monsters does Ben hunt?*

- ◆ **Akath,** a spirit. *What is Akath's nature? What does Akath want?*

Mage Special Abilities

Elementalist

Pick one elemental concept like *Lightning, Rock,* or *Wood*. **Spend 1 stress** to lash out with that element or manipulate it in the environment. Spend **+1 stress** to: affect a small group of targets, manipulate a larger area, or manipulate your element precisely.

When you lash out with the element as a weapon, the GM will describe its effect level and collateral damage. If you unleash it in combat against an enemy who's threatening you, you'll still make an action roll in the fight.

When you manipulate that element, you can do things like build a bridge of rock or reach through the bars of your jail cell. If you manipulate precisely, you can give it very specific shapes or cause it to move as if it were your own hand.

Mystic Familiar

Your familiar is more powerful, with enhanced senses and potency when tracking the supernatural. It gains one arcane ability: intelligence, mind link, or venomous bite. Take this ability one or two more times to add additional arcane abilities.

Your familiar functions as a cohort (Expert: Spy). Mystic familiar gives them extraordinary senses (including the ability to see in total darkness), potency in tracking the supernatural, and an arcane ability of your choice. Intelligence means that it can speak and can act intelligently on your behalf. Mind-link allows the familiar and mage to share their senses and thoughts telepathically. Venomous allows the familiar to inject a paralytic drug into an enemy with a bite or sting that can affect a Human-sized target for about 30 minutes. For more details about cohorts, see page 60.

Enchanter

You can **research** and **craft** items with *magical* features. You can craft any standard Tier 1 magical item. Other items can be researched and crafted via **downtime** activities.

Deep Knife
Mage Sight Potion
Silence Potion
Spirit Coin
Void Powder
Warding Chalk

You begin with the ability to craft any Tier 1 magical item and can freely replenish them between delves if you have access to your usual magical supplies. Follow the Inventing procedure with the GM (page 112) to research other formulae for magic items.

Glamour

You can create small, simple, static visual illusions. Spend **+1 stress** for: sound and scent, movement, independent action (up to a few minutes), or larger area.

A default illusion is visible, insubstantial, static, and silent. You must concentrate to maintain it. It is no larger than a Human. If you want it to be really convincing, the GM may call for an action roll. It is insubstantial, so someone touching the illusion can feel that it's not there.

Ritual

You have learned how to perform ritual magic. You can **Study** an occult ritual (or create a new one) to summon a supernatural effect or being. You begin with one ritual already learned.

For more details on rituals, see page 160.

Warded

You can expend your **special armor** to resist a supernatural consequence or create a mystic circle that prevents movement of supernatural creatures.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you resist a consequence, the severity of the consequence is reduced by two levels. If you use this ability to create a mystic circle, you can use it to block a doorway, keep yourself (and a few others) safe within, or trap a supernatural being. The GM may call for an action roll to keep a strong creature from breaking through.

Mage Items

Magic is easier with a magical focus—generally a wand or staff. Using magic without a proper wand or staff can reduce the effect level.

◆ **Fine magic wand:** This is your personal wand, filled with your own magical energy. [**0 load**] *What does your wand look like? What rare magical ingredients does it contain? What did you have to sacrifice to bind it to your soul?*

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◆ **Fine magical staff:** You can fight with it or use it for magic. [**1 load**] *What does it look like? What do the runes inscribed upon it mean?*

◆ **Magical books:** Reference materials that help identify demons, magical effects, creatures, etc. [**1 load**]

◆ **Black mirror:** A small piece of magically prepared glass. Hidden things, when seen in the mirror, can be revealed for what they are. [**0 load**]

◆ **Familiar:** You have bound a spirit into an animal. It obeys your commands and tries to anticipate what you want. This can be any natural beast, smaller than you, such as a monkey or raven. *Cohort* (*Expert: Spy*). *What kind of creature is this? How is it weird compared to a normal creature of its kind?*

◆ **Magical items:** If you have the **Enchanter** special ability, you have access to any standard **Tier 1** magical items, as well as those you have researched, and can replenish them in between delves. Others can be researched and crafted during downtime. Track the load for each item you deploy during a delve (see page 117 for more information on carrying magical items). [**1 load for up to 3 items**] *If an enchanted item has the drawback of heavy or very heavy, it has its own separate load cost.*

Scholar

Scholar

A researcher and explorer.

Athland is a place of mysteries, and you love to solve them. While might be respected among academics, you are a field researcher, going out and finding answers.

When you play a Scholar, you earn xp when you address a challenge with research or exploration. Study, translate lost languages, learn about strange creatures.

You're not the kind who sits in a library, poring over tomes and waiting for information to come to you. That's not all you do, anyway. What drives you to risk your life and sanity to discover the answers?

Starting Actions

- ● ● ● ● SURVEY

- ● ● ● ● **STUDY**

Starting Builds

If you want guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Archaeologist.** Survey +1, Finesse +1, Prowl +1. **Researcher.**

- ◆ **Sage.** Survey +1, Consort +1, Attune +1. **Flash of Insight.**

- ◆ **Mystic.** Attune +2, Tinker +1. **Occultist.**

Friends and Rivals

- ◆ **Endril,** a bookseller. *What book does he have that he refuses to sell to you*?

- ◆ **Gram,** a seer. *What kinds of mystical forces can Gram provide information about*?

- ◆ **Drela,** a spy. *How could you possibly be of assistance to a spy?*

- ◆ **Domra,** a scholar. *Perhaps your mentor?*

- ◆ **Helk,** a noble. *Does he dabble in subjects you're interested in?*

Scholar Signature Ability

Specialist

Choose an area of academic study. It only costs 1 stress to **push yourself** if the action is directly relevant to your topic. If you **gather information** about that topic, you get **increased effect**.

Your area of study might be Yethri history, magical artifacts, barrow structural mechanics, occult geology, military tactics, monstrous creatures, or demonic entities. It should be academic in nature: not martial arts, blacksmithing, or other modern day practical skill (although you could know academic rather than practical things about ancient martial arts or blacksmithing). While your specialty could be about something magical, it does not teach you how to cast magical spells or make alchemical potions (if you want to do that, take veteran advances from those playsheets).

You've spent countless hours studying tomes and searching for every possible scrap of information about your specialty. Why are you so obsessed with this topic?

Scholar Special Abilities

Occultist

Get **+1d** to determine the nature of any strange artifact (including whether it is magical), to identify what an artifact does, or to figure out how to use an artifact.

This ability can be during a delve or downtime.

Flash of Insight

When you **gather information**, you get **increased effect**.

You have an expansive memory and the ability to connect seemingly unconnected bits of information.

Mission Focused

You can expend your **special armor** to protect a teammate or to **push yourself** when you **take point** when traversing.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you protect a teammate, this ability negates or reduces the severity of a consequence that your teammate is facing by two levels. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored at the beginning of downtime or after you rest.

Navigator

If you've been there before, you can figure out how to get there again. When **traversing** or **assisting** someone who is traversing to a location you have been to, a roll of **1–3** counts as a **4/5**.

Researcher

During downtime, you get **two ticks** to distribute among any long term project clocks that involve researching information that you can find in books or other written materials.

You get these extra ticks regardless of what other downtime activities you engage in..

Speaking Tongues

Once per delve, after a few minutes of interaction, you can achieve functional communication with a sentient being (or group) who uses a language you don't normally understand.

This works only on sentient creatures. When you use this ability, you don't achieve fluency, but you can get across simple concepts and, with enough time, more complex ones. If you meet the same creature on a subsequent delve, you'll need to use this ability again to communicate functionally. After several uses with the same kind of creature, you can declare that you know the language well enough that communication no longer expends your one use of this ability per delve.

Scholar Items

- **Fine books and maps:** A folio of useful drawings, plans, journals, and maps. Feel free to specify which plans you're carrying when you choose this item. [**1 load**]

- **Light climbing gear:** A well-crafted set of climbing gear that is less bulky and heavy than a standard set. [**1 load**] *Standard climbing gear is 2 load.*

- **Analysis kit:** Magnifying glass, fine tools, reagents, notebook, calipers, plumb line, notebook, measuring tape, etc. [**1 load**]

- **Strange artifact:** It just so happens that you've brought along some odd item from your collection. It's not powerful (no higher than your crew Tier), but it might just be exactly what's needed for this particular situation. Describe what it is and how it will help. [**1 load**]

- **Spyglass:** A brass tube with lenses that allow long-distance vision. Collapsible. [**1 load**]

- **Brightstone:** This rare Yethri artifact is a small stone that, if tapped in just the right way, puts out a bright light for about a day. Only one use. [**0 load**]

Strategist

Strategist

A leader and tactician.

While others know how to fight their way through a barrow, you are good at the thinking part. You can negotiate, manage relationships with factions who might want to exploit or kill your crew, and conduct the research and planning that go into a successful delve.

When you play a Strategist, you earn xp when you address a challenge with calculation or conspiracy. Use contacts, negotiate deals, plan the delve.

Where did you learn your skills? Were you part of a crew and have now set up on your own? Were you a spy, mercenary, or brigand?

Starting Actions

- ● ● ○ ○ **SWAY**
- ● ○ ○ ○ **STUDY**

Starting Builds

If you want guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Arbiter.** Attune +2, Study +1, Sway +1. **Negotiator.**
- ◆ **Captain.** Command +2, Survey +2. **I have a plan.**
- ◆ **Delver.** Command +1, Skirmish +2, Sway +1. **Mastermind**.

Friends and Rivals

- ◆ **Jack,** a criminal. *Perhaps your mentor and teacher. Or perhaps he thinks you betrayed him.*
- ◆ **Tekler,** a tax collector. *Does Tekler have sympathy for those who owe, or is he relentless?*
- ◆ **Mikail,** a spy. *Who does Mikail pass information to?*
- ◆ **Domra,** a priestess. *Perhaps the interests of her god align with yours. Or perhaps not.*
- ◆ **Ishta,** a mercenary. *What connections does Ishta have that could benefit or harm you?*

Strategist Signature Ability

One Step Ahead

Three times per delve, you can pay 1 fewer **stress** than usual for a flashback (minimum 0).

Narrate how you foresaw exactly how this was going to play out and prepared for it.

Strategist Special Abilities

Leader

When you **lead a group action** using an action rating you have at least one dot in, you can suffer only 1 stress at most, regardless of the number of failed rolls.

This special ability is good for covering for your team. If they're all terrible at something, you don't have to worry about suffering a lot of stress when you lead them. If you are leading a group action with only one comrade, you suffer 0 stress no matter what.

Connected

During downtime, you get **+1 result level** when you **acquire an asset** or reduce **trouble**.

Your array of connections can be leveraged to borrow assets, pressure a vendor to give you a better deal, forgive transgressions, etc.

Deceitful

When you are attempting to deceive others through lies, a disguise, or other duplicity, take **+1d.**

You know all about telling half truths, the big lie, misdirection, admitting to a lesser offense to draw attention from the greater one. Sometimes you almost believe yourself. If you also have the Negotiate special ability, you can't use both at the same time.

I Have a Plan

When you perform a setup maneuver leading to an ambush, your allies get **increased effect**.

This applies to any situation in which you are preparing your team to lay in wait or set a trap for enemies.

Mastermind

You can expend your **special armor** to **protect a teammate** or to **push yourself** when you gather information or work on a long-term project.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you protect a teammate, this ability negates or reduces the severity of a consequence or harm that your teammate is facing by two levels. You don't have to be present to use this ability—say how you prepared for this situation in the past. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Negotiator

When you are offering or brokering a trade of an item or service for another, take **+1d** to your roll..

This ability will work for any honest negotiation. You can't use the Deceitful special ability at the same time.

Strategist Items

- **Forged documents:** Falsified documents, made by yourself or someone you know. You can determine exactly what they are when you declare your load, as long as you could reasonably have foreseen the need for them. [**1 load**]

- **A needful thing:** You've anticipated what someone you will encounter is likely to want—a bribe, a trinket, a bottle of fine liquor. It's nothing incredibly valuable, but just the right thing. [**1 load**]

- **Books, maps, and plans:** A folio of useful drawings, plans, journals, and maps. Feel free to specify which plans you're carrying when you choose this item. [**1 load**]

- **Vial of slumber essence:** A dose of slumber essence sufficient to put someone to sleep for an hour. The victim's sleep isn't supernatural, but it is deep—they can be roused with some effort. [**1 load**]

- **Concealed dagger:** A small but sharp weapon, easily concealed in a sleeve or boot. It's very difficult to detect on your person, even if you're searched. [**1 load**]

- **Fine disguise kit:** A theatrical make-up kit equipped with an impressive array of expert appliances to fool the eye. The fine quality of this kit may increase the effect of your deceptive actions when you use it. [**1 load**]

Thief

Thief

An infiltrator and larcenist.

Every town has thieves, but it takes a special one to go into a barrow. There in the darkness, your skills can be especially valuable.

When you play a Thief, you earn xp when you address a challenge with stealth or evasion. Stay out of sight, sneak past your enemies, and strike from the shadows.

How did you learn the stealthy arts of the Thief? Are you a spy, an acrobat, a burglar? Or an ambush predator in the darkness?

Starting Actions

- ● ○ ○ ○ **FINESSE**
- ● ● ○ ○ **PROWL**

Starting Builds

If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action dots and special ability, use one of these templates.

- ◆ **Assassin.** Hunt +2, Skirmish +2. **Ambush**.
- ◆ **Burglar.** Survey +2, Finesse +1, Tinker +1. **Infiltrator**.
- ◆ **Rogue.** Skirmish +2, Consort +2. **Shadow**.

Friends and Rivals
Thief Signature Ability
- ◆ **Shelan**, another thief. *Did she teach you your craft?*

Daredevil

When you roll a **desperate** action, you get **+1d** to your roll if you also take **-1d** to any resistance rolls against consequences from your action.

This special ability is a bit of a gamble. The bonus die helps you, but if you suffer consequences, they'll probably be more costly to resist. But hey, you're a daredevil, so no big deal, right?

How did you learn the stealthy arts of the Thief? Are you a spy, an acrobat, a burglar? Or an ambush predator in the darkness?

- ◆ **Dinah,** a fence. *Perhaps your contact for handling stolen goods, or perhaps you've stolen from her.*
- ◆ **Zek,** an underworld boss. *A valuable contact or a dangerous enemy?*
- ◆ **Thel,** a thief taker. *Perhaps an old friend who looks the other way, or perhaps a copper who has it in for you.*
- ◆ **Shekin,** a street urchin. *Does she know everything that goes on in town?*

Thief Special Abilities

Ambush

When you attack from hiding or spring a trap, you get **+1d** to your roll.

This ability benefits from preparation, so don't forget you can do that in a flashback.

Cutpurse

When attempting to take something unnoticed from someone next to you, get **+1d** to your roll.

This could be used when casually bumping into someone or even during a fight.

Infiltrator

You are not affected by **quality** or **Tier** when you disarm traps or bypass security measures.

This ability lets you contend with higher-Tier enemies on equal footing. When you're cracking a safe, picking a lock, or sneaking past elite guards, your effect level is never reduced due to superior Tier or quality level of your opposition.

Reflexes

When there's a question about who acts first, the answer is you.

This ability gives you the initiative in most situations. Some specially trained NPCs (and some demons and spirits) might also have reflexes, but otherwise, you're always the first to act, and can interrupt anyone else who tries to beat you to the punch. This ability usually doesn't negate the need to make an action roll that you would otherwise have to make, but it may improve your position or effect.

Shadow

You can expend your **special armor** to resist a **consequence** from detection or security measures, or to **push yourself** for a feat of athletics or stealth.

When you use this ability, tick the special armor box on your playbook sheet. If you "resist a consequence" of the appropriate type, you avoid it completely. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but you don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored at the beginning of downtime.

Uncanny Acrobat

You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: perform a feat of athletics that verges on the super Human or maneuver to create a moment of confusion and disarray among your enemies.

When you push yourself to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) if you're making a roll, in addition to the special ability.

If you perform an athletic feat (running, tumbling, balance, climbing, etc.) that verges on the super Human, you might climb a sheer surface that lacks good hand-holds, tumble safely out of a three-story fall, leap a shocking distance, etc.

If you maneuver to confuse your enemies, they attack each other for a moment before they realize their mistake. The GM might make a fortune roll to see how badly they harm or interfere with each other.

Thief Items

◆ **Fine lockpicks:** A finely crafted set of tools to disable and circumvent locks. [**1 load**]

◆ **Fine shadow cloak:** A hooded cloak made of rare foreign shadow-silk that blends into the darkness around it. This item improves your effect level when you sneak around. [**1 load**]

◆ **Light climbing gear:** A well-crafted set of climbing gear that is less bulky and heavy than a standard set. [**1 load**] *Standard climbing gear is 2 load.*

◆ **Vial of silence potion:** A vial of golden alchemical liquid that negates all sound within 10 paces of the drinker for a span of several moments. [**1 load**]

◆ **Dark-sight goggles:** An arcane device that allows the wearer to see even in pitch darkness. [**1 load**]

◆ **Ward ocular:** A small scrying device that reveals magical wards and protections. [**0 load**]

Standard Items

A Single Handed Weapon: A weapon that can be wielded effectively in one hand: a mace, longsword, falchion, single handed ax, short stabbing spear, etc. [**1 load**]

Your choice of weapon might reflect your heritage:

In Athland, common soldier's weapons include long-swords, arming swords, spears, maces, and knives. Peasant weapons include, clubs, and heavy knives.

In the Tanin Islands, weapons tend to be broad, heavy, and single-edged.

Cambri and other continental weapons include curved single edged swords, falchions, long knives, and spears.

Throwing Weapons: Several throwing daggers, a couple of light javelins or axes, etc. [**1 load**] *What kind of weapons are these? A couple with longer range (javelins)? A larger number with shorter range (daggers)?*

A Large Weapon: A weapon meant for two hands. A battle-axe, greatsword, warhammer, long spear, or polearm. A bow or crossbow. [**2 load**] *A two handed weapon will often provide +1 effect level in a fight, as well as having greater range than a single-handed weapon. It also looks more imposing. On the other hand, you need more room to carry and use it, you might be at a disadvantage if an enemy is in close, and you can't use a shield.*

A Small Shield: A buckler, target, or other small shield. [**1 load**] *A small shield is effective in hand to hand fighting against one opponent, but not much use against groups of enemies or ranged attacks. A shield doesn't give you extra armor boxes for resistance, but it does affect position. If your shield could help you in this situation (you are being attacked from the front, the shield would work against this kind of attack, etc.), then in most applicable circumstances, the shield will improve your position by one level, making the effects of a poor roll less dire.*

A Large Shield: A kite shield, big roundshield, or other large shield. [**2 load**] *Effective in melee (even against several enemies), when mounted, and against ranged attacks. A large shield will improve position in more situations than a small shield will.*

Armor: A thick leather or heavy padded jack, plus a leather cap, reinforced gloves, and boots. Or equivalent protection. [**1 load**] *Armor gives you one box that you can use to resist a physical consequence when wearing armor would be useful in that circumstance (see page 18 for more information about armor).*

+Heavy Armor: The addition of enough armor to provide substantial protection at the cost of greater encumbrance: mail, brigandine, greaves, a metal helm, pauldrons. [**+2 load**] *The load for heavy armor is **in addition** to normal armor—3 load total. Heavy armor gives you one additional armor box.*

Burglary Gear: A set of lockpicks. A small pry-bar. Vials of oil to silence squeaky hinges. A coil of wire and fishing hooks. A small pouch of fine sand. [**1 load**]

Climbing Gear: A large coil of rope. A small coil of rope. Grappling hooks. A small pouch of chalk dust. A climbing harness with loops and metal rings. A set of iron pitons and a small mallet. [**2 load**]

Documents: A collection of slim volumes on a variety of topics, including local history, folklore, a number of interesting maps, tide charts, heraldic crests, and other miscellanea. Blank pages, a vial of ink, a pen. [**1 load**]

Rations: Enough to sustain a person over a few days if there is a source of potable water, or a day without that. [**1 load**]

Breaching Tools: A sledgehammer and iron spikes. A heavy pry-bar. A length of chain. Heavy drill. Crowbar. [**2 load**]

Tinkering Tools: An assortment for detailed mechanist work: jeweler's loupe, tweezers, a small hammer, pliers, screwdriver, etc. [**1 load**]

Lantern: An oil lantern, a couple of torches, or other light source. [**1 load**]

Extra torches or lamp oil: Very useful for a longer delve. [**1 load**]

Environmental gear: Equipment for a specific challenging environment: wet gear, cold gear, etc. Say what environment your gear is for when you declare this item [1 load]

> *Cold gear includes heavy cloaks, gloves, hats, and boots. Wet gear includes waterproof pouches, packs, and waxed canvas or woolen clothing to stay warm even when wet.*

Chapter 3
The Crew

3. The Crew

Crew Creation

Choose a Crew Type

Breakers	Breakers go right in and take what they want.
Burglars	Burglars infiltrate, get the loot, and get out.
Explorers	Explorers are in it for the adventure as well as the loot.
Scavengers	Scavengers steal from strong crews and prey on weak ones.

Your crew type determines the actions that you'll focus on, as well as a selection of special abilities that support that kind of action. The crew type isn't meant to be restrictive—a crew of breakers might sometimes sneak or steal—but the core activity of the crew type is the most frequent way they earn **coin** and **xp** for advancement.

Like a character playbook, your crew type is also how you're known among barrow raiders. The factions and institutions think of you as "breakers" or "scavengers" and will treat you accordingly.

Your crew begins with **2 coin** in its coffers (the remains of the PCs' savings). You are **Tier 0,** with **0 rep**.

Choose An Initial Reputation and Base

Your crew has just formed. They have acquired a base. Given this group of characters and their previous escapades, what initial reputation would you have among the factions of this region? Choose one from the list below (or create your own).

Ambitious	Professional
Brutal	Savvy
Daring	Subtle
Honorable	Strange

You earn **xp** when you bolster your crew's reputation, so think of this as another cue to indicate what sorts of action you want in the game. Will you be recklessly ambitious, challenging more powerful factions? Will you take on daring delves that others deem too risky? Are you interested in the strange and the weird?

Also decide where the crew makes its base. You begin at Tier 0, so it's probably a modest or run down sort of place. You'll be able to improve your base with time and money.

- An abandoned farmhouse, boathouse, lighthouse, or watchtower.
- A couple of small buildings in a village or forest.
- A moored, nonfunctional canal boat.
- A cave in the hills.
- The back room of a shop or tavern.

Choose a Barrow

The GM will give you a list of barrows in the area. Pick one. You have that one **located**. You know where it is, how to get there, and where at least one entrance lies. Maybe you've been in there already. If you pick a barrow that is **claimed** by another faction, you may have difficulty with entry. Decide how to handle that.

- Pay them 1 **coin**.
- Pay them 2 **coin**. Get +1 status.
- Pay nothing. Get -1 status if they learn of your entry despite their claim, or -2 status if you injured or killed anyone in the process.

Choose A Special Ability

Take a look at the special abilities for your crew and choose one. Everyone in the crew benefits. If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. It's important to pick a special ability that everyone is excited about. You can get more special abilities in the future by earning **xp**.

Just like picking the crew type, reputation, base, etc., choosing a special ability is another chance to focus the game down to a more specific range of possibilities. That's a lot to work with, and it helps get the game going in a strong direction from the very beginning.

Assign Crew Upgrades

An upgrade is a valuable asset that helps the crew in some way, like a boat or a gang (see the complete descriptions further down). Each crew type has two pre-selected upgrades that suit that crew (like **Prowess Training** and a **gang** of Fighters for the Breakers crew).

You get to add **two additional upgrades** to your new crew (so you'll have a total of four upgrades when you start). You can choose from the specific upgrades available to your crew type or the general upgrades on the crew sheet.

When you assign your two upgrades, the GM will tell you about two factions that are impacted by your choices:

◆ One faction helped you get an upgrade. They like you, and you get **+1 status** with them. At your option, spend **1 coin** to repay their kindness, and **take +2** status with them instead.

◆ One faction was screwed over when you got an upgrade. They don't like you, and you get **-2 status** with them. At your option, spend **1 coin** to mollify them, and take **-1 status** with them instead.

You'll be able get more upgrades in the future by earning **xp**.

Choose a Favorite Contact

Take a look at your list of potential contacts on the crew sheet. Choose one contact who is a close friend, long-time ally, or partner in crime. The GM will tell you about two factions that are impacted by your choice:

◆ One faction is also friendly with this contact, and you get **+1 status** with them.

◆ One faction is unfriendly with this contact, and you get **-1 status** with them.

At your option, these factions are even more concerned with this contact and so you take **+2** and **-2 status** instead.

Crew Upgrades

When upgrading your base, think about how these upgrades fit together. Some combinations can require some imaginative storytelling to explain how they are compatible with each other.

◆ **Boat house:** You have a boat, a dock on a waterway, and a small shack to store boating supplies. A second upgrade improves the boat to a small sloop with cargo capacity and the ability to travel in heavier seas. This upgrade makes sense if your base is by the ocean, a river, or some other body of water. Your boat can make travel to and from a delve, or around the coast, much simpler.

◆ **Cohort:** A cohort is a gang or a single expert NPC who works for your crew. For all the details on cohorts, see below (page 60).

◆ **Hospitable base:** You get **+1d** to **Consort** and **Sway** rolls on-site. *Your base is set up for visitors. Perhaps you run a tavern, or your place is outfitted with a large dining hall.*

◆ **Hidden base:** Your base has a secret location and is disguised to hide it from view. If your base is discovered, use two downtime activities and pay **coin** equal to your Tier to relocate it and hide it once again.

◆ **Infirmary:** You get **+1d** to healing treatment rolls. *The infirmary also has beds for long-term convalescence.*

- **Manor:** Your base is a well-protected manor house or similar level of physical defense (small tower, motte and bailey, etc). Gain **+1d** to engagement rolls that involve defense of your base. A second upgrade adds magical traps and wards to your defense.

- **Mobile:** Your base is set up to be moved easily and quickly. Perhaps it's a houseboat, fits onto wagons, or you ensure that the important things are kept ready to move and you have a secondary base all scoped out and prepared.

- **Mastery:** Your crew has access to master level training. You can advance your PCs' action ratings to 4 (until you unlock this upgrade, PC action ratings are capped at 3). Mastery costs four upgrade boxes to unlock.

- **Quality:** Each upgrade improves the **quality rating** of all the PCs' items of that type, beyond the quality established by the crew's Tier and fine items. You can improve the quality of **Documents**, **Gear** (covers Burglary Gear and Climbing Gear), **Arcane Implements**, **Subterfuge Supplies**, **Tools** (covers Demolitions Tools and Tinkering Tools), and **Weapons**.

- So, if you are Tier 0, with fine lockpicks (+1) and the Quality upgrade for gear (+1), you could contend equally with a Tier II quality lock.

- **Stables:** You have mounts and the facilities for keeping them housed, fed, and cared for. When traveling, your crew can do so mounted.

- **Training:** If you have a Training upgrade, you earn 2 **xp** (instead of 1) when you train a given **xp** track during downtime (**Insight**, **Prowess**, **Resolve**, or Playbook **xp**). This upgrade helps you advance more quickly. See Advancement, page 96.

- If you have *Insight Training*, when you train **Insight** during downtime, you mark 2 **xp** on the **Insight** track (instead of just 1). If you have *Playbook Training*, you mark 2 **xp** on your playbook **xp** track when you train.

- **Vault:** Your base has a secure vault, increasing your storage capacity for **coin** from the default 4 to 8. A second upgrade increases your capacity to 16. A separate part of your vault can be used as a holding cell.

- **Village:** You have taken a village under your protection. Gain **+1d** to acquire assets rolls involving gangs of Fighters, Skulks, or Rovers.

- **Wagon House:** You have a wagon or wagons, draft animals to pull them, and facilities to manage them. A second upgrade improves your carriages with better protection, the ability to travel over more difficult terrain, and larger, swifter steeds. At higher crew Tiers, you have more wagons—enough to mount an expedition with your full crew, including cohorts.

- **Workshop:** Your base has a workshop appointed with tools for tinkering and alchemy, as well as a small library of books, documents, and maps. You can accomplish long-term projects with these assets without leaving your base.

Cohorts

A cohort is a **gang** or an **expert** who works for your crew. To recruit a new cohort, spend **two upgrades** and configure them using the process below.

Creating a Gang

Choose a **gang type** from the list below:

- **Adepts:** Scholars, tinkerers, occultists, and chemists.
- **Porters:** Basic laborers.
- **Rooks:** Con artists, spies, and socialites.
- **Rovers:** Sailors, boaters, wagon drivers, and animal handlers.
- **Skulks:** Scouts, infiltrators, bandits, and thieves.
- **Fighters:** Killers, brawlers, and mercenaries.

A gang has **scale** and **quality** equal to your current crew Tier. It increases in scale and quality when your crew moves up in Tier.

If your crew is Tier 0, your gang is quality 0 and scale 0 (1 or 2 people). When your crew is Tier II, your gang is quality 2 and scale 2 (12 people).

Some crew upgrades will add the "Elite" feature to a gang, which gives them **+1d** when they roll for a given Type. *So, if you're Tier I and have a gang of Elite Fighters (+1d), they would roll 2d when they try to kill a target.*

Creating an Expert

Record the expert's **type** (their specific area of expertise). The expert might be a *Doctor*, an *Investigator*, an *Occultist*, an *Assassin*, a *Spy*, etc.

An expert has **quality** equal to your current crew Tier +1. Their scale is always zero (1 person). Your experts increase in quality when your crew moves up in Tier.

Edges and Flaws

When you create a cohort, give them one or two **edges** and an equal number of **flaws**.

Edges

- **Fearsome:** The cohort is terrifying in aspect and reputation.
- **Independent:** The cohort can be trusted to make good decisions and act on their own initiative in the absence of direct orders.
- **Loyal:** The cohort can't be bribed or turned against you.
- **Tenacious:** The cohort won't be deterred from a task.

Flaws

- **Principled:** The cohort has an ethic or values that it won't betray.
- **Savage:** The cohort is excessively violent and cruel.
- **Unreliable:** The cohort isn't always available, due to other obligations, stupefaction from their vices, etc.
- **Wild:** The cohort is drunken, debauched, and loud-mouthed.

Modifying a Cohort

You can add an **additional type** to a gang or expert by spending two crew upgrades. When a cohort performs actions for which its types apply, it uses its full quality rating. Otherwise, its quality is zero. A given cohort can have up to two types.

Using a Cohort

When you send a cohort to achieve a goal, roll their **quality** to see how it goes. Or, a PC can oversee the maneuver by leading a **group action**. If you direct the cohort with orders, roll **Command**. If you participate in the action alongside the cohort, roll the appropriate action and add dice equal to the cohort's quality to your roll. The quality of any opposition relative to the cohort's quality affects the position and effect of the action.

The PCs crew want to run off a rival crew of scavengers who have been tracking them. They send their gang of Fighters to go kick the interlopers out. The GM rolls 2d for the Fighters' quality, and gets a 3. An hour later, the Fighters come back, beaten and bloody. One of them looks sheepish, "Those guys are tough, boss." (The GM inflicts harm on the cohort, and they failed their goal.)

Later, after the cohort has healed up, a PC goes back and leads a group action, rolling her 3d in Skirmish alongside the 2d the cohort provides. The result is a 6 this time—they beat the tar out of the other gang and send them packing (at least for now).

Cohort Harm and Healing

Cohorts suffer harm similarly to PCs. A cohort can suffer four levels of harm:

1. **Weakened.** The cohort has a reduced effect.
2. **Impaired.** The cohort operates with reduced quality (**-1d**).
3. **Broken.** The cohort can't do anything until recovering.
4. **Dead.** The cohort is destroyed.

All of your cohorts heal during downtime. If circumstances are amenable for recovery, each cohort removes one level of harm (or two levels of harm instead, if a PC spends a downtime activity helping them recuperate).

If a cohort is destroyed, it can be replaced. Spend **coin** equal to your Tier +2 to restore it, plus two downtime activities to recruit new gang members or hire a new expert.

Crew Creation Summary

1 Choose a **crew type**. The crew type determines the group's purpose, their special abilities, and how they advance.

You begin at **Tier** 0, with 0 **rep**. You start with 2 **coin**.

2 **Choose an initial reputation and base**. Choose how other factions see you: *Ambitious—Brutal—Daring—Honorable—Professional— Savvy—Subtle—Strange.* Look at the map and pick a location for your base. Describe the base.

3 **Choose a barrow.** One barrow is known to you. Decide how to deal with any factions that might have a claim on the barrow (if that applies—check with the GM).

- Pay them 1 **coin**.
- Pay them 2 **coin**. Get +1 status.
- Pay nothing. Get -1 status if they learn of your entry despite their claim, or -2 status if you injured or killed anyone in the process.

4 **Choose a special ability.** They're in the gray column in the middle of the crew sheet. If you can't decide, choose the first ability on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.

5 **Assign crew upgrades.** Your crew has two upgrades pre-selected. Choose two more. If your crew has a cohort, follow the procedure to create it. Record the faction status changes due to your upgrades:

- One faction helped you get an upgrade. Take **+1 status** with them. Or spend 1 **coin** for **+2 status** instead.
- One faction was harmed when you got an upgrade. Take **-2 status** with them. Or spend 1 **coin** for -1 **status** instead.

6 **Choose a favorite contact.** Mark the one who is a close friend, long-time ally, or partner in crime. Record the faction status changes related to your contact:

- One faction is friendly with your contact. Take **+1 status** with them.
- One faction is unfriendly with your contact. Take **-1 status** with them.

At your option, increase the intensity of the factions' relationship with your contact and take **+2** and **-2 status**, instead.

Breakers

Fighters and hooligans.

Breakers don't bother with a lot of subtlety. You use threats and coercion to get your enemies to let you have your way. If that doesn't work, you fight your way in and fight your way out.

When you play Breakers, you earn xp when you win a battle, dominate through threats of force, or smash and grab valuable treasure.

Contacts

- **Keller**, a retired sergeant. *What does he know of the Baron's plans?*
- **Heming**, a physicker. *Why has Heming been covered in burns lately?*
- **Arshong**, who runs a brothel. *Would Arshong betray the secrets of another faction for the right incentive?*
- **Deethen**, a rumormonger. *What kinds of contacts does Detheen have?*
- **Gellir**, a logger and hunter. *What does Gellir know of strange places in the deep forest?*
- **Cheney**, a mage. *Perhaps a collector of strange artifacts?*

Starting Upgrades

- **Training: Prowess.**
- **Cohort:** Gang, type **Fighters.**

Breaker Upgrades

- **Heavy Rigging:** You get 2 free load worth of weapon or armor items. *For example, you could carry a sword and wear normal armor for zero load.*
- **Barracks:** Your **Thug** cohorts get **+1 scale**. *Extra room means more gang members.*

- **Elite Rovers:** All of your cohorts with the Rovers type get **+1d** to quality rolls for Rover-related actions.
- **Elite Fighters:** All of your cohorts with the Fighters type get **+1d** to quality rolls for Thug-related actions.
- **Hardened:** Each PC gets **+1 trauma box**. Hardened costs **three upgrades** to unlock, not just one. This can bring a PC with 4 **trauma** back into play if you wish.
- **Interrogation Chamber:** You get **+1d** to **Command** and **Sway** on-site. *Grisly business, but effective.*

Breaker Special Abilities

Dangerous

Each PC can add **+1 action rating** to **Hunt**, **Skirmish**, or **Wreck** (up to a max rating of 3).

Each player can choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.

Bloodsworn

When you fight alongside your cohorts in combat, they get **+1d** for **teamwork** rolls (setup and group actions). All of your cohorts get the **Fighters** type for free (if they're already Fighters, add another type).

*If you have the Elite Fighters upgrade, it stacks with this ability. So, if you had an Adepts gang cohort, and the Elite Fighters upgrade, and then took Blood Brothers, your Adepts would add the Fighters type and also get **+1d** to rolls when they did Thug-type actions.*

This ability may result in a gang with three types, surpassing the normal limit of two.

Door kickers

When you execute an *assault* plan, take **+1d** to the **engagement roll**.

This ability applies when the goal is to attack an enemy. It doesn't apply to other operations you attempt that happen to involve fighting.

Forged in the fire

Each PC has been toughened by cruel experience. You get **+1d** to resistance rolls.

This ability applies to PCs in the crew. It doesn't confer any special toughness to your cohorts.

Patron

When you advance your Tier, it costs half the **coin** it normally would.

Who is your patron? Why do they help you?

Smashers

Gain **+1d** on any action roll that involves breaking through a wall or other physical barrier.

You get this bonus even if you didn't bring the right tools in your loadout. You're just that good at busting things.

Wardogs

When you're at war (-3 faction status), PCs still get two downtime activities, instead of just one. When you execute an assault plan against a faction you are at war with, you gain **+1d**.

Burglars

Robbers and sneaks.

Burglars tend avoid conflict. You misdirect, find a different way, or use stealth to get what you want.

When you play Burglars, you earn xp when you steal valuable treasure or information.

Contacts

- **Tremain**, a thief. *Is Tremain a source of information and guidance about professional matters?*
- **Lila,** a fence. *Does Lila help you get the best price for your loot?*
- **Irigar,** a barrow raider. *Perhaps a member of another crew who slips you information?*
- **Augry,** a musician. *Is Augry a source of information about what the common folk know? Or the nobility?*
- **Jesskar,** a beggar. *Perhaps Jesskar knows everything about matters in town.*
- **Deneth**, a noble. *Who is Deneth connected to?*

Starting upgrades

- **Training: Prowess**.
- **Cohort:** Gang, type **Skulks.**

Burglar upgrades

- **Thief Rigging:** You get 2 free load worth of tool or gear items. For example, you could carry burglary gear and tinkering tools for zero load.
- **Broker:** You get **+1d** to **payoff** rolls to determine **coin** earned from a delve. This well-connected broker can get the best price for artifacts recovered from barrows.
- **Elite Rooks:** All of your cohorts with the Rooks type get **+1d** to quality rolls for Rook-related actions.

- **Elite Skulks:** All of your cohorts with the Skulks type get **+1d** to quality rolls for Skulk-related actions.
- **Steady:** Each PC gets **+1 stress box.** Steady costs **three upgrades** to unlock, not just one.
- **Training Rooms:** Your **Skulks** cohorts get **+1 scale**. *Extra training enables them to fight like a larger gang.*

Burglar Special Abilities

Everyone steals

Each PC can add **+1** action rating to **Prowl**, **Finesse**, or **Tinker** (up to a max rating of 3).

Each player can choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.

Infiltrators

When you execute a *stealth* plan, you get **+1d** to the **engagement roll**.

THAT WASN'T US

During downtime, take **-1 trouble**. When your **trouble** is 4 or less, you get **+1d** to deceive people when you pass yourselves off as ordinary citizens.

Pack rats

Your base is a jumble of stolen items. When you roll to acquire an asset, take **+1d**. This ability might mean that you actually have the item you need in your pile of stuff, or it could mean you have extra odds and ends to barter with.

Patron

When you advance your Tier, it costs half the **coin** it normally would.

Who is your patron? Why do they help you?

Slippery

When you roll entanglements, roll twice and keep the one you want. When you reduce **trouble** on the crew, take **+1d**.

The GM might sometimes want to choose an entanglement instead of rolling. In that case, they'll choose two and you can pick between them.

Synchronized

When you perform a group action, you can count multiple 6s from different rolls as a **critical** success.

*For example, Hallen leads a group action to Attune to overcome a magical ward on the door to an underground temple. Emily, Hallen's player, rolls and gets a **6**, and so does Eric! Because the crew has Synchronized, their two separate 6s count as a **critical** success on the roll.*

Explorers

Adventurers and fortune hunters.

Explorers are in it for the glory as much as the money. For crew members of noble background, being a member of a group of explorers would be seen as almost socially acceptable. Almost.

When you play Adventurers, you earn xp when you discover something unknown or make the world aware of your adventurous deeds.

Contacts

- **Golkus**, a merchant. *What does Golkus trade in? Where does it come from?*
- **Ilka,** a broker. *What are Ilka's best contacts?*
- **Jastik,** a mercenary leader. *Who does Jastik carry a grudge for?*
- **Tomwe,** a noble. *What noble house does Tomwe have influence with?*
- **Asticar,** a witch. *Which barrow is Asticar most interested in, and why?*
- **Thakel,** a mayor. *What sorts of political games does he play? Who is he connected to?*

Starting upgrades

- **Training: Prowess.**
- **Base:** Manor.

Explorer upgrades

- **Adventurer Rigging:** You get 2 free load worth of equipment or armor items. *For example, you could carry a lantern and wear normal armor for zero load.*
- **Elite Rovers:** All of your cohorts with the Rovers type get **+1d** to quality rolls for Rover-related actions.

- **Elite Fighters:** All of your cohorts with the Fighters type get **+1d** to quality rolls for Thug-related actions.
- **Hardened:** Each PC gets **+1 trauma box**. Hardened costs **three upgrades** to unlock, not just one. This may bring a PC with 4 **trauma** back into play if you wish.
- **Fiefdom:** You have feudal holdings (possibly local, possibly distant) that give you an extra source of income. This gives you **+1d** to payout rolls.

  Most feudal holdings are in the form of tithes from a manor, village, or guild. You might, for example, be entitled to 1% of the annual revenue of the Yanterton Cooper's Guild.

Explorers Special Abilities

Adventurous

Each PC can add **+1 action rating** to **Hunt**, **Skirmish**, or **Consort** (up to a max rating of 3).

Each player may choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.

Bloodsworn

When you fight alongside your cohorts in combat, they get **+1d** for **teamwork** rolls (setup and group actions). All of your cohorts get the **Fighters** type for free (if they're already Fighters, add another type).

If you have the Elite Fighters upgrade, it stacks with this ability. So, if you had an Adepts gang cohort, and the Elite Fighters upgrade, and then took Blood Brothers, your Adepts would add the Fighters type and also get +1d to rolls when they did Thug-type actions.

This ability may result in a gang with three types, surpassing the normal limit of two.

Bravado

When you execute a *social* or *deception* plan, you get **+1d** to the **engagement roll**.

Cartographers

You make maps and collect them. Gain **+1d** on traversal and travel rolls.

High society

It's all about who you know. Take **-1 trouble** during downtime and **+1d** to **gather information** about the nobility.

Noble Harness

Armor worn by crew members is of **fine quality**.

The armor you wear is made by expert armorers. It is well made and impressive looking. It is fitted to you, easy to move in, and covers the vulnerable spots that lesser harness leaves vulnerable. This does not give you more uses of armor to resist consequences, but it can affect the kind and severity of consequences you receive. It also counts in social situations, where being equipped like knights rather than armed vagabonds can impress noble and commoner alike.

Patron

When you advance your Tier, it costs half the **coin** it normally would.

Who is your patron? Why do they help you?

Scavengers

Scroungers and vultures.

When you play a crew of scavengers, you take advantage of weaker factions (especially barrow raiders) and play stronger factions off against each other.

When you play Scavengers, you earn xp when you take advantage of other factions.

Contacts

◆ **Ilir**, a barrow raider. *Perhaps you have some means of compelling Ilir to betray the other crew?*

◆ **Treven,** a noble. *Does Treven have interesting gossip to share?*

◆ **Bothar,** a weapons trader. *Who else does he work with?*

◆ **Deneel,** a tavernkeep. *Does Deneel keep his mouth shut about what he hears or is he a gossip?*

◆ **Shoyo,** an entertainer. *What kind of entertainment does Shoyo provide? What kind of clientele?*

◆ **Ben**, a warden. *What secrets does Ben know about the deep forest?*

Starting upgrades

◆ **Training: Resolve**.

◆ **Base:** Hidden.

Scavenger upgrades

◆ **Scavenger Rigging:** You get 2 free load worth of weapon or gear items. For example, you could carry a mace (weapon) and burglary tools (gear) for zero load.

◆ **Broker:** Your connections allow you to get better prices on your loot. Get **+1d** to **payoff** rolls.

◆ **Secret Pathways:** You get **+1d** to any traversal, travel, or exit roll that involves movement overland. *Knowing how to get places without being observed can be very useful*.

◆ **Elite Fighters:** All of your cohorts with the Fighters type get +1d to quality rolls for Thug-related actions.

◆ **Elite Skulks:** All of your cohorts with the Skulks type get +1d to quality rolls for Skulk-related actions.

◆ **Steady:** Each PC gets +1 **stress box**. Steady costs **three upgrades** to unlock, not just one.

Scavenger Special Abilities

Takers

Each PC can add **+1** action rating to **Prowl**, **Survey**, or **Sway** (up to a max rating of 3).

Each player may choose the action they prefer (you don't all have to choose the same one). If you take this ability during initial character and crew creation, it supersedes the normal starting limit for action ratings.

Charm

You get **+1d** to the engagement roll with *Deception* or *Social* plans.

Lurking

Take **+1d** to follow someone or conduct surveillance without being noticed.

This works any time you are tailing or watching someone. It doesn't help with tracking, so if you lose sight this ability doesn't apply.

Patron

When you advance your Tier, it costs half the **coin** it normally would.

Who is your patron? Why do they help you?

Slippery

When you roll entanglements, roll twice and keep the one you want. When you reduce **trouble** on the crew, take **+1d**.

The GM might sometimes want to choose an entanglement instead of rolling. In that case, they'll choose two and you can pick between them.

Spymasters

Get **+1d** on any **downtime activity** related to planting, recruiting, manipulating, or gathering information from a spy among another faction.

You could attempt to plant any of your regular contacts among another crew, or you could figure out how to turn someone already aligned with a faction.

That Wasn't Us

During downtime, take -1 **trouble**. When your **trouble** is 4 or less, take **+1d** to deceive people when you try to convince them that someone else did them wrong instead of you.

Chapter 4
The Delve

4. The Delve

Barrows

Barrows are strange places of occult power. Beyond that, scholars differ about what exactly barrows are and how they came to be.

Some say they have always been there, but knowledge of them was kept out of public consciousness by the Yethri. Or that the Yethri created them for their own arcane purposes. Or that when the Yethri left, they retreated into one or more barrows. One theory is that they created so many in order to hide their tracks and prevent anyone from following them.

It is not known if the number of barrows is fixed and those that exist are being discovered one at a time, or if new ones are appearing from somewhere.

Do they exist spontaneously or were they deliberately created by the Yethri or by some other entity—and if not the Yethri, who? Some scholars contend that each barrow is a gateway to another world, or to a partial world, separate from our own.

Each barrow is different, but they seem to have a few things in common:

- **They are warded.** Some have magical defenses. Some are filled with traps. Some are almost impossible to find even if you've been there before and you are standing right where the entrance was last time. All of them present serious challenges to entry and exploitation.

- **They are defended.** There is a barrow wight controlling and protecting each of these places. It responds to intrusion and adapts to challenges. Each time an attempt is made to enter, it learns, changes, and creates new defenses. These defenses seem to scale to the level of threat. When very large expeditions have been attempted, they have tended to meet exceptional levels of resistance. Smaller intrusions generate less of a response and are usually more successful.

- **They are strange.** The normal rules do not apply. Barrows may be larger on the inside than the outside. Walls shift, corridors follow impossible geometries. Creatures are found in barrows that exist nowhere else and may not be able to survive if removed. Anything can be different in a barrow.

- **They have strange inhabitants.** Barrows have monsters, creatures, and non-human sentients and semi-sentients found nowhere else. They are not of this world. While sometimes creatures from one barrow seem to be the same as those from another barrow, in most cases they do not overlap.

- **They have treasure.** Hidden in barrows are myriad items of magical power. Beyond items decorated with precious metals and jewels, delvers have found spears that could find their target a mile away, geese that could tell the future, flasks that stay ever full of beer, potions that bestow beauty or wisdom, and many other things of immense value. Despite the incredible danger they represent, people keep going into barrows because of the wealth than can be obtained in them.

Known Barrows

Knowledge of barrows is usually a matter of great secrecy. Every crew actively has its own list of known and suspected places.

However, there are a few barrows that are famous throughout Athland. In any given locality, there will be other barrows that are known in that region.

- **Brightthorn Isle.** This is one of the first barrows found and explored after the Awakening. The catacombs on Brightthorn Isle have been thoroughly explored and cleared out, although crews sometimes go back to see if anything has changed.

- **The Wailing Forest.** This barrow is on top of a large rocky hill (a down). The region is filled with plant and small animal species found nowhere else. The dark purple trees wave as if in strong winds, even when the air is still, and make wailing sounds as they move.

- **Kerrick Rock.** This barrow is the most dangerous known. Many crews have entered the cave under Kerrick Rock. None have returned.

- **The Red Tower.** This barrow is not hidden or hard to get to—it's in the center of Trevest, the old capital city. The Red Tower is surrounded by a magical barrier that no one has been able to breach, although many have tried. There are no records of it from before the Awakening, yet no one quite remembers it *not* being there, either.

If a known barrow has already been explored, most or all of its treasures have probably been taken. Crews that delve in these well traveled places often come back with nothing to show for their trouble.

However, since these places are strange, sometimes they change. Some new creature might appear, or a new tunnel where none existed before. It can be worth revisiting old delves and paying attention to rumors about changes in the status of even the most thoroughly looted place.

Barrow Tier

Each barrow has a **Tier** starting at 0 and going up to V (or even VI for an "impossible" barrow). The Tier is an abstract measure of several things:

- The power of the barrow wight.

- How effectively and aggressively the barrow wight will adapt and react to threats.

- How warped the reality within the barrow is. The higher the Tier, the more the reality of the barrow will differ from that of Athland. A higher Tier barrow can be a *very* strange place. Many raiders have had their minds destroyed just by attempting to comprehend the weirdness of a barrow and the horrors it contains.

- The overall difficulty of entering and traversing through the barrow.

- How dangerous the monsters, traps, and other challenges in the barrow are likely to be.

- The value of loot that can be found within the barrow.

The Tier of the barrow is an overall rating. Not every creature or trap in a barrow is of the same Tier, but the Tier is a rough guideline to how dangerous the most significant challenges will be.

A larger barrow can be broken up into multiple zones (e.g., levels, regions, buildings, etc.). For example, the upper part of a set of catacombs might be one zone, while the lower part is another one. Each of these could be different in Tier. Usually, the outer zone or zones are lower in Tier, while the deeper places, where the barrow wight resides, is at the barrow's maximum Tier.

Reducing Barrow Tier

A successful delve can reduce the Tier of the barrow. Much of the arcane power of the barrow resides in the strange inhabitants and magical artifacts to be found within. By taking treasure from the barrow and fighting or influencing the inhabitants, the crew reduces the barrow's power. Also, any intrusion of the normality of Athland into the strange world of the barrow changes its nature, further reducing its arcane power.

Each barrow has a clock, generally with 6 or 8 faces, Whenever there is a successful delve, make a fortune roll, starting with **1d** for luck. Add **+1d** for an extensive delve into unexplored locations, **+1d**

if many or powerful inhabitants were either killed or turned into allies, **+1d** if harm was done to a manifestation of the barrow wight.

Reducing Barrow Tier	
After a successful delve, roll **1d** for luck.	**Critical:** 5 ticks.
	6: 3 ticks.
+**1d** for an extensive delve.	**4/5:** 2 ticks.
+**1d** if many or powerful inhabitants were killed or turned into allies.	**1-3:** 1 tick.
+**1d** if harm was done to a manifestation of the barrow wight.	

Once the clock is filled, the barrow Tier is reduced by 1. If a barrow is reduced to Tier 0, it's essentially cleared. If left to itself for years, the it might recover to Tier 1.

If a large barrow is divided into multiple zones, levels, or regions, each can be treated separately for the purpose of Tier and reduction in Tier. One way to do that is to make the first part of the barrow lower in Tier, with the deeper or more distant parts becoming increasingly more challenging and dangerous.

Planning and Engagement

Your crew spends lots of time planning delves and other actions, because it's life or death for them. They huddle around a flickering lantern in their base, looking at scrawled maps, whispering plots and schemes, bickering about the best approach, lamenting the dangers ahead, and lusting after stacks of **coin**.

But you, the players, don't have to do the nitty-gritty planning. The characters take care of that, off-screen. All you have to do is choose what type of plan the characters have already made. There's no need to sweat all the little details and try to cover every eventuality ahead of time, because the engagement roll (detailed below) ultimately

determines how much trouble you're in when the plan is put in motion. No plan is ever perfect. You can't account for everything. This system assumes that there are always some unknown factors and trouble—major or minor—in every operation; you just have to make the best of it.

Assault	Go right in, breaking, smashing, killing. *Detail: The point of attack.*
Deception	Lure, trick, or manipulate. *Detail: The method of deception.*
Stealth	Sneak in or past. *Detail: The point of infiltration.*
Occult	Use mystical powers. *Detail: The arcane method.*
Social	Negotiate, bargain, or persuade. *Detail: The social connection.*
Transport	Carry cargo or people through danger. *Detail: The route and means.*

First Complication

The GM will inform you of the point of first complication. That may happen while traveling to the barrow, as soon as you get there, partway in, or even after you've gotten your loot and are on your way out. In any event, we skip over the boring parts and zoom to the action.

"The first part of the delve goes fine. You get to the site, slip right past the Boom Crew camping out nearby, and make an easy entry. You're in the third room of the complex, the big one past the underground river."

That's one way it could go. Or it could be more like this:

"You get to the site and see that the Blind Rabbit Gang have been very busy since the last time you were here. They've put up a wooden palisade around the entrance with two sentry towers."

Now is when, in a traditional RPG, you'd spend an hour hashing out exactly what you're going to do. But in this game, the plan is just a one word description of how, in general, you're proceeding with the delve at the point of first complication. Then the GM will cut to the action as the first moments of challenge unfold.

The Detail

When you choose a plan, you provide a missing **detail**, like the point of attack, social connection, etc. If you don't know the detail, you can **gather information** in some way to discover it.

Item Loadouts

After the plan and detail are in place, each player chooses their character's **load**. This indicates how much stuff they're carrying at the moment of first challenge. They don't have to decide exactly what they are carrying—just the maximum amount they'll have access to during the delve.

Engagement Roll

Once the players choose a plan and provide its detail, the GM cuts to the action—describing the scene as the crew encounters their first challenge. But how is this established? The way the GM describes the starting situation can have a huge impact on how simple or troublesome the delve turns out to be. Rather than expecting the GM to simply "get it right" each time, we use a dice roll instead. This is the **engagement roll**.

The engagement roll is a **fortune roll** with between 1 and 4 dice. Most of the time it will be 2 or 3.

◆ If the crew had no time to prepare, or there are disadvantages that seriously outweigh any advantages the PCs have, roll **1d**.

◆ If the PCs had an opportunity to plan and prepare, roll **2d** or **3d**, depending on whether it's a regular situation or they have significant advantages on their side (help from allies, exploiting a significant vulnerability, etc.).

◆ If the crew has overwhelming advantages that support their plan, roll **4d**.

The engagement roll assumes that the PCs are approaching the target as intelligently as they can, given the plan and detail they provided, so we don't need to play out tentative probing maneuvers, special precautions, or other ponderous non-action. The engagement roll covers all of that. The PCs are already in action, facing the first obstacle—up on the rooftop, picking the lock on the window; kicking down the door of the throne room; maneuvering to speak with a noblewoman at the masquerade party; etc.

Don't make the engagement roll and then describe the PCs *approaching* the target. It's the approach that the engagement roll resolves. Cut to the action that results *because* of that initial approach—to the first serious obstacle in their path.

The first obstacle in Old Denderton is at the abandoned manor house. The engagement roll puts us on the roof outside the window, having bypassed the open main door because the map showed that as dangerous.

↓

The PCs have kicked down the door and swarmed into the front room of the jackolaks. They achieve surprise and begin to get their revenge for the loss of Old Tom on the last delve. They cut down several jackolacks, but then they begin to rally.

↓

The PCs have socialized politely at the party, maneuvering into position to have a private word with a Lady Trethka. As a group of young nobles leave her side, the PCs step up and engage her in conversation.

Engagement Roll

No time to prepare, or disadvantages that seriously outweigh advantages: roll **1d**	**Critical:** Exceptional result. *You've already overcome the first obstacle and you're in a controlled position for what's next.*
Opportunity to plan and prepare: roll **2d** or **3d**, depending on whether it's a regular situation or they have significant advantages on their side	**6: Good result.** *You're in a controlled position when the action starts.*
	4/5: Mixed result. *You're in a risky position when the action starts.*
The crew has overwhelming advantages: roll **4d**	**1-3: Bad result.** *You're in a desperate position when the action starts.*

If the players want to include a special preparation or clever setup, they can do so with **flashbacks** during the delve. This takes some getting used to. Players may balk at first, worried that you're skipping over important things that they want to do. But jumping straight into the action of the delve is much more effective once you get used to it. When they see the situation they're in, their "planning" in flashbacks will be focused and useful, rather than merely speculations on circumstances and events that might not even happen.

Outcomes

The outcome of the engagement roll determines the **position** for the PCs' initial actions when we cut to the delve in progress. A **1–3** means a desperate position. A **4/5** is a risky position. A **6** yields a controlled position. And a **critical** carries the action beyond the initial obstacle, deeper into the action of the delve.

No matter how low-tier or outmatched you are, a desperate position is the worst thing that can result from the plan + detail + engagement process. It's designed this way so the planning process matters, but it doesn't call for lots of optimization or nit-picking. Even if you're reckless and just dive in and take your chances, you can't get too badly burned. Plus, you might even want those desperate rolls to generate more **xp** for the PCs, which helps to bootstrap starting characters into advancement.

When you describe the situation after the roll, use the details of the target to paint a picture of the PCs' position. How might the strange, occult gang present a desperate position for burglars? How might the violent and ruthless butchers present a risky threat to assaulting thugs? How might the vain and pompous Lord present a controlled opportunity for a manipulative scoundrel? Use this opportunity to show how the PCs' enemies are dangerous and capable—don't characterize a bad engagement roll as a failure by the PCs, or they won't trust the technique in the future. Sure, things are starting out desperate here against the creepy occultists, but you're just the type of characters who are daring enough to take them on. Let's get to it.

How long does it last?

The engagement roll determines the starting position for the PCs' actions. How long does that hold? Does the situation stay desperate? No. Once the initial actions have been resolved, you follow the normal process for establishing position for the rest of the rolls during the delve. The engagement roll is a quick short-hand to kick things off and get the action started—it doesn't have any impact after that.

Linked Plans

Sometimes an operation seems to call for a couple of plans linked together. A common scenario is a team that wants a two-pronged approach. "You create a diversion at the tavern, and when they send thugs over there, we'll break into their base." There are two ways to handle this.

1. The diversion is a **setup maneuver** that a team member performs as part of the plan. A successful setup maneuver can improve **position** for teammates (possibly offsetting a bad engagement roll) or give increased effect. An unsuccessful setup maneuver might cause trouble for the second part of the plan—an easy consequence is to give the engagement roll **-1d**. *If it makes sense, the team member who performed*

the setup can drift back into the main operation and join the team later so they don't have to sit out and wait.

2. The diversion is its own plan, engagement, and operation, whose outcome creates the opportunity for a future plan. Use this option when the first part of the plan is required for the next part to happen at all. For example, you might execute a stealth plan to steal an artifact from the Boom Crew, then later use that artifact in an occult plan to consecrate a temple for a forgotten god who has promised to reward you handsomely. In this case, you go into downtime (and **payoff**, **trouble**, etc.) after the first part of the plan, as normal.

Either approach is fine. It's usually a question of interest. Is the linked plan idea interesting enough on its own to play out moment by moment? Is it required for the second plan to make sense? If so, make it a separate operation. If not, just use a setup maneuver.

Flashbacks

The rules don't distinguish between actions performed in the present moment and those performed in the past. When an operation is underway, you can invoke a **flashback** to roll for an action in the past that impacts your current situation. Maybe you convinced the district Watch sergeant to cancel the patrol tonight, so you make a **Sway** roll to see how that went.

The GM sets a stress cost when you activate a flashback action.

◆ **0 Stress:** An ordinary action for which you had easy opportunity. *Consorting with a friend to agree to arrive at the dice game ahead of time, to suddenly spring out as a surprise ally.*

◆ **1 stress:** A complex action or unlikely opportunity. *Finessing your knife into a hiding spot near the card table so you could retrieve them after the pat-down at the front door.*

◆ **2 (or more) Stress:** An elaborate action that involved special opportunities or contingencies. *Having already Studied the history of the place and learned of a ghost that is known to haunt its ancient canal dock—a ghost that can be compelled to reveal the location of the hidden vault.*

After the stress cost is paid, a flashback is handled just like any other action. Sometimes it will entail an action roll, because there's some danger or trouble involved. Sometimes a flashback will entail a fortune roll, because we just need to find out how well (or how much, or how long, etc.). Sometimes a flashback won't call for a roll at all because you can just pay the stress and it's accomplished.

If a flashback involves a **downtime** activity, pay **1 coin** or **1 rep** for it, instead of stress.

One of the best uses for a flashback is when the engagement roll goes badly. After the GM describes the trouble you're in, you can call for a flashback to a special preparation you made, "just in case" something like this happened. This way, your "flashback planning" will be focused on the problems that *do* happen, not the problems that *might* happen.

Limits of Flashbacks

A flashback isn't time travel. It can't "undo" something that just occurred in the present moment. For instance, if you're at the Baron's feast and an influential knight confronts you about recent thefts of occult artifacts from his manor, you can't call for a flashback to assassinate the knight the day before. He's here now, questioning you—that's established in the fiction. You can call for a flashback to show that you intentionally tipped off the knight so he would confront you at the feast—so you could use that opportunity to impress the Baron with your aplomb and daring.

Flashback Examples

"I want to have a flashback to earlier that night, where I sneak into the stables and feed fireweed to all their horses so they'll go berserk and create a distraction for our infiltration."

"Ha! Nice. Okay, that's seems a bit tricky, dealing with ornery horses and all… 1 stress."

"Should I roll Prowl to sneak in and plant it?"

"Nah. Their security amounts to a stable boy who is usually asleep anyway. You can easily avoid their notice."

"So it just works?"

"Eh… not so fast. When you want the distraction to hit, let's make a fortune roll to see how crazy the Fireweed Maneuver gets. Three dice."

↓

"The engagement roll is … a 2. Looks like a desperate situation for you. Hmmm. Okay, so you're inside the gang's compound at the entrance to the cave, slipping through the shadows next to two big wagons. But then you see a bunch of lanterns. The gate to the compound opens, and you hear a heavy wagon coming in through the gate. Looks like they're getting a delivery right now, and a bunch of gang members are out to receive it. They're about to be on top of you. What do you do?"

"Hang on, I want to have a flashback."

"Okay, for what?"

"Uh. Something… helpful? Damn, I don't know what that would be. Anyone have ideas?"

"Oh, what if you Consorted with your teamster friends yesterday and they blabbed about this delivery, so we rigged it with a petard."

"Oh man, that's hilarious. But kind of nuts. I guess 2 stress for that?"

"Sounds good. But let's make that Consort roll and see if your teamster friends made any demands or complicated anything for you. Then we need to find out if you can get to the fuse on the bomb so you can light it. Who's going to try that?"

"I will. I'll roll Prowl to get to the fuse and get it lit. I hope."

During free play, the GM can also call for an engagement roll if there is a significant encounter or plan being played out.

Traversing

There are many situations during a delve in which some or all of the crew needs to move from one location to another. If the movement is routine and there are no significant stakes involved, it just happens via the narrative.

If there is meaningful opposition or uncertainty, traversing requires an **action roll**. One character will **take point**, describing how they are approaching the traverse and letting that determine which action rating to use. A second character can spend 1 stress to **assist**, but if so both of them can experience the consequences of a bad roll. The other members of the crew are following, but they don't all have to roll unless there's a good reason to split it up.

Many different **action ratings** could be appropriate for taking point or assisting with traversal, depending on the situation.

◆ **Attune** to the magical energy of the barrow and use it to guide you to your destination.

◆ **Command** the crew's gang to charge ahead into danger.

◆ **Hunt** for the path taken by the blue men.

◆ **Prowl** the strange forest of wailing purple trees, alert for traps.

◆ **Study** the secret journal you recovered to determine the path of least resistance.

◆ **Survey** the terrain, looking for the easiest route up the slope.

◆ **Sway** the guards to let you pass.

◆ **Wreck** the wall in front of you to create an opening, and the wall after that, to get around the ambush you know is ahead.

As with any action roll, the rating you choose will be important in determining position and effect.

The traversal roll determines how successful you are in moving through the barrow. Depending on distance, physical barriers, and opposition, it might take you all the way to the location you're looking for or just partway. If it takes you to a place

of danger or opposition, it also determines the situation you're in when that happens. In this way, the traversal roll can act similarly to the engagement roll that begins the delve (although it's not a fortune roll).

Traversal Roll

The character taking point makes an action roll, picking the action that best describes how they are attempting to move through the barrow.	**Critical:** Exceptional result. *You've gone further than expected or found away around barriers. On an encounter, you begin in a controlled position that provides extra advantage.*
	6: Good result. You make expected progress. *On an encounter, begin in a controlled position.*
	4/5: Mixed result. You make some progress, but not what you'd hoped. *On an encounter, begin in a risky position.*
	1-3: Bad result. You make poor progress, get lost, or go in a circle. *On an encounter, begin in a desperate position.*

A successful action roll moves the group to the next location. Depending on effect, that might mean going partway to the objective or getting all the way there. A **critical** result means the crew travels further than expected or, if they encounter some kind of hazard, they are in an advantageous position when they do.

A failure on the roll could be an encounter with a monster, a trap, some kind of blockage, an ambush, an environmental danger, etc.

Avoid one tedious traverse roll after another. Each traverse should resolve all or a significant portion of the movement the group is attempting toward their objective.

Resting

Sometimes, the crew spends a long time in a barrow—that may be the plan, or maybe they get stuck longer than expected. When the crew has been on a delve for at least a few hours and has engaged in strenuous activity, they can find a safe place to hole up and **rest**.

Resting can only happen in a location that is quiet and appears safe. A rest also requires rations—if you're out of food or potable water, you get nothing from a rest. A rest takes at least a few hours. An uninterrupted rest produces the following benefits:

◆ If you have less than half your full **stress**, recover stress up to half (round up). If you have more than half your full stress, recover 1 stress (up to your maximum).

◆ Clear short term harm that can be addressed via a few hours rest. Long-term harm is not recovered when resting.

◆ Uncheck your **armor** boxes (except for armor that has been damaged or lost).

◆ If you took **trauma**, you recover sufficiently to function.

If a rest is significantly interrupted, it resets and you need to begin resting again to get the benefit Unless a character is alone, it's assumed that there is a rotating watch during a rest. If so, the GM decides who is on watch if a rest is interrupted. A fortune roll can be used if necessary.

During a rest, the GM may check one or more segments of ongoing progress clocks representing things happening and time passing in or outside the barrow.

Loot

Barrows usually have treasure, and raiders are assumed to do their best to come back with valuable stuff.

Rather than getting into the minutiae of identifying every single thing the crew finds, we assume

the PCs don't have the ability to assess the true value of most items during a delve.

How much is an obsidian skull covered in unknown runes worth? How about a handful of ancient coins, some with edges clipped, that look like silver but could be debased with cheaper metals?

Instead of trying to figure that out during the delve, they stick the things that seem most valuable into their loot bags and assess the value of that stuff later, when they have time, safety, and good light.

Loot Dice

We use **loot dice** to approximate the accumulation of loot during a delve. Each die is an abstract representation of potential profit—you're not sure exactly what it's worth, but the more you can collect and bring back from the delve, the more chance you'll end up with valuable things.

The GM should feel free to embellish with details when handing out loot dice. "A pearl necklace, some kind of chalice, and a few weird coins."

During the delve, the crew will accumulate loot when they explore an area that has potentially valuable stuff they can grab. In general, a barrow can be expected to produce one loot die per barrow Tier for each traversal roll through an unexplored part of a barrow. Some particularly valuable locations might produce several loot dice, if you can make your way there.

There are two types of loot dice, of different colors. We will call them **blue** and **red** here for convenience, but you can pick any two contrasting colors. Almost every loot die you acquire is **blue**, but you can combine two **blues** into a **red**. This represents choosing the stuff that seems most valuable and dumping the rest. A **red** die is more valuable than a **blue** die, but two **blue** dice are more valuable than one **red** die.

This becomes important because each loot die uses up one load. When the PCs can't carry any more, they can combine **blues** to make **reds** and take home the best stuff. The GM might also

occasionally give out **red** loot dice directly to represent finding loot that is clearly more valuable.

See Coin Earned on page 103 for information on how much each type of die is worth.

Carrying More Loot

How do you get as much as you can back from a delve?

PCs who have used up their entire load can declare that they are increasing their load in order to carry more loot. They can't declare any extra items, but they can accept the penalties of greater load if they wish. A PC carrying medium load can increase to heavy load in order to carry one more die of loot, for example.

A PC with heavier load will be moving more slowly and be more encumbered for the rest of the delve. One extra load above heavy can be carried, but the character can't do anything physical but move slowly.

Cohorts and loot: PCs can also get cohorts to carry loot for them. A specialist can carry 1 load die in excess of what is otherwise carried. A gang can carry one load per person in the gang (a gang of Porters, who don't do anything but move things around, can carry 3 dice each. (Cohorts can run off with your stuff if they get scared, or try to bargain with you for a larger share.)

Finding Special Items

Most of the time, when the PCs come across something that looks magical or special, they not be able to really assess its usefulness during a delve. In the dark, under pressure, can they figure out what this magic item does and how to activate it? Probably not, so they just stick it in the loot bag and keep moving.

But sometimes, it might be immediately apparent that some object is beyond the ordinary. A PC pulls a sword out of a stone and it starts telling her that she is now the rightful queen of some long dead nation. Or the crew were sponsored to go on this delve by a mage for the purpose of finding a

wall painted with an ancient magical fresco—and finally, after an arduous journey, they are standing right in front of it.

Events like this are handled narratively. The availability of such items is determined by the GM. They should have a reason in the story for existing, such as the scepter of the lich king the crew scammed or a sword that's been embedded for a century in the hide of the rock troll they decapitated.

Discoveries like this should not happen every delve, but finding some interesting and potentially useful item during exploration can add a lot to the story from time to time.

If you need ideas for magical items, take a look at the section on single use items (page 104) and items that can be crafted (page 113). You can also borrow ideas from other games or media.

Using Found Special Items

Sometimes, the use of a special item found during the delve is obvious. Maybe that sword has a flaming blade and you figure that if you swing it at a monster it might just hurt them.

However, much of the time the PCs are likely to have to make a **study** or **attune** roll to figure out what something is good for. On a **1–3**, they're confused or have the wrong idea about what it's for or how to use it. (which could be dangerous). On a **4/5**, they get the general gist, but there's likely to be a complication when they try to use it (an activation delay, a side effect, etc.). On a **6**, the item just works as expected. On a **critical**, there is some additional benefit.

Exiting the Delve

Once the objective of the delve has been reached, then if there is no opposition the crew can just transition back to base and into downtime. This happens whenever the GM and the group agree that the delve is over and there is nothing interesting left to play out.

Contested Exit

On the other hand, the situation might be more dire. Perhaps the crew has the treasure, but there are monsters, traps, or enemies standing the way of exit. Or the crew might be injured, desperate, and wanting to give up and get out. *Will they make it out? If they do, what will it cost them?*

The GM sets the scene for the point at which the exit is first contested. The PCs choose a plan and one detail, as with a standard engagement roll. The dice are calculated in the same manner. Then play it out from there. They don't get to change to a different loadout, however.

Collapsing a Contested Exit to a Single Roll

Sometimes, it's just not fun to run through a whole series of action rolls to see how the exit goes. The GM or any of the players can propose that a **contested exit** is handled as one roll for the whole exit sequence. If the group agrees (GM has final say), then do it that way.

Roll **1d** for luck. Add **+1d** if there is limited opposition or the way is clear. Take **-1d** if the group is heavily encumbered or slowed down by wounded comrades.

◆ On a **1–3**, **the exit goes poorly**. There will be significant **consequences** distributed among the crew. This is negotiated with the GM, but it should be multiple significant consequences. These could include harm, damage or loss of items, loss of loot or treasure (which could mean **-1d** to the payoff roll), loss of status with another faction, significant harm to a cohort, and so on. On a **1–3** it's also OK to just play out the contested exit after all, but the starting position will be **desperate**.

◆ On a **4/5**, **the crew gets out at a cost**. They should still profit from the delve, but there are still consequences. Maybe they get help from another crew and pay them 1 **rep** or 1 **coin** for the assistance. Or maybe a cohort takes a level of harm.

- On a **6, the crew gets out without further problems**. They handle anything in their way smoothly and at no cost.
- On a **critical**, the crew gets out and **gains some additional advantage**—more treasure, useful information, a hostage, etc.

Based on the result of the roll, the GM and other players can collaborate on narrating an exciting montage to summarize how the exit went.

Operations

In some cases the crew may decide to embark on some complex group activity outside of a barrow. Perhaps they need to steal a secret map from the Baroness' bedchamber, or they want to ambush the Bluejacks as they get ready for their own delve. In other cases they might engage with creatures that have escaped from barrows and headed into the countryside or gone on a rampage of killing regular Athlanders. Out in wilds there are spirits, monsters, demons, and demigods. Thus, there are many adventures that can be had outside of barrows.

Any major group action like that is called an "operation." Operations work like a delve. The players come up with a plan and a detail, and we make an engagement roll to see how the action starts. Players should be firmly discouraged from active planning—anything like that can be handled with a flashback at any time.

A minor scene, such as one PC getting into a fight with a group of thugs while managing trouble, is not an operation. It's just at thing that happens during downtime.

After an operation, we go into downtime, just like after a delve. If the operation was of the sort that could generate payoff, trouble, etc., then it's handled just like what happens after a delve. See Downtime, starting on page 103, for more information.

Travel

Sometimes, a delve or operation may require significant travel from one place to another. If the story isn't about travel right now an it's not interesting, then everyone can agree that it just happens narratively during free play, or we ignore it and jump to the action.

However, sometimes it makes sense to have travel be a notable activity, perhaps because of potential hazards. If there is a predictable hazard the crew will have to deal with, the GM will just incorporate it into the game. If the potential for problems should be more random, make a fortune roll for each increment of travel. By default, an increment is one day or significant portion of a day, but this can be compressed to multiple rolls per day or one roll representing multiple days. The GM can adjust this depending on the riskiness of the region and how quickly or noticeably the crew is traveling.

Roll **1d**. Add **+1d** if the group is traveling slowly (wagons, refugees, etc.), **+1d** for each level of **notoriety** the group has, and +1d if traveling in an area that is dangerous, bandit-ridden, or in a state of war.

Travel Roll	
Roll **1d**	**Critical:** Incident
+1d if the group is traveling slowly	**6:** Delay or Harbinger
	4/5: Toll or Incident
+1d for each level of **notoriety**	**1-3:** No problems

- ◆ **Delay:** The crew wastes time dealing with a washed out bridge, a broken wagon wheel, lame horses, or other frustration. No progress toward the destination is made.

- ◆ **Harbinger:** Something happens that is not an immediate impediment, but will negatively affect the next delve or operation. The crew is being followed by someone, sights a monster they will have to deal with eventually, loses supplies or items they need but can't replace, etc. The GM may add **+1d** to the next travel roll, tick a faction clock, or subtract a die from the next engagement roll.

- ◆ **Incident:** The group encounters a major complication that could spell disaster such as a bandit attack, monster encounter, warring factions, natural disaster, etc. If it came up on a **critical**, it will be worse. This will need to be dealt with.

- ◆ **No problems:** This portion of the journey proceeds without notable incident.

- ◆ **Toll:** Pay 1 **coin** per crew tier, play out a confrontation (+1 **trouble**), or avoid it some other way.

The purpose of travel rolls is to give a sense of movement, time passing, and potential threat. If travel rolls turn into a boring slog, skip them and just handle travel narratively.

Chapter 5
Playing the Game

5. Playing the Game

Fiction First

The most important part of *Raiders in the Dark* isn't what's written in the rules, it's the imaginary world that emerges from the ongoing conversation among the players. That's different from games like *Risk* or *Monopoly*, in which events flow from the game rules, without regard to what those rules represent.

In a story-based role playing game like this one, events flow from the fiction. The rules are there to provide a structure to the story and to help answer the question, "what happens next?" Any time the rules conflict with the fiction or are just slowing things down, it's OK for the group to agree to follow the story and not the rules.

Because the goal is to create a story, this isn't a game you win or lose (though you will have triumphs and defeats within the events of the game). You don't manipulate the rules to take as much advantage as you can, you use the rules to help make the story as engaging, dramatic, and "true" as you can.

Player Best Practices

◆ **Play hard.** The protagonists in *Raiders in the Dark* are not normal people. They choose to do something most everyone—even mercenaries and hardened criminals—think is insanely dangerous and terrifying. Play it up. You might be fearless, terrified, dedicated, nervous, ambitious, or fanatical, but you are the kind of person who explores horrifying places, comes back, and then does it again. Figure out why you do that, and embrace the life of a barrow raider.

◆ **Play as part of the crew:** This is not a game for playing lone wolves. Don't create a character who would go off and ignore everyone else. If you do that, you're not "roleplaying," you're just not playing the game. You are a member of a crew who are in business together. While you don't have to be in perfect harmony with the others all the time, you do have to be able to get along, go on delves together, and cover each other's backs. Make a character who will be able to do that.

◆ **Advocate for the story you want told.** The point of the game is to create an engaging narrative together. Think about what you want from the story and let the others know what that is. Your character probably wants an easy, safe, profitable delve, but that doesn't make an interesting story. So while on the one hand you are playing a character who is trying to survive and prosper, as a player you're also thinking about how to create challenges and drama.

◆ **Discover your character in play.** Some RPGs have whole systems for establishing a character's personality traits, life path, quirks, nemeses, weaknesses, moral alignment, family tree, destiny, and so on. Those things are largely abstracted in this game, but that doesn't mean they don't exist or aren't important in the fiction. Come up with enough details about your character at game start to get yourself excited about playing. The choices you make in the game will further show you who the character

is. Add more details during the game until your PC is fully fleshed out in the fictional world and playing them is second nature to you.

◆ **Jump to the action.** In this game, over-planning is *against the rules*. There are specific mechanisms in the form of the engagement roll and flashbacks to simulate all the planning the characters do. You, the player, don't have to worry about all that. As soon as you have a cool idea, just cut to the exciting part. The game assumes the planning is done competently, and of-screen.

◆ **Learn and use the rules.** It's OK if you're not interested in the minutiae of game rules. But at least get familiar enough with the basic systems to play your character, roll the dice, and make sensible choices. Use the rules to empower your character.

◆ **Pick the action that matches what you're doing.** On your character sheet, some action ratings are high and some low. It's natural to want to find a way to use the high action ratings all the time, but that's not how the game works. It doesn't make much sense to **skirmish** the guard to convince him to let you by. That's **swaying**, even if you're giving him a friendly punch on the shoulder or making a joke about a bar fight you got into last week. You can choose to use any rating to attempt any action, but in doing so you are choosing what you are doing to try to accomplish your goal. If you **skirmish** the guard, then you are fighting them even if you are stating that your goal is persuasion. Don't try to weasel your way into always rolling your best rating. Instead, choose a reasonable action for each thing you try to do.

◆ **Go for devil's bargains.** A devil's bargain gives you a better chance of success or improved position in exchange for an additional consequence that will happen no matter what the result is. Try to think of dramatic devil's bargains to propose when you're making important rolls. And suggest them for other players as well (although they don't have to take them).

◆ **Get into trouble.** It's OK for some your rolls to be **desperate** (each one gives you **xp**!). When the effect you'll get out of a roll isn't good enough, offer to take more risk (worse position) for more satisfying results.

◆ **Accept the possibility of character death.** Since the crew is doing crazy dangerous stuff, it's likely that someone will die, sooner or later. Maybe *everyone* dies. If it's going to happen, try for a really good death.

Action Rolls

Choosing an Action

Sometimes it's not 100% clear which action rating best reflects the thing you're trying to do. *Is swinging from a rope a* **finesse** *or* **prowl** *action?* It's OK to ask the other players what they think. It's also fine to go with the one that just seems to fit best, remembering that there is some deliberate overlap among them. The GM might tell you that one action rating is closest, but that one or more other approaches could also work. Your choice will affect the position and effect of the action, as well as the consequences if you fail.

Zooming in and Out

With each action roll, before the dice hit the table, there should be a quick conversation about what this action will accomplish. If you get a success (**4+**), what will that mean?

There is no set amount of time or number of events that each roll represents. If the group is interested in the details, then each roll should resolve just a small piece of the action—a single sword thrust, a leap from one roof to the next, a moment of banter. If the group is more interested in broad strokes, then a whole scene can be resolved and narrated with just a roll or two. The amount of detail chosen for the scene interacts with the effect level of the chosen action to determine exactly how much gets accomplished if the die roll is a success.

Think about that when you're choosing an action. *How much detail do I want here? What am I really trying to accomplish? What would be a fun turn of events?* Contribute that to the conversation as you make choices and roll dice. Help the GM figure out whether to zoom in because what's happening now is meaningful and exciting, or to zoom out so you can move quicker and progress to the next thing.

Do that by saying how interested you are in the details and expressing excitement and interest. When the game seems more zoomed in than the scene warrants, suggest larger swaths of detail or ask if it's OK to zoom out. If you find yourself less

engaged, it's not helpful to act obviously bored, get really interested in your phone, or disrupt other people's gaming time. You'll tend to get from the game as much as you put into it.

Consequences

When you make a roll, the most common result will be a partial success. You'll also sometimes just fail. Either way, that mean consequences in the form of reduced effect, a complication, a lost opportunity, worse position, or harm. When consequences are on the table, the GM has final say, but you can suggest what you think would best fit the fiction. Consequences are a lot of what creates the drama the game revolves around.

Resistance

When you get a consequence, you can choose to resist it, but that will usually cost you (in stress or checked armor boxes). You can resist only a subset of consequences, so be strategic about which your resist and which you accept. It's OK to think of resistance as willpower—in which cases do you choose to override fate and say *no way* am I letting that happen? Don't be afraid to spend stress, but you can't resist every consequence. Resist the ones you hate the idea of taking.

Teamwork

The game deliberately makes teamwork more efficient than going it alone. If you push yourself on an action roll, it costs you 2 stress. If someone assists you, it costs

If you **assist** someone with an action roll, it costs you 1 stress.

If they **push themselves**, they pay 2 stress for the same benefit. **Setup maneuvers** and other assistance actions similarly make things easier, overall, for everyone. By **protecting** each other, you can spread out consequences so that no one gets hit too hard. When playing the game, look for opportunities to use teamwork whenever that makes sense in the fiction. That will not only make

everything easier for everyone, it will also build a sense of cohesion among the crew.

Teamwork

When the team of PCs works together, the characters have access to five special **teamwork maneuvers**. They're listed at the bottom of the character playbook sheets to help remind the players of them. The four maneuvers are:

- **Assist** another PC who's rolling an action.
- Lead a **group action**.
- **Protect** a teammate.
- **Set up** a character who will follow through on your action.
- **Take point** when the group is traversing.

Assist

When you assist another player who's rolling, describe what your character does to help. Take **1 stress** and give them **+1d** to their roll. You might also suffer any consequences that occur because of the roll, depending on the circumstances. Only one character can assist a given roll. *If you really want to help and someone else is already assisting, consider performing a **setup maneuver** instead.*

A character can assist a group action, but only if they aren't taking part in it directly. You decide which character in the group action gets the bonus die.

Lead a Group Action

When you lead a group action, you coordinate multiple members of the team to tackle a problem together. Describe how your character leads the group in a coordinated effort. Do you bark orders, give subtle hand signals, or provide careful instruction and encouragement? Also say exactly what the team is doing together.

The GM will set position and effect accordingly.

- Some actions, such as using a battering ram to break down a door, are *made easier* when several people work together. Position, effect, or both, would be improved compared to just one person doing the action. This can also affect scale: one PC would be at a disadvantage when being pushed back by an angry mob, but a group of PCs working together might be on even terms.

- Other actions, such as sneaking past a snoozing guard, are *made harder* when many people do them. Position, effect, or both, would be impaired compared to a single person doing it.

Then, the leader rolls dice equal to the best rating for that action among the PCs in the group. The leader can **push** or make a **devil's bargain** as with any other action roll, but none of the participants in the group action can assist (they are already helping as much as they can).

That one action roll decides success for the whole group. On a failure or mixed success, consequences might be applied to everyone equally, to the leader alone, or to one character chosen randomly, depending on what makes sense in the fiction.

The action roll also determines the stress cost. This is in addition to any consequences.

Lead a Group Action	
Say how the team is working together. The leader rolls dice equal to the **highest rating for that action** among the team.	The action roll determines success for the entire group. It also determines stress cost: **Critical:** No stress cost. **6:** Leader pays 1 stress. **4/5:** Leader pays 2 stress. **1-3:** Leader pays 2 stress and everyone else pays 1 stress.

Your character doesn't have to be especially skilled at the action at hand in order to lead a group action. This maneuver is about leadership, not necessarily ability. You can also lead your crew's **cohorts** with a group action (with position and effect determined accordingly). You can roll their quality level if it is better than your action rating. They don't have stress, so they don't pay a penalty on a **1–3** roll.

Protect

You step in to face a consequence that one of your teammates would otherwise face. **You suffer it instead of them. You can roll to resist it as normal.** Describe how you intervene.

This is how you do the "I'll dive in front of the arrow." You cover for a teammate, suffering any harm or other consequences that still linger after you've rolled to resist. It hurts, cost stress, and may leave you in a bad spot. But hey, you're a hero.

Set Up

When you perform a setup action, you have an indirect effect on an obstacle. If your action has its intended result, any member of the team who follows through on your maneuver gets **+1 effect level** or **improved position** for their roll. You choose the benefit, based on the nature of your setup action.

*This is how you do the "I'll create a distraction" scene. You roll **Sway** to distract a guard with your charms, then any teammate who follows through with a **Prowl** action to sneak past him can get improved position. It's less risky since you're drawing the guard's attention.*

This is a good way to contribute to an operation when you don't have a good rating in the action at hand. A clever setup action lets you help the team indirectly. Multiple follow-up actions can take advantage of your setup (including someone **leading** a group action) as long as it makes sense in the fiction.

Since a setup action can increase the effect of follow-up actions, it's also useful when the team is facing tough opposition that has advantages in quality, scale, and/or potency. Even if the PCs are reduced to zero effect due to disadvantages in a situation, the setup action provides a bonus that allows for limited effect.

*The PCs are facing a heavily armored carriage that's immune to their weapons. Aldo uses **Wreck** as a setup action to pry some of the armor loose with his crowbar, giving follow up actions +1 effect—going from zero to limited effect.*

Take Point

When traversing from one place to another during a delve, one character takes point and the others follow. See page 79 for more information on traversing.

Is Teamwork Required?

Teamwork maneuvers are options, not requirements. Each character can still perform solo actions as normal during a delve. If your character can't communicate or somehow coordinate with the rest of the team, you can't use or benefit from any teamwork maneuvers.

The rules, however, do make it more efficient and effective to use teamwork than to go it alone. Crews will find that creative use of the teamwork options will lead to greater success.

PC vs. PC

The opposite of teamwork is conflict between PCs. Since this game is about a crew working together against opposition, that should be rare. It is possible, however, for players to find their characters working at cross purposes or even getting into active conflict with each other.

PC vs. PC is not the same as a disagreement between the players themselves. There isn't any way for the game to resolve interpersonal problems at the gaming table. If two players are arguing, stop the game and work it out as maturely as you can. If a player's actions in game are being used to manipulate or bother another player, that's also not OK. Stop the game. Work it out person to person.

But if two players who are friendly with each other find their characters opposing each other, that's completely fine. Only let this happen if both players

are clear that they're having fun with roleplaying a conflict between their characters, and that there won't be hard feelings however it turns out.

The standard game rules are built around PCs acting on NPCs, not PC vs. PC. In a conflict between PCs, figure out with the GM who is doing what. Choose action ratings to reflect what the PCs are doing. Set the stakes for each PC via position and effect. They can push themselves or get assistance as usual. Make sure everyone is clear what a success, tie, or failure will mean. Then roll the dice. In this case, the PC with the highest die result succeeds (equivalent to a success on a regular roll), while the other PC fails. A tie is a mixed success for both.

It might take one or several die rolls to get to resolution of the action. Play through the scene as you normally would. If it goes on, make sure all of the players are still OK with how it's going. Take your time and talk out each decision so that the whole process feels fair to everyone.

Coin and Stash

Coin

Coin is an abstract measure of cash and liquid assets. The Yethri used large gold coins for large transactions. No one really uses those for normal exchange, but "coin" has stuck as a term for a significant amount of money, even though the actual coins used are worth much less than an old Yethri gold piece.

The few bits PCs use in their daily lives are not tracked. If a character wants to spend to achieve a small goal (bribe a tavernkeep), use the PC's lifestyle quality for a fortune roll.

Monetary Values

◆ **1 coin:** A full purse of silver pieces. A week's wages for skilled work.

◆ **2 coin:** A fine weapon. A weekly income for a small business. A fine piece of art. A set of luxury clothes.

◆ **4 coin:** A satchel full of silver. A month's wages.

◆ **6 coin:** An exquisite jewel. A heavy burden of silver pieces.

- **8 coin:** A good monthly take for a small business. A small safe full of **coin**s and valuables. A very rare luxury commodity.

- **10 coin:** Liquidating a significant asset—a fishing boat, a good horse, a deed to a small property.

More than **4 coin** is an impractical amount to keep lying around. You must spend the excess or put it in your **stash** (see below). A crew can also store **4 coin** in their base, by default. If they upgrade to a **vault**, they can expand their stores to **8** and then **16 coin**. Any **coin** beyond their limit must be spent as soon as possible (typically before the next delve) or distributed among the crew members.

One unit of **coin** in silver pieces or other bulk currency takes up one item slot for your **load** when carried.

Coin Use

- Spend **1 coin** to get an additional **activity** during **downtime**.

- Spend **1 coin** to increase the result level of a **downtime activity** roll.

- Spend **coin** to avoid certain crew **entanglements**.

- Put **coin** in your character's **stash** to improve their lifestyle and circumstances when they retire.

- Spend **coin** when you advance your crew's **Tier**.

Stash and Retirement

When you mark your character's final trauma and they retire, the amount of **coin** they've managed to stash away determines their fate. Your stash tracker is on your character sheet.

- **Stash 0-9: Poor soul.** You end up in the gutter, awash in vice and misery.

- **Stash 10-19: Meager.** A tiny hovel that you can call your own.

- **Stash 20-39: Modest.** A simple home, with some small comforts. You might operate a tavern or small business.

- **Stash 40: Fine.** A well-appointed home or manor, claiming a few luxuries. You might operate a medium business or be the lord of a village.

In addition, each full row of stash (**10 coins**) indicates the **quality level of the character's lifestyle**, from zero (street life) to four (luxury).

Cross wants some alone-time with a prospective new friend, but he can't take them back to the hidden base where he lives, so what to do? Ryan, Cross's player, says he wants to rent a nice room for the evening, so the GM asks for a fortune roll using Cross's lifestyle rating to see what quality of room Cross can manage.

Removing Coin From Your Stash

If you want to pull **coin** out of your stash, you may do so, at a cost. Your character sells off some of their assets and investments in order to get some quick cash. For every 2 stash removed, you get **1 coin** in cash.

The Faction Game

Since the Awakening, Athland has experienced waves of chaos and disorder. Various factions have arisen to compete for influence in local, regional, and national spheres of power.

Tier

Each notable faction is ranked by **Tier**—a measure of wealth, influence, and scale. At the highest level are the Tier V and VI factions, the true powers of the realm. Your crew begins at Tier 0.

You'll use your Tier rating to roll dice when you acquire an asset, as well as for any fortune roll for which your crew's overall power level and influence is the primary trait. Most importantly, your Tier determines the **quality level** of your items as well as the quality and **scale** of the gangs your crew employs—and thereby what size of enemy you can expect to handle.

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Gang Scale By Tier

◆ **Tier v.** Massive gangs. (80 people)

◆ **Tier iv.** Huge gangs. (40 people)

◆ **Tier iii.** Large gangs. (20 people)

◆ **Tier ii.** Medium gangs. (12 people)

◆ **Tier i.** Small gangs. (3-6 people)

◆ **Tier 0.** 1 or 2 people

A given faction might have no gangs, one gang, or many gangs.

Increasing Tier

To move up the ladder and develop your crew, you need **reputation**. **Reputation** is a measure of clout and renown. When you accrue enough **reputation**, the other factions take you more seriously and you attract the support needed to develop and grow.

When you complete a delve or operation, your crew earns **reputation**. See page 103, Reputation Earned, to find out how much reputation is earned after each delve.

Reputation is a kind of abstract currency. Losing reputation can be a consequence paid for actions that negatively affect the credibility of your crew, or to limit the reputational harm that might occur due to events in the fiction.

Additionally, reputation is used to increase your Tier. You need **20 reputation** to fill the **reputation** tracker on your crew sheet. When you fill the tracker, you can pay to increase your crew Tier by one. This costs **coin** equal to your **new Tier × 8**. As long as your **reputation** tracker is full, you don't earn new **reputation** (20 is the max). Once you pay the cost to increase your Tier, **reset your reputation to zero**. Then start over to work on gaining reputation.

Faction Status

Your crew's **status** with each faction indicates how well you are liked or hated. Status is rated from -3 to +3, with zero (neutral) being the default starting status. You track your status with each faction on the faction sheet.

Faction Status Levels	
+3: Allies	This faction will help you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same for them.
+2: Friendly	This faction will help you if it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same.
+1: Helpful	This faction will help you if it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.
0: Neutral	This faction doesn't care about you.
-1: Interfering	This faction will look for opportunities to cause trouble for you (or profit from your misfortune) as long as it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you
-2: Hostile	This faction will look for opportunities to hurt you as long as it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you.
-3: War	This faction will go out of its way to hurt you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you. When you're at war with any number of factions, your crew suffers **+1 trouble** from delves, temporarily loses **1 hold**, and PCs get only one downtime action rather than two. You can end a war by eliminating your enemy or by negotiating a mutual agreement to establish a new status rating.

When you create your crew, you assign some positive and negative status ratings to reflect recent history. The ratings will then change over time based on your actions in play.

Faction status changes

When you execute an operation, you gain -1 or -2 status with factions that are hurt by your actions. You may also gain +1 status with a faction that your operation helps. (If you keep your operation completely quiet then your status doesn't change.) Your status may also change if you do a favor for a faction or if you refuse one of their demands.

If your crew has weak hold when you go to war, the temporary loss of hold causes you to lose one Tier. When the war is over, restore your crew's Tier back to its prewar level.

Faction Status With Temples

Each of the major gods in the Athland pantheon has temples throughout the land. Each of these networks of temples is a faction'(if the temple is not identified as a separate faction in the standard list, you can still interact with it, since every god has a network of temples and functions as its own faction).

If you have good status with a temple, your crew also has a good status with that god, which can provide supernatural aid when the crew embarks on delves or other endeavor (if the god is displeased, you will lose status with the temple also). See the section on **Praying for Divine Favor** on page 110 for more information.

Claims

For a crew of raiders, knowledge of and access to a barrow is a valuable asset. If you find a previously unknown barrow, you may be able to keep it a secret—for a while. Once word gets out, other factions will certainly get involved. They may delve the barrow, take over your claim to the barrow and deny you access, ambush you on an exit and force you to hand over your loot, or otherwise interfere.

In the same way, you can try to learn about other faction's claims and horn in on their territory.

Making a Claim

A barrow can have several levels of exploration and control.

◆ **Rumored.** You might have some idea that it exists and its general location, but you don't know exactly where it is.

◆ **Located.** You know exactly where it is and how to get into it, but you have no control over access to it. You may or may not have completed delves into the barrow. You might be trying to keep the location secret.

◆ **Claimed.** You have made a public claim to the barrow. Others have some idea where it is, but you have staked your reputation on making it "yours." If others want to delve the barrow, they need to get your permission or violate your claim. That might mean something, or not, depending on your ability to enforce your claim. In general, crews will think twice about violating the claims of higher Tier crews. If you violate the claim of a higher Tier crew, and they find out about it, you'll lose at least -1 status with them.

◆ **Secured:** You have put barriers in place that prevent others from accessing the barrow: guards, walls, magical wards, etc. Describe how you are doing this. Some barrows are physically much harder to secure than others (a barrow in the form of a haunted forest is harder to control than a single cave opening). Assuming it is practical to do so, spend **coin** equal to **your crew Tier+1** on securing a barrow. That will make its security level equal to your crew Tier and other gangs will need to overcome that to enter or control the barrow. You may take other actions (spend **coin**, commit a **gang**, spend **downtime** activities, etc.) to reinforce the security of your claim on a barrow. This can increase the effective Tier of the defense of your claim, as negotiated with the GM.

Each downtime, a claimed or secured barrow provides 1 **reputation** to your crew for a barrow equal to your Tier or 2 **reputation** if it is of higher Tier—3 **reputation** if it is more than two Tiers higher, but that will be really hard to hold on to. Any violation of your claim means that no **reputation** is earned.

Allowing Access to Claimed Barrows

If you want, during downtime, you can give friendly factions access to a barrow you control (assuming there are such factions).

If so, roll **1d** for each barrow you control that has not been picked clean. On a **6**, a friendly faction pays you 1 **coin**+the barrow's Tier (if you control multiple barrows, the GM can make fortune roll to determine which one is accessed). On a **critical**, double the payout.

When you allow access to a barrow, the GM will start a "picked clean" clock for that barrow. Each access will result in a fortune roll to tick the clock. Once picked clean, no one will want access and any delves you conduct will produce little or no profit unless you can discover a new and unexploited part of that barrow.

Seizing a claim

If a barrow is claimed by another faction, you can attempt to seize it. The GM will detail the claim with a location and a description and will tell you which faction currently controls that claim. Or the GM might offer you a choice of a few options if they're available.

Execute the operation like any other action, and if you succeed, you seize the claim and the targeted faction loses the claim.

Seizing a claim is a serious attack on a faction, usually resulting in **-2 faction status** with the target, and potentially **+1 status** with its enemies. As soon as you seize a claim, you enjoy access to that barrow.

Losing a claim

An enemy faction may try to seize a claim that your crew holds. You can fight to defend it, or negotiate a deal with the faction, depending on the situation. If you lose a claim, you lose all the benefits of that claim. If your base is lost, you lose the benefits of all of your claims until you can restore your base or establish a new one. To restore or establish a new base, accomplish a operation to do so.

Advancement

PC Advancement

Each player keeps track of the experience points (**xp**) that their character earns.

During the game session, mark **xp**:

◆ When you make a **desperate action roll**. Mark 1 **xp** in the attribute for the action you rolled. For example, if you roll a desperate **Skirmish** action, you mark **xp** in **Prowess**. When you roll in a **group action** that's desperate, you also mark **xp**.

At the end of the session, review the **xp** triggers on your character sheet. For each one, mark 1 **xp** if it happened at all, or mark 2 **xp** if it happened a lot during the session. The **xp** triggers are:

◆ **Your playbook-specific xp trigger.** For example "*Address a challenge with violence or coercion*." To "address a challenge," your character should attempt to overcome a tough obstacle or threat. It doesn't matter if the action is successful or not. You get **xp** either way.

◆ **You expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage, or background**. Your character's beliefs and drives are yours to define, session to session. Feel free to tell the group about them when you mark **xp**.

◆ **You struggled with issues from your reprieve or traumas**. Mark **xp** for this if your reprieve tempted you to some bad action or if a trauma

condition caused you trouble. Simply seeking reprieve doesn't count as struggling with it (unless you overload, see page 112)

You may mark end-of-session **xp** on any **xp** tracks you want (any attribute or your playbook **xp** track).

When you fill an **xp** track, clear all the marks and take an **advance**.

Special Ability Advances

When you take an advance from your playbook track, you may choose an additional **special ability**. This can be any of the abilities from your own playbook. If you want, you can also take a veteran ability by choosing one from another playbook. Explain how this happened in the fiction. Write that ability in the notes section of your character sheet.

Commitments

At the time of taking a special ability advance, you can choose a **commitment** for your character, as long as you meet the prerequisites. You will probably want to plan for commitments in advance, since they generally require advance planning to meet requirements. A commitment will also become a big part of character's identity, so it should make sense in terms of how that character behaves and how you as a player see your character. See page 154 for more information on commitments. If none of the listed commitments seem like they fit your character, then it's entirely OK to play your character without one.

Attribute Advances

When you take an advance from an attribute, you can add an **additional action dot** to one of the actions under that attribute.

*Nadja is playing a Hunter. At the end of the session, she reviews her xp triggers and tells the group how much xp she's getting. She rolled two desperate **Hunt** actions during the session, so she marked 2 xp on her **Insight** xp track. She addressed several challenges with tracking or violence, so she marks 2 xp for that. She expressed her heritage many times when dealing*

*with the gang from her homeland, so she takes 2 xp for that. She also showcased her character's beliefs, but 2 xp is the maximum for that category, so she doesn't get any more. She didn't struggle with her reprieve or traumas, so no xp there. That's 4 xp at the end of the session. She decides to put it all in her **Insight** xp track. This fills the track, so she adds a new action dot in **Hunt**.*

You can also earn **xp** by **training** during downtime. When you train, mark **xp** in one of your attributes or in your playbook. A given **xp** track can be trained only once per downtime phase. See **Training**, page 112.

Crew Advancement

At the end of the session, review the crew **xp** triggers and mark 1 crew **xp** for each item that occurred during the session. If an item occurred multiple times or in a major way, mark 2 crew **xp** for it. The crew **xp** triggers are:

◆ **Your crew-specific xp trigger.** *For example, the Breakers' is "win a battle, dominate through threats of force, or smash and grab valuable treasure."* If the crew successfully completed an operation from this trigger, mark **xp**.

◆ **Contend with challenges above your current station.** If you tangled with barrows or factions of higher Tiers, or more dangerous opposition, mark **xp** for this.

◆ **Bolster your crew's reputation or develop a new one.** Review your crew's reputation. Did you do anything to promote it? Also mark **xp** if you developed a new reputation for the crew.

◆ **Express the goals, drives, inner conflict, or essential nature of the crew.** This one is very broad! Essentially, did anything happen that highlighted the specific elements that make your crew unique?

When you fill your crew advancement tracker, clear the marks and take a new special ability or mark two crew upgrade boxes.

For example, when a crew of Burglars earns a crew advance, they could take a new special ability, like Slippery. Or they could mark two upgrades, like Rigging and Resolve Training.

Say how you've obtained this new ability or upgrades for the crew. *Where did it come from? How does it become a new part of the crew?*

Profits

Every time the crew advances, **each PC gets stash** equal to the new crew Tier+2, to represent profits generated by the crew as they've been operating.

Changing Playbooks or Crew Type

A player might want to change their character to a different playbook (a Cutter becomes a Lurk), or the group may decide to shift their crew to a new type (Hawkers become Assassins). There are two ways to do this.

◆ The change represents a "rebuild" of the character or crew. For instance, if the PC was created as a Thief, but after a couple sessions, the player realizes that the Hunter playbook is a better fit for what they want to play. In this case, re-create the character or crew anew using the new sheet, keeping the same number of advances already earned.

◆ The change represents growth into something new, leaving the old life behind. In this case, transfer the action ratings of a PC or the upgrades of a crew to the new sheet (keeping the same total number of action dots or upgrades; you don't get the "free" elements of the new playbook as extra advancement). You may keep

◆ some of the special abilities already earned as Veteran advances. A crew might also keep their claims—assess each one to see if it makes sense in the fiction to keep it with the new crew type.

Bringing In New Player Characters

A player might want an additional character, perhaps to play while their regular character is lost in reprieve or recovering from harm. Or a player character has died. Or you want to bring a new player into the group after the initial character creation process has finished and the campaign has been in play for some number of sessions.

If you're within the first few sessions, just create a new character according to the standard procedure. If the PCs have earned several advances, however, they can seriously outmatch a new character, making the game seem unbalanced and less fun. If so, it's OK to give new PCs their own advances to catch them up. A more experienced and successful crew will attract more capable recruits, after all.

Magnitude

Supernatural entities and energies have a wide variety of effects and power levels. To help the GM judge these forces consistently, the **magnitude** scale is provided. See the master table of magnitude below. Magnitude measures the quality level of a monster or different aspects of an arcane force: its area, scale, duration, range, and force. Whenever you need to assess an entity or power, use the magnitude scale as a guideline to judge how it compares relative to the examples given on the table.

You can use the magnitude of an entity or power as a dice pool for a **fortune roll** to see how much effect it has, if it's not obvious or certain.

*A sea monster summons a crushing wave at the canal dock where the PCs are landing their boat. How badly does this damage the vessel and the crew? Obviously it's gonna be bad for them, but are they merely sinking or are they immediately wrecked and sunk? The GM makes a fortune roll using 6d (the magnitude of the monster). On a **1-3**, the wave has only little effect (for a huge wave), causing the craft to take on water and begin sinking. On a **4/5**, the wave has reduced effect, fully swamping the boat*

*and throwing some of the characters and their cargo overboard. On a **6**, the wave has full effect, immediately sinking the boat and dragging the crew and cargo under. On a **critical**, the boat is sunk, and also the crew and cargo are badly harmed by flying debris and the crushing force of the wave.*

You can add levels of magnitude together to describe a combination of effects, or simply focus on one key feature for the magnitude assessment, ignoring other elements, even if they're on the magnitude scale. They're not always additive.

In the example above, the monster generated magnitude 6 force and the GM included its area of effect "for free" as part of the power. A huge wave at a dock should affect the boats and the crews there, the GM decides.

The magnitude table is provided as a tool to help the GM make judgment calls. It's not meant to be a rigid restriction or mathematical formula to replace those judgment calls. Use the levels as a rough guideline for setting a magnitude number that seem appropriate to you.

This table can also be used as a guide to **quality level** when a PC **acquires an asset** or crafts an item. See **Crafting**, page 113.

Area / Scale

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
A closet	A small room	A large room	Several rooms	A small building	A large building	A city block
1 or 2 people	Small gang (3-6)	Medium gang (12)	Large gang (20)	Huge gang (40)	Massive gang (80)	Colossal gang (160)

Duration / Range

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
A few moments	A few minutes	An hour	A few hours	A day	Several days	A week
Within reach	A dozen paces	A stone's throw	Down the road	Several blocks away	Across a town	Across a city

Tier and Quality / Force

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent	Superior	Impeccable	Legendary
Weak	Moderate	Strong	Serious	Powerful	Overwhelming	Devastating

Force Examples	
6	Hurricane wind, molten lava, tidal wave, electrical maelstrom
5	A trebuchet, raging thunder-storm, massive fire, lightning strike
4	A charging horse, burning forge, bomb, whirlwind, electrocution
3	A crushing blow, staggering wind, grenade, searing fire, electrical surge
2	A powerful blow, howling wind, burning brand
1	A solid punch, steady wind, torch flame, electrical shock
0	A firm shove, a candle flame, breeze, tiny spark

Quality Examples	
6	A mansion, large ship, rare essences or arcane artifacts, powerful monster
5	A large townhouse, small ship, custom-tailored clothing, magical barrier
4	A luxury vehicle, fine manor house, typical monster or powerful ghost
3	A carriage, boat, finely crafted armor, fashionable clothing, small home
2	A well made sword, respectable clothing, private rented room, typical ghost
1	A simple polearm, ordinary clothing, shared apartment, cheap food or drugs
0	A rusty knife, worn and tattered clothing, rickety shack on the street

Chapter 6
Downtime

6. Downtime

After the crew finishes a delve (succeed or fail), they take time to recover, regroup, and prepare for the next one. This phase of the game is called **downtime**.

Downtime fulfills two purposes in the game:

◆ First, it's a break for the players. During the action of the delve, the PCs are always under threat, charging from obstacle to obstacle in a high-energy sequence. Downtime gives them a reprieve so they can catch their breath and relax a bit—focus on lower-energy, quieter elements of the game, as well as explore personal aspects of their characters.

◆ Second, the shift into a new phase of the game signals a shift in which mechanics are needed. There are special rules that are only used during the downtime phase, so they're kept "out of the way" during the other parts of play. When we shift into downtime, we take out a different toolbox and resolve downtime on its own terms, then shift back into the more action-focused phases of the game afterwards.

Downtime is divided into four parts, which are resolved in order:

1. **Payoff.** The crew receives their rewards from a successfully completed delve.

2. **Trouble.** The crew accumulates suspicion and attention from the law and the powers-that-be in the region as a result of their last delve.

3. **Entanglements.** The crew faces trouble from the rival factions, the law, and the haunted city itself.

4. **Downtime Activities.** The PCs seek reprieve to remove stress, work on long-term projects, recover from injuries, etc.

After the downtime activities are resolved, the game returns to free play, and the group can move toward their next delve.

Payoff

After a delve, the PCs take stock of the loot they have obtained. A successful delve generates both **rep** and **coin**.

Rep Earned

The crew earns 2 **rep** per delve by default. If the target of the delve is higher **Tier** than you, take **+1 rep per Tier higher**. If the target is lower Tier, you get **-1 rep per Tier lower** (minimum zero).

*If your crew is Tier I and you pull off a successful delve in a Tier III barrow, you earn 4 **rep** (2 **rep**, +2 **rep** for a target two Tiers above you). If your crew is Tier III and you complete a delve in a Tier I barrow, you earn 0 **rep** (2 **rep**, -2 **rep** for the lower Tier target).*

If you keep the delve completely secret so no one knows about it, you earn zero **rep**.

Mark the **rep** on the **rep** tracker on the crew sheet.

You will also earn **rep** for conducting an operation—generally 2 **rep** if you acted against an equal Tier faction, + or – one **rep** per Tier of difference (minimum zero). Just as with a delve, if you keep the operation completely quiet, you earn no **rep**.

Coin Earned

Once you get back to your base after a delve, you can start figuring out the value of your loot. You get in touch with your contacts and start assessing what you managed to haul back with you. Sometimes,

an object that seemed almost worthless turns out to be the perfect thing a mage needs for a magical ritual and she will pay handsomely for it. Other times, the stuff you thought was going to make you rich turns out to be junk.

Payout is determined by rolling your loot dice.

Payout Roll	
Roll your **blue** loot dice	Each **5** or **6**: **1 coin.** Three **blue** sixes : special item.
Roll your **red** loot dice	Each **4**, **5**, or **6**: **1 coin.** Two **red** sixes: special item.

Some towns or regions have crime bosses that expect smaller crews to pay a tithe from their delves. Ask the GM if there's a boss that you should be paying. **Subtract coin equal to your crew Tier +1** when you pay a tithe to a boss or larger organization. *If you're supposed to be paying off a boss, but you don't, start a clock for that boss's patience running out. Tick it whenever you don't pay. Every time it fills up, lose 1 faction status with them.*

Special Items

The possibility of finding and using special items discovered and identified during the delve was discussed on page 82. But in many cases, you a special item until you return to your base and have time to sort through the stuff you found.

The GM decides what was found. Here are some possibilities:

◆ **Heritage item:** This is a mundane item or gadget with some kind of interesting story attached. It will usually be of fine quality. It might be extremely fancy (inlaid with gold and jewels, for example). For example, a *fine falcatta of the ancient witch kings*. It should have a story that is interesting enough that the PCs are likely to set it aside instead of just selling it.

◆ **Alchemical item:** This could be any of the standard alchemical items (page 115), or the GM could come up with a different alchemical concoction. If the crew doesn't have a PC with

the Artificer ability, it could be challenging and potentially dangerous to store, carry, and use alchemical items.

◆ **Magical items:** The GM can pick from the list of standard items (page 116) or invent something different. Alternately, it cold be a unique single-use item, such as those on the list below.

Avoid item bloat. One cool item is awesome, but a giant pile of them gets boring. Heritage items should be used rarely and integrated into the story. Alchemical items are self limiting in that they are used once and then they are gone. Magical items are limited in that there are carry limits (one at a time for most PCs or 3 for characters with the Enchanter special ability).

Many magical special items can be single use rather than have continued utility. That way the PCs can find them, do something awesome or weird, and move on.

Sample Single Use Special Items

◆ **Bitter pill:** This a very large greenish pill which tastes unbelievably bad. To choke it down, roll **Attune**. On **1–3**, you just can't. On **4/5**, take level 1 long-term harm (nauseated) and get it down. On **6**, you get it down. Once down, you'll have something like a seizure, but with a lot more agony, for about 5 minutes. When that's over, you will have greatly expanded senses and clarity of understanding for the next several hours. You can see in the dark, smell like a hound, hear like a bat, balance like a cat. You have an unerring sense of when someone is lying to you. You get **+1d** to any gather information roll, with **increased effect**. As the magic of the pill fades, you will have a stunning revelation about the nature of the universe and your place in it, which you will immediately forget.

◆ **Clay golem:** This is a small, vaguely Human figure made of clay. **Attune** with it and command it to grow, and it will expand to the size of a large Human. It does not speak, but it has prodigious strength and will follow simple commands for

24 hours, after which it dissolves into mud. If you use it to carry extra loot out of the delve for you, get **+1d** to your payoff roll.

◆ **Death mask:** Place this strange mask on the face of a person who has died within the last week and whose body is essentially intact. The mask is absorbed into the skin as the person is revived for one day and an hour. But then, alas, death returns.

◆ **Fish form box:** A small wooden box with jeweled inlay. Open the box to see a magically projected image of a swimming fish. Touch the fish and the box disappears while you transform into a fish-Human hybrid, with gills, fins, etc. You have trouble on land (you can breathe, but can't move very well), but are now perfectly suited to living and moving underwater. This effect lasts for one day.

◆ **Gem of comprehension:** Place this blue gem against your forehead and **attune** to it. It embeds itself into your head and provides you the ability to comprehend and read any spoken or written language. You can speak any language that your voice is able to approximate. The gem disappears after a week, leaving you with a severe headache (level 1 harm) and a small scar.

◆ **Porcelain scouting bird:** Place this small figurine in your hand and speak a mystic word inscribed on its back. It will transform into a magical bird. The user can see through the bird's eyes and direct its flight. After an hour, the connection is lost and the bird flies away, free.

◆ **Salve of rejuvenation:** Spread this soothing balm over your forehead and lie down for five minutes. All of your stress is cleared.

◆ **Soulkiller:** This is a dagger, sword, polearm, spear, or other melee weapon. It is highly magical and possessed by a spirit. When the weapon is used to kill a worthy opponent, the spirit consumes their soul. As a side effect, the wielder of the weapon clears their highest level of harm. If there is no harm, they clear 2 stress. The spirit has need of only a certain number of souls and has already consumed some. Each time the weapon eats a soul, roll **1d**. On **6**, the spirit is released and the weapon crumbles into rust.

◆ **Spider ring:** Put this ring on a finger and turn the top of it widdershins (counter-clockwise). The ring embeds itself in your flesh. For the next 24 hours, you have the ability to climb on any solid surface, even horizontal ones. At the end of that time, the ring turns into a regular spider and crawls away, leaving a scar around that finger.

◆ **Staff of smiting:** This appears to be a regular wooden staff, carved with strange markings that glow very faintly in dim light. However, if you succeed in striking a monster or supernatural entity with killing intent, you have **potency** even against enemies of greater Tier or magnitude. It will affect creatures that cannot normally be harmed by physical attacks. The staff breaks with that strike.

◆ **Water of healing:** This is a small flask containing what seems to be lightly scented water. You can pour it over one external physical wound. That wound, no matter how severe, is healed immediately. If used quickly enough on an appropriate wound, this can eliminate even level 4 harm. If won't fix decapitation or whole body burns, but it will heal a spear through the chest or ripped off limb (it will reattach the limb if it is held against the wound while healing, or leave a well-healed stump if not).

Selling Special items

The PCs may want money more than they want the item they found. By default, a single use special item is worth **1 coin** while a multi-use item is worth 2 **coin**. However, if the PCs want to play out the process of finding a buyer and negotiating a better price, they can also do that.

Trouble and Notoriety

Barrow raiders are not outlaws, but they're not completely legitimate, either. Raiders prefer to avoid notice as much as they can. More notice attracts problems in the form of robbers, grifters, nobles, mages, monsters, tax collectors, and others.

Every delve attracts attention from prying eyes and informants. To reflect this, your crew acquires **trouble**. Sometimes, you acquire trouble as a consequence for an action roll. But usually, it comes during downtime when your crew returns and people start find out how it went.

What drives trouble? **M-O-N-E-Y**. The bigger the payoff, the more attention you attract. Whenever you get a payoff, look on the table to see how much **trouble** you accrue.

Trouble	
0 **coin**	0 **trouble**
1–3 **coin**	1 **trouble**
4– 6 **coin**	2 **trouble**
7–9 **coin**	4 **trouble**
10+ **coin**	6 **trouble**

Add +1 **trouble** for a high-profile delve or well-known sponsor. Add **+1 trouble** if a special item was recovered. Add +1 **trouble** if you're at war with another faction or if someone from the Athland side was killed during the delve (from your crew, another faction, or anyone else).

You mark **trouble** levels on the **trouble tracker** on the crew sheet. The higher your level of trouble, the more attention you attract. When your trouble level reaches 9, you gain a **notoriety** level and clear your trouble (any excess trouble "rolls over," so if your trouble was 7 and you took 4 trouble, you'd reset with 2 trouble marked).

The higher your **notoriety** level, the more serious the response when higher Tier factions take action against you (they'll send a force of higher **quality** and **scale**). Also, a higher **notoriety** level contributes to the severity of the **Entanglements** your crew faces after a delve.

Reducing Notoriety

There are three ways to reduce your crew's **notoriety** level: lay low or perform a service.

◆ If you **lay low**, you hold off on performing delves or other activities that generate profits for the crew. In the story, that means we skip ahead in time anywhere from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. The GM will tick multiple faction clocks to represent time going by (if appropriate, make a **fortune roll** for each relevant clock: **1–3**: 1 tick, **4/5** 2 ticks, **6**: 3 ticks). Pay **Tier** +1 in **coin** to represent cost of living (and paying your cohorts). Clear one level of **notoriety**.

◆ If you **perform a service**, you seek out an important faction, either in local government or with significant sway over the government. Offer to provide a service for little or no fee, just because you like and respect them so very much. Then complete a delve or operation that they assign to you, successfully meeting the objective they have provided. Gain +1 **status** with that faction and clear one level of **notoriety**.

◆ Use a downtime activity (page 108) to take action in the fiction to reduce notoriety. This will be a clock (higher notoriety means more segments). Say how you do this and make a roll.

Entanglements

Your crew didn't just spring into existence on your first delve. You have a complex history of favors, commitments, debts, and promises that got you where you are today. After **payoff** and **trouble** are determined, check for **entanglements**. Make a fortune roll: **1d**, plus one die for each level of **notoriety**.

Entanglement Roll

Roll **1d**.	**Critical:** Severe entanglement.
Add **+1d** per level of **notoriety**.	**6:** Major entanglement
	4/5: Minor entanglement.
	1-3: No problems.

If the roll comes up "no problems," there is no significant entanglement this downtime. Otherwise, the GM will assign one, from the list below, at the indicated level of challenge.

The GM might bring the entanglement into play immediately, or hold off until an appropriate moment during downtime, free play, or even the next delve. For example, if you get the Cohort Trouble entanglement, it might manifest when the PC seeks reprieve and the gang gets involved with the character's family.

Minor Entanglements

Minor entanglements are relatively mundane problems. I the players are interested in dealing with a minor entanglement through role-play, they can do that. If not, they can usually buy off a minor entanglement for 1 **coin**, 1 **rep**, or -1 **status** with a faction of equal or higher Tier, depending on the situation (GM has final say).

Cohort trouble	**Supply problems**
Friend in need	**Cooperation**
Rivals	**Tax**

Major Entanglements

Major entanglements are serious problems brought about by friction generated by the operations of the crew. Unlike minor entanglements, they can't just be bought off.

Cooperation	**Show of force**
Reprisals	**Flipped**
Followed	

Severe Entanglements

A severe entanglement represent a big problems for the crew, usually involving a higher Tier adversary that is pushing its weight around. It will hit at the most inconvenient time between now and the end of the next delve.

Flipped	**Show of force**
Reprisals	**Nobility complications**
Followed	

Some entanglements show up at more than one level of severity. If so, the higher level indicates a bigger problem.

Entanglements manifest fully before the PCs have a chance to avoid them. When an entanglement comes into play, describe the situation after it has started to happen. The PCs deal with it from that point—they can't intercept it and defuse it before it happens. Entanglements are the cost of doing business as barrow raiders—a good crew learns to roll with the punches and pick their battles.

- **Cooperation.** A higher status faction asks you for a favor. They won't be happy if you refuse.
- **Flipped.** One of the PCs' rivals arranges for one of your contacts, patrons, clients, or brokers to switch allegiances to a rival faction. The rivals now have information they can use against the crew.
- **Followed.** *Something* has followed you back from a delve. Maybe it tracked you, maybe it was even hidden among your loot. A monster, a ghost, a group of creatures, or something really strange.
- **Friend in Need.** One player will need to volunteer a friend, ally, or source of reprieve who gets in some kind of trouble: bad debt, thrown in jail, lost job, nasty vendetta, captured for ransom, etc.
- **Cohort trouble.** One of your cohorts (a gang or expert) causes trouble due to their flaw(s).
- **Nobility Complications.** The crew has attracted the attention of local noble houses. They might stage a raid, send a representative demanding the crew perform some service, accuse a crew member of murder and demand an appearance in court, or other governmental interference.

- **Reprisals.** An enemy faction makes a move against you (or a friend, contact, or source of reprieve). Apologize, pay them off, or fight them.
- **Rivals.** A faction that is neutral or -1 status with you throws their weight around. They threaten you, a friend, a contact, or source of reprieve.
- **Show of force.** A faction with whom you have a negative status makes a play against your holdings. Perhaps you can pay them off by giving up a claim to a barrow.
- **Supply Problems.** The crew has trouble getting some of the items it depends on to manage its regular operations. The GM chooses one of: crafting supplies, magical supplies, weapons/ammunition, or other needed items. These are in short supply.
- **Tax.** The representative of the baronial government or other faction claiming authority levies a tax, fine, tariff, or fee on you.

Downtime Activities

Between delves, your crew spends time at their liberty, resting up, recovering from injuries, attending to personal needs, and working on side projects. These are called **downtime activities**.

> Acquire Asset
> Long-Term Project
> Pray
> Recover

During a downtime phase, each PC has time for two downtime activities. When you're at war, each PC has time for only one.

You can choose the same activity more than once. You can only attempt actions that you're in a position to accomplish. If an activity is contingent on another action, resolve that action first.

A PC can make time for more than two activities, at a cost. Each additional activity from the list costs **1 coin** or 1 **rep**. This reflects the time and resulting resource drain while you're "off the clock" and not earning from a delve. When you complete a new delve, you reset and get two "free" activities again.

Activities on the downtime list are limited; normal (free play) actions are not. During downtime, you can still go places, do things, make action rolls,

gather information, talk with other characters, etc. In other words, only activities that are on the list are limited.

For any downtime activity, take **+1d** to the roll if a friend or contact helps you. After the roll, you can spend **coin** to improve the result level. Increase the result level by one for each **coin** spent. So, a **1–3** result becomes a 4 or a 5, a **4/5** result becomes a **6**, and a **6** becomes a **critical**.

> *If a player can't decide which downtime activity to pick, offer them a long-term project idea. You know what the player is interested in and what they like. Suggest a project that will head in a fun direction for them.*
>
> *"Remember how you had that weird vision at the altar to the forgotten gods? Yeah, do you want to get to the bottom of that? Okay, start a long-term project—six segments—called… 'Weird God Vibes.' What do you do to work on that?"*

Acquire Asset

Gain temporary use of an asset:

◆ One special **item** or set of common items (enough for a gang of your Tier scale).

◆ A **cohort** (an expert or gang).

◆ A **vehicle** (wagon, boat, ship).

◆ A **service.** Transport from a smuggler, use of a warehouse for temporary storage, help from a person of influence or expertise, etc.

"Temporary use" constitutes one significant period of usage that makes sense for the asset—typically the duration of one delve. An asset can also be acquired for "standby" use in the future. You might hire a gang to guard your base, for example, and they'll stick around until after the first serious battle, or until a week goes by and they lose interest.

To acquire the asset, roll the crew's Tier. The result indicates the **quality** of the asset you get, using the crew's Tier as the base. **1–3**: Tier -1, **4/5**: Tier, **6**: Tier +1, **critical:** Tier +2. You can spend **coin** to raise the result of this roll beyond **critical** by spending **2 coin** per additional Tier level added.

The GM may set a **minimum quality** level that must be achieved to acquire a particular asset. For example, if you want to get a set of Warden uniforms and masks, you'd need to acquire a Tier IV asset. A lower result won't do. If you can't get an asset of sufficient Tier and can't or won't pay to get to the minimum required Tier, you can accept drawbacks to make up the difference. For example, if you need some baronial guard uniforms at Tier III, and you only manage to acquire Tier II uniforms, the players and the GM could agree that the clothing will pass casual scrutiny, but any member of the guard will notice that the sashes are the wrong fabric and the buckles are the wrong shape.

If you acquire the same asset again, you get **+1d** to your roll. If you continue to re-acquire an asset every time it's used, you can effectively rent it indefinitely.

Alchemicals, poisons, bombs, magic items, and dangerous items tend to attract attention. When you acquire one of these items (rather than crafting it yourself), you take **+2 trouble.**

If you want to acquire an asset permanently, you can either gain it as a crew upgrade or work on it as a **long-term project** to set up a permanent acquisition.

> *Zamira the Armiger is a duelist and would like a fine sword to add to her permanent items. Her player starts a long-term project: "Get My Family Sword Back from the Pawn Shop." The GM says this is an 8-clock (she can work on it by Consorting or Swaying the pawn shop owner or maybe rolling her lifestyle level to represent small payments).*

Long-Term Project

When 123 you work on a long-term project (either a brand new one, or an already existing one), describe what your character does to advance the project clock, and roll one of your actions. Mark segments on the clock according to your result: **1–3**: one segment, **4/5**: two segments, **6**: three segments, **critical:** five segments.

A long-term project can cover a wide variety of activities, like doing research into an arcane ritual, investigating a mystery, establishing someone's trust, courting a new friend or contact, changing your character's source of reprieve, and so on.

Based on the goal of the project, the GM will tell you the clock(s) to create and suggest a method by which you might make progress.

In order to work on a project, you might first have to achieve the means to pursue it—which can be a project in itself. For example, you might want to make friends with a member of the City Council, but you have no connection to them. You could first work on a project to Consort in their circles so you have the opportunity to meet one of them. Once that's accomplished, you could start a new project to form a friendly relationship.

Pray For Divine Assistance

When your crew has positive status with the temple of a god, one representative of the crew can spend a downtime activity to go there, make offerings, participate in purification rituals, and ask for divine favor from that god.

How To Pray

When you **pray for divine assistance**, roll **1d** per level of status you have with that temple. Take **+1d** if you spend 1 **coin** in donations and sacrifices.

Pray For Divine Assistance	
Roll **1d** per level of status with temple.	**Critical: Good Omens**, **Divine Favor**, and **Divine Protection**.
+1d if you spend 1 **coin** in donations and sacrifices.	**6: Good Omens** and **Divine Favor**.
	4/5: Good Omens.
	1-3: Bad Omens.

You can never have favor from more than one god at a time. If you gain favor from a different god, the previous favor is lost.

There are three types of **divine assistance** (and one kind of disfavor in the form of bad omens). When you call on divine favor, say how you are asking for

assistance from the god, and what that assistance looks like. Then apply your bonus to the roll.

Bad Omens

Take **-1d** on your next engagement roll. *When the omens were read, they were unfavorable. The gods do not support your next endeavor.*

Good Omens

Take **+1d** on your next **engagement roll**, provided the **plan** is within the god's dominion (see table above).

Divine Favor

Mark **divine favor** on the crew sheet. During the next delve or operation, the crew can apply **+1d** or **increased effect** three times to **action rolls** that fall within the god's dominion.

Divine Protection

On your next delve or operation, each crew member gains +1 free use of the **special armor** ability on their playbook. If they do not have that special ability, they get one free use anyway.

Gods of Athland

God	Dominion	Divine Favor
Akikron	Authority The Sun	**Engagement** (assault) **Command** roll
Cholethre	Knowledge Travel	**Engagement** (transport) **Long-term project**
Dendrok	War Ferocity	**Engagement** (assault) **Skirmish** roll
Dineri	Precision Archery	**Engagement** (deception) **Finesse** roll Any shot with a bow
Elim	Wisdom The Arts	**Engagement** (social) **Flashback**
Hekathe	Insight The Moon	**Engagement** (social) **Consort** roll
Imor	Fertility Agriculture	**Engagement** (transport) **Healing** roll

God	Dominion	Divine Favor
Malathena	Ingenuity Crafts	**Engagement** (transport) **Tinker** roll
Morag	Magic Supernatural	**Engagement** (occult) **Attune** roll
Teklos	Trickery Theft	**Engagement** (deception) **Sway** roll Any theft roll
Vishelu	Audacity Valor	**Engagement** (assault) **Desperate** roll

Gods of the Cambri

God	Dominion	Divine Favor
Gehir	Protection Authority Wisdom Sacrifice	**Engagement** (assault) **Engagement** (deception) **Command** roll **Skirmish** roll
Meshua	Fertility Devotion Prosperity Supernatural	**Engagement** (stealth) **Engagement** (occult) **Sway** roll **Healing** roll

Recover

When you recover, you seek treatment to heal your long-term harm (page 17). You might visit a physicker who can stitch your wounds and soothe your mind with anatomical science or a witch who specializes in healing charms and restorative alchemy. If you don't have a contact or fellow PC who can provide treatment, you can use the **acquire asset** activity to gain access to a healer, who can provide service for the whole crew. Alternately, a PC with the Physicker special ability can provide healing,

When you recover, the person providing treatment makes a roll (using a relevant action rating if done by a PC with the Physicker ability or using **Tier** if done by an NPC). Add **+1d** for assistance. Increase the effect level by 1 per **coin** spent.

Recover	
Roll PC action rating or NPC **Tier**. Add **+1d** for assistance. **Get +1 effect level** per **coin** spent.	**Critical:** Clear all harm. **6:** Clear two levels of harm. **4/5:** Clear one level of harm. **1-3:** Clear all level 1 harm.

If you clear one level of harm, that means all level one harm is removed and each other level of harm goes down one level. If you clear two levels of harm, that means your level 1 and level 2 harm is removed and your level 3 harm is reduced to level 1. When you reduce a level of harm, rewrite it to reflect the healing process (from Severely Concussed to Concussed to Bad Headache, for example).

Dacy has two injuries: a level 3 Shattered Right Leg and level 1 Battered Rib. During downtime, she gets treatment from Ithlir, a physicker friend of Jonas, the crew's Artificer. Ithlir is at Tier 1 and gets assistance from Jonas, so he rolls 2d. The die roll is 6, so Dacy clears 2 levels of harm. That eliminates the level 1 harm and reduces Shattered Right Leg to level 1 Limping.

For her second downtime activity, Dacy decides to continue Recovery with Ithlir. Any result will remove the level 1 limp.

You can heal yourself, but you take **2 stress** when you do so. You can also choose to simply tough it out and attempt to heal without any treatment—in this case, take **1 stress** and roll **0d.**

Note that it's the recovering character who takes the recovery action. Healing someone else does not cost a downtime activity for the healer, because much of healing involves rest.

Reduce Trouble

Say how you reduce **trouble** on the crew and roll your action. Reduce **trouble** according to the result: **1-3:** one, **4/5:** two, **6:** three, **critical:** five.

Train

When you spend time in training, mark **1 xp** on the **xp** track for an attribute or playbook advancement. If you have the appropriate crew Training upgrade unlocked, mark **+1 xp** (2 total). See Crew Upgrades, page 58. You can train a given **xp** track only once per downtime.

Reprieve

Your characters are a special lot. They delve into terrifying places and confront the horrors they find there, pushing themselves further than ordinary people are willing to go. But this comes at a cost. Their life is one of constant stress. Inevitably, each requires a source of **reprieve** in order to cope.

At the beginning of downtime, stress is automatically cleared up to half of maximum (rounded up). *If you end a delve with 2 stress left and your maximum is 9, you'll start downtime with 5 stress.*

Additional stress management comes through reprieve. A character's reprieve is their solace. With reprieve comes relief from stress and the ability for PCs to once again face the overwhelming challenge of their daring life.

Seeking Reprieve

When you **seek reprieve**, say how your character finds solace, including which source of reprieve they use to satisfy their needs. This takes time, so it can only be done when the crew has downtime. Alternately, you can choose to release your character to be "lost in reprieve" during a game session, allowing them to indulge off-camera while you play a different PC. A gang member, friend, or contact of the crew might be created as an alternate character to play, thus fleshing out the landscape of PCs.

When you seek reprieve, you clear all of your stress boxes. You then roll a number of dice equal to your lowest **attribute** (**insight, prowess,** or **resolve**) to see if there are any other positive or negative consequences.

Reprieve Roll	
Roll dice equal to lowest **attribute**.	**1-3:** Clear stress and **overload (see below)**.
	4/5: Clear stress and take **+1 trouble**.
	6: Clear stress.
	critical: Clear stress and gain **+1 coin** or reduce **trouble** by 1.
	If you do not or cannot seek reprieve during downtime, you take stress equal to your **trauma**.

Horace ends a challenging delve with only 1 stress remaining out of his normal maximum of 9. At the beginning of downtime, his stress goes up to five (half of maximum). Then he seeks reprieve by spending time with his family. Jon, his player, rolls 1d for his lowest attribute. He gets a 2 and overloads.

Overload

Reprieve is not a reliable, controllable habit. It's a risk—and one that can drive your character to act against their own best interests. On a poor roll you may **overload**.

When you overload, you make a bad call because of your need for reprieve—in acquiring it or while under its influence. To bring the effect of this bad decision into the game, select an overload from the list:

◆ **Attract Trouble.** Select or roll an additional **entanglement**.

◆ **Brag to the wrong person about your exploits. +2 trouble**.

◆ **Busy.** Your character vanishes for a few weeks (at least one delve). Play a different character until this one returns. When your character returns, say what they were doing (or get surly and refuse to tell anyone). They've also healed any harm they had.

◆ **Tapped.** Your current source of reprieve cuts you off. Find a new source for solace.

Ignoring Reprieve

If you do not or cannot seek reprieve during a downtime phase, you take stress equal to your **trauma**. If you don't have any **trauma**, you're free to ignore your need. It doesn't have a hold over you (yet).

Reprieve, Roleplaying, and XP

Along with your character's heritage and background, their reprieve tells us what kind of person they are. This focus affects their motivations, goals, and behavior. When you ponder what your character might do or say next, you can always consider their reprieve to help you think of something. As an added benefit, by playing to the nature of your character's reprieve, you earn **xp** at the end of the session.

Crafting

During downtime, a PC can invent or craft items with **Tinker**.

◆ Anyone can invent or craft mundane gadgets.

◆ A character with the **Alchemist** special ability from the Artificer playsheet can invent or craft items with *alchemical* features.

◆ A character with the **Enchanter** special ability from the Mage playsheet can invent or craft items with *magical* features.

The system for each method is similar, with different details depending on the nature of the project.

Researching

To research the formula for a new item (weapon, alchemical concoction, magical item, etc.) or the plan for a new item of your design, you need to **Study** it as a **long-term project**. Most new formulas or designs will require an 8-segment progress clock to invent and learn. The player and the GM answer questions about the invention to define what it will do in play and what is required to create it (see below). The player records these answers in their notes for future reference.

Mundane gadgets of research should be within the general tech level of the setting. Electrical devices, steam

catapults, muskets, etc., would all be outside of scope. Discuss with the GM how far in advance of general setting technology would make sense.

Creation Questions

1. GM asks: **"What type of creation is it and what does it do?"** Player answers. A creation might be *mundane*, *alchemical*, or *magical*. If a PC has an appropriate special ability (**Alchemist**, **Enchanter**), they get bonuses when researching and crafting certain creation types.

2. Player asks: **"What's the minimum quality level of this item?"** GM answers, with the magnitude of the effects the item produces as a guideline.

3. GM asks: **"What rare, strange, or adverse aspect of this formula or design has kept it in obscurity, out of common usage?"** Player answers.

4. Player asks: **"What drawbacks does this item have, if any?"** GM answers by choosing one or more from the drawbacks list, or by saying there are none.

A PC with the **Alchemist** or **Enchanter** special abilities invents and learns one special formula when they take the ability (they don't have to take time to learn it).

Once you've researched a formula or design, you can craft it by using a downtime activity (see **Crafting**, below). No one else can craft this item unless they learn your design as a long-term project. If you acquire a formula or design invented by another tinkerer, you can learn to craft it by completing a long-term project.

Making

To craft something, spend one **downtime activity** to make a **Tinker** roll to determine the **quality level** of the item you produce. The base quality level is equal to your crew's Tier, modified by the result of the roll (see the results on the next page).

The results are based on your crew's Tier because it indicates the overall quality of the workspace and

materials you have access to. *If you do the work with the **Workshop** upgrade for your crew, your effective Tier level is one higher for this roll.*

Crafting Roll	
1d for each tinker action dot.	**Critical:** Quality level is Tier +2.
+1 **quality** for each **coin** spent.	**6:** Quality level is Tier +1.
	4/5: Quality level is equal to Tier.
+1 **quality** for **Workshop** crew upgrade.	**1-3:** Quality level is Tier -1.

The GM sets a **minimum quality level** that must be achieved to craft the item, based on the **magnitude** of the effect(s) it produces. The GM uses magnitude as a *guideline* for setting the quality level—it may be higher or lower at their discretion to better describe the nature of the project. An item can be crafted at higher quality if the player wishes to attempt it.

You can spend **coin** 1-for-1 to increase the final quality level result of your roll (this can raise quality level beyond Tier +2).

What if you don't get a high enough Tier? If your crafting roll doesn't meet the minimum Tier for the item, you have three choices. First is to just assume you wasted your time and it came out wrong. Second is to pay **coin** to increase the Tier high enough. Third, if you can't or won't pay to bring the Tier up, you can accept extra drawbacks (see below). One drawback will increase the Tier by one level. Anyone can suggest an interesting drawback for the item.

Modifying an item

Adding a feature or additional function to an item is simpler than creating something new. You don't need to invent a special formula or plan. Make a crafting roll to modify an item (the baseline quality of an item that you modify is equal to your crew's Tier, as usual).

◆ A simple, useful modification requires Tier +1 quality. *A crossbow that breaks down into two sections to be more easily concealed.*

- A significant modification requires Tier +2 quality. *A crossbow with greater power to shoot further and with greater penetration.*
- An alchemical, or magical modification requires Tier +3 quality. *A fluid that will mask your scent, even from death wolves.*

Drawbacks

A creation or modification may have one or more drawbacks, chosen by the GM.

- **Attune:** If you did not make this item, make an **attune** action roll at the time of use to see if you can make it work effectively.
- **Complex.** You'll have to create it in multiple stages; the GM will tell you how many. One downtime activity and crafting roll is needed per stage.
- **Consumable.** This creation has a limited number of uses (all *alchemicals* must have this drawback).
- **Heavy.** Uses 1 load.
- **Huge:** Too large for one person to carry.
- **Rare.** This creation requires a rare item or material when it is crafted.
- **Unreliable.** When you use the item, make a **fortune** roll (using its quality) to see how well it performs.
- **Very heavy.** Uses 2 load.
- **Volatile.** The item produces a dangerous or troublesome side-effect for the user, specified by the GM (see examples on the sample creations, next page). A side-effect is a consequence, and can be resisted.

Sample Creations

Creations are listed with their quality level (by Tier: I-VI), followed by a number of uses if they're Consumable (1-3).

Marta spends a downtime activity to distill a batch of Silence Potion. She rolls Tinker and gets a 4, meaning quality level equal to her crew Tier, which is II. She spends 1 coin to bump up her result to a 6

(Tier +1), which is high enough for Silence Potion (III). She makes one dose and plans to use it to bypass some guards.

Mundane gadgets

- **Armored Wagon** (ii/1): Adds physical armor (steel over wooden planks) to a wagon to make it difficult to damage. **Complex, Huge.**
- **Glider** (iv/1): A winged contraption that allows one person to glide from a high place to a lower place, with a bit of control. **Complex, Huge.**
- **Grappling gear** (ii/1): Equipment for capturing a large creature: heavy lines, spikes, nets. **Very heavy.**
- **Improved compass** (iii/1). It is common for compasses to point in the wrong direction when deep underground, which can be a serious problem on delves. This compass is not infallible, but it is much less likely to become confused about true North.
- **Repeating Crossbow** (iii/1): A crossbow with a magazine that allows several bolts to be fired in succession before reloading. **Very heavy.**
- **Telescoping ladder** (iii/1): A ladder that can be folded up and then opened for height. **Very heavy.**
- **Underwater gear** (iii/1): Gear to allow one person to breathe underwater: a helmet, hose, weights. etc. **Complex, very heavy.**

Alchemical Items

All alchemicals have the **Consumable** drawback. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are standard items that anyone with the Alchemist special ability already knows how to craft.

- *Alchemical Silver** (i/2): A vial of mercury-like substance. Rubbed in the striking or cutting part of a weapon gives it potency against magical creatures.
- *Black Salt** (i/1): Spread this substance across a threshold or in a circle and it will prevent ghosts, demons, and other magical creatures from crossing in or out. **Rare.**

- ***Black Lyptus** (i/1): A liquid that can be instantly lethal when consumed. **Unreliable**.
- ***Blinding Powder (i/2):** A fine dust that causes temporary blindness when thrown toward the eyes.
- **Depth Oil** (iv/1): Rub this dark, slippery oil over your entire body. It allows you to breathe underwater and survive at any depth. Lasts for a day.
- ***Fire Oil** (i/1): A sticky substance that, when lit, is resistant to being put out, even when smothered or covered in water. **Volatile** (fumes that make the user woozy).
- ***Flash Powder** (i/3): When a packet of this powder is thrown against the floor or a hard object, it creates a blinding flash.
- **Grenade** (ii/2)**:** A small explosive charge with a short fuse that detonates. **Unreliable**.
- **Locking Glue** (ii/1): A powerful adhesive substance that can lock any two solid objects together. Dries in a few moments.
- ***Night Balm** (i/1). Smear this substance on your eyes and you can see clearly even in complete darkness. Lasts for a day.
- ***Oil of Fire Resistance** (i/1): When this liquid is rubbed over an object or person, it confers resistance to fire and intense heat.
- **Petard** (iii/1): A large explosive charge with a fuse that detonates. **Very heavy, unreliable**.
- **Red Lyptus** (ii/3): A thick resin that, when rubbed on the insides of the wrists, induces intense euphoria and stupor for several hours.
- **Silence Potion** (iii/1): A golden liquid that negates all sound within 10 paces of the drinker for a span of several minutes.
- ***Smoke Bomb** (i/2): When ignited, causes a cloud of acrid, stinging smoke that makes it difficult to breathe without coughing. **Volatile:** can affect user.
- ***Sweetbush Draught** (i/1): A dose of this potion makes the subject sleepy, friendly, and talkative.

Magical Items

A character with the Enchanter special ability has access to all Tier 1 standard magical items, which are marked with an asterisk (*), as well as any that they have researched.

The items listed below are those common among delvers. For regular folk, there are also love charms, abortifacients, crop curses, fertility potions, and other kinds of magic items that are of value to agrarian people.

- **Amulet of Protection** (ii/1). This is a small amulet, generally worn around the neck, that provides resistance against magical attacks, curses, etc. (Many people in Athland wear amulets that are purported to provide such protection, although mages will tell you that most are not actually magical and provide only imaginary protection.)
- **Curse Figure** (iii/1). Incorporate the hair and blood of the target into a small wax figurine. Stabbing, cutting, or burning the figure can cause Level 1 or 2 harm to the target (use by a PC requires a roll with **attune**). **Attune, Consumable, Rare** (hair and blood of target), **Complex** (4 segment clock).
- ***Deep Knife:** (i/1). This is a small knife covered in strange runes. It can affect insubstantial creatures and cut through magical barriers. **Attune**.
- **Healing Salve** (iv/1)**:** This potion, when spread over a physical wound, magically reduces the harm from that wound by one level. **Rare** (requires a difficult to prepare tincture of ironroot), **Volatile** (if used more than once per week, it induces seizures), **Complex** (2 stages).
- ***Mage Sight Potion** (i/1): Allows the drinker to see things that are magically invisible. Lasts for an hour. **Consumable**.
- **Shadow Wax** (ii/2). Draw a rune on the forehead of the subject with this waxy substance. For the next several minutes, the subject can blend magically into shadows, becoming nearly invisible. **Attune, Consumable**.

- ***Silence Potion** (i/1): Allows the drinker to move in utter silence. Lasts for an hour. *Drawback:* The drinker cannot speak or make any sound. **Consumable**.

- ***Spirit Coin** (i/1): Placed on the forehead of a recently deceased sentient creature, causes the user to experience the last or most intense recent memory of the dead. **Attune, Volatile:** woozy, level 1 harm to user.

- **Terror Candle** (iii/1): A small candle in the shape of a rune-covered skull. When lit, it emits a strange actinic light that causes anyone staring at it to feel utter and mortal fear. **Volatile:** if the user stares at it has the same effect.

- **Transferral Charm** (iv/1): A small piece of enchanted parchment. Write upon it the name of a place you know well and put it under your tongue as you fall asleep. You will awaken as you are physically transported there for 1 hour before being transported back. **Attune, Complex** (2 stages), **Consumable**.

- ***Void Powder** (i/1): Creates a cloud of utter, impenetrable darkness. Disperses after about a minute. **Consumable**.

- **Walkthrough Mirror** (iii/1): A small mirror that, when broken, turns the user insubstantial. For a few minutes, the user cannot directly affect the material world and can pass through physical objects. **Attune, Complex** (4 stages), **Volatile (**user is disoriented).

- ***Warding Chalk** (i/3): A special chalk that can be used to draw a complex rune around the threshold of a doorway or other entrance. This takes about 10 minutes. Once set, your ward cannot be crossed without your knowledge. If you wish, you can concentrate on preventing anyone from crossing the ward, and if you are strong enough they cannot (usually this will be resolved with an action roll). **Attune, Consumable.**

Carrying Items on a Delve

When delving, PCs can choose to bring items that they have crafted or have gained through downtime acquire assets activities.

- **Mundane gadgets** will often have a load cost, in which case they can just use those items in the same way they can declare any item they have access to. Small mundane gadgets that don't count toward load can be carried with no penalty, within reason.

- **Alchemical items** tend to be difficult to carry safely, because they are fragile and often volatile. A character with the **Alchemist** special ability can equip with one or two bandoliers, each of which can hold three alchemical items (see the Artificer playsheet). Anyone else trying to carry alchemicals—especially multiple alchemicals—is likely to have an accident.

- **Magical items** can be carried by anyone. However, it can be dangerous to have multiple magical items on your person at one time, because they tend to resonate with each other in unpredictable ways. A PC with the **Enchanter** special ability can use one load to carry three magical items (see the Mage playsheet). Anyone else can carry one at a time without mishap (no load cost unless the item is heavy or very heavy). Exceeding these limits is likely to result in unfortunate magical accidents.

Mass Production

Athland is not a culture of mass production. Commodity items are produced by cottage labor and small workshops, not factories. Because of the chaos created by the Awakening, mass quantities of most raw materials that would be used for mass production is difficult to obtain and transport.

Additionally, Player Characters are assumed to be rare and exceptional specialists. They can research and craft in ways that most cannot. Throughout the land there are relatively few artificers and mages of real ability, and those who exist are unlikely to

spend their time crafting the same formulas over and over.

So, just because a crew of PCs can craft various items during their downtime, only low Tier magical and alchemical items are generally available to most of the populace. Higher Tier items are not being made in bulk anywhere in Athland.

Downtime Activities In Play

*Selvia wants to discover how Jarek survived falling off that cliff and what he's up to now. She works on a **long-term project** called "Figure out Jarek's secrets"—an 8-segment clock. The result of the **Study** roll is a **6**! Selvia ticks three segments on the clock.*

*Devik wants to **reduce trouble** on his crew. He sits down the Fighters in his gang and tells them to lay low. No loud drinking in the tavern, no telling tales, no nothing. The result of the **Command** roll is a **critical**! The crew's **Trouble** drops by five levels as the local spies, citizens, and baronial guard get interested in other things.*

*Josephus wants some special arrows to kill the werewolves he knows will be lurking around Broken Hollow. He **acquires an asset** from the Crabin Crew: bodkin arrows with tips alloyed with alchemical silver, consecrated to Dendrok, the God of War. The Tier roll is a **4**: only standard quality, which isn't enough for this rare item. Steve (Josephus' player) spends 2 **coin** to bump up the result to a **critical**: exquisite quality. Josephus gets his arrows—powerful enough to kill a werewolf with a single well placed shot.*

NPC and Faction Downtime

NPCs and factions also do things when the PCs have downtime. The GM **advances their project clocks** and chooses a downtime maneuver or two for each faction that they're interested in at the moment. Choose any maneuver that makes sense for that faction to pursue. For example:

◆ Seize a claim, make an enemy vulnerable, or reduce the hold of a vulnerable enemy.

◆ Gather information on the PCs (can be opposed by a PC roll) or another subject.

◆ Achieve a short-term goal they're in position to accomplish.

◆ Acquire a new asset.

◆ Call in a favor from another faction.

◆ Employ political pressure or threats to force someone's hand.

Choose downtime maneuvers and advance clocks for the factions you're interested in right now. Don't worry about the rest. Later, when you turn your attention to a faction you've ignored for a while, go ahead and give them several downtime phases and project clock ticks to "catch up" to current events.

If you're not sure how far to progress a faction's clock, make a fortune roll using their Tier as the base trait, modified up or down depending on the opposition or circumstances. Tick 1 segment for a **1–3** result, 2 segments for a **4/5** result, 3 segments for a **6** result, or 5 segments for a **critical** result.

When factions do things that are known among barrow raiders and other seedy types, tell the **players about it** through one of their **friends**, **contacts**, or **sources of reprieve**. These rumors and bits of gossip can lead to future delves and opportunities for the PCs.

Downtime Activities Summary

Acquire Asset

Roll the crew's **Tier**. The result indicates the quality of the asset:

◆ **Critical:** Tier +2

◆ **6:** Tier +1

◆ **4/5:** Tier

◆ **1-3:** Tier -.

*Some items require a minimum quality result to acquire. To raise the result beyond **critical**, you may spend **2 coin** per +1 Tier bonus or accept drawbacks.*

Seek Reprieve

Start downtime with half of max stress recovered. Visit your **source of reprieve** to clear more. Roll dice equal to your **lowest attribute**.

◆ **1-3:** Clear 2 stress and **overload**.

◆ **4/5:** Clear 3 stress.

◆ **6:** Clear all stress.

◆ **critical:** Clear all stress and reduce **trouble** by 1.

*If you do not or cannot seek reprieve during downtime, you take stress equal to your **trauma**.*

*Add **+1d** to your roll if a **friend** or **contact** helps with your downtime activity.*

Overload: You made a bad call because of your reprieve—in acquiring it or while under its influence. What did you do?

◆ **Attract Trouble:** Maybe an enemy has tracked you to your source and you let your guard down. Select or roll an additional entanglement.

◆ **Brag:** Maybe you brag about your exploits. The crew takes **+2 trouble**.

◆ **Busy:** Play a different character until this one returns from their bender.

◆ **Tapped:** Your current source of reprieve cuts you off. Find a new source of reprieve.

Recover

Get **treatment** to tick your **healing clock** (like a long-term project). *Clear level 1 harm. When you fill a clock, each harm is reduced by one level.*

Reduce Trouble

Say how you reduce **trouble** on the crew and roll your action. Reduce **trouble** according to the result level.

◆ **Critical:** Clear five **trouble**

◆ **6:** Clear three **trouble**

◆ **4/5:** Clear two **trouble**

◆ **1-3:** Clear one **trouble**

Train

Mark 1 xp (in an attribute or your playbook). Add **+1 xp** if you have the appropriate crew upgrade. *You may train a given xp track once per downtime.*

Pray for Divine Favor

Roll **1d** per level of status with temple. Take **+1d** if you spend 1 **coin** in donations and sacrifices

Critical: Good omens, divine favor, and **divine protection**.

6: Good omens and **divine favor**.

4/5: Good omens.

◆ **1-3: Bad omens**.

Long-Term Project

Work on a **long term project**, if you have the means.

Mark segments on the clock according to your result:

◆ **Critical:** Five ticks.

◆ **6:** Three ticks.

◆ **4/5:** Two ticks.

◆ **1-3:** One tick.

Chapter 7
Running the Game

7. Running the Game

How To Be the Game Master

Are you new to roleplaying games? If you are, it can help to go online and read over some descriptions of what happens in a game like this. You can find lots of audio recordings of people playing RPGs via podcasts, as well as video recordings on YouTube, Twitch, and other places. Before you try being a GM, it can help to be a player in one or more games if you can. There are places online where you can look for single-session or short-term games (one-shots) with new players welcome. If you can find a *Blades in the Dark* or other *Forged in the Dark* game, it's close enough that it will help you learn this ruleset as well.

But, if you are reading this, there is a pretty good chance **you've played RPGs before**. So we'll proceed from here with assumption that you have a general idea of how they work.

Play Format

How will the group play the game? There are several ways to get your players together.

◆ **Tabletop.** This is the traditional way to play a game like this. The group gets together in person, usually around a table where they keep character sheets, notes, dice, reference sheets, snacks, etc. A session runs as long as everyone has time and inclination—anything from a couple of hours to a whole day.

◆ **Live online.** There are many audio or video systems available that can be used for roleplaying. Some are specifically designed for RPGs, but videoconferencing, text chat, whiteboards, scheduling, document sharing, and other functions built for other purposes can also be adapted to roleplaying.

◆ **Play by post/text/chat:** Some games run with a simple text system (email, forum, chat software, etc.) or a dedicated system like Roleplay Online (rpol.net). Everyone reads messages and responds when they have time. Usually there is an expectation of response frequency, such as for each player to post at least one or two messages per day (maybe skipping weekends). The GM will respond as needed; probably three or four times as often as each player. There will need to be some mutually agreeable system for rolling dice.

Time Frame of Play

You'll want to start with a mutual sense of how long the game will run.

◆ **One-shot.** A one-shot is intended as a single story to be played in one to three sessions, then end. This can be a good way to try out the game system and see if the group is interested in continuing. If you attend a gaming convention, you can participate in (or run) any number of one-shot games.

◆ **Short campaign.** A short campaign is intended to follow the PCs for one story arc: maybe 3–10 game sessions.

◆ **Long campaign.** A long campaign is intended to follow the PCs over a series of arcs, or even indefinitely. There are RPG campaigns out there that have been running regularly for decades.

Sometimes, you do a one-shot and want to bring the same characters back for another adventure, or even transition into a full campaign.

Compared to Other RPGs

One of the big stumbling blocks when you get a group of players together is that everyone's RPG experience and expectations are different—sometimes *really* different. You can easily find yourself with players who think very differently about what will happen in the game. It helps to discuss expectations in advance.

You may also need to describe how this game compares with other RPGs they may have experienced—especially since the setting seems kind of like traditional fantasy RPGs, but the game plays differently.

- **Fantasy setting.** The game has a semi-familiar fantasy setting with similarities to medieval Europe. In this game, magic can be powerful, but not constantly so. All of the PCs are Human.

- **Storytelling focus.** In *Raiders in the Dark,* the intention is that everyone collaborates in telling an engaging story about characters they care about. The game is played mostly in words, without miniatures or grid maps. Combat will probably happen in the game, but is played out through description rather than with miniatures and maps. Fights and other conflicts tend to be short and dramatic rather than extended and tactical.

- **Everyone contributes to the story.** Players are invited and expected to actively drive the story. They don't just wait for the GM to give them a pre-plotted scenario to run through, but instead actively decide what goals they want their crew to pursue and which factions they will align with or against.

- **Not much character optimization.** The game is about characters who have interesting stories, but they are not mechanically complicated to make or play. Characters don't need to be optimized to be as capable as possible (or exploit rules loopholes). Although each PC has a specific playsheet, it's easy to grab abilities from other ones, so player choices at game start do not place serious limits on progression over time.

- **Limited GM prep.** The PCs are the only characters who are represented by a set of numbers and statistics—there are no "stat blocks" for NPCs or adversaries. That means the GM will come up with ideas for the game, but doesn't have to translate those ideas into detailed game mechanics or make sure that encounters are "balanced."

How to Learn the Rules

As the GM, you want to be reasonably familiar with the rules. While players are also welcome to develop rules knowledge, in most cases the GM will both manage the fiction and the game itself.

It's OK if you don't know every rule! Get familiar with the basic system (Chapter 2), character creation (Chapter 3), and crew creation (Chapter 4). You can learn more about downtime, commitments, rituals, crafting, etc., later on, when they become relevant.

Even when you're new, it's a bad idea to spend a lot of game time looking up rules. Usually, if you're not sure what to do, you can just have the player make whatever action roll or fortune roll seems appropriate. That will probably be good enough for now, and you can look it up later. It is entirely OK to tell the players that, even though you did it one way before, you looked it up and from now on you'll do it a different way.

GM Goals

- **Have fun.** If you're having a good time, the other players are probably having fun as well. Don't forget to plan the game around your enjoyment and interests as well as those of your players.

- **Coordinate the game.** Like it or not, the GM is usually the one in most groups to invite players and manage schedules. Fortunately, in this game, it's usually OK if someone can't make it for a session (their character can just be busy with other things). And if someone wants to drop in and play for a session or two without making a long-term commitment, that won't be a problem either.

- **Help players have a good time.** You are the facilitator and host of the game (although in many groups it is traditional for other people to provide snacks and drinks as a thank-you to the GM). Be welcoming and supportive. Talk to the players about what they want, what they like, and what could be better. You can't give them everything, but you can work toward a good time for all.

- **Help players feel comfortable.** Most players will need help learning the rules. Some players are shy and don't know what to do. Some players (usually without meaning to) tend to monopolize the conversation and leave others feeling shut out. Some players really want to develop a detailed backstory, while others treat the expectation of adding lots of detail to be an annoying chore. Some players may be part of the game because that's what their friends want to do. Some players want this game to be just like some other game they enjoyed in the past. All of those are fine and it's important to accept each player's honest contribution as valid. Try to divide your time evenly among players. Try to find out what gets each player excited about their character and let them do something awesome at least one time each session.

- **Learn and teach the rules.** Introduce the rules in bits and pieces. Don't overwhelm anyone. If you have players who are interested in rules, that's great. However, just as lots of people use software without ever reading the help files, there are plenty of players who just want the gist explained to them and have no desire to spend any significant time reading this book.

GM Actions

- **Ask questions.** This is possibly the most frequent GM action.
  - **Ask about PC actions.** *What are you doing? You want to get up that cliff face, but how are you going to accomplish that?* Much of the game is just asking questions, talking about the answers, asking for clarification, and continuing that cycle.
  - **Ask about PC reactions.** *He gets right in your face and starts yelling. His breath could stun an ox and he's spraying some spittle. What do you do?*
  - **Ask warning questions.** Sometimes, players will take action because they don't understand the risks or the potential consequences. *He's twice your size. Are you really sure you want to say that to him?* It's the player's choice, but if they are doing something risky or ill-advised, they should know that before committing.

- **Answer questions.** The players will ask you about what they can see (taste, feel, smell, hear), about what they know, and about the effect of their actions. Your job is to figure that out (consulting the dice and the rules as needed) and convey information honestly about what they experience.

- **State and restate the fiction.** The game depends on a common understanding of the fictional situation that each PC is in. Say what people see, hear, smell, etc. Say where things are in space (*the goblin is on top of the rock, Jozen is next to Felicia, the tower is past the manor*). Say how people are moving around and how things change during a scene. Don't just say these things, keep restating them as you engage in conversation about what the PCs are doing (*Urden is heading past the group of Grenlings to the left while Sazir is still up on the ledge with an arrow nocked*). Restatement of fictional positioning helps with making sure everyone is visualizing the same scene. The game gets off track when one player's version starts to significantly differ from that of others.

- **Provide options.** *What barrows do the PCs know about? Are there rumors of other strange places the PCs could follow up on? Which factions might be interested in sponsoring the crew? Which factions are angry at the crew and might cause problems if they are not dealt with? What clocks are ticking, and why? What are their contacts telling them?* Give enough information for the players to decide what they want to do. Dangle

opportunities in front of them. Offer several choices. If they seem to be stuck in tunnel vision, offer other options. Give them lots of plot threads to pull on.

◆ **Portray the NPCs.** When the PCs interact with NPCs, it's your job to play them in a manner that is engaging. There are a lot of ways to do that—every GM develops a different style. Use a striking voice, accent, or set of mannerisms. Think of a specific actor or movie/TV character to mimic. Focus on what the NPCs wants and try to get it. Speak in first person, as if you are that character.

◆ **Make the world go.** It's important for the PCs to exist in a living world that doesn't completely revolve around them. Have factions take action in the background of the story even when the PCs aren't paying attention to them. Have an NPC met in one session show up later with a black eye (and a story about how that happened). The world feels much more alive when it's not just sitting and waiting for the PCs to interact with it.

◆ **Foreshadow trouble.** Show what trouble the PCs are in. *You hear another howl in the distance, this time a bit closer. The guards are starting to look more alert. The water is murky, but there's something moving around in there. You turn and see the assassin on the rooftop with an arrow knocked and aimed right at your heart.* Trouble could be physical danger or it could be other problems, like the baron's troops getting ready to raid the crew's base for forbidden magic.

◆ **Use clocks.** One powerful GM tool is to use clocks to show the progression of threats and NPC actions. The PCs should be aware of at least one or two clocks all the time. As things change or time passes, tick the clocks. When the PCs take action, the stakes include movement of clocks. When a clock finishes, the fiction changes and consequences are assessed.

◆ **Jump to the action.** Know the difference between players having a good time playing their characters (even when nothing else is happening) vs. overthinking and indecision. If the

game bogs down, move to the next thing. Ask who is taking point on a traverse roll, suggest a new engagement roll, tick a clock, have a creature barge in—but get things moving.

◆ **Manage the action.** Call for action rolls when appropriate. Offer devil's bargains. Hand out consequences when the dice or the situation call for them. There is no "turn order" in this game, so it's on the GM to make sure that the players who talk the most don't get to do the most. One great way to keep the action moving is lots of little cliffhangers, in which you pause one player's action to ask what another player (maybe the one glancing at their phone) what they are doing.

GM Principles

◆ **Don't be a jerk.** Really, *don't be a jerk*. As the GM, it's easy to be domineering without intending to. You are the coordinator, not the boss. Don't play favorites among the players. Don't make capricious decisions. Don't let players make decisions unless they understand the fiction. and the consequences. If you're annoyed with a player, talk to them about it, but don't take it out on the character. If the players make choices you didn't expect or decide to ignore the plot threads you've provided for them, that's OK—you and they are making the story together. Bad things will happen to characters in the game, but it needs to make sense in the story, not as a GM power trip.

◆ **Make the PCs the star of the show.** Keep in mind that the PCs are the protagonists. They are always in the foreground.

◆ **Your characters are expendable.** You don't play the protagonists, you play the opposition and the secondary characters. Don't get attached to your NPCs. Adversaries will be defeated (or humiliated), monsters will be slain, factions will be conquered. That's what they are there for. That doesn't mean the PCs always win, but even when they lose, it is their story being told. Be sure to avoid making "GM player characters" that take the stage from the PCs.

- **Play to find out.** Don't start a session, scenario, or campaign with *the plan* for particular events to happen or a particular ending. It's good to think in advance about what might happen and come up with interesting potential plot hooks, but don't try to make the player's decisions for them. *Play to find out what happens*.

  - If the players make a choice that you just hadn't thought of and you don't know what to do, call a break and give yourself some time to think. Or just tell the players for help and ask them for ideas. But don't try to force the story in a direction the players don't want to go.

Edginess

Disturbing things can happen in a game like this. Stuff like sex, graphic violence, body horror, murder, betrayal, torture, maiming, terrible illness, and other emotionally intense things can arise. Some players might be fascinated by these kinds of themes (or turn them into macabre humor), while for others playing that out is the opposite of a fun time.

- **Talk it over and get agreement.** If you need to have a clear discussion among friends about what everyone is comfortable with, then do that.

- **If you're not sure, don't include it.** Know your players and practice good judgment. A good default is to have the game be no more edgy than a regular action movie or TV show. Not the extreme kind of action movie with gore and explicit sex, but the sort most parents would be OK sending a young teenager to (PG-13 in the U.S.). Feel free to have more extreme things happen in the background or be implied without needing to play them out.

- **Anyone can say they are not comfortable at any point.** Even if you've already had a discussion about comfort levels, most people can't tell you in advance exactly what will and will not bother them. For that reason, it is always acceptable for a player to realize that something is *not*

OK. Some groups like to have a card on the table to point to if the game gets uncomfortable. Others just talk it out and make ad hoc changes as needed. But it's important that no one treats an interruption like that as "ruining the fun." When someone is uncomfortable, the group can agree to skip forward ("fading to black"), rewind and have a scene play out differently, retroactively change something in the game's past, or make any other necessary changes.

- **No rape or sexual assault.** These just don't belong in a roleplaying game, no matter how "adult" or "realistic" everyone says they want it to be. If the game ever starts to go in that direction, call an immediate halt.

Themes and Tone

The GM and players can explore a variety of themes within the structure of a *Raiders in the Dark* game. Those include:

- Exploring strange places that fight back. Dealing with bizarre people, monsters, traps, and environmental hazards.

- Interacting with various outside factions who might threaten, compete against, assist, or ally with the crew.

- Managing the strong contrast between the delve and the outside world. For the PCs, Athland is the "normal" world. While bad things happen there, it's a fairly predictable world with understandable rules. Barrows are not like that. Each barrow is a bizarre place where the rules are different and hard to figure out.

- Choosing how aggressively the crew approaches delving. Do they just kill and steal? Or do they negotiate, make bargains, play one group of creatures against other groups, and manage alliances within groups of intelligent creatures within barrows?

- Living in a land rife with political instability. Will the great nobles go to war to decide who will gain power? What effect would that have on the PCs?

- Addressing the mystery of the Yethri. Who were they? Where did they come from? What caused them to disappear? Are they still out there?

- Addressing the mystery of barrows. Do they have a common origin? Were they created by the Yethri or are they reappearing now that the Yethri are gone? Are new barrows appearing, and if so, from where? Are there other worlds that barrows are connected to? Are barrows connected to each other? Do barrows represent a threat to Athland? What if there were an invasion from one or more barrows?

Are the PCs Good or Bad?

In some roleplaying games (such as the original *Blades in the Dark* game this rule set is drawn from), the PCs explicitly play criminals whose actions are likely to be morally ambiguous or explicitly amoral. *How about this game?*

It depends on how you play. Within their culture, the PCs are doing a very risky job that can potentially make them rich. That job is to explore territory claimed by others and bring back loot. In doing so, they could engage in aggression, larceny, and murder. Alternately, they could prefer exploration, negotiation, and bargaining. The creatures they encounter can themselves be amoral, sympathetic, or utterly malevolent. In the world of Athland outside of barrows, the crew can treat other Human factions with honor or treachery.

For these reasons, as in many other RPGs, it's on the players to make moral choices about the actions of their characters and on the GM to present NPCs as having their own potentially wide spectrum of behavior and morality. The players can play heroes, bad guys, selfish rogues with a secret heart of gold, or any other pattern of morality, as they choose.

It can be very helpful to discuss the general tone of the game in advance, so that some players don't expect a game of adventure and wonder while others are expecting to be robbers and killers.

Creating Barrows

The land is festooned with an unknown number of barrows. Each is an opportunity for the GM to create (in collaboration with the players) a horrific and engaging world to explore.

Why not "dungeons?"

In traditional fantasy role playing games, the places where the PCs go to encounter dangerous creatures and find treasure are usually called "dungeons." Why are they called barrows in this game? Because **dungeon** *means "underground jail cell," while* **barrow** *means "ancient burial place." So we are using a word that's a bit closer to what we mean.*

But you can go ahead and call them dungeons, if you want.

Barrow Concept

To create a barrow, begin with a concept: a complex of underground catacombs, an abandoned town haunted by a dead noblewoman, or a strange hill where it snows no matter the season.

Here are some principles to follow:

- **Make it weird.** Barrows can have crawling babies with cat faces and viper tongues. Or a meadow of grass that sucks the life force of anyone who lingers for more than a moment. Or a ghost who tries to force you into a dream world in which you take the place of her grandchildren. Or a talking sculpture that decapitates anyone who fails to answer a riddle. Most barrows should include something that's just really strange.

- **Every barrow is its own world.** Think of a barrow as a small, separate world. It can have its own physics, rules of magic, ecology, culture, and history. Your description of it should *feel* different from any other place. Some barrows might make ecological sense—for example with lots of prey animals and a small number of predators. But they don't have to, because they are strange and magical. Don't feel the need for them to fit normal logic.

- **Play up the horror.** The people of Athland—even hardened veterans and professional delvers—are simply not prepared for what they will find in a barrow. Anyone can be terrorized by experiencing one horror after another. Barrow raiders tend to have short and very interesting careers. Don't be afraid to impose consequences in the form of sheer terror.

- **Evoke all the senses.** Describe the environment in ways that give each location a strong feeling across sight, sound, touch, etc. *Is the crew making a descent down a cliff face of rocks that seem to weep thick, sticky blood? Does the air smell like honeysuckle with a hint of the acrid scent of wine? Is it strangely silent, as if something is eating the echoes before they can return? Is it so warm and humid that your sweat soaks your clothes with no place to go? Is there a feeling of electricity and touching things gives you a little shock? Are there swarms of tiny glowing gnats that don't bite, but tickle? Is there dim bluish light seemingly filling the air, with no specific source, so shadows don't really show the shape or volume of things properly?*

The Barrow Fights Back

Each barrow is controlled by an entity, called a *barrow wight*. Those entering the barrow, especially those with one or more dots in **attune**, will be able to sense the presence of the barrow wight and perhaps interact with it remotely.

The form of the barrow wight will vary. Examples:

- A **disembodied spirit** that haunts the entire barrow but never appears as an individual. The spirit essentially *is* the barrow.

- A **ghostly presence**, glimpsed briefly out of the corner of the eye.

- A creature that is usually disembodied, but with the **ability to manifest a physical form** when it chooses to. Can it appear in any form it wishes? Might it pretend to be a member of the crew, in order to sow discord or lead someone astray?

- A **physical object**, deep in the barrow, such as a s a golden statue or a rune covered throne. If they find and damage the object, does that harm the barrow wight? What effect might that have on the barrow itself?

- An **actual creature** such as a demon, dragon, or otherworldly entity.

Barrow raiders traditionally give the barrow wight a simple nickname such as Red Nick or Blabby Jen. If the barrow has been delved by other crews, the wight already has such a name and it will be common knowledge to the PCs. If not, the

crew can come up with one, if they want. Generally this will not be the true name of the wight.

Give the barrow wight a personality. It might be bombastic and boastful, demented and manic, subtle and sly, or devious and sadistic. It might prefer to play with the crew, leading them into danger and fooling them, rather than opposing them directly. Even if they never actually communicate with the barrow wight, when they spend enough time in the barrow they should feel its presence.

It is the nature of the wight to defend its barrow from intrusion. When the crew enters the barrow, the GM should start a clock. Label it with something foreboding like "Barrow Wight Responds," or "Barrow Awareness." Every time a significant event happens (a traverse roll, a fight, narration of extended progress, a rest, etc.), tick one or more faces of the clock. When it fills, the barrow wight will take action. Once that happens, start a new clock for the next action.

There may be parts of the barrow the wight does not control. For example, there could be a location taken over by creatures of higher Tier than the wight's. If so, those locations (and creatures) are not directly subject to the wight. The barrow wight might bargain with those inhabitants, however.

Here are some of the actions a barrow wight might take:

◆ **Influence barrow inhabitants.** The wight influences the inhabitants of the barrow to be unfriendly toward intruders. This could be in form of bargaining or, if the wight has a lot of willpower, simply applying magical compulsions. Those who might have helped the crew become neutral, those who might have been neutral become hostile, those who were unaware of intruders are on alert. The PCs could even see this happen in real time: they're talking to a group of creatures they have encountered and they seem basically friendly, but then something happens and now they are surly and uncooperative.

◆ **Change barrow configuration.** The wight changes the physical structure of the barrow. Hallways shift, doors appear or disappear, footing becomes unsteady, maps become inaccurate. This can change the position or effect of traversal rolls, require the crew to address new hazards, or force the crew to find a new way through the barrow.

◆ **Play jokes.** Some barrow wights like to play with intruders in cruel ways. They might extinguish the crew's lanterns, leaving them in pitch darkness. Or leave harassing messages on the wall. Or boil the water they are wading through. Or drop a rock on their head. Or make horrific screams echo down hallways. In some cases, these will cause consequences of one sort or another, which the players can choose to resist.

- **Summon enemies.** The wight reaches out through cracks in reality and brings new creatures to the barrow from other worlds. A barrow wight could bring any kind of alien creature in to oppose intruders.

- **Make mental attacks.** A powerful wight may use its supernatural powers to induce fear, argumentativeness, delusion, rage, confusion, or other effects against the crew, cohorts, and allies. PCs can have intrusive thoughts and feelings. NPCs can potentially be controlled more directly by a hostile wight, even potentially to the point of active hostility or rebellion.

  If the barrow wight makes a mental attack against a PC, that's not a reason to take away the player's control of the character. But you can tell the player about external thoughts or feelings that are intruding—such as a voice that's telling the PC that the rest of the crew plans to murder her and steal her share of the loot. The player can choose to interpret that however they wish. If an intrusion is forceful enough, the player might have to resist in order to avoid a consequence.

- **Appear directly.** Perhaps it just wants to taunt or talk to the crew, telling a mixture of half truths and lies. Maybe it would even try to bribe them to leave or to act against another crew of raiders. If they attack the barrow wight, it might disappear or it might have a physical form that they can fight or interact with.

Between delves, a barrow wight may also take actions to shore up its defenses. It might change the configuration of the barrow, create new traps, summon new creatures, and so on.

Barrow Structure

The structure of a barrow should compliment its theme. Physically, most barrows consist of locations of interest separated by distances that can be traveled through or along.

- A location of interest could be a room, a cave, a building, a well, an altar, an inter-dimensional gate, a pool of water, a cluster of huts, a clearing, or anything else you can think of.

- The spaces between could be hallways, cliff faces, forests, streams, streets, staircases, open fields, cave complexes, fields of poisonous flowers, interlocked rooms, a series of breakable walls, etc.

Beyond that basic idea, there are lots of possible ways to structure a barrow, or a section of a barrow. In many cases, the structure flows from the concept. Examples of barrows, or sections of barrows:

- A linear set of underground tunnels and rooms consisting of worked stone with elaborate mosaics. It extends over multiple interconnected levels.

- A complex underground maze, seemingly designed to trap anyone who enters in its incomprehensible, occasionally shifting structure. Explorers will find the corpses of many who have come before them.

- A tall silver tower. It has no precise location and is never found in the same place twice. Entry through its magically warded doors requires precise understanding of ancient runecraft. The interior also changes in strange and subtle ways every time you enter.

- A remote valley in a deep wooded area with species of various trees, birds, and lizards that live nowhere else in Athland. Spread throughout the valley are various ruins and stone statues. At the center is a stone tower guarded by intelligent wolf-like creatures that speak a strange dialect of Athlish. They say they have been guards here for 1,000 years, but they know nothing of the Yethri and the version of history they remember is not that of the Athland the players know.

- A battlefield from the ancient time of the Dragon Kings is haunted by the ghosts of those who fought there. They seek to possess the bodies of those who trespass in order to continue their combat forever.

- A manor house and nearby village have been abandoned because strange blue creatures came out of the ground and drove the Humans away. Did the lord of the manor make some sort of pact which went awry?

- A shaft leading to an abandoned underground mining complex. Something very ancient has risen from deep in the earth to inhabit the mines.

- An underground river has carved out a set of caves deep underground. It will take a lot of swimming to get to those caves.

- A cave complex that contains a confusing series of inter-dimensional jumps that play strangely with location and, seemingly, with time.

- A market where creatures from many different worlds meet to trade in rare goods, strange spells, and powerful stories.

- A stairway that leads far downward, for miles. If you go all the way, you emerge on an island with inhabitants who believe that anyone coming from the other side must be either an angel or a demon.

- A strange underground city, mostly abandoned, but with groups of squatters and scavengers scattered about. A dark figure hunts the empty streets of the city, killing the vulnerable and the terrified.

- Only on clear nights during the full moon, a ghostly stairway appears on a hilltop. You can climb the stairs to an ethereal city full of treasure. Almost no one has risked it, though, because if even a wisp of cloud covers the moon, the stairs disappear and the climbers fall to their deaths. But the crew's Artificer has been working on a gadget that fits into a backpack. If you fall, you'll float safely to the ground. She's almost sure it will work perfectly…

Your style of planning a barrow can depend on your needs. At the core, you need to be able to visualize and communicate spatial relationships. You can draw a map or a diagram, or you can just have an idea narratively of how the different parts relate to each other. Much of the time, you don't want a detailed grid map. Why? Because asking, "*do you go left or right?*" over and over again is not interesting.

Instead, you ask narratively interesting questions like, "*are you heading deeper in?*," "*are you trying to get back to the library of the celestials?*," or, "*so now you're just trying to escape, right?*"

Therefore, you should come up with whatever visuals or other tools will help generate those kinds of questions. Perhaps the PCs have maps (and the fiction should reflect that), but the players might just have a verbal description of the barrow or a loose diagram showing how different places relate to each other. The maps exist in the background of the story, not the foreground. No one should get caught up in the minutiae of precise distances, angles, and structure. Skip over boring travel scenes or abstract them with a simple traversal roll.

Besides such a spacial structure, you also need to know what the crew might encounter on the delve:

- **Evocative details.** Narrow, twisting hallways. Overhanging branches with flowers that smell of slightly rotted lilac. An underground stream with a humanoid skeleton at the bottom. Details set the mood and communicate the theme of what the crew is experiencing.

- **"Random" encounters.** A poor result on a traversal roll can result in stumbling into some creature or creatures in the barrow. Creatures that move around in the barrow can be encountered in an unexpected location. They may be more surprised to find the crew than the crew is to find them.

- **Set locations.** These are places where, if the crew goes there, something significant is likely to happen. The throne room of the Lich King. The crack where the last explorer hid her journal and maps. The hut where the three blind Witches brew their terrible draught. The hall with the dart traps. Don't plan out what *will* happen, but have ideas about what *could* happen. When the PCs subvert those ideas (and they will), adapt to how the story plays from there.

- **Barriers:** What prevents PCs getting to where they want to go? Confusing corridors, difficult climbs, dangerous creatures, devious traps? Whatever those are, you want to have some idea of what's in the way. Sometimes clever PCs might be able to find their way around the most

difficult barriers. In other cases, there's only the one way to get there and the crew will have to figure out how to get through.

Factions and Barrows

Various outside factions will likely be interested in any active barrow. Here are some ways that the faction game can interact with the barrow raiding game.

◆ **Who is helping the crew?** Generally, there will be at least one faction allied with the crew. What do they want the PCs to do? What help can they provide? What interest do they have in this barrow? What do they want in return for assistance?

◆ **Is the barrow's location unknown?** Who is searching for it? How are they searching? Are they spying on the crew, so that they get that information without having to find the barrow themselves?

◆ **Have other crews delved the barrow?** Other crews might have been here before. Have they cleaned out all or most of the monsters or treasure? Have they explored some parts but not all? Are their corpses strewn about the barrow?

◆ **Is the way to the barrow blocked?** Some faction may control the roads or other approach to the barrow. They may be blocking the way for reasons unrelated to the barrow. They might just be brigands, or they could be levying a toll on passage, for example.

◆ **Are they in the barrow right now?** They could be delving, or camped out at some location in the barrow, potentially blocking access. They might know that the PCs are here, or they might be encountered at random.

◆ **Are they directly blocking access to the barrow?** The PCs could arrive at the barrow only to find that another faction has claimed it and is blocking entry. They might have stationed guards, have built physical barriers, installed traps, magical wards, or other methods of enforcing a claim or blocking access.

◆ **Will they let the PCs into the barrow, but try to intercept them on the way out?** Lots of factions care about the loot. They might be perfectly happy to let the PCs do the hard and dangerous work of getting it, so they can steal it. You could do a whole adventure in which the delve itself involves only a few simple action rolls, with the primary confrontation occurring as they are trying to get out with the goods.

Handling an Unplanned Delve

What if the crew decide to delve a barrow they know about, but it wasn't something you planned for and you don't know what's there?

One of the basic principles of this game is that the GM doesn't railroad the crew into following a specific pre-planned storyline. So if they know where a barrow is, they can try to get there. On the other hand, it's challenging for a GM to just make up the structure of a whole barrow on the spot if the crew decides to ignore other plot threads and go there. At the end of a session, it can help to ask about the PC's plans, so you can do some preparation for what might happen.

If you're surprised by a delving choice during the game, call a short break to think about what you're going to do. Here are a few strategies for handling that situation.

◆ **Come clean.** If you really have no idea what to do, tell the players you don't have that particular barrow worked out yet and discuss how to handle that. Maybe they have a cool idea, or maybe they would be just as happy going to a barrow you have a plan for.

◆ **Make this session about finding and securing the barrow.** Depending on the situation, the crew might need to make travel rolls to get there, they have an encounter on the way. Or our crew arrive, only to find that a rival crew has laid full claim to the barrow. There are guards and maybe even a wall or magical wards around the entrance. Or two factions are fighting or arguing

right now about access. Or there is a pile of fresh corpses from a known faction right at the entrance, with no immediate sign of what killed them. Don't do this unless there's an interesting story to be had in just getting to the barrow.

◆ **Come up with the first part of the barrow.** You don't need the whole thing, just the parts the crew will encounter at the beginning. The delve can be a short, initial exploration. Maybe after a few initial encounters, they find a magically barred door that will require research to figure out how to pass through.

◆ **Use the random barrow and encounter generation tables.** There are random tables in the back of this book that you can use for planning or for impromptu generation of barrows (page 182) and encounters (page 183). Roll some dice and see what comes up.

You cannot have a plan for any possible choice the players might make. However, before you offer a rumor about a delve, it's a good idea to have enough of a concept about it that you could run one session. That's a lot easier with this game than most others like it, because you just need a basic concept of what's in the barrow and what kind of opposition could be found there. Many of your best ideas will occur in the moment rather than advance planning.

Creating Encounters

Sages have many ways of categorizing the creatures encountered in barrows, but delvers (and Athlanders in general) usually categorize them into *people* and *monsters*.

People

◆ **Sentient creatures** are able to communicate, plan, negotiate, socialize, cooperate, and make understandable choices. Athlanders on a delve are likely to think of this kind of inhabitant as a person rather than a monster—potential enemies, but also potentially someone to do business with. If a sentient creature is not shaped anything like a Human, some Athlanders won't consider it a person no matter how it behaves.

Monsters

To Athlanders, a monster might be able to talk, but is not really a person.

◆ **Animals.** These are creatures following instincts related to staying alive, getting food, protecting young, and so on. Athlanders would classify any dangerous animal encountered on a delve to be a monster—unless it can be tamed, in which case it might be classed as a friendly animal or pet.

◆ **Supernatural creatures.** Ghost wolves, revenants, animatronic warriors, drowned women, giant bull-men with glowing golden horns. These are all strange and usually quite dangerous. These are also considered to be monsters.

◆ **Malevolent entities.** These may be controlled by the barrow itself, by the remnant of some dead god, or by some other dark power. Or they are simply motivated by a desire to cause harm, steal life force, infect others, etc. They are inimical to natural life. These are supernatural monsters, sometimes ethereal and sometimes physical.

Creating Creatures and Inhabitants

While many other roleplaying games require complex sets of statistics (hit points, damage dice, etc.) this one doesn't need any of that. A scene with one or more creatures can be resolved like any other challenging situation.

Nevertheless, it's important to have a sense of the nature of each creature and how it can challenge the crew. Don't pre-plan how the scene will go, but consider what each creature can do and what its motivations are. Then play to find out what happens.

Here are some questions to ask that can help you firm up your ideas about an inhabitant of a barrow.

- **Is it sentient?** Can it be communicated with? Placated? Negotiated with? Distracted? Charmed? Tamed? Joked with? From the point of view of an Athlander, it a person or a monster?

- **How does it communicate?** Does it speak Athlish? Some ancient tongue? A language spoken in some other world? If it doesn't communicate vocally, does it use telepathy, gestures, complex patterns of glowing feathers?

- **How does it sense?** Can it see, and if so how well? Can it see in the dark? How good is its sense of smell? Hearing? Can it echo-locate in the dark? Does it have senses Humans do not have, like being able to feel disturbances in electrical fields? Can it feel magic or life force?

- **How does it compare to a "typical" member of its species?** Is it young, old, smart, dull, injured, quick, skilled, impaired, magical, or have some other notable individual set of characteristics?

- **What does it want?** Is it lonely, bored, curious? Does it want treasure? To protect its people, its family, or its possessions? To return to a long lost home? Just survive this invasion of strangers into its home? To serve or summon a god? Can the PCs help it in exchange for aid, free passage, or treasure? Is it just malevolent and want to destroy or consume the living? Does it have a magical compulsion to protect the barrow from intruders?

- **What is it afraid of?** What would cause it to cower, beg for mercy, or run in terror?

- **Does it have enemies?** Perhaps the PCs could help it against a foe. Or if it is too strong for the PCs, maybe they can find its enemy or set two strong monsters against each other.

- **Is it horrifying?** An otherwise mundane creature with something creepy or disturbing about it can make a monster much more memorable. Does it swallow its screaming prey whole? Does it wear a necklace of the shrunken heads of previous barrow delvers? Does it regurgitate stomach acid onto its paralyzed prey before consuming it? Does it pull its prey down into a pit or into a pool of icy water? Does it inflict horrific nightmares and a feeling of utter dread as harm rather than physical consequences? Does just being in its presence require a resistance roll against a fear consequence?

- **Is it deluded?** Maybe it has some strange idea of reality and can only be reasoned with if you speak within that frame. Maybe it believes that it is a god and the PCs have come to worship it, even though it clearly is not. Or that the PCs are representatives of the ancient Dragon Empire. Or that its dead children can be brought back if only the right spell could be acquired.

- **Is there a hierarchy?** If there are multiple creatures, who is in charge? Is there a big boss and lieutenants? How is the hierarchy enforced? Do some members resent those above them? Are they loyal to each other? Are there internal factions? If one member of the group is injured or threated, will the others try to rescue? Is there one smart mastermind and the others will respond foolishly without orders?

- **Is it stealthy?** Might it attack by surprise? Could it drag a cohort or minion off into the darkness or down into the cold water? Would it drop from above or burst up from below? Could it follow the crew unnoticed, waiting for the best time to attack?

- **Is it invulnerable to normal attack?** Does it have impenetrable scales, hide, force field, or other defense? If so, you should probably not decide in advance exactly how to harm the creature. Instead, you should be open to player creativity in finding or establishing weaknesses. If they come up with a cool idea, go with it.

- **Is it ethereal?** Invulnerable to physical attacks? If so, how can it be affected?

- **Does it have a code of conduct?** Is it unable to tell a lie or go back on a promise? Must it challenge any who offend it to a duel? Is it obligated to serve anyone who saves its life for a year and a day? Must it offer hospitality to any visitor who speaks politely?

◆ **What kinds of harm can it cause?** Stabbed in the gut, face ripped open, picked up and thrown, life force drained, terrified, hollowed out soul, covered in tiny cuts, tangled up and immobile. itching uncontrollably, envenomed arm swelling, your arm's off, just a bit of a cut really, blinded, vomiting, nameless dread, strangely mutated, swallowed whole? You don't have to decide every possible kind of harm in advance, but you should have a sense of the kinds of harm the creature is capable of inflicting.

◆ **Is it magical?** Can it cast spells like a mage or create other magical effects? What kinds of effects? How powerful are they?

◆ **Is it clever?** Does it anticipate the PCs actions and have its own kind of flashback to counter their plans? Does it track the crew and pick them off one at a time?

◆ **Is it quick?** A terrifyingly fast sprinter or monster with incredible reflexes can present a significant challenge. Perhaps a PC takes a consequence before anyone can even react to its presence.

◆ **Is it partly in this world and partly in another?** Does it flicker in and out of existence? Can it go through walls? Avoid a sword cut by not being in this world as it slices through?

◆ **Does it have particular vulnerabilities?** Are certain kinds of attacks especially potent against it? Is it vulnerable to fire, magic, ranged attacks, silver, water, taunting, or demon bane? Does it become impulsive and stupid if angered? Does it have other vulnerabilities that could be discovered and exploited?

◆ **Can it strike at range?** Does it have the ability to fire weapons, suck life force, spit acid, launch spines, breathe fire, or otherwise cause harm at a distance? Or does it have to get close?

◆ **Can it mesmerize, influence, or take control of others?** Some monsters might have the ability to control perceptions, influence behavior, or magically enslave others.

◆ **Do you need a progress clock to track its defenses?** Perhaps it can't be overcome with a single good action roll. If so, use a progress clock. Or multiple clocks, such as a clock for the creature's armored hide before you can even get to the clock for its vulnerable

organs. Or a clock that represents it transitioning into its true form after the monster's initial presentation is defeated. *Don't overdo this kind of progress clock because it can lead to long grinding conflicts.* Most monsters can be managed with just a clear sense of whether, in the fiction, they are health, wounded, dead, etc. Only unusual creatures, or unusual circumstances, require a progress clock.

◆ **Is it gigantic?** A creature that is huge enough might require special preparations just to have any effect on it. Or maybe the delve involves the PCs traveling into the enormous creature's body and coping with a whole ecosystem dwelling within.

◆ **Are they tiny?** Tiny, numerous creatures can be challenging to deal with. Normal weapons will have limited effect on a swarm of enemies, so the players will have to be creative in figuring out how to cope.

Answers to these questions will help you set position and effect as each character responds to events in the fiction and makes action rolls.

There is no standard bestiary of creatures that are encountered in barrows. Every barrow is a separate and unique ecosystem. The crew might meet hordes of giant green fire lizards in one barrow and never see them anywhere else. On the other hand, they might also see the same enigmatic white crows in every barrow they enter, creating a mystery for them to try to solve.

Take inspiration for creatures from any source you like: video games, "monster of the week" TV shows, mythology, novels, movies, or bestiaries from other roleplaying games and supplements. Since you don't need game stats, you can take the theme for a monster from just about anywhere and worry only about the fiction.

Sample Encounters

While it's expected that the GMs will create (or borrow) lots of encounters themselves, here are a few examples to get started.

Albino Warpigs

These are creatures bred to be combat mounts. They often bear battle scars and jewelry through pierced ears s are about as large as a small horse. They are carnivorous. They can be found rooting around, digging for insects, rats, or other prey. The warpigs are almost blind, but have excellent senses of smell. They can be belligerent, but are potentially distractable or even tame-able. When ridden, they are extremely aggressive and effective in battle. However, they don't do well in sunlight, nor do they tolerate well being ridden for hour after hour of long distance travel.

Blue Men

Blue men are small humanoids, abut 2½ feet (75 cm) tall. They are hairless, with bright blue skin of a cerulean hue, all black eyes, and sharp teeth. They carry small packs but do not wear clothes and all appear to be male. It is not known how they reproduce.

They speak to each other in a muttering high pitched whine that can carry a long way. They carry small blow guns with darts tipped with a soporific drug. One hit will make you a bit sleepy (level 1 temporary harm), but a bunch of hits will make you pass out. They tend to appear in small groups of 3–8, but other groups are usually nearby and able to respond to vocal calls for aid.

Blue men are very territorial and xenophobic to the point of considering anyone not of their specific tribe (even other blue men) to have the status of animal, to be hunted and eaten. They are easily defeated one on one, but in groups they can be extremely challenging. If confronted by superior force or if they start to lose an engagement, they will retreat. If captured, they will refuse food and drink and have no interest in communication.

The Cult of Athelion

Somewhere in a barrow is a small cult that worships an ancient and otherwise forgotten god. The worshipers are basically Human, although a few details are off (long incisor teeth, extra fingers, extra joints, strangely shaped eyes, patches of skin with vestigial scales, etc.). These vary from one to the next. There are about 10–30 members of the cult. If the barrow is underground, they survive by farming mushrooms and hunting small animals. If above ground they are hunters and gatherers. They are equipped with whatever they can scavenge or make in their environment.

Their god, whom they call Athelion, takes the form of a featureless rock about the size of a small barrel. It looks completely nondescript to others, but cult members are certain that it is the most beautiful and glorious object in the universe. They will become extremely offended if anyone seems to think otherwise. They are not sure what Athelion is the god of or what he stands for, but they are devoted to him nonetheless.

The rock does have supernatural power. If you spend time in its presence it will start to speak to you. This will require resistance rolls for PCs, or they will start to be convinced of the glorious beauty and divinity of the rock. Cohorts and allies will also be affected.

The cult wants to expand the number of followers and will happily accept crew and cohorts as members (this could be an interesting transition for the whole crew if the players thought that would be fun). But Athelion can only take over one mind at a time, and it takes a couple of days to fully recruit someone to absolute control. The cultists prefer to evangelize, but they will stoop to kidnapping if they think they can get away with it.

Deathwitch

A deathwitch is an undead creature of darkness and horror. It appears in the form of an eyeless, spindly humanoid with loose gray veiny skin. Its joints that move in disturbing ways. Deathwitches are solitary, but may use their magic to command other creatures in their environment.

A deathwitch is utterly malevolent to sentient beings. While it may lie dormant for long ages, when awakened it desires greatly to cause suffering, fear, harm, and death.

Each deathwitch may have different magical powers, but are likely to have some or all of the following abilities, as well as any others the GM may come up with.

◆ **Blinding speed:** A deathwitch can move during the instances between moments. It doesn't appear to move like a normal creature—instead seeming to be in one place and then a slightly different place without having crossed the intervening space. It can't teleport across notable distances, but it's flickering pattern of movement is confusing and its incredible speed can make it very difficult to target or avoid.

◆ **Ignore gravity:** A deathwitch can move upon any surface as if it were the floor. It can scramble across a wall or ceiling with incredible speed.

◆ **Binding:** A deathwitch can focus its malignant power on a specific creature and take control of its limbs. It could force an enemy to stab themselves,cause paralysis, or make a victim feel as if stinging insects are crawling under their own skin.

◆ **Shadow veil.** A deathwitch can briefly mold shadows into physical barriers, blocking arrows or sword blows.

◆ **Uncanny senses.** A deathwitch has no eyes in its head, but is able to sense perfectly in total darkness or through obstacles. It is virtually impossible to surprise a deathwitch, since its magical senses allow it to feel the ebb and flow of reality all around its vicinity.

◆ **Life drain.** If it has a sentient being helpless, it will toy with its prey, sometimes for weeks or months of terror, torture, and insanity. During that time it slowly sucks the life out of its victim. This life force will sustain the deathwitch for as many years or ages as necessary until it can feed again.

A deathwitch is intended to be a formidable enemy for even an experienced crew. An encounter will usually start with one or more consequences applied and could well go downhill from there. It has powerful and horrifying attacks, and it is very hard to land a telling blow. A deathwitch is vulnerable to light, fire, and water, so a careful crew might be able to prevail.

The Ghost Wind

The ghost wind is an ethereal miasma that drifts slowly from place to place. It is most attracted to places that are strongly magical or where death and terror have occurred very strongly. It consists of fragments of many souls that have become trapped within. Those who experience or attune to the ghost wind feel the screaming horror of the many souls it contains (this may cause level 1, 2, or 3 harm depending on how close it is and how intensely the connection is established). The souls of the ghost wind can briefly possess those who are caught up in it, forcing them to take momentary actions that fit the circumstances of their death. Often this just a matter of screaming in terror, calling out to loved ones, or looking around in amazement, but it can also involve striking out at the nearest person or taking other harmful actions. Prolonged exposure is extremely dangerous and will eventually suck the life force out of a character, leaving only a mindless husk.

It is fairly easy to avoid the ghost wind by just moving away from it, but it may surround or block a place the crew need to get to. It might also contain the soul of someone a PC knew in life, or the PCs might choose to try to bring peace to the tormented souls of a ghost wind.

Grenlings

Grenlings are humanoids, about the size of a Human. They are blobby, with saggy gray skin. They have round eyeless heads with thin mouths and two narrow nostril slits. They sense largely through a strong sense of smell, echolocation, and the ability to sense electrical fields around them. They smell a vaguely like ripe peaches. Grenlings live underground in small bands, cooperating with each other and obtaining food by farming mushrooms, insects, and cave fish.

They don't really speak, communicating with each other mainly through a complex language of gestures. If necessary, they can communicate with Humans via simplified gestures. Grenlines are completely nonviolent and mainly just want to be left alone. If attacked, they will run, but they will not fight back.

The Jegran

These are goblin-like humanoids, a bit smaller than a Human. They have greenish skin and large bony head crests that they can use to make very loud hornlike sounds. During celebration, they can also make music with their crests.

The Jegran are refugees from a terrible cataclysm that destroyed the world from which they come. They are a small band of individuals who have somehow made their way to a barrow in Athland. They are highly traumatized and just want to survive. However, they can be very aggressive if they feel threatened. An encounter could turn deadly very fast if not handled carefully. However, if offered a safe place to live, the Jegran could become useful allies.

Steam Knight

Long ago, on some distant world, a mad goddess took it upon herself to create an order of immortal warriors. She spent centuries finding the strongest and noblest fighters. Upon each one she performed a great ritual, removing their limbs and encasing the husks of their bodies in a magical steel carapace. Upon each knight she imposed a magical compulsion, forcing them to single-mindedly pursue a quest. Each had a different command, such as "protect the weak," "find the place where the sun sets and conquer those lands in my name," or, "bring me all the chocolate."

The goddess has been dead for millennia; no one even remembers her name any more. Almost all of her steam knights are also gone, but the few that still

exist have found their way across many worlds, toiling on endless quests that no longer have meaning.

Steam knights take different forms, but they are generally about as large as a big wagon and all are armored in some strange, almost indestructible metal. Inside is the husk of what remains of their withered, immortal bodies. Their bodies are sustained by magic so they do not need to eat, drink or breathe. Their carapaces do require a reservoir of water to function. They belch clouds of white steam when they exert themselves (hence the name).

If you encounter one in a barrow, it's possible that it might be out of water and thus dormant and frozen. It will appear like a big metal statue, dented here and there from countless battles. Examination will show a nozzle for refilling the water reservoir —doing so will reactivate the knight.

If still fully functional, a steam knight is a very formidable opponent capable of taking on a dragon or company of knights on even footing (Tier IV). It is virtually invulnerable to most kinds of physical and magical attack. It might, however, be already damaged and therefore less capable. A steam knight can be reasoned with, but has no choice but to pursue their geas, even if nonsensical. It would be possible to research a ritual to free the knight of their geas. If removed from the carapace, the body will crumble into dust. Some would consider that an act of kindness.

Wall Snakes

These strange creatures make their way in larval form to a hard vertical surface such as a wall or rock face. They burrow into the rock, camouflage themselves, and hibernate—for years if necessary. When a creature walks within a few feet, they shoot out a snakelike protuberance about the thickness of a large python, tipped with a mouth containing rows of needle teeth. They yank whatever they grab inward to the wall and hold on with great strength until their prey dies, at which point they consume it at their leisure. Encountering one wall snake can be survivable, especially if it clasps on to equipment or armor instead of flesh, but a cave passage or hallway containing many such creatures can be deadly even for a large crew.

White Crows

These are large crows with white feathers. They have the ability to transition among different worlds and are attracted to locations with lots of supernatural power. They tend to appear in barrows, usually in groups of 3–6, often where the most deadly encounters are likely to happen. Other than showing up in odd places, they act like regular crows. If desired, encountering them in different barrows can become a regular and kind of spooky foreshadowing of danger.

Negotiation

When the crew encounters creatures during a delve, they can choose to run, fight, sneak, ambush, confront, or any other action. Sometimes, they have to deal with an immediate attack. But there is often plenty of room for negotiation.

Taming

If the creatures are not sentient, that takes the form of taming, offering food, magical interactions, or other suitable actions. These can be usually be resolved with sway, consort, command, or attune rolls.

Communication

If the creatures are sentient, the first thing to consider is communication. It's very convenient if the creatures speak Athlish. The GM might come up with a rationale for why that is, such as that they have been in this barrow in Athland for a long time and have encountered barrow raiders before, they come from a parallel version of Athland where the same (or similar) language is spoken, or that the magic of the place simply facilitates communication.

If not, the PCs can still attempt to communicate using gestures, pictures, exchange of objects, teaching simple words, etc.

Since the game has no explicit skill system (other than a couple of Scholar special abilities), there isn't a specific mechanism for learning a language. It can be treated as a long-term project: a 4-clock for basic understanding and a 6-clock for reasonable fluency, for example.

Assuming some kind of reasonable communication can be achieved, the basics of negotiation can be resolved through role-playing in combination with appropriate action rolls (consort, sway, command, attune, etc.). The GM should adjust position and effect depending on the temperament of the creatures that the PCs are communicating with, what those creatures want, what the PCs are offering, and how they are choosing to act. As with any PC actions, the basic assumption is that they are approaching problems in an intelligent manner, informed by their profession as delvers. Poor rolls should not be interpreted to make the PCs look dumb, but rather reflect unfortunate misunderstandings or other problems.

Danger

How dangerous should things be for the PCs? We want to tell an adventure story among a group of friends. Adventure stories have an element of threat and danger, so those belong in the story. The perception of danger, and the likelihood of death, is a strong contributor to the tone of the game.

As the GM, it's your job to present a world with potential threats in it. There are threats in barrows and in the world outside. As part of the conversation with the other players, give them a clear sense of how much danger the PCs are running into. Let them make choices about the risks they are taking and how to approach those risks.

Some of these risks might involve fighting, but not all. Deadly traps, precarious ascents up dangerous walls festooned with bloodsucking vines, vials that could be useful or might contain poison—all kinds of threats exist in barrows.

Resistance

The resistance mechanic gives players the ability to avoid or reduce any consequence they wish, as long as they have the stress (or armor boxes) to pay for it. A crew who are willing to jump in and protect when necessary in order to balance out the most severe consequences has a significant resource that allows them to avoid or mitigate lots of rough stuff. That's cool, but it means that PCs can take a lot of hurt before they go down.

Raiders in the Dark does not reward rule optimization for characters much, but some players may figure out that having **3d** or **4d** in an attribute means that resisting with that attribute becomes pretty cheap. So they might decide to put one dot into each action rating of the attribute they expect to resist with most often. For example, a brand new Armiger character could easily have a **Prowess** of 4 and thereby roll **4d** to resist most kinds of physical consequences. That means each resistance roll will usually cost only 0 or 1 stress (and even recover stress on criticals, which happen on 13% of rolls with **4d**).

Should you do something about that? Sometimes, you should definitely let that character be the tank and shrug off the consequences. Allow the PC to shine in the areas the player has decided to make them good at.

But you should also mix up the kinds of consequences you apply so that resistance rolls sometimes require **Prowess**, sometimes **Insight**, and sometimes **Resolve**. It's not until quite a few **xp** advances that a character will be able to have hight scores in all of those, and even then only by giving up the opportunity to have a high number of dots in any one action rating. If you change it up, any PC will feel the heat some of the time. That also means you're being more creative and interesting in coming up with consequences.

Balance

In some other games, there are whole systems for "balancing" encounters so the challenge matches the current abilities of the PCs. You don't really need to do that in this game.

The assumption behind balance is that you know what the players will do—usually in terms of getting into a preplanned fight. Maybe the crew is up against a gigantic fire dragon that could kill them easily. But the crew takes advantage of the fire dragon's gullibility and walks away with the its treasure without taking a scratch. Was that encounter "balanced?"

Try to set up every scene so you don't know how it will be resolved, with lots of open possibilities. Since the opposition doesn't have statistics like the PCs do, you can easily adjust the level of challenge on the fly. And you can do that without "cheating" to keep from accidentally killing all the PCs like you might have to in other RPG systems.

Combat

Since we are playing in an adventure genre, fighting will happen sometimes. Creatures will attack the PCS, and the PCs can decide to get into fights, even if they have other choices they could make. They might be playing a crew of Breakers who just want to go fight things—if so, let them find lots of enemies to fight.

Making Fights Engaging

If a fight happens, avoid any tendency to turn it into a slog of the same action over and over.

"I hit him. I roll Skirmish. Is he dead? No? I roll Skirmish again. Still not dead? Well, guess what? I roll Skirmish."

That would get really boring. First of all, the character in the fiction is not rolling **Skirmish**. *The character is fighting for their life.* Even if the player is choosing to use the same action rating for a series of rolls, what's happening in the fiction is dynamic and evolving. Describe the action in terms of thrusts, sidesteps, wild swings, near misses, and telling blows.

Second, the game provides several mechanisms for making any decisions, including those in combat, engaging through position, effect, devil's bargains, trading position for effect, pushing, and consequences. Use those to make each combat into a meaningful event.

Making Enemies Threatening

The GM has a few tools to show how threatening the opposition is.

The core mechanic is to use **position** and **effect**. A more dangerous opponent means risky or desperate position. An opponent with strong defenses means limited or even zero effect. These are adjusted depending on the situation. *On open ground the master assassin would have you in a* **desperate** *position, but because he's stuck in a pit trap, it's* **controlled**.

Another tool is **consequences**. On failed or mixed result rolls, you'll select one or more consequences:

◆ **Reduced effect**: *You push him back, but he scrambles onto his feet again.*

◆ **Complication:** *She blows her war horn, warning the others.*

◆ **Lost opportunity:** *He makes an amazing leap across the chasm, so if you want to catch him you'll need to get over there.*

◆ **Worse position** *You get your shield in the way, but the creature grabs it with it's claws and yanks. You just barely release in time to keep from being pulled into its jaws, but the shield is thrown to the side while it charges in again.*

◆ **Harm:** *He lands a cut on your arm just above the vambrace. You can feel the blood dripping, but you can't spare a glance to check how bad it is. Mark level 2 harm.*

A good habit to get into is to try not to give the same kind of consequence twice in a row unless you have a really good reason, and to give out consequences that will require a mix of attributes to resist.

When the opposition is weaker, hand out weaker consequences (*level 1 or 2 harm, slipped and out of position, enemy gets away*). When stronger, you can hand out heavier consequences, or more than one (*level 3 or 4 harm, broken weapon or shield, slip and fall to the ground, enemy reinforcements arrive*). Remind players that they always have the option to **resist** consequences.

Initiative

This game has no formal system for taking turns or deciding who goes first. As a GM, you'll want follow the fiction and the conversation to decide who does what when. Make sure everyone has a chance to shine, even though you don't explicitly track everyone's turn.

Since the PCs make all the action rolls, by default it can make NPC opponents feel rather passive. That works well for some enemies when the PCs are the ones driving the narrative forward, but for others you want the flavor of the PCs being thrown back on their heels. When you want an adversary to have more initiative, there are two levels of intensity that can be applied:

If the adversary is **quick**, tell the players what the NPC is *about to achieve*, then ask how they respond.

> *"The creature lunges out of the pool and is trying to grab your leg with four hairy tentacles. What do you do?"*

The player's reaction will drive an action roll. Since die rolls serve double duty, the results of the roll will decide what happens.

If the adversary is **overwhelming**, tell the player what the NPC has *already done*, then ask if they want to resist.

> *"It's incredibly fast. A hairy tentacle is wrapped around your ankle. It's yanked you off your feet and dragged you to the edge of the dark water. Do you want to resist that?"*

Taking Enemies Out

How many successful rolls are required to take an adversary out of the fight? One success at standard effect? If you want the fight to be resolved quickly that works fine. In a fight with many weaker enemies, standard effect can mean that two, three, or all of them go down.

For more detailed action or enemies who are just hard to take out, you can use a clock. A defensive clock is a pacing mechanism, designed to slow down the action from being resolved in one roll to taking two or more. If the enemy has a clock representing some kind of defense (a warrior's ability to maintain her guard, a dragon's armored scales, a giant's capacity to absorb hits, a swarm's sheer volume, etc.) then it takes longer to overcome that enemy and there is more chance for a bad roll to generate consequences for a PC.

Remember that victory doesn't necessarily mean death or even physical harm to the NPC. Depending on the fiction, the enemy could run in terror, drop weapons and beg for mercy, or fall writing to the ground with a serious wound.

Example of Combat

> **GM:** *The rock troll charges forward with a loud bellow and swings its club at you. That's a pretty freaking big club. What do you do?"*

The GM has made the troll **quick** in this instance. The PC is having to react to what the troll does.

> **Kristin:** *"Yikes! I'll give ground and keep my shield in front of me, looking for an opening."*
>
> **GM:** *"So you're skirmishing? I think that's risky position ."*
>
> **Kristin:** *"Even with the shield?"*
>
> **GM:** *"Yeah, without it the situation would be desperate."*

If Kristin's character had a two handed weapon, such as a pollaxe, instead of a shield, the GM might call this a **desperate position**, but with better **effect** because she can hit harder. Also, she might

be able to hit the troll while maintaining some distance.

> **Kristin:** *"OK. What's the effect if I succeed?"*

> **GM:** *"With its long arms and big club, you're going to have to close in to strike back. Getting into position will be standard effect. Is that what you want to do?"*

The GM and player are treating this fight as important and worth playing out in detail. If it were more routine, each roll might resolve a bigger part of the fight.

> **Kristin:** *"I guess I have to. But I'm moving fast and keeping my shield up."*

> **GM:** *"Absolutely. You could push yourself or take a bargain if you want to make that better. Improved effect would mean you'd get a hit in."*

> **Kristin:** *"Nope. Mellisande is conserving her energy for now. I rolled a 5."*

> **GM:** *"Cool. The troll swings at you and you duck in close enough to be inside its easy swinging distance. But a 5 is a mixed result, so there's a consequence. What do you think that might be?"*

The GM has final say on consequences, but it's fine to solicit ideas.

> **Kristin:** *"Uh…maybe the troll sidesteps and I'm not quite as ready to get in a good hit?"*

> **GM:** *"Sure, but he's also really tough. Let's say you manage to deflect the club with your shield, but it puts you off balance and shield crumbles around your arm. That's two consequences. You can resist one of them if you want."*

The player suggested a very mild consequence for such a serious situation. The GM could have pushed for a bigger one (harm, slip and fall, etc.), but instead accepted the suggestion and added another consequence that will affect position going forward.

> **Kristin:** *"I don't think my armor would apply here, and I think I'm going to need that stress."*

> **GM:** *"All right. You're close enough to smell the troll's breath and it's like there's a pile of bloated corpses rotting in its gut."*

> **Kristin:** *"Nice."*

> **GM:** *"Meanwhile, let's switch back to Mike. You're still in the small room with the sarcophagus. The door has slammed shut behind you, and you can hear something really big bellowing and stomping on the other side of it. Melisande seems like she might be in trouble. What are you doing?"*

In this scene, the GM is presenting the troll as a significant threat for a single PC to handle. The stakes are serious. The rest of this fight is might be rough for her.

Different Power Levels

In managing combats, you will often find that the PCs and the opposition are not in an even fight.

◆ **What if the PCs are overmatched?** Sometimes, PCs get themselves in over their heads—not just a challenging situation, but way more than they can handle. Make sure they know what they're getting themselves into. Give them an opportunity to run away (and remind them that it's an option). Perhaps the enemy decides to spare these pathetic fools. Maybe the enemy surrounds the crew and calls for their surrender (it can be fun for the crew to get captured and then try to escape or talk their way out). Or allies unexpectedly arrive in the nick of time (which could cost **coin**, **rep,** or the need to repay the favor later on). Or they experience the consequences of their choices and one or more PCs die a glorious death. That can be a good story, too.

◆ **What if the PCs attack creatures who are much weaker than them?** That's fine; fights don't have to be fair. Maybe they win easily, perhaps without even needing any die rolls (after all, we roll the dice when we are unsure of the result). Play up what a slaughter it was, and how terrified their enemies were. Or have them run away. Or drop their weapons and beg piteously for mercy. Or they turn out to be tougher than expected. Or they were just the babies and now momma shows up.

Fight Resolution

What if a scene drags on? The details of fights and action sequences can take a while to play out, sometimes longer than the group's attention is sustained. Always keep in mind that each die roll can resolve however much of the action you want. If blow by blow action is fun and engaging, go ahead and have each die roll resolve just a tiny portion of the scene. But if you look around at your players and see that their attention is lagging, you can zoom back out and resolve a whole lot of action with just the next die roll or two. Get it over with and move on.

Traps and Obstacles

A trap is an environmental obstacle that needs to be overcome in order to survive and proceed through the barrow. You can make up your own traps or borrow ideas from various games, supplements, or websites. Some traps are set by enemies to protect the barrow or some portion of it. Other traps might be natural environmental barriers, such as a rickety bridge over a deep chasm.

Traversing Through a Trap Zone

Getting one or a series of not individually interesting traps can be handled with a single **action roll**. On a poor roll, a character might be harmed or delayed (if time is a concern). On a good roll, we can quickly narrate getting through them.

GM: *"You're all trying to get back to the room with the mosaic, right? There's a whole bunch of twisty corridors in the way, and there will probably be some more of those stake traps. I think we can do this with one traversal roll. Who wants to take point?"*

Lisa: *"Sure. Sabine will take the lead. We're just trying to move along carefully, so I think it's* **prowl**.*"*

GM: *"Sounds good to me."*

Lisa: *"A six!"*

GM: *"Cool, you travel a long distance through a confusing maze of corridors, but you manage to keep moving in the right direction. There are quite a few of those nasty stake traps, but you avoid all of them. You see the door to the mosaic room closed in front of you."*

Zoom in on the action if the crew encounters a trap that is particularly complex or devious; or if there is some other challenge that might make time a consideration in getting past it.

GM: *"You can hear the war horns of the blue men blowing in the distance again behind you. But then you spot a bunch of cracks in the floor. It seems weak."*

Shane: *"Micah is going to look for ways to get past."*

GM: *"That's* **survey**, *right? Give me a roll. It's risky. I think if you succeed you'll understand the quickest way forward. If you don't succeed there will be more of a delay."*

Shane: *"That's a 4."*

GM: *"Hmm. Not a full success. Let's say you were probing the floor with your gear, but it was weakened a bit closer to you than you thought. The whole floor collapses in front of you and you barely jump back in time to keep from falling. It's really deep. You can't see a bottom. There's no obvious way across." (GM checks a segment on the "blue men Approaching" progress clock.)*

Lisa: *"Well, I guess someone is going to have to get across and rig a line for everyone else. Good thing Delilah brought climbing gear." (Lisa marks Climbing Gear on her character's loadout.)*

Some traps require clever action to disarm, avoid, or just cope with. There are a couple of ways to handle that.

Handling Traps Oppositionally

Some groups of players like to solve complex traps and puzzles themselves, even when death is on the line.

For example, let's say there's a statue in the center of a room with a bunch of spikes that look like they are ready to launch in all directions. The misdirection is this: if you enter the room, you need to get right next to the statue to avoid the giant boulders that will crash down on your head (meanwhile, the spikes are harmless decoration).

This kind of thing can be handled largely narratively: the GM describes what the PCs see, the players try to figure out what's going on (perhaps with **gather information** rolls), they decide on a course of action, and if they choose wrong they face the consequences.

This is a kind of GM vs. player mini-game that some groups find lots of fun and other groups find infuriating. That is especially the case for traps that could be deadly. If it's dishing out level 1 harm, that's one thing. If a mistake will get your character decapitated (level 4), that's a lot harder to handle.

*Make sure everyone is on the same page and agrees that it's OK to just unload on a PC because the player made a poor choice before you handle traps this way in a game. **If you're not sure, err on the side of not doing this.***

Remember that, even if you're playing traps out oppositionally, players can choose to resist any harm that affects their character.

Handling Traps Narratively

This approach to traps is similar to the one above, but the style of play is different: *the character deals with the puzzle, not the player*. The PC might be a brilliant solver of puzzles, even if the player can barely do a simple crossword. The trap could be the same as in the example above, but the players don't have to guess what they need to do to avoid the ceiling trap. The PCs, who are professionals at this, are the ones who try to figure it out. Given their experience and observations skills, can they understand that you need to stand at the center of the room to avoid being smashed by the boulders?

We use action rolls to decide that, rather than just asking the player what the character does. That could use **tinker**, **hunt**, **attune**, or some other action rating. A poor result means the characters may face the consequences.

GM: *"You see an open room with a stone altar at the center. There are spikes sticking out of the altar in all directions."*

Lisa: *"Delilah scopes out the room."*

GM: *"She's an experienced delver, right? So she's seen things like this before. Sounds like a **study** roll? That will be Risky / Standard."*

Lisa: *"OK, yeah."*

Shane: *"I'll spend a stress and have Micah assist."*

Let's think about how that plays out, depending on the results of the roll.

- **Lisa rolls a success:** On a success, Delilah and Micah figure the trap out. They can choose to maneuver to the center of the room, spring the trap and stay in the center to avoid the rocks, or just not spring the trap at all. On a **critical**, they get some other advantage as well.

- **Lisa rolls 4/5:** They figure it out at the last second. They could suffer harm from the falling rocks, or a complication (the entrance to the throne room is now blocked, for example), or they end up in a desperate position (they have to roll **prowl** to jump out from under the falling rocks).

- **Lisa rolls 1–3:** They don't figure it out. They think they know how to avoid the spikes, so they enter the room and spring the ceiling trap. They might need to resist level 3 (or level 4) harm or get crushed (it would be reasonable for the GM to rule that resisting avoids the harm, though). Or one of their cohorts gets mashed, Or now they're trapped in this room and the Snake Lords have been alerted to their presence.

Trapped Items

Another kind of trap is an item that has a trap built into it. It looks like it will be useful, but actually does something nasty. One simple example of this is something that appears to be a useful magical potion, but turns out to be a deadly poison.

Just like regular traps, trapped items tend to set up a GM vs. player dynamic. They are very easy to abuse. Make sure that kind of dynamic is OK with your players before including items like that. If you're not sure, leave them out.

Progressive Traps

A progressive trap is like the ones described above, but it has one or more clocks associated with. A clock might track the passage of time and events until the trap is triggered. Or it might track the time from when it is triggered until it has some effect. For example, the PCs might need to solve a series of puzzles in order to disarm the trap. Or the PCs set off a trap and the room starts to fill with water.

PC Death

PCs can die in this game.

How much risk of PC death should there be? Talk it over with the other players. Some groups like death to be on the line, all the time. They might want it to feel unexpected and random.

Other groups would rather that any possible death be talked out in advance, with assent from the player to ensure that it feels dramatically appropriate. Some players get *really* attached to their characters and will be deeply hurt if they die.

As a GM your goal is to help the players have fun. Try to give them the kind of story that you and they will most enjoy. If the group wants life to be cheap and death always right around the corner, go for it. But if everyone prefers deep story with enduring characters who only die meaningfully, heroically, and rarely, that is fine as well.

Starting the Game

For a 1-shot, you can either not bother with having a crew playsheet at all, or pre-select the crew sheet that best fits the starting situation in the game you'll be running. You could also either pre-select a starting ability for each playsheet, or cross off the abilities that are only useful in downtime. Ignore crew xp. If you're only doing one delve, ignore character xp. If you'll do more than one delve, limit downtime activities to those that will provide some kind of payoff during the game, and consider, instead of xp, just giving one free upgrade during downtime.

If you'll be running a full campaign, follow the procedure described below.

Preparing for the First Session

During the first session, the group will choose a crew type, create their characters, and introduce those characters to each other.

Raiders in the Dark is designed to allow character creation to happen quickly and smoothly. A lot of the details can emerge during play rather than from advance preparation. So you can probably embark on the first delve during that first session. You might be able to finish the delve in that session if it's a quick one, or maybe you'll end in the middle of things. Either way is fine.

To prepare, make sure you are familiar with character and crew creation. You'll guide the other players through that.

> **Don't sweat character creation too much.** *While it's important to have a cast of engaging characters, it's very possible to make changes after the first session or two. A player who just really doesn't connect with their character can also introduce a replacement.*

At least skim the chapter on Athland (starting on page 165). If you plan to use the Barony of Trenghall as your location within Athland, get familiar with the factions active there (page 173). Pick a few that you're interested in and might get into conflict with each other. During crew creation, the players will ask you about some factions

connected to their crew, so it's good to have some in mind already. If you're using the "Delve in Blackbarrow" starting situation (page 147), you'll probably want to use the Bluejacks and Kigani's Crew as your connected factions to start.

Print out the game sheets. You'll want at least two of each playbook (in case two people pick the same one) and one of each crew type. Also print the rules reference sheets and the map of Trenghall.

First Session: Explaining the Game

Once you have players together, you can start with a simple game pitch. Something like this:

It's a medieval fantasy world. You'll play a crew of adventurers who break into dangerous magical places called barrows.

Don't get caught up in details. They can learn the rules and setting information as they go along. Show them the playbooks, crew sheets, reference sheets, and maps. See who is interested in which roles.

Unlike some other games, you don't need a "balanced" party or any particular number of characters to play specific playbooks. If everyone wants to play an Artificer, that's cool. Nor is there any need to optimize character builds. Instead, the focus should be on generating a crew that each of the players is excited to play and wants to find out more about.

Creating Characters and Crew

Follow the procedures that start on page 23 (character creation) and page 57 (the crew). Ask the players some of these questions while they do it:

◆ *How did you come to be a barrow raider? Did you choose this life or did you find yourself caught up in it?*

◆ *How did you join this crew? Did another member vouch for you? Were you a founding member?*

◆ *The two of you have the same heritage. Are you blood relatives? Or do you know each other's families?*

◆ *You both have the same background. Are you long-term associates? Were you partners before this crew was founded?*

◆ *What's your reprieve? What is it, specifically? Why does that thing consume you?*

◆ *Who do you trust the most on the crew? Who do you trust the least? What's that about? Or will we find out in play?*

◆ *Has [faction] ever tried to recruit you? What happened? You don't secretly work for them, do you?*

If it's fun for players to come up with answers to those kinds of questions, let it play out (but stop it once it starts to seem like people are experiencing creation fatigue). If they don't know or find it awkward to work on backstory at this point, let it go. However, you want everyone to be excited about this group of raiders. Encourage each player to come up with at least one detail about their PC or crew that they are interested in. You can add more detail about the setting, or character abilities, if that might prompt engagement. But not too much.

Quicker start: For a one-shot or shorter game, you can forgo crew creation at the beginning. The PCs are just a small gang of brand new raiders and those details don't exist yet. You can play to find out what kind of crew they are, then do crew creation after the first one or two delves.

Introduce Characters and Crew

Go around the table and ask each player to introduce their character to the group. They should say their name or alias, their playbook, look, heritage, background, and special ability. Ask them about their reprieve. Ask them who their best friend and rival are—maybe follow up with a question or two about those NPCs, like "Why is Micah your rival?" It's okay if the answer is, "Let's find out in play."

Do the same thing with the crew. Ask the players to remind you what they picked for their special ability and upgrades. They can wait to come up with a name for the crew until later.

The Starting Situation

If you want to use the Barony of Trenghall default location (page 165), familiarize yourself with the factions and map of Trenghall.

Also have a list of known barrows. If you want to start with action, decide which one the crew will have their first delve in.

The Opening Scene

Although it's a different genre, the best way to get everyone started in this game is to think about it like a *James Bond* movie. We never start with Bond in Q's office learning all about the threat and being sent on a mission. No, we start right in the action and learn plot details later. Begin a game of *Raiders in the Dark* the same way.

If the players start to do a lot of planning, make sure they know that they don't have to worry about that. Explain that they're assumed to be making good choices and can call for a flashback any time. And they don't need to worry about gear because they can declare that as they go.

Quickly explain how the **engagement roll** works. They just need the *plan* and the *detail*.

Go!

Delve in Blackbarrow

This is a sample starting situation that you can use to start the game.

Players: Ask your GM if they are planning to use this scenario to begin the game. If so, you should not read this part. Skip ahead to the next chapter (Athland) on page 165.

The crew is caught up in a perilous situation involving Blackbarrow. Once the characters and crew have been created and introduced to each other, you can start right in the delve.

The Starting Situation

Start the game right here.

> **Quick summary:** *You've been hired by Kigani's Crew to explore this barrow. They've supported you with information, a map, documents, and extra equipment. You're heading toward the entrance when you spot some guys in armor. You know these scumbags—they're goons from the Bluejacks. You've had run ins with them before. In fact, they ambushed you on your last job and forced you to hand over most of the loot. But this time, you see them first. What are you going to do?*

Cut to the action. Get the players to come up with the plan and the detail. Then go right to the **engagement roll**.

The initial encounter with the Bluejack goons should not be too challenging. These are not the Bluejack's best people—they are just here to keep an eye on the place while an expedition is being organized. Although the Bluejacks have a higher Tier, this gang of thugs are at Tier 0. Even if the engagement roll is poor, the PCs should be able to bluff, sneak past, or waylay the thugs and move into the barrow. If intimidated or if they start taking casualties, the goons will probably retreat, yelling curses and promising payback. If they've been conned somehow, they wish the PCs luck.

Background

(This is background info—the players don't need to know the background yet, but you should. You can feed it to them as they ask questions or it becomes relevant. Otherwise, once they're done with the guards, skip to Entering the Barrow.)

Blackbarrow takes the form of about 12 ancient, pre-Yethri burial mounds. The terrain is open scrubland amid low hills. All of the mounds show evidence of previous looting, some of which goes back many centuries. But the relatively intact entrance to one mound leads to a set of underground corridors, long since explored and cleaned out.

When they arrive, they find that the Bluejacks have moved faster than expected and are already at the Blackbarrow.

It's a hot, dry summer. The crew has been traveling to the barrow, in the heat, for a couple of days. They've approached the barrow carefully. There's no time to wait until nighttime for the engagement roll if they want to make sure no Bluejack reinforcements arrive.

Blackbarrow is an older barrow, thought to have been pretty much cleaned out a decade ago. But the Bluejacks have discovered a pathway into a previously unknown set of caves. They are preparing a delve to explore this new territory.

Kigani's Crew have a spy planted within the Bluejacks and have discovered their plans. They are not prepared to conduct a delve because of bad omens and because, if they piss off the Bluejacks right now, it will be a war they're not ready for.

Kigani would like to send the PCs in for at least an initial reconnoiter before the Bluejacks have a chance to exploit their discovery. They don't think the Bluejacks are there yet, but time is of the essence. They are given a map and some extra equipment and sent off with a deal: the crew keeps 60% of the profits from the delve (we can do a flashback to negotiations on the deal if desired).

> **GM:** *Kigani's crew doesn't have to be the sponsor for this delve. If you've already gone through crew creation, the players identified one or more faction to be friendly with. Any of those could replace Kigani's crew as the sponsor. That could be any of the temples (they might want some specific religious artifact they believe to be in the barrow), any of the noble factions (desiring more influence over the barrow raiding trade), etc.*

Entering the Barrow

Explain that they are traversing a series of ancient stone corridors. As they travel, there is plenty of evidence of previous looting: disarmed traps, a dessicated corpse, empty sarcophagi, rusted and broken weapons, a rope bridge over a deep

chasm, etc. They barely need to attend to their map, because someone has drawn arrows in chalk showing the way. Whoever it is thoughtfully added some obscene graffiti as well.

Give a few of those details and move to the part of the barrow where the map says the new entrance lies. Don't bother with a traversal roll for that, just quickly narrate getting there.

> **GM:** *If you want, you can run your own scenario from this point on. You could adapt something written for a different game or come up with your own ideas for what's in the barrow. Or you can use the version below.*

The Caves

As the crew gets closer to the location shown on the map (and by chalk marks), the air is more moist and the walls are wet. At the designated spot, there is a blank stone wall. However, with a little investigation they discover a spot with new stone, recently installed (you can let the PC with the highest **Survey** or **Study** score see it, if anyone has dots in those action ratings, but don't make anyone roll). It takes some work for the crew to bust a hole in it, but it's not too hard (again, no need for a **Wreck** roll).

When they break through, they find a narrow passageway half full of water, up to a grown Human's waist. The roof is a bit low, so getting through the passage will require stooping. There are bits of glowing lichen here and there, so it's possible to see dimly even without a lantern. This part of the barrow, unlike the earlier part, is a cave complex, apparently carved long ago by the underground flow of water.

By jumping in the water and following the passage for about a hundred yards/meters, the crew can find their way to a series of caves going deep underground. There are several potential encounters that the GM can present as the PCs explore.

> **There isn't a map,** *because we don't really need one for this particular delve. There are the main (explored) parts of Blackbarrow, which are not the focus of this delve. There are the near parts of the*

cave complex, where the Grenlings and Slider can be found (see below). And there are the deeper parts of the complex, where the additional encounters are. A simple traversal roll can move the PCs from one zone of the cave complex to the next. If you need to communicate the structure of a particular location (for a fight, ambush, or reconnaissance, for example), just draw some caverns, stalactites, stalagmites, a stream, etc).

The first encounter will be with Grenlings. That will be benign. At some point, the PCs will find themselves in contact with Slider, who will also not be dangerous. They can then either go deeper in the caves, or you can have the reds and greens come to them via a scouting party.

The Grenlings

This part of the cave is inhabitted by a band of Grenlings (page 137). They live in these middle caves. They are the ones who sealed up the wall.

Slider

Living alongside the Grenlings is a Human, originally from Athland. He's an old man with long while hair and a long beard. He wears homemade clothes stitched from hides of cave animals. He carries a steel knife and a spear (which he uses to hunt blind cave fish).

Slider is a former barrow raider who got lost on a delve about 12 years ago and just decided he'd rather stay here than go back home (he and his wife did not get along). He belonged to the Red Rabbit Gang (who were taken out by the Bluejacks about 5 years ago).

Slider lives alongside the Grenlings. They don't talk to him, but he and they have developed some ways to cooperate. Mostly they just leave each other alone.

At some point, the crew will encounter Slider or evidence of him. He's very cautious about the crew because he knows from personal experience how aggressive and treacherous barrow raiders can be. The most likely thing is that they will find his hut, cook fire, footprints, or other evidence

that someone who is not a Grenling is living in the caves. They might spot him observing from a distance or they might surprise him (he'll scream and try to run).

He won't attack anyone. If pressed, he's likely to use his knowledge of the caves to set traps or escape. He'll only fight if cornered. If the crew is friendly, he might talk with them, but he'll be twitchy about having an escape route until they prove trustworthy.

He'd really like the crew to go away—because he likes his quiet life and because he knows that the presence of active raiders will induce the barrow wight to fight back. He'll warn them that the deep caves hold some very scary things.

If the crew decides that they've accomplished their reconnaissance mission and head back, that's fine. Since they did only a bit of exploring in the newer sections of Blackbarrow, they'll take **-1d** to their payout roll. There won't be any opposition until they get to the barrow entrance, so don't bother with a traversal or exiting the delve roll. Skip ahead to the second encounter with Bluejacks on page 150.

Binny

Binny is the nickname barrow raiders have given to the wight inhabiting Blackbarrow. The PCs have undoubtedly heard of Binny, since Blackbarrow has been intermittently explored for many years. Binny has the ability to take physical form, usually in the form of a humanoid figure of undefined sex, covered in rags, wearing a wide hat. Binny doesn't take physical action against delvers. If they attack Binny, it will collapse into a pile of rags. The GM can bring in Binny any time that might be interesting.

Binny is currently only a Tier 1 barrow wight, so its ability to intervene against the PCs is limited. The GM should have a 6-face clock running to indicate Binny's interest in them. If it completes, have Binny take action—either direct any of the creatures in the deep tunnels after them, change the physical structure of the barrow to make maneuver more difficult, or play a joke like dousing lanterns or dumping stinking water on a PC's head. Reset the

clock after Binny takes action and increase the intensity of the next incident of harassment. If the delve goes on long enough it might act in opposition to the PCs several times.

The Deep Tunnels

If the PCs choose to continue into the deep tunnels despite warnings, there are several possible encounters they could have. You can adjust how much they find depending on how long you and the players want this first delve to go.

The approach to the lower caves will require a traversal roll. There is some significant climbing to get down into those areas of the cave complex. If the PCs don't have climbing gear, position and effect should be penalized.

As the crew goes deeper into the caves, they begin to see a strange diffuse glow that looks like moonlight. The walls of the caves become dry. If you run your hands along the surface, it almost seems to pulse. Even deeper and the wall start to exhibit a reddish glow flowing in river-like seams through the rock.

Dangerous Creatures

You can have the crew encounter any (or all) of the creatures presented below, or make up your own.

- **Wraith:** An ethereal creature that appears as a flowing, wispy shadow that can be hard to spot in the dark. It moves slowly, so if you run away you can escape. It wants to steal life force, and it can do that by touching a living person. The wraith is not intelligent (at least, not anymore), but its mind contains fragments of hundreds of creatures whose life it has stolen over the centuries. It just wants to find creatures to prey on.
- **Blue Men:** These small humanoids will be extremely hostile (page 135).
- **Albino Warpigs.** These creatures have wandered here from some distant world. They can be found rooting around in a very large cavern, digging for small ratlike mammals with glowing green eyes that sound like screaming babies when pulled from their holes (page 135).

Trap

- **Stone statues of three eyed goats.** There are five of them, arranged in a circle facing outward. They exude an aura of magic to those able to sense it. Touching or attempting to attune to the goats produces a sensation of feeling a horrific and incredibly loud screech, although others cannot hear. This can impose a level 2 harm consequence in the form of Deafened. The statues can be physically broken, which removes the enchantment upon them.

Treasure

In a corner of a room that appears to have been carved out of the rock by big flat teeth, there's a pile stuff shoved into a niche. Amid some mouldering books and papers written in an unknown language (potentially valuable) are two items:

- A flask containing a dose of **Water of Healing** (page 104).
- **A jeweled orb**. It contains the spirit of an ancient, pre-Yethri sorcerer named Athila. If anyone tries to **attune** to it, they find that it is attuning to *them*. She claims to have lived a very long time ago, at a time when Athland was ruled directly by gods. The gods she names are not the gods of the current pantheon. If kept (1 load) the orb can be used as a source for gathering information about ancient creatures, civilizations, and magic.

Getting Back

Once the crew decides to be done with the delve, they can play out the process of exiting. Depending on the situation, that may involve just walking out (if there isn't any opposition) or executing a daring escape. You can play it out as a series of traversal rolls or you can compress it into an **exiting the delve** roll (page 83).

The Bluejacks (Again)

On the way back, the PCs will find a larger group of Bluejacks waiting for them.

You can choose to skip this if it's too much. *The point here is not to penalize the crew for a successful delve, but to set up the Bluejacks as an opposing faction. Feel free to decide that the Bluejack thugs have gone off for reinforcements, who have not yet arrived.*

The Bluejacks may be waiting at the entrance, or they might have sent a crew of their own into the barrow. This could be **fortune roll** or depend on how things ended when the PCs went into the barrow. The **exit roll** can determine the PC's relative advantage when they encounter the Bluejacks: **1–3** means they meet a well prepared Bluejack crew , **4/5** means the Bluejacks are wary, but not specifically ready for the PCs, **6** means the PCs get the drop on the Bluejacks (maybe they exit in the middle of the night and find a couple of sleepy sentries), and a **critical** means the Bluejacks are caught completely unawares.

The encounter with Bluejacks could result in negotiation, a fight, sneaking past, paying a fee, or some other action, depending on the choices the PCs make.

Continuing the Game

After the first delve, play through the downtime phase (page 103). Decide how various factions respond to the PC's actions and provide various options for continued action: return to the location of the first delve, explore another known barrow, search for a new find, etc. Advance the progress clocks of relevant factions and create any other relevant clocks.

As you continue the game, the PCs will earn **xp**, giving them increased action ratings, more special abilities, and more crew upgrades. Eventually, they will be able to increase their crew Tier, which means their cohorts and equipment will improve in quality. Other crews, and various factions, will start to take them more seriously. Continue to dangle plot threads in front of them, both in the form of barrows they could explore and things happening in the mundane world of competing factions.

Chapter 8
Strange Things

8. Strange Things

In the fantasy world in which Athland exists, supernatural forces are manifestly real. Every town has magical practitioners who can cast spells and create magical artifacts and substances.

Gods and Demons

The people of every nation worship a pantheon of gods, who are demonstrably real and who respond to prayers and sometimes meddle in the affairs of mortals. Spirits inhabit the deep forests and far places. Sailors and fisher folk encounter monsters, merfolk, and magical islands on the open sea. Mages summon demons and powerful spirits from other planes of existence. Throughout the land, places of strange magic and horrifying creatures are being discovered with increasing frequency. The inhabitants of these places seem to be making their way out into the land and, sometimes, terrorizing the populace.

These forces are getting stronger as the stabilizing influences of the Yethri fade. In combination with the political instability and chaos induced by the Awakening, Athland has become an interesting place indeed.

Encounters with Gods and Demigods

Most interaction with divine beings is mediated by the temples and by individual prayer. A family of farmers contributes goods and services to the temples and prays regularly on holy days. They find that their crops crow without blight and their herds are more fertile than other families who are less devout. The gods sometimes manifest during prayer in temples, especially on their particular holy days.

But mortals also sometimes encounter gods on a more personal basis. The gods of the Athland pantheon are said to spend much of their time in their home in the sky, on strange island that appear and disappear mysteriously, and in the land of the dead. But they do sometimes appear to mortals—sometimes mundane people and sometimes great heroes. Those who have taken a full commitment of devotion to a god (page 158) are more likely to experience such encounters, although even they cannot summon a deity when they wish. They may manifest in their divine form or in disguise. Sometimes they act in a trickster role, or to subvert the aims of other gods, or for purposes that mortals do not understand. Sometimes they offer bargains or boons to mortals whom they favor.

It is known that there are other gods as well: The gods of the Cambri, the Dandreen, and lands even more distant. Ancient gods from previous ages of the world. Gods from distant lands. Remnants of the early days of creation. Gods of other places finding intersections in barrows between their own worlds and this one.

The GM can choose to include encounters with gods or demigods in the game. The players and GM can decide what such manifestations represent. Generally, no mortal can harm a god. Their motivations are strange, and they are fickle. Any encounter with even the weakest god should be terrifying and overwhelming.

Demons

Sages disagree on the nature of demons. They may simply be what remains of ancient, defeated gods. Or gods of other places. But they might also be a different order of supernatural being.

Demons are invariably driven by powerful desires and strange compulsions. They can sometimes be bargained with, but they are devious and extremely dangerous. Mages can research **rituals** (page 160) for the summoning and control of demons, attempting to bind them into service. That, too, is a very risky endeavor even with the greatest precaution and forethought.

Demons usually manifest as corporeal beings of monstrous countenance. They may be very large, Human sized, or quite small—and some can change shape and size at will. They affected by magic and abilities that are **potent** against the supernatural, but often immune to most other kinds of harm. They are incredibly formidable and difficult to kill—with great speed, hardened skin, terrible claws or teeth, and magical abilities that vary from one to the next. They are typically able to teleport from one place to another in an instant.

If the PCs encounter demons, they will usually be outclassed unless they have prepared in advance for the encounter.

Commitments

Powers greater than mortal Humanity exist in this world. It is possible to dedicate yourself to such a supernatural entity, trading service and the energy of your soul for some small part of that greater power.

An established character can choose a **commitment**. This must make sense in the fiction, but a character with any playsheet can choose any commitment as long as they meet the listed prerequisites. The character must play through dedication to that source of power. This can happen mechanically through faction status, downtime activities,

etc., but also by roleplaying events that occur in game.

> **GM:** *Don't make players jump through excessive hoops to establish a commitment. It doesn't have to wait until the end of a long campaign. If it fits the story, let it happen.*

You can only have one commitment at a time.

Each commitment has specific prerequisites. Once you meet those and you have an available playsheet advance, you may accept that commitment as soon as it makes sense in the story. You gain a new **xp** trigger and a new reprieve. Use your advance to choose special ability advances from those listed for your commitment. Additional advances can be spent normally or on other commitment abilities. Only characters with a commitment can take abilities from that commitment list—they are not available as veteran advances.

Creating and Expanding Commitments

A player with a commitment might want to invent new special abilities to add to the list. That's fine, so long as a new ability fits the theme and is not excessive or unbalancing. The GM has final say.

It's also possible to create a new commitment, following the same structure as the samples provided. Make sure a commitment doesn't provide abilities

that overshadow those of other players.

Blood Magic

You have been infected. At some point during a delve, something bit you. Perhaps you barely noticed it at the time, but it put something into you. Later, in your dreams, it began to speak to you, telling you how much it loves you, begging you to let it in, join with it, allow it to fill you with its power.

At first your resisted, but it was seductive and persistent. Finally, you said yes.

Blood Magic Prerequisites

◆ At least one delve into a barrow of Tier 1 or higher.
◆ Long term project (4 clock) being slowly taken over by the thing in your blood.

Blood Magic xp Trigger

◆ Mark **xp** when you consume the blood of a worthy enemy you have recently killed.

Blood Magic Cost

◆ Accept 1 trauma for the horror of being taken over from the inside.

Blood Magic Reprieve

◆ Weird: drinking fresh blood from sentient creatures.

Blood Magic Special Abilities

Blood Control

You don't bleed. You suffer 1 lower level of penalty from a cutting or piercing wound. Toxins and diseases have no effect on you. Permanently fill one tick of your healing clock.

A wound still hurts you, but blood refuses to flow even from a cut to a major artery (if you need to fake it, you can bleed a little if you really try).

Blood Creature

By spending 2 stress, you can create a horrific creature out of your own blood, no larger than you. This is a cohort: expert with the Fearsome edge and the Savage flaw.

You can have one servant at a time, It can be of any viable shape—animal, Human, or monster. Once finished, it doesn't change shape. It is reasonably intelligent and will do its best to anticipate and serve your desires. It looks rather horrific. If destroyed, you can make another one in about10 minutes.

Consume

Once per delve, you can eat the intact heart of a worthy foe that you have recently killed. This gives you 1+the enemy's Tier in **bonus dice**, which can be used for any action roll that enemy would have been able to accomplish competently.

No more than one bonus die may be added to any single roll. This is a free die in addition to any other dice. If you're not sure whether the enemy would have been competent at a given action, check with the GM. All bonus dice must be used before your next delve.

Power of the Blood

You can **push yourself** to perform a feat of super-human physical strength.

You could lift a huge gate, wrestle a giant, throw a horse, or other feat beyond the capacity of a normal person.

Companion of the Black Rose

The Order of the Black Rose exists throughout Athland to serve the poor, sick, and weak. Most adherents are lay members, who simply serve in whatever capacity they can. You, however, are among the most deeply committed and capable, so you have been inducted as companions of the Black Rose. You have undergone purifying rituals and are marked with a large black rose tattoo on your chest.

Have you always been this selfless? Or did something inspire a change in you?

A real world analogue to the Order of the Black Rose is the medieval Order of Knights Hospitaller (Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem), who similarly devoted themselves to serving the poor, sick, and needy.

Black Rose Prerequisites

◆ Lay membership in the Order of the Black Rose.

Black Rose Cost

◆ You may not have a lifestyle Tier higher than 0.

Black Rose xp Trigger

◆ Mark **xp** for your commitment when you actively aid or protect the weak.

Black Rose Reprieve

◆ Service: give comfort and aid to the poor and the sick.

Black Rose Special Abilities

Assistance of the Order

Gain **+1 quality level** when you **acquire an asset** if the asset is something the Order of the Black Rose could reasonably provide.

Any cohort acquired will have the Principled flaw.

Healer

Lay hands on a person and choose one physical wound they have received. You can resist that wound with **resolve** to reduce it by one level.

This allows you to resist another person's harm after it has happened. What does it look like when you do this? How does it feel to you? To them?

Noble Bearing

Gain **+1d** to any social engagement plan involving nobles or any **gather information** roll regarding the nobility. When you help your crew lay low to reduce **notoriety**, the cost in **coin** is reduced by one.

You have learned to look, speak, and carry yourself as a member of the upper class. Even if you are poor, any deficiencies in your clothing or possessions can be attributed to your oath of humility and devotion to the needy.

Puissance

When protecting the weak, you can cause your weapon to glow brightly. spend 1 stress to: gain **potency** against the supernatural, pierce armor or magical protection as if it did not exist, or ignore the effects of your own wounds until the end of a battle.

Death Magic

Death is something that has long attracted you. Perhaps you are a warrior, well acquainted with death and dying. Or a mage, conducting systematic research into what happens as the body and the spirit are severed.

However you came to this discipline, you've learned much about death. What it feels like. How it clings delicately to a corpse like an early morning mist. How life transitions into death. How to manipulate it. How to embrace it like a lover.

Death magic was prohibited by the Yethri. Throughout Athland, it is still considered a terrible crime.

Death Magic Prerequisites
- ◆ At least one dot in **attune**.
- ◆ You've caused the death of at least one sentient creature.

Death Magic Cost
- ◆ Your crew takes **+1 trouble** per delve or operation if it has one or more members with a death magic commitment.

Death Magic xp Trigger
- ◆ Mark **xp** when you are physically in contact with a sentient creature as it dies.

Death Magic Reprieve
- ◆ Weird: experiments with corpses.

Death Magic Special Abilities

Deathless

You cannot die through normal means. Take 1 trauma to immediately clear level 4 harm.

Work with the GM to identify one thing that can kill you permanently, such as fire, a consecrated stake through the heart, removal of your head, destruction of an object in which you have hidden your soul, etc. A fourth trauma will not kill you, but it still has the regular effect of taking the character out of play.

Raise The Dead

You know a forbidden ritual (page 160) that will force the spirit of a recently dead person back into their (intact) body. Harm is cleared. This requires a long-term project (4 clock) and 6 coin in rare materials. The GM will choose something that isn't right.

"Recently" means about a week. GM options for what isn't right include: the reanimated person is sociopathic and cruel, can only speak a language no one understands, is covered in wounds that bleed constantly, cannot stop laughing, etc. A raised PC will gain 2 trauma (which may force retirement).

Shambling Dead

You can animate a nearby corpse. It will obey simple commands. It is a cohort: Fighter with an armor upgrade. Pay stress equal to magnitude of duration. +1 stress if the corpse is larger than Human, up to horse-sized. Add stress for scale if animating multiple corpses at a time.

A corpse reanimated in this manner does not have the soul, memories, or abilities of the original person. The armor upgrade doesn't represent equipment but rather the difficulty of causing effective harm to something already dead. See page 99 for information on Magnitude.

Speak To the Dead

Compel the corpse of a creature to speak. Pay 1 stress if dead within the last day, 2 within a week, 3 a year, 4 if more than that. The creature will communicate as they would have in life for several minutes.

They can speak only the languages they knew in life, and there is nothing in this magic that compels truthfulness.

Devout

Most people respect and pray to the gods, while a few devote themselves mainly to one temple and one god.

Your worship is at a different level. You are filled with the burning power of faith and devotion to a single god. You feel the power of divine grace in every moment. After proving your dedication to your god and your temple, you have received a sacred mark of your god upon your flesh.

What does your Godmark look like? As a devout worshiper of your god, why have you chosen to be a member of a crew of barrow raiders? Are you in search of some holy relic? To bring word of your god into the depths and the other worlds touched by barrows? To gain the wealth your temple needs? Or some other cause?

Devout Prerequisites

◆ Your crew has at least +1 status with the temple of that god.

◆ Long term project (6 clock) of prayer, purification, communion, and service to your god.

Devout Cost

◆ You must aid your god or temple if you can and may not aid or support your god's enemies.

Devout xp Trigger

◆ Mark **xp** for your commitment when you do a notable service for your god, your temple, or the faithful worshipers of your god.

Devout Reprieve

◆ Religion.

Devout Special Abilities

Sacrament

Once per delve, you can lead those of your companions who choose to sincerely participate in a prayer to your god. Each of you clears 2 stress.

What does it look like when you lead others in prayer? What do you and they do?

Divine Warrior

Once per delve, beseech your god to aid you against a specified foe. For the rest of the delve, your Godmark ignites brightly in the presence of that enemy and you gain **potency** when fighting them.

This power will not work against anyone favored by your god. What does it look like when your Godmark ignites with divine power?

Favored

When you pray for divine assistance from your god, take **+1d**.

You pray on behalf of your crew, gaining divine favor for the next delve or operation.

Ordained

You are a recognized priest or priestess within the hierarchy of organized worship. You acquire followers (a **gang**) whom you can call upon to assist you. You also take **+1d** when attempting to persuade anyone who would be impressed by your religious authority.

Your followers are a gang of adepts (religious followers) with the Loyal edge and the Principled flaw.

Feral

You are most comfortable in wild places. You are drawn to distant forests, hills, and vales where Humans seldom go. You might have grown up in these places or found your attraction to them in later life.

In your travels, you've discovered the old spirits of the deep, thick, inaccessible places. You still have friends and connections to civilization, but you find yourself spending less and less time there. The more time you spend with the ancient ones, the better you understand their wisdom. And the more feral you become.

What holds you back from disappearing into the wild and never returning?

Feral Prerequisites

◆ Long term project (6 clock) of time spent in the deep forest, shedding your connections to Human civilization.

Feral Cost

◆ If you spend more than an hour in a town, castle, temple, or other civilized place, take level 1 short-term harm (Ungrounded). This is cleared by a half hour away from civilization.

Feral xp Trigger

◆ Mark **xp** when you solve problems using natural means or refuse the comforts of civilization.

Feral Reprieve

◆ Weird: time spent in deep wilderness.

Feral Special Abilities

Beast form

Spend 2 stress to transform into a Human/beast hybrid, with increased strength, speed, and natural weapons. You cannot speak and you respond to frustration or challenge with rage. Beast form lasts 10 minutes or until the end of a confrontation; add 30 more minutes for 1 stress.

Depending on the situation, your size, strength, speed, and natural weapons (horns, teeth, or claws) may give you potency.

What is the form of your beast? A great stag or ox? A lion or wolf?

Commune

Spend 1 stress and touch the living earth to reach out with your mind and **gather information**. You have **potency** when taming, calming, or otherwise engaging with non-sentient beasts that are not supernatural. You can speak with any nature spirit.

"Living earth" means that your sensing ability is effective only on unworked ground—not inside a building or on brick or a planted field, for example. You can get general impressions at a distance of about a mile (1.6 km), with more detailed impressions available out to about 100 yards/meters.

Forest Portal

Spend 2 stress to disappear into a tree and instantly exit from any tree in the same forest. You can carry your clothing and personal gear, but nothing more.

What is it like when you disappear and reappear this way?

Endure

You are not harmed by natural or elemental forces like fire, lightning, water, wind, etc. This doesn't save you from physical impact, but you can't be burned, drowned, or otherwise harmed by natural things.

Fire won't hurt you. You would be comfortable naked in a blizzard or in a scorching desert. You can't drown and could walk across the bottom of a lake (if you carried weights to keep you from floating). You can swim in lava. Lighting will refuse to strike you. A rock slide could hurt you, but if you were buried alive you would not smother. A tree would rather not fall on you, but if it did the impact would hurt you.

Rituals

A ritual is a method for achieving a *magical* effect. Ritual magic derives mostly from the Yethri, who had access to powerful ritual magics. During the Dreaming, the Yethri recruited Humans with magical talent, taught them basic ritual magic, and employed them as magical assistants.

Since the Awakening, Human mages have continued this tradition, half remembering the rituals they were taught, and building on that basic knowledge. One of the main sources of loot for barrow raiders is the recovery of scraps of documents, occult objects, inscriptions, and other sources of information that mages can use to piece together the methods for new rituals.

Finding A Ritual Source

A PC with the **Ritual** special ability begins with one known ritual, already learned (answer the questions below to create it). To learn a new ritual, a PC must first find a **source**. A source may be secured as payoff from a delve—perhaps you find a ritual book in the library of an ancient underground temple. You might also secure a source as the goal of a long-term project—by consorting

with cultist friends, studying ancient texts, or some other method you devise.

Learning a Ritual

Once the source of a ritual is found, you may undertake a **long-term project** to learn the ritual. Most rituals will require an 8-segment progress clock to learn. The player and the GM answer questions about the ritual to define what it will do in play and what is required to perform it (see below). The player records these answers in their notes for future reference.

Ritual Questions

1. GM asks: **"What does the ritual do and how is it weird?"** Player answers.

2. Player asks: **"What must I do to perform the ritual, and what is its price?"** GM answers. A ritual takes at least one downtime activity to perform and inflicts stress on the caster according to its magnitude. If performance of the ritual is dangerous or troublesome in some way, it requires an **action roll** (usually **Attune**). A ritual may also have additional costs, such as a sacrifice, rare item, the start of a dire progress clock, etc.

3. GM asks: **"What new belief or fear does knowledge of this ritual and its attendant occult forces instill in you?"** Player answers.

Example Ritual Answers

Player: "*The ritual wards a person so that they cannot be found or affected directly by magical means. It's weird because… as long as the ward is in place, the person sometimes weeps tears of black blood.*"

"*Spend a downtime action to prepare a mixture of pipe-weed, dream smoke, and crematory ash from a victim—which the target then smokes. You take at least **3 stress** when you perform the ritual, which will be its quality for a fortune roll when it's challenged by any magical effect—so you might want to take more stress to make it more potent.*"

Player: "*Gotcha. My new fear is what will happen if Drageth the Wise figures out that I'm protecting his target from him.*"

Performing A Ritual

To perform a ritual, you must have the **Ritual** special ability, then follow the method outlined by the answers to the ritual questions. Most rituals will take **one downtime activity** to complete, though the GM may call for two (or more) downtime activities for very powerful or far-reaching rituals. Some rituals may be partially performed during downtime and then fully manifested at-will later by completing the last incantation or ritual action. In this case, simply make a note that the ritual has been "primed" and may be unleashed at a later time.

When you perform a ritual, you take an amount of **stress** as established by the ritual questions, according to the **magnitude** of the forces brought to bear. The GM uses magnitude as a guideline for setting the stress cost—it may be higher or lower at their discretion to better describe the nature of the ritual. Some claims and special abilities also reduce the stress cost for ritual casting (like the Cult's Ancient Obelisk claim).

Rituals take time to cast. Use the duration examples on the magnitude table to reduce the stress cost based on the time needed, generally no less than an hour.

The GM may also tick a progress clock when you perform a ritual—to advance the agenda of an arcane power or entity, or to show the steady approach of a dark outcome that is a consequence of the ritual's use.

If a ritual is dangerous or troublesome to perform, make an **action roll** (usually **Attune**) to see if unpleasant consequences manifest. If a ritual has an uncertain effect then a **fortune roll** should be made to see how well it manifests. Because a ritual is a downtime activity, you may spend **coin** 1-for-1 to increase the result level of your fortune roll (this represents the expenditure of expensive or rare ritual materials). If a ritual is both dangerous and uncertain, then both rolls may be called for.

Each performance of a ritual is a unique event, and may not always work the same way each time. The GM or players may call for a round of questions to

establish a ritual anew. Rituals are a way to bring in a wide variety of arcane effects into the game. Use with caution! If you ever go overboard, address the questions again to establish new weirdness and costs if things have gotten out of hand. The abyssal forces are not playthings and cannot be considered a reliable or safe source of power.

Sample Rituals

◆ **Charm of Opening:** Make a rubbing on parchment with red chalk of a portal, door, or other entrance that is closed to you. Conduct a ritual, at a distance of no more than 10 miles from the portal, using a pair of silver shears inscribed with secret runes (this costs 1 **coin** and a 4-clock long-term project to make). Spend **stress** equal to the Tier of the door or the protections on it. The portal will be forced open and cannot be closed for one day plus one hour.

◆ **Deathskin:** Conduct a ceremony within a mystic circle in which a living person is slowly killed, removing their skin. This requires a downtime activity and the expenditure of 1 **coin** in rare and valuable materials. The skin is bonded to the body of the caster or another person, who must be of similar size and body morph. For one month following, the target of the ritual will look like and have a voice that sounds like the dead person. No knowledge is transferred, so the target will need to figure out how to act like the victim in order to be convincing. At the end of a month the skin begins to peel off, leaving the target of the spell completely hairless (but it will grow back).

◆ **Portal:** This ritual is conducted in two parts. The first is to inscribe precise runes into two small, identical objects. This requires one downtime activity. The second part is to cover one object in the caster's fresh blood and ignite a raven feather on top of it. This opens a person-sized vertically oriented mystical gateway to the other object, wherever it may be. The caster takes **level 1 harm** (blood loss), **2 stress**, plus **2 additional stress** for each minute past the first that the gateway is held open. It closes when the caster ends the ritual or steps through the gateway (at which point the

object burns to ash). While it is open, others can pass through the gateway or objects can be pushed through it.

◆ **Shapeshift:** Prepare the hide of an animal using a 4-clock long-term project. Cast this ritual during the full moon (the hide is consumed in the process). The caster transforms into an animal for 1 night. While transformed, you gain 4 total dots to divide among these attributes: **Skirmish, Prowl, Hunt, Wreck**. Add no more than +2 in any attribute and no more than 4 total, but you may exceed normal limitations. While transformed you cannot speak, but may use any natural abilities of the form you transform to (such as flight for a hawk). If you fail a risky or desperate roll while transformed, you may suffer a "cannot distinguish friend from foe" consequence.

◆ **Summon Elemental Spirit:** This ritual brings an elemental creature to the caster and binds it to do the caster's bidding. Pick an elemental concept (rock, trees, mud, wind, flame, smoke, river, rain, lightning, etc.) that the spirit is associated with. Spend an equal amount of **coin** and **stress** to establish the spirit's **Tier**. It will serve the caster for 24 hours divided by its Tier (e.g., 8 hours at Tier 3). The caster will take on some minor but noticeable physical characteristic of the elemental that lasts for a month.

Chapter 9
Athland

9. Athland

The Yethri

For about seven centuries, Athland was dominated by a foreign caste of mages known as the Yethri.

When they came to Athland, the Yethri used their powers to enslave the population. All the native people of Athland, for hundreds of years, lived in a state of mental slavery called The Dreaming. In the Dreaming the Humans of Athland lived a orderly and generally comfortable life as farmers, herders, servants, tradespeople, soldiers, and so on, but all in unquestioning servitude to the Yethri. While in the Dreaming, generations of Athlanders lived under the delusion that the Yethri were their beloved lords and masters.

The Yethri are humanoids (some scholars believe they are a type of Human, while others say they are of a different kind), a bit taller than Humans, with purplish skin. They have red, blonde, or black hair and yellow or green eyes.

The Awakening

Forty seven years ago, without warning, the Yethri disappeared. No one knows why they left or where they went.

When the Yethri left, the people Awakened. There was immediate chaos. Athland had lived for centuries in a culture of servitude. They had no leaders or even a conception of self rule.

The first couple of decades since the Awakening were hard. The political system broke down and there was chaos. Food deliveries to towns broke down and starvation quickly ensued. Members of the servant class (those who lived in the homes of the Yethri and served them directly), administrator class, and the military classes claimed the right to lead. Political chaos led to war, famine, disease, and atrocity.

Eventually, some degree of equilibrium was achieved. Warlords, claiming the noble titles once held by the Yethri, managed to create enclaves and hold onto land. They have imposed some degree of order as far as their power extends. Most of Athland is now divided loosely into baronies. In between lie lawless zones controlled by independent towns and bandits. Due to famine and war, the population is significantly reduced, so many villages lie abandoned and there are empty, decrepit buildings in every town.

Within the last 10 years, one Baron, Halea, has claimed the old capital city at Trevest and gained the loyalty (willing or coerced), of several other Barons. She has laid claim to the throne of Athland and has begun to exert significant dominance in the central and southern parts of Athland, but most of the country is still independent.

The Land and People

Climate and Terrain

Athland is a large island about two days sail eastward from the larger continent of Estrenta. The physical environment of Athland is similar to that of England in our world. The climate is moderate and rainy, with mild winters.

The People

The inhabitants of Athland are Humans. Before the Yethri came, the inhabitants of the island had migrated from several places, including from across the ocean far to the East. Thus, just about any combination of features can be found among the Athlish—skin that is dark, light or in between; black, brown, green, or gray eyes; black, blonde, reddish, or brown hair, etc. The Yethri stamped out any sense of social alignment by skin color or other physical characteristics. That has continued since the Awakening. Thus far there are no divisions, stigma, or social advantages associated with particular physical characteristics.

Social Classes

During the Dreaming, Athland was a stratified society. The Yethri established specific social roles and little or no class mobility. A person born to be a farmer, merchant, or soldier would have that role throughout life.

Since the Awakening, Athlanders have approximated the previous system, but with a lot more chaos. For the most part, the descendants of administrators and military commanders have taken over the role of nobility once held directly by the Yethri. The new nobility tend to display the trappings of the Yethri in their titles, dress, modes of speech, etc., because that confers the appearance of legitimacy.

Other social classes have also continued as they were during the Dreaming. Most of the population are farmers. Under the Yethri, villages were scattered about the countryside to support clusters of farms. Each village had a mill, storehouses, etc., that were communally managed. Villages clustered around towns where goods could be more efficiently manufactured and exchanged.

Sex, Gender, and Race

While the original culture of Athland was patriarchal and matrilineal, the Yethri had a rigidly egalitarian and merit based ethic. Anyone of either sex could have any role, so long as they came from the right family and could do the job. Similarly, the Yethri tolerated no bias among Humans on the basis of skin color, sexual preference or other superficial characteristics unrelated to ability. Since the Awakening, this general approach has continued. The culture of Athland,

unusually for a society at this stage of development, is remarkably free of intolerance.

Law and Order

Because the Yethri imposed order through magical means, there wasn't much need for strong legal system. For that reason, while there is still a tradition of effective organization of society in other ways, there is very little legal tradition to fall back on.

In places where nobles rule, a basic legal system has had to be invented. Scholars have researched ancient law and legal systems from the continent, but for the most part each barony is a separate legal jurisdiction based on primitive concepts of rules against basic things like theft and murder. In many places the lords judge guilt or innocent arbitrarily, and punishments are harsh. Disputes are handled by summary judgment or, in some cases, by organized duels between aggrieved parties.

Extralegal means of managing hierarchy and control have also become commonplace, most especially where there is no functioning governmental structure. Blood feuds, honor killing, group reprisals, etc., have become commonplace. Many villages now have walls around them to protect from bandits and the depredations of warlords.

Languages

The people of Athland speak Athlish, a language that evolved from the original Old Athlish that existed before the Yethri conquest to become a blend of grammar and vocabulary between the native and Yethri languages. While it is believed that there were divergent regional dialects of Old Athlish, the Yethri created and enforced a standardized grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. While there are minor regional differences in pronunciation and idiom, anyone speaking Athlish can be easily understood throughout the land.

The Cambri speak Delthin, a language only distantly related to Old Athlish. Other people from the continent speak a mishmash of languages.

While modern Athlish includes many Yethri words, the actual language of the Yethri was separate. Very few Humans were taught to speak, read, or write Yethri. Today, only a relative few scholars can translate Yethri documents, and they sometimes disagree with each other on significant matters of meaning.

Time

The Yethri imposed a simple calendar of 12 months of 30 days each, plus a festival week of 5 days (with an extra leap day added when needed to adjust to the year length). Each month has six five day weeks. A day is divided into 24 hours of 60 minutes each.

The months are each named after a god (page 168). The 12th month is Death, which has no god but is recognized anyway.

Years are reckoned from the date of the Yethri conquest. The Awakening happened in AY 712 and the current year is AY 759.

Technology, Crafts, and Medicine

During the Dreaming, the Yethri rulers established a stable and relatively unchanging society with a level of technology approximately equivalent to Europe in the High Middle Ages. It is thought by scholars that the Yethri had the capacity for more advanced technology, but had no interest in it, at least for Humans. Athland was an agrarian society with many villages and manors, a few large towns, and a capital city of about a quarter million souls.

Roads

During the first several hundred years of Yethri rule, much of the population was involved in building a road network. Yethri roads are made of stone, wide enough for the largest cart, and constructed to last for centuries with minimal upkeep. They run straight, dug through hillsides or other landscape features where necessary. Bridges run over any rivers in the way (since the Awakening, some bridges have been damaged and have not been repaired).

The roads are a basic feature of Athland society. During Yethri rule, cities, towns, villages, manors, and villas were connected by roads. Civilization existed where the roads were; everything else was wilderness. Since the awakening, some have fled into the forests and hills to escape war, rapacious barons, and famine. But the general pattern still holds that most of the population lives near the roads.

Technology Since the Awakening

Since the Awakening, there has been a significant fall in the effective level of technology, mainly due to civil disorder. The well-constructed roads are still there, but starting to fall into disrepair in some places. Towns have lost significant amounts of population because there is no longer the ability to provide sufficient food to feed large populations. There are still some functioning water mills, aqueducts, mines, and other technology.

The old ways hold together in some enclaves. People still remember how to do things. Under the Yethri, advanced agricultural methods were practiced. Where there is still a semblance of the old social structure (a villa and its surrounding villages, a remote valley untouched by strife, a barony with a strong and responsible lord), people are able to thrive. It is a cultural norm to practice good hygiene and sanitation. There are doctors, midwives, and apothecaries with knowledge of effective medical practices.

In other parts of Athland, chaos reigns. The old culture has broken down. People starve, brigands and murderers roam the land, and the only order is what small groups can eke out for themselves. In some ways, Athland resembles Europe after the end of the Roman Empire.

War

As barons and warlords have consolidated power, their ability to project force has expanded in scale. Athland appears to be evolving toward a "warring states" period in which nobles jockey for power via uneasy alliances and opportunistic warfare.

Thus far, only a few major battles have occurred, but most everyone predicts that this trend will likely accelerate.

Religion

When the Yethri conquered and enslaved Athland centuries ago, they co-opted the preexisting religious customs to establish an official state religion. This involved worship of a pantheon of gods and the land itself, along with a caste of hereditary clergy and a network of temples.

Since the Awakening, these religious practices have continued and, in many places, thrived. Temples are one of the few places considered sacrosanct from the battles for power among the barons and have become places of worship and sanctuary.

There are 11 primary gods in the Athland pantheon, led by Akikron and his wife Hekathe.

The gods are literally and provably real. Miraculous events happen in temples during worship, as the combined spiritual energy of the congregants manifests in a display of the will of the god. Gods sometimes manifest during worship or at other times. While the gods rarely take strong interest in the doings of mundane persons, they do provide assistance and guidance to those who show them reverence.

God	Dominion	Symbol
Akikron	Authority The Sun	Crossed rods
Cholethre	Knowledge	Scroll
Dendrok	War Ferocity	Spear
Dineri	Precision Archery	Bow and arrows
Elim	Wisdom The Arts	Laurel leaf
Hekathe	Insight The Moon	Eye/Moon
Imor	Fertility Agriculture	Sheaves of grain

God	Dominion	Symbol
Malathena	Ingenuity Crafts	Hammer
Morag	Magic Supernatural	Feather
Teklos	Trickery Theft	Hand
Vishelu	Audacity Valor	Flame

Holy Days

Each month has a holy day to recognize the god for which it is named. During a god's holy month, it is customary for everyone to leave offerings and pray at temples and shrines devoted to that god. This is common even for those who do not regularly participate in worship of that god. Priests of other temples will also visit to provide offerings to that god on his or her yearly holy day. It is considered a grave insult for one temple to withhold offerings to another god on that god's day.

The yearly Festival Week also has a series of traditional rituals, sacrifices, and celebrations devoted to the entire pantheon of gods.

Death and Burial

Those who die are believed to pass on to another world, ruled by an invisible and unnamed god with no presence in this earthly realm. During the month of Death and especially the holy day of Death during that month, it is believed that the veils of reality separating this world from that of the dead become weak and it is possible to communicate with those who have passed on. There are many rituals, ceremonies, magical spells, and cultural practices associated with connecting with the dead.

Those who die are ritually washed, shrouded, and buried with a coin over each eye to pay for passage into the Land of the Dead. Burial ceremonies are overseen by clergy from various temples.

Magic

Magic is a real and normal thing in Athland. Really powerful magic is uncommon, but most towns have one or more practicing mages who perform minor spells for a fee (scrying, blessing, cursing, etc.). Most villages have no formal mage, but there are always folk who know a few simple spells, have the gift of communing with spirits, or can bless a newborn child or animal.

There are more powerful mages who can achieve greater effects. Some mages seek secular power, becoming barons themselves or working in the pay of the nobility. Others recuse themselves from everyday life and prefer isolation.

Another occult practice inherited from the Yethri is alchemy. They discovered many ways to imbue potions, powders, and other substances with magical properties. These formulae are difficult to reproduce, except by specialists with very specific skills. While there is a general trade in alchemical products, not enough is produced these items to be in common use.

Beasts and Monsters

A wide range of natural animals are native to Athland. These include wolves, badgers, deer, oxen, falcons, foxes, eagles, and other creatures that would be familiar in the Europe of our world.

There are a number of domestic animals common to Athland, used as pets and in agriculture. These include dogs, cats, cows, geese, chickens, pigs, oxen, and horses.

Under the rule of the Yethri, most large predators were driven to extinction or into wild places, while large game animals were managed to avoid over-population or over-hunting.

During their rule, the Yethri embarked on a campaign to eliminate supernatural monsters and spirits from their domain. This was largely successful and by the time of the Awakening the existence of monsters had been all but forgotten.

Since then, more and more barrows have been discovered and opened. The inhabitants of some barrows seem to stay contained. But from others, monsters have come. Sometimes they follow the delvers back, in some cases to gain revenge. Other monsters have begun to return to the forests, hills, and other wild places. With no central authority, there is no one to limit access to barrows or to take systematic action to prevent the spread of monsters. There are now many stories of travelers being attacked or remote villages slaughtered, and there is no reason to think it won't get worse.

Foreigners

The Cambri

About two days sail to the east of Athland is the larger continent of Estrenta. Before the Yethri, there was considerable contact between different parts of Estrenta and Athland, with waves of migrations over several millennia.

When the Yethri came, they limited contact and later cut it off entirely after defeating two invasion fleets from the continent. Since the Awakening, contact has resumed. Over the last few decades, more and more foreigners have come from the continent. At first they came to trade, but then they established armed control of several coastal towns.

These foreigners, the Cambri, preach adherence to foreign gods. Their religion has just two gods: Gehir the Father and Meshua the Mother.

The Cambri offer aid in exchange for allegiance. Halia has called on the barons to unite under her banner to drive the Cambri back into the sea.

Although the Cambri are the most common people to visit Athland due to proximity, the continent is large and there are many peoples there. Occasionally, people from these strange lands make their way to Athland for the purpose of trade, adventure, or other purposes.

The Tanin Islands

North of Athland lie the Tanin Islands. These were never conquered by the Yethri and not part of the Dreaming. The people of the Tannin Islands, the Dandreen are mostly fisher folk. They are thought of as strange and wild by the people of Athland. They speak a related tongue called Dandrish. The two languages are similar enough that two native speakers can usually, with effort and frustration, get the gist of what the other is saying.

The Dandreen worship similar gods to those of Athland, but with different names and a different set of stories. Generally, Dandreen visitors choose to interpret the Athland gods as the same as their own, with different names.

The Barony of Trenghall

Our default setting is the Barony of Trenghall, located in the Northwest coast of Athland. It is located between the baronies of Yarin to the East, Ganril to the South, and Teben across the Firth of Maglin to the West.

Trenghall is an independent Barony, not currently owing outside fealty, although Baron Halea, who claims the crown for herself, is a significant potential threat if she can forge a stronger alliance.

But not all is well in Trenghall. The Barony is held together by an uncomfortable alliance of two strong families. The Baron is the head of House Benevin. His wife is of house Ithmir, but they are estranged the two houses are increasingly at odds.

Locations

- **Arnin:** This is the central and main town of the barony, with a population of nearly 3000 souls. It is under the direct control of the Baron. It houses a significant keep and the Baronial Guard.

- **Deterlough:** Pronounced "detluh" by the locals, Deterlough is a coastal town, once prosperous but since ravaged by war and famine. Until last year, the town was mostly empty. More recently, troops from House Ithmir have arrived and begun rebuilding the watchtower and other defenses.

- **Firth of Maglin:** An inlet with a deep central channel, the firth divides Trenghall from Teben.

- **Henet:** A coastal town on the North coast of Trenghall, known for its fishing fleet and exports of seaweed and dried fish. Also known as a haven for pirate crews.

- **Leorin Tower:** An abandoned stone tower, said to be haunted. This is the site of a large skirmish about 20 years ago between rioting farmers and the remnants of the local militia.
- **Red Fens:** Uninhabited in the time of the Yethri, this marshy land has become the sanctuary of a few small bands of refugees.
- **Mintish:** A mining town (copper and tin), Mintish is built on a set of ancient ruins.
- **Nethrel's Tower:** This is the tower and domain of Nethrel, a powerful sorceress.
- **Temberlech:** A town on the River Glyr, known for its great stone bridge and aqueducts, built under the instruction of the Yethri long ago.
- **Yanerton:** This town is the seat of power of House Ithmir, one of the two major noble houses in the Barony. Over the past 10 years, a stone wall has been built around the town, and the keep has been reinforced with an additional wall around it.

Known Barrows

Much of Trenghall is made up of deep forests and remote hills. Even in the days of the Yethri, the back country of this region was uninhabited and unexplored. Mages say that Trenghall is a locus of occult power.

Throughout the barony are bits and pieces of ancient civilizations. Nothing is really known of these precursors, but it's easy to find a piece of wall here and the remains of a huge inhuman statue there. It is suspected that the barony may contain many unknown barrows.

There are three barrows that are publicly known:

Old Denderton (II)

An abandoned village, Old Denderton is a place of ghosts and whispers. While it is clearly marked on maps, actually getting there is a challenge, since travelers in the area get increasingly lost as they approach the town. There are many stories of people finding their way to Denderton and coming

back changed, with strange dead eyes and violent personalities.

Blackbarrow (i)

This is an ancient graveyard from pre-Yethri times. It consists of about a dozen burial mounds with passageways leading downward. All show signs of previous exploration, with some completely opened up. However, it is known that new passages leading further underground have recently been discovered.

Trenergan Rocks (II)

This barrow lies deep in a small valley up in the hills. It's a largely unexplored cave system. Last year the Bluejacks, a crew of delvers, returned from Trenergan with a large haul of valuable items. They've been back a couple of times since, but with less success. The rumor is that they've suffered significant casualties dealing with infestations of large spiky worm-like creatures and other horrific hazards.

Beyond these known barrows are rumors of other places, including a huge underground city inhabited by strange cat-like people, glowing structures deep underwater in the Firth of Magin, and a large statue of an inhuman god that appears only during the full moon, visible only from a certain secret spot.

Factions

The factions most active in the Barony of Trenghall are briefly described below.

Faction	Tier
Baronial Guard	III
Bluejacks	II
The Beloved of Kindra	II
Companions of the Black Rose	II
Forest Spirits	II

Faction	Tier
Kigani's Crew	I
House Benevin	IV
House Ithmir	IV
Mudlarks	II
Nethrel	III
Northroad Gang	II
Pantheon Temples	III
The Rat King	II
The Redfeathers	II
Sir Jornan Dendrilong	III
Temple of Akikron	III
Temple of Cholethre	II
Temple of Morag	III
Terlindigus	I

Baronial Guard (III)

The baronial guard is a small force of professional soldiers in service to the barony.

- **Scope:** Athland.
- **NPCS:** Captain Marcus Nekkler (*careful, uncertain*), Sir Eleeth Denrin (*second, ambitious, competent, treacherous*).
- **Assets:** A company of professional soldiers.
- **Allies:** House Ithmir, House Benevin.
- **Enemies:** Redfeathers, Northroad Gang.
- **Situation:** Nominally, the guard are at the service of the Baron Caronin. However, in the current dispute between noble houses over control of the barony, the loyalty of the guard is in doubt.
- **Faction clock (8):** Align with House Ithmir or House Benevin.

- **Faction clock (6):** Eleeth betrays Marcus.
- **Faction clock (8):** Expedition to wipe out the Northroad Gang.

Bluejacks (II)

The Bluejacks are a successful crew of barrow raiders.

- **Scope:** Athland.
- **NPCs:** Doric (Former mercenary captain, *commanding, intelligent, suspicious*). Gorihan (war leader, *gigantic, brutal*).
- **Assets:** Claims on two barrows (Trenergan Rocks and Blackbarrow), gang, wagons, grenades.
- **Allies:** House Ithmir.
- **Enemies:** Kigani's Crew.
- **Situation:** Led by Doric, a ruthless veteran soldier, they the Bluejacks established claims over multiple barrows in the area and are known for well-planned and successful delves. They are also known for being belligerent to other barrow raiding crews, forcing them off of claims, ambushing them on the way back from a delve to steal their loot, and working to deprive them of any access to barrows in Trenghall.
- **Faction clock (4):** Explore and establish full control over the new find in Blackbarrow.

The Beloved of Kindra (II)

This is a religious cult that worships the Yethri as benevolent demigods.

- **Scope:** Athland.
- **NPCs:** Anra (high priestess, *proud, strange, devoted*).
- **Assets:** Devoted followers, spies in unexpected places.
- **Allies:** none.
- **Enemies:** Established temples.
- **Situation:** The Beloved of Kindra believe that if they can conduct the right set of occult rituals in the right way, they can bring the Yethri back. They are continuously searching for information about the Yethri: their magic, their arcane

artifacts, where they went, what they did in the last days before the Awakening. They camp out near barrows, sometimes sponsor crews of barrow raiders, and will attack any crew they believe might have artifacts they think are crucial to their mission. While active throughout Athland as a fringe cult, they have a particular following in Trenghall. They believe some of the most important Yethri artifacts can be found in the barony

- **Faction clock (6):** Anger the temples enough to provoke retribution.
- **Faction clock (8):** Attempt Yethri summoning ritual.

Forest Spirits (II)

A small group of spirits in Dellwood.

- **Scope:** Dellwood forest.
- **NPCs:** Anwhir (*aged, unflappable, devoted*), Iliwen (*impatient, parental, concerned*).
- **Assets:** Secret places in the forest.
- **Allies:** None.
- **Situation:** Forest spirits have begun to manifest in greater numbers since the Awakening and the end of Yethri magic. In Dellwood, the spirits have banded together for mutual protection.
- **Enemies:** Invasive creatures from barrows.
- **Faction clock (4):** Monsters in the forest.

Companions of the Black Rose (III)

A semi-monastic order devoted to helping the weak and treating the sick.

Scope: Athland.

NPCs: Sir Eleen (dour, reliable, hardworking), Chorik (friendly, rough, prankster).

Assets: Chapter house in Arnin, several manors throughout the barony, contacts with other chapters throughout Athland.

Allies: House Benevin, Temple of Akikron.

Enemies: Northroad Gang, Rat King, Sir Jornan Dendrilong.

Situation: The Companions began as groups of soldiers and nobles responding to the chaos of the Awakening. Many thousands of people had nowhere to go. They had no food and no protection. Sir Wilem of Harnick formed a company of armed troops devoted to simply helping. They fought bandits, protected food supplies, organized medical care, and otherwise kept the weak and disorganized from being harmed or preyed upon. Since then the Companions have spread throughout Athland. They have a small contingent in Trenghall.

Faction Clock (4): Take action against the Northroad Gang.

Kigani's Crew (I)

This is a small, up and coming crew of barrow raiders.

- **Scope:** Trenghall.
- **NPCs:** Kigani (*rough, earthy, reliable*), Dorthen (*cold, loyal, fearless*).
- **Assets:** Competent barrow raiding crew, hidden base.
- **Allies:** Mudlarks.
- **Enemies:** Bluejacks.
- **Situation:** Kigani has recruited and developed this crew through sheer force of will. She chafes under the relative dominance of the Bluejacks over delving in the barony.
- **Faction clock (4):** Make a move on the Bluejacks.

House Ithmir (IV)

The Ithmir descend from the leader of the local military during the Dreaming. They are a powerful house, with extensive holdings throughout the barony.

- **Scope:** Trenghall.
- **NPCs:** Sir Ganin Ithmir (house patriarch, *rough, scheming, confident*). Baroness Melisse (*imperturbable, ruthless, ambitious*), Lord Chador (house chancellor, competent, arrogant.

- **Assets:** Manor, feudal holdings, villas, several outposts.
- **Allies:** Northroad Gang (secret sponsor).
- **Enemies:** Unstable "alliance" with House Benevin.
- **Situation:** House Ithmir is ruled by Ganin, a rather rough and scheming patriarch. Melisse, the Baroness, is his daughter. He has recently become disaffected with Caronin, the baron, and there is significant ill will between the two noble houses.
- **Faction Clock (8):** Weaken House Benevin to Tier III without going into outright war.

House Beneven (IV)

This the family of Baron Caronin Benevin. The Benevins descend from personal servants and administrators of the Yethri. The Barony was formed as an alliance between House Benevin and House Ithmir. That alliance is extremely rocky.

- **Scope:** Trenghall.
- **NPCs:** Baron Caronin Benevin (Baron of Trenghall, *honorable, intelligent, uncertain*). Lady Tenrin (chief of operations, *insightful, subtle, effective*). Sir Tondo (baronial marshal, *blustery, dithering, loyal*).
- **Assets:** Acknowledged feudal control of the Barony of Trenghall, taxation rights on merchants, military guard, constables, servants, etc
- **Allies:** Redfeathers.
- **Enemies:** House Ithmir.
- **Situation:** The Baron is aware of his rocky position in control of the Barony. He is estranged from his wife Melisse, who is the daughter of the head of House Ithmir. He has hired the Redfeathers to buttress his military control of the barony.
- **Faction clock (6):** Use Redfeathers and military assets to kill or drive out the Northroad Gang.

Mudlarks (II)

The Mudlarks are a crew of barrow raiders.

- **Scope:** Trenghall.
- **NPCs:** Dormin (leader, *quiet, calculating, ambitious*). Lida (mage, *witty, charming, secretive*). Tethrell (*loyal, addict, compulsive thief*).
- **Assets:** Crew of experienced barrow raiders.
- **Allies:** Kigani's Crew.
- **Enemies:** Bluejacks.
- **Situation:** The Mudlarks are new in this area, having moved in as a result of political instability to the South combined with rumors of the potential for rich barrow finds in Trenghall. The leaders of the Mudlarks are Dormin and Lida, who are a married couple.
- **Faction clock (4):** Push for a real score, even if it angers the Bluejacks.

Nethrel (III)

Nethrel is a mage, deeply interested in occult artifacts.

- **Scope:** Trenghall.
- **NPCs:** Nethrel (mage, *inscrutable, strange, obsessive*), Derleth (steward, *loyal, bitter, quiet*), Ilkirates (shapeshifting demon servant, *lazy, devoted, vengeful*).
- **Assets:** Small but competent crew of hired soldiers, tower, servants, village.
- **Allies:** House Benevin, House Ithmir.
- **Enemies:** None.
- **Situation:** Nethrel is a powerful mage. She is Tier 3, meaning she could take on a gang of 20 by herself on even footing. She has repaired an abandoned stone tower where she and her servants live. There is a local village that she has taken under her protection and she has hired a retinue of fighters who act as guards and protectors. Additionally, she is said to have made pacts with several demonic entities, who do her bidding. She is fascinated with arcane knowledge and artifacts and is therefore always interested in whatever is recovered from barrow raiding. She acts as a patron for multiple crews in the area, but tends not to take sides in their internecine disputes.

- **Faction clock (8):** Do something random, strange, and significant.

Northroad Gang (II)

This is a gang of brigands.

- **Scope:** Northern Trenghall forests; expanding.
- **NPCs:** Burly Jack (*mountainous, mean, domineering*), Gorlick (*veteran, greedy, sadistic*).
- **Assets:** Hidden base, crew of brigands.
- **Allies:** House Ithmir (secretly).
- **Enemies:** House Benevin, Sir Jornan Dendrilong
- **Situation:** The Northroad Gang is secretly funded and supported by House Ithmir to disrupt the Barony and demonstrate that Caronin is not able to maintain control. They started with robberies along the North Road (hence their name) with a base in the forests between Yanerton and Deterlough, but have been expanding operations and recruiting new members. They are a bunch of cutthroats and murderers, known for their brutality.
- **Faction clock (4):** Violent raids on villages.
- **Faction clock (4):** Raid on the Rat King.

Pantheon Temples

Various temples associated with the 11 major gods of the Athland pantheon.

- **Scope:** Athland.
- **NPCs:** Domoric (priest of Elim, *ostentatious, proud, kind*), Thelea, (priestess of Dineri, *shrewd, competitive, wise*).
- **Assets:** Divine aid, temples and shrines in every town and most villages, priests and priestesses, worshipers.
- **Allies:** Temple of Akikron, Temple of Morag.
- **Enemies:** none.
- **Situation:** Temples and shrines are found in every town and village throughout Trenghall. In larger towns there are separate temples for each god, but in villages and smaller places there are often temples devoted to worship of all the gods, with specific shrines for worship of particular deities. Priests and priestesses each choose one god for primary affiliation, but pay respect to the entire pantheon.

The Rat King (II)

A gang of brigands in the forest.

- **Scope:** Trenghall northern forests.
- **NPCs:** The Rat King (aging patriarch, suspicious), Mendara (long serving, ranger, true believer).
- **Allies:** Villagers in the region.
- **Enemies:** Northroad Gang.
- **Situation:** During the chaos immediately following the Awakening, the Rat King created a gang in the deep forest, offering protection to whoever would follow him. Many starving peasants did. The Rat King gang became brigands, claiming mainly to take only from those with more than they needed. The Rat King is said to be quite old now and the gang is no longer as strong as it was, but there is undoubtedly still a band of brigands who claim to serve him.
- **Faction clock (6):** Regain full control of [name] forest.

The Redfeathers (II)

The Redfeathers are a mercenary troop that have recently moved into the barony, hired by House Benevin to bolster the Baronial Guard.

- **Scope:** Athland
- **NPCs:** Sir Gawin Heleath (freelance knight, courtly manners, ruthless).
- **Assets:** Troop of experienced and well-equipped mercenaries.
- **Allies:** House Benevin, Northroad Gang.
- **Enemies:** House Ithmir.
- **Situation:** The Redfeathers have been through several very rough campaigns in other parts of Athland. They were hoping for a nice, easy job bolstering the baronial guard against bandit incursions, but have also found themselves as part of a conflict between two noble houses.

◆ **Faction clock (6):** Inciting incident with House Ithmir.

Sir Jornan Dendrilong (III)

Underworld boss.

◆ **Scope:** Athland
◆ **NPCs:** Jornan Dendrilong (*polite, vindictive, scheming*), Thela (*quiet, loyal, vicious*).
◆ **Assets:** Crime syndicate spread through Arnen, Temberlech, and Mintish. Vice dens, gambling parlors, legitimate businesses, extortion rackets, gangs of enforcers.
◆ **Allies:** House Ilim.
◆ **Enemies:** Northroad Gang.
◆ **Situation:** Sir Jornan likes to play the role of retired veteran of the wars following the Awakening. And he is that. But he's also the most important crime boss in the Barony. He controls bordellos, smuggling, extortion, and other illicit activities in several towns.
◆ **Faction clock (8):** Throw his weight behind one of the noble houses.
◆ **Faction clock (6):** Decide to take over the barrow raiding trade in the Southern part of the barony.

Temple of Akikron (III)

Akikron is worshiped throughout the barony.

◆ **Scope:** Athland
◆ **NPCs:** Karrick, High Priest (*veteran, logical, inquisitive*), Belin (*ambitious, scheming, secretive*).
◆ **Assets:** Major temple in Arnin, smaller temples and shrines throughout the barony, relationships with temples in other baronies, worshipers.
◆ **Allies:** Temple of Morag.
◆ **Enemies:** Beloved of Kindra.
◆ **Situation:** Akikron is a popular god throughout Athland in these times of chaos, and so it is also in Trenghall. His is the largest temple in Arnin and there are smaller temples and shrines spread throughout the land.

◆ **Faction clock (8):** Intervene in Baronial dispute.
◆ **Faction clock (8):** Act against Beloved of Kindra.

Temple of Cholethre (II)

The temple of Cholethre, goddess of knowledge. Keepers of books, libraries, and secrets

◆ **Scope:** Athland
◆ **NPCs:** Ilgren (*shrewd, secretive, dedicated*).
◆ **Assets:** Major temple in Arnin with a massive library, smaller temples and shrines throughout the barony, relationships with temples in other baronies, worshipers.
◆ **Allies:** Temple of Elim.
◆ **Enemies:** None.
◆ **Situation:** Ever since the Awakening, the priests of Cholethre have been gathering books and other sources of information. They have large libraries that they make available to worshipers and those who make donations. It is said that they also have private libraries, filled with secret and arcane knowledge. They frequently purchase select tomes from barrow raiders and sometimes sponsor expeditions into barrows when they have reason to believe there might be particularly interesting volumes to be found.
◆ **Faction clock (8):** Discover information that embarrasses one of the noble houses.
◆ **Faction clock (8):** Acquire information on a powerful and forbidden ritual.

Temple of Morag (III)

The temple of Morag, goddess of magic and the occult, is popular in Trenghall.

◆ **NPCs:** Kagren (*elderly, dying, stubborn*). Dierdre (priestess and mage, *shrewd, talkative, careful*).
◆ **Assets:** Major temple in Arnin, smaller temples and shrines throughout the barony, relationships with temples in other baronies, worshipers.
◆ **Allies:** Temple of Akikron.
◆ **Enemies:** None.

- **Situation:** Athland is known as a region of strange and occult things, so it makes sense that the Temple of Morag, goddess of magic, draws a significant number of worshipers. The local temple is nominally led by Kagren, who is extremely old and does not have long to live. She is focused on her legacy and has decided that she is to be buried in an as yet undiscovered barrow. She is using temple resources to hire scouts and barrow raiders to find it for her. Her second, Dierdre, runs day to day operations and is said to be losing patience.

Terlindigus (I)

Terlindigus is a wandering Cambri preacher.

- **Scope:** Trenghall
- **NPCs:** Terlindigus (*gaunt, devout, blessed*).
- **Assets:** A few followers, the clothes on his back, and a walking stick.
- **Allies:** None.
- **Enemies:** Temples of the Athland pantheon.
- **Situation:** Terlindigus has taken a vow of poverty and wanders Athland preaching the gospel of the Father and Mother, his god and goddess. He is said to perform the occasional powerful miracle. Thus far, he is not enough of a threat for the local power brokers to mess with.
- **Faction clock (6):** Anger the powers that be.

Barrow Raider Jargon

- **Barrow:** A strange, magical, dangerous place inhabited by a barrow wight.
- **Barrow raider:** Those who explore barrows, especially professionals.
- **Barrow wight:** The malevolent entity that possesses a barrow.
- **Breecher:** An explosive charge used to break through a barrier during a delve.
- **Crew:** An organized group of professional barrow raiders.
- **Delve:** An expedition into a barrow.
- **Delver:** aka barrow raider.

- **Face:** A member of a crew who is good at negotiation.
- **Landlord:** nickname for barrow wight.
- **No go:** A barrow or section of a barrow that is too dangerous to explore or that no one has ever returned from.
- **Pay rent:** Getting hurt or killed during a delve. Losing a crew member during a delve. *We're gonna have to pay rent on the way out of here.*
- **The weird:** A part of a barrow that doesn't obey the laws of normal reality. *After the second level we'll be in the weird for sure.*

Heard Around Trenghall

"There's a haunted ship prowling the Firth. All the fisherfolk have seen it. Whenever the fog comes in. Drowned sailors with ghost-while eyes, they say. Took three "

"The Baron and Baroness haven't seen or talked to each other in a month. Completely estranged, I hear."

"The Rat King and Sir Jornan have some kind of deal running. Not sure what it is, but there are deliveries in crates every week."

"I hear Baron Marcus of Ganril is planning to send in troops. With the Trenghall nobles at each other's throats, this is an opportunity for invasion."

"You know those amulets of protection Hamey's been selling from his shop in uptown? The ones made with blessed earth from the Isle of Tenik? Yeah, it's just dirt from the riverbank. Useless. I heard it from my cousin, who works for him."

"Barrows? Yeah, I heard from a warden that there was some sort of tower in the forest north of Deterlough. It's only there when the moon is full."

"Down by the docks in Arnin, you can find a fellow who has connections with the water folk. And if you have coin, see, you have some intimate time with the water folk."

"The Bluejacks lost three crew the last time they tried Trenergan Rocks. Horrible in that place, just horrible."

"If the Baron can't keep pirates out of the damned firth, maybe we should find someone who can."

"My cousin runs a tavern up there in Mintish. I had a letter from him just the other day, and he said the miners are all spooked by some sort of big snake thing. Dragged two miners down into the pits, they say. It talks to them from the depths too, they say."

"I hear one of the temples is bringing in Red Lyptus from the continent. The price has crashed in the last month."

"Sir Jornan is not so bad if you stay on his good side. My friend Dedi missed two payments on his gambling tab, and Sir Jornan only had one of his legs broken. Maybe he's going soft."

"I was at the Temple of Hekathe, the other day, cause she gives good luck if you leave an offering when you have a little extra. I heard the priestess complaining that Belin, that Akikron priest, was trying to poison Karrick, the head of the Akikron Temple in Arnin."

"When I was a kid we all played in the tunnels under the Arnin aqueducts. But it's funny, no one seems to be able to find any of the entrances any more. It's like they just… disappeared."

"A Cambri trading ship just docked down at Arnin port. Carrying some fine cargo, I hear, but I'm not sure whose ready to do business with them."

"I heard tell that way down south, 100 miles or more, there's some kind of huge monster. Came out of barrow they say. It's got six giant heads full of teeth and it's the size of barn! Some baron tried to have his troops kill it with a trebuchet and it just ate them. Hope it stays down there."

"The Northroad Gang has been getting a lot bolder. They've burned a couple of villages and I think they're going to raid a town soon. Mark my words."

"Down at the west end of Dergen Street, ya. Best fish house anywhere. Got no name, no sign, just a door, ya. Cheap, too, an' none better."

"My cousin Triella says those Mudlarks ain't even ever been on a delve. All talk and no action, just like my husband!"

Sources of Reprieve

Faith

- Andra, High Priestess, Beloved of Kindra.
- Temples of the Athland pantheon (various, found in every town and village).
- Terlindigus, wandering Cambri preacher.

Gambling

- Maskar's dice game, near the docks, Arnin.
- Elino, boxing, the Docks.
- Telegin, hound racing, Temberlech.
- Shecklow, cock fighting, Mintish.
- Sergeant Jon, the fighting pits, upper town, Arnin.

Luxury, pleasure

- Shelier, singer, Dek's Tavern, Arnin.
- Mirakor's Tavern, Yanerton.
- Demrick, painter and sculptor, Arnin.
- Marcus and Sons fine fabrics and tailoring, Temberlech.
- Bimly, cook, Dek's Tavern, Arnin.
- Hellene, Bright Theatre, Arnin.
- Brightswallow puppet theatre, Mintish.
- Origin, organizer of the Arnin mummer's parade.

Obligation

- Family members.
- Former co-workers (background).
- Cambri wanderers.
- The Red Scorpion Oath, a secret society.

Pleasure, stupor

◆ Telly Bull, the Seagull, tavern, Temberlech.

◆ Indira, the Bull, tavern, Arnin.

◆ Ardeen, the Baron's Sleeve, Temberlech.

◆ Lady Uthra, the White Cask Bar, Yanerton.

◆ Avrick, powder dealer, Barrowcleft.

◆ Rolan Volaris, the Veil, social club, Arnin.

◆ Madame Tesslyn, the Red Lamp, brothel, Arnin.

◆ Red Bird Sings, Fleet Alley, the Arnin docks.

Weird

◆ The hooded proprietor of a tavern near the docks in Arnin. For a price, it is said that customers can receive a magic potion that will allow them to breathe underwater, descending down into the sea to cavort with watery spirits.

◆ Father Teff, leader of a splinter cult that claims that Dineri is the true Queen of the gods, Yanerton.

◆ Mereem, forest spirit.

◆ Ojak, red lyptus vendor, Arnin.

◆ Erlen, cultist of a forgotten god, barge moored in Temberlech.

Random Barrows

Use for inspiration or roll one die for the vertical column and another for the horizontal column. Roll one or more times until you have a clear picture, discarding (or embracing) nonsensical combinations.

Location

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Island	Cloud	Pool	Artifact	Quarry	Leviathan
2	Undersea	Forest	Shore	Temple	Crossroad	Bridge
3	Sewer	Village	Hilltop	Tower	Aqueduct	Chasm
4	Mountain	Statue	Vessel	Mine	Battlefield	Monastery
5	Henge	Ruin	Manor	Cemetery	Shipwreck	Cliff
6	Painting	Tomb	Tree	Waterfall	Valley	Shrine

Barrow Features

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Underwater dwellings	Spike traps	Huge bridge	Bleeding walls	Screaming fog	Unstable mineshaft
2	Stone statues	Winding corridors	Strange gravity	Writhing trees	Rune covered portal	False floor
3	Alien sky	Lair	Long stairs	Connected rooms	Rickety ladders	Deep valley
4	Many boxes	Misty moor	Huge cavern	Deep mud	Altar	Eyes everywhere
5	Large hives	Door after door	Deep pool	Ancient ruins	Tiny rooms	Cliff face
6	Dimensional jumps	Walking building	Branching corridors	Dungeon cells	Disgusting stream	Library

Barrow Wight

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Undead	Ghostly	Comes through walls	Oozing blood	Insectoid	Joker
2	Indescribably alien	Maniacal laughter	Draconic	In your head	Deadly joker	Eyes in the walls
3	False friend	Waterborne	Myriad and tiny	Ingenious traps	Miasma	Gigantic creature
4	Crushing corridor	Beneath you	Swallow your soul	Compel others to kill you	Your greatest fear	Venomous pustules
5	Unseen behind you	Charming	Travels in shadow	Gates to other worlds	Seen in the mirror	Writhing mouth worms
6	Cute and deadly	Hypnotic fronds	Horrific stench	Oozing ceiling	Summoned	Forgotten god

Random Barrow Encounters

Use these tables when you want to disclaim decision making for encountered creatures. Re-roll if a result doesn't fit, or roll twice and take the more interesting or relevant result.

Number

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	One		2 or 3	Small group	Large group	Horde/swarm

Creature Size

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1–3	Tiny		Small		Normal for type	
4–6	Normal for type		Large		Gigantic	Leviathan

Intelligence

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Mindless	Beast		Sentient		Otherworldly

Weapons

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1–3	Short blade	Long blade	Bow	Spear	Club/mace	Pole arm
4/5	Rock	Hidden	Trap	Net	Javelin	Flail
6	Bolas	Hand cannon	Dart	Grenade	Weird	Vehicle

Occult Attacks

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Poison breath	Fire blast	Flying shadow knives	Shapeshift	Lightning surge	Teleport behind you
2	Plague touch	Shapeshift into a swarm	Terror	Soul drain	Animate dead	Cursed luck
3	Magically charming	Animate surroundings	Telekinetic attack	Possession	Writhing vines	Deathless
4	Pocket dimension	Blinding or darkness	Death touch	Deadly familiar	Freezing wind	Entrapment circle
5	Control your limbs	Hold in place	Ghostly mist	Illusory foes	Insects under your skin	Invisible foe
6	Evil eye	Silken web	Hyper speed	Boil your blood	Summoned horror	Ice cage

Tier

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Barrow -1	Barrow Tier			Barrow +1	Barrow +2

Roll 2 dice for an adjective and 2 more for a noun. Imagine something about like that. Roll as many quirks as desired. Discard (or embrace) nonsensical combinations.

Creature Generator				
	Adjective	**Noun**	**Wants (if intelligent)**	**Quirks**
1 1	Blood	Bat	Vengeance	Extra eyes
1 2	Shadow	Bear	Answers	Quick
1 3	Hopping	Octopus	Honor	Twitchy
1 4	Two headed	Dragon	Oblivion	Sleeping
1 5	Ambush	Ooze	Escape	Fearful
1 6	Fluttering	Dinosaur	Unknowable	Extra limbs
2 1	Clockwork	Beetle (swarm?)	Food	Acquisitive
2 2	Crystalline	Boar	Protect family	Curious
2 3	Multi-headed	Centipede (swarm?)	Treasure	Parasitic
2 4	Water	Snake	Pleasure	Magical
2 5	Tentacled	Demigod	Cause pain	Ornery
2 6	Drop	Tree	Freedom	In agony
3 1	Burrowing	Vine	Weapon	Has babies
3 2	Ethereal	humanoid	Warmth	Ponderous
3 3	Shrieking	Demon	Survival	Friendly
3 4	Holocaust	Bird (flying)	A challenge	Spiky
3 5	Dimensional	Lion/tiger/panther	Safe haven	More nearby
3 6	Stone	Horse	Fulfill oath	Glowing eyes
4 1	Stinging	Human	Procreate	Amphibious
4 2	Stinking	Bird (non-flying)	Pursue quest	High pitched
4 3	Plague	Lizard	Conquest	Has allies
4 4	Lightning	Hornet (swarm?)	Serve a god	Sprinter
4 5	Pustulent	Frog/toad	Blood	Long reach
4 6	War	Rhino	Obey the law	Climbs
5 1	Dessicated	Elephant/Mammoth	A new home	Spits poison
5 2	Terror	Elk/deer/antelope	Magic	Unpredictable
5 3	Fire	Bison/aurochs	Water	Sucks life force
5 4	Teleporting	Fish/shark	Souls	Regenerates
5 5	Frost	Wolf	Conversation	Deceitful
5 6	Gigantic	Wraith	Find kin	Incredibly strong
6 1	Shambling	Ghost	Healing	Chameleon
6 2	Rock	Eel	Knowledge	Pursued
6 3	Sand	Spider	Sleep	Enslaved
6 4	Shadow	Crocodile/alligator	Cold	Young
6 5	Poisonous	Vampire	Home	Armored
6 6	Dimension jumping	Golem	Glory	Stinking

Barrow Loot

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Something very strange	Skin	Equipment	Banner	Pet	Document
2	Relic	Painting	Carpet or tapestry	Large hand weapon	Necklace or Torc	Eating utensils
3	Ingot	Box	Ancient coins	Chalice	Gems	Clothing
4	Ring	Book	Shield	Weird coins	Crown or tiara	Goblet
5	Religious artifact	Pottery	Small hand weapon	Sculpture	Mirror	Beverage
6	Explorer remains	Tool	Armor	Ranged weapon	Footwear	Potion or drug

Random Athland Encounters

Use these tables to disclaim decision making for encounters with Humans in Athland. The GM can decide some things and roll randomly for others. Re-roll if a result doesn't fit, or roll twice and take the more interesting or relevant result.

Country Folk

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Farmer					
2	Miller	Herder	Crafter	Healer	Builder	Tinker
3	Merchant	Knight	Soldier	Hunter	Woodcutter	Noble
4	Wanderer	Tavernkeep	Beekeeper	Mage	Fisher	Bandit/robber
5	Town folk		Barrow raider	Tax collector	Priest	Fugitive
6	Mercenary	Warden	Refugee	Entertainer	Courier	Monster

Town Folk

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Orphan	Beggar	Trader	Country folk		
2	Veteran	Thug	Crafter	Shopkeep	Nanny	Thief taker
3	Noble	Servant	Knight	Guard	Soldier	Priest
4	Mage	Physicker	Barrow raider	Artificer	Artist	Scholar/Scribe
5	Thief/robber	Builder	Grifter	Gambler	Sailor	Entertainer
6	Fugitive	Drunk	Cook	Merchant	Mercenary	Monster

Age

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Child	Adolescent	Adult		Mature	Elderly

For Forged in the Dark Veterans

You may be looking at this game because you are familiar with *Blades in the Dark* or other *Forged in the Dark* games. If so, you are likely interested in what's different in this one. So here is a list of the most significant changes.

The Basics (page 1)

◆ **Attune:** Since occult forces work differently in this game than in *Blades in the Dark*, **attune** is defined a little differently. Anyone can open their mind to sense arcane forces, but it takes training to actually manipulate magic in any systematic way (page 7).

◆ **Resistance:** By default, resistance reduces harm by two levels of severity (from level 3 to level 1 harm, for example) (page 18).

◆ **Armor:** You can use armor and resist on the same roll (page 18).

◆ **Short-term harm:** Harm can be designated as short-term, which means it can be cleared under some identified circumstance (such as resting or taking the antidote) during a delve (page 17).

◆ **PC death:** No ghost, vampire, or hull playsheets. Under most circumstances, if a PC dies that will mean creating a new character (page 145).

Characters (page 23)

◆ **Playbooks:** There are new setting specific playbooks (page 23).

◆ **Reprieve:** Since the PCs are not criminals, but they can suffer incredible stress from delving, vice has been renamed to reprieve (page 25).

◆ **Signature abilities:** Each playbook has one signature ability, which the character gets automatically. The player can still choose one special ability at character creation (page 24).

◆ **Standard items:** There's a new standard item list to reflect the tech level of this world and the needs of a crew of barrow raiders (page 54).

◆ **Armor load:** Regular armor is just 1 load; heavy armor is 2 load (page 54).

The Crew (page 57)

◆ **Crew books:** There are new setting specific crew books (page 57).

The Delve (page 73)

◆ **The delve:** Instead of a score, the basic kind of crew operation is a delve into a barrow (page 73).

◆ **Engagement roll:** The engagement roll is significantly simplified, without adding and subtracting dice for individual factors (page 76).

◆ **Loot:** During a delve the crew accumulates loot in the form of loot dice (which are rolled later to determine payoff). Loot uses load, so PCs will have to make choices about how much they will try to carry. PCs might also find special magic items during the delve (page 80).

◆ **Group actions:** Leading a group action works differently. The leader rolls with the highest action rating of the group. That determines success and also the stress cost (page 90)

◆ **Traversing:** Rules for movement to, from, and within a barrow have been added (page 79).

◆ **Rest during a delve:** The standard *Blades* system assumes that scores will be of limited in duration, with a relatively small number of action rolls. Some delves may last much longer in this setting, so we need to provide some method of resource replenishment in between downtimes. So there is a Resting mechanic, to allow the crew to hole up in a safe location and replenish some of their stress, armor uses, etc. (page 79). Because half of stress can be recovered while resting, any stress relief roll during downtime also replenishes stress to at least half of maximum (page 111).

◆ **Exiting a delve:** Rather than slogging through the process of getting back after a delve, the process can be abbreviated if the group agrees (page 83).

- **Operations:** A complex crew action that is not a delve, similar to a score in *Blades in the Dark*, is an operation (page 84).
- **Travel:** Simple rules for encountering potential difficulty while traveling overland or over sea have been added (page 84).

Playing the Game (page 87)

- **Claims:** Since this is not a game about taking control of criminal activity in a city underworld, the basic claim system doesn't apply, and there are no identified hunting grounds. Instead, a crew can attempt to stake a claim on one or more barrows and prevent other factions from controlling them. The game doesn't require this, however (page 95).

Downtime (page 103)

- **Payoff:** PCs get loot dice during the delve and then roll to discover exactly how much their stuff is worth when they have time to assess it during downtime (page 103).
- **Special loot:** Besides coin, the crew can discover special magic items and other things of value among the things they bring out of a delve (page 104).
- **Trouble and entanglements:** Since there is nothing like a modern concept of a professional constabulary in this setting, Heat has been changed to Trouble. It works similarly, but wanted levels have been renamed to Notoriety levels. You clear Notoriety not by going to prison but by laying low or performing a service for a powerful faction. Entanglements are determined differently and the kinds of Entanglements that arise have been adjusted to fit the setting (page 106).
- **Acquire asset:** If the GM sets a required minimum quality level for an asset, and you don't roll high enough for an asset of that Tier, you can accept drawbacks to make up the difference (you can also pay coin as usual) (page 109).
- **Divine assistance:** Athland has a pantheon of major gods, each of whom has a network of temples and priests. During downtime, PCs can

pray for divine assistance from gods with whose temple they have positive faction status. They can obtain various kinds of mechanical bonuses that fall within the dominion of the god with whom they have favor (page 110).

- **Recovery:** We're assuming that downtime in this setting is long enough for PCs to rest up and heal their wounds before the next expedition. So recovery is not based on a clock, but a roll to clear harm. Recovery always clears at least level 1 harm and will usually clear more (page 111).
- **Reprieve:** Clearing stress is handled differently than Blades. You start downtime by clearing stress up to half of maximum. To clear more stress, you roll 2d. A failure on the roll means you overload (page 112).
- **Crafting:** Since this is not a steampunk setting and there is no spark-craft or a ghost field, crafting works a bit differently. Instead of inventing, the process of developing a new item is called researching, because it most likely involves rediscovery of how it was done in the **past. Artificers and Mages each get a crafting special ability. There is a new list of sample** crafted items (page 113).
- **Crafting item quality:** If you are crafting an item and it doesn't meet the minimum required quality level, you can spend coin as usual to increase the item's Tier, or you can accept drawbacks to make up the difference (page 113).
- **Carrying items on a delve.** Clarified the limits on carrying mundane, alchemical, and magical items (page 117).

Running the Game (page 121)

- **Creating a barrow:** Guidance for the GM on setting up barrows (page 126), creating encounters (page 132), and managing traps and obstacles (page 143).
- **Danger:** There's a guidance on adjusting the threat level, managing fights, and making the game exciting (page 138).
- **Starting the game:** Procedures for guiding the players through character creation, crew creation, and first delve are provided (page 138).

◆ **Starting situation:** A sample starter scenario ("Delve in Blackbarrow") is provided to get a one shot or campaign going (page 147).

Strange Things

◆ **Commitments:** After character creation, PCs can choose a commitment if they wish (and they meet the prerequisites). They pledge themselves, body and soul, to some great power. This gives them a new xp trigger and access to new special abilities (page 154).

Athland

◆ **Setting:** The land, people, and history of Athland are described (page 165). Within Athland, the Barony of Trenghall is provided as a default setting, with maps, locations, factions, etc. (starting on page 172).