BRINKWOOD

THE BLOOD OF TYRANTS

A poacher's widow sat sighing
On the side of the white chalk bank,
Where under the gloomy fir-woods
One spot in the ley throve rank.

She thought of the dark plantation,
And the hares, and her husband's blood,
And the voice of her indignation
Rose up to the throne of her God.

'I am long past wailing and whining-
I have wept too much in my life:
I've had twenty years of pining
As an English labourer's wife.

'There's blood on your new foreign shrubs, squire,
There's blood on your pointer's cold feet;
There's blood on the game you sell, squire,
And there's blood on the game you eat.

'So I'll take up my poor husband's bow, Squire
Fletch arrows of ashwood and yew
I'll 'scape to the Brinkwood this evening
And there will I join with the few

'And I will not put down my labors
I'll take forest leaves for my bed
Until this arrow pierces your cold heart, Squire
And you in your coffin lie dead

'So to kennels and liveried varlets
Where you starved your own daughter of bread
And worn out with liquor and harlots
See your heirs at your feet lying dead

'When you follow them into your coffin
And your soul rots asleep in the grave
Then Squire, you will not be forgiven
By the free men you took as your slaves

-Excerpted and adapted from "The Bad Squire," by Charles Kingsley

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www.brinkwood.net

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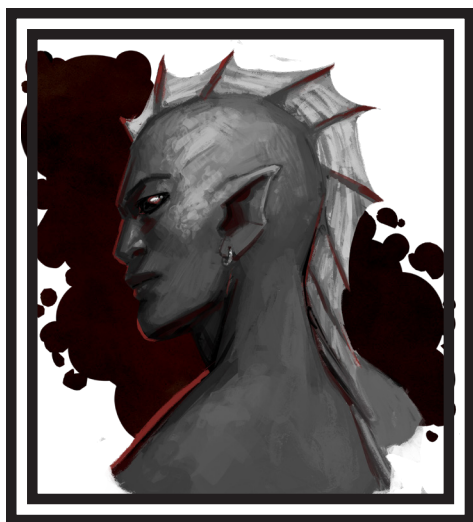Veronica Lockwood
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

INTRODUCTION

BASIC PREMISE

The world is not as it should be. The rich feed—literally—upon the poor, as blood-sucking vampires who barely bother to conceal their horrific, parasitic nature. The downtrodden people of the world struggle under the burdens of rent, payable through the sweat of their toil or the blood of their veins. Evil has triumphed. Many have given in to despair. But all is not lost.

In *Brinkwood*, you take on the role of **brigands:** renegades, thieves, and rebels struggling for freedom and liberation in a castylpunk world controlled by vampires. Radicalized by tragedy, you have taken up arms and fled into the forests, where you were taken in by unlikely allies—the fae, forgotten creatures of myth —who offered a different path and the means to fight back against your oppressors.

Masks, forged of old wood and older magic, are the final tool left to fight a war long ago lost. If you wear them, they will take their price, etching themselves upon your very soul. But they will also let you spill the blood of the rich and powerful vampires that now rule the land, and from that blood you strengthen yourself and your movement.

DRINK THE RICH, BEFORE THEY DRINK YOU.

Castylpunk

Castylpunk is an aesthetic genre that blends elements of gothic horror, medievalism, anachronism, victorianism, gas-punk and fantasy. Castylpunk worlds are usually medieval in setting, but aren't concerned with historical details so much as aesthetics. You might find factories, gearworks, victorian fashion, and other out-of-place setting details, set against a backdrop of gloomy castles, old decaying cities, and vaulted gothic architecture. This is a world where you'll find faeries and other supernatural creatures, but they've been driven to the fringes, back into the darkest parts of the forest where few dare tread. The notable exception in this case, of course, being vampires.

The "punk" in Castylpunk implies a punk aesthetic and intention brought to bear on the setting. You aren't here to admire the scenery, brood in secret castles, or soliloquize on your moral complexity while you drink the blood of virgins from a crystal chalice; you are here to *fuck shit up*. This isn't a game about having sympathy for blood-drinkers and oppressors; it's about staking them through the goddamn heart. Be reckless. Be active. Stay mad. Stay punk.

What is this Game About?

�҂   Coming together, finding unlikely allies, understanding cultures and people that might at first seem alien to you.

✚   Organizing people. Recruiting in secret. Staging a full-fledged rebellion against the oppressors that drain people, both literally and figuratively, of everything they have.

✚   Blowing stuff up. Assassinating vampires and their collaborators alike. Planning raids, taking what you need from the stores of your enemies, waging guerrilla war, and slowly but surely growing your movement.

✚   Navigating the politics of underground resistance and, eventually, revolution. Making hard choices about whose needs to prioritize, and giving voice to a collective, democratic will in a tyrannical world.

✚   Taking back power for the marginalized, dispossessed, and poor. Putting fear into the hearts of your oppressors. Drinking the Rich.

Dramatic Questions

✚   What does it take to win people's trust, organize a rebellion, and achieve victory? What sacrifices must be made? Who must make them?

✚   How do you balance the needs of the people you're trying to liberate, versus the costs of overthrowing those that keep you all in chains?

✚   What amount of violence—be it physical, political, emotional, or economic—is necessary to achieve liberation? How do you keep your focus on your goals without devolving into vengeance and bloodlust?

GMs and Players

This book makes a distinction between two groups that play the game of *Brinkwood*: the GM, who runs the world and characters of *Brinkwood*, and the players, who take on specific roles as **brigands**, the heroes of the story you and your friends will tell.

But remember: the GM is a player and participant in *Brinkwood* even though they do not control a brigand, and it is not their sole responsibility or role to manufacture a fun experience for the group. The game of *Brinkwood* is a collaborative creation between the GM, the players, and this very rule book.

How to Use this Book

This book is intended to be used both as a learning tool and as a reference. This chapter is arranged to introduce you first to the setting of *Brinkwood* and provide advice on how to get a game up and running. Later chapters will dig into the specific mechanical systems and nuances of *Brinkwood*.

As a Learning Tool

If you're planning to play in a game of *Brinkwood*, you can stop reading at **Chapter 8 - Vampires and their Servants**, though it's recommended that you skim the previous chapters to get a sense of the setting, rules, and mechanics of *Brinkwood*.

If you're planning to run a game of *Brinkwood* as a GM, it is recommended that you familiarize yourself with the entire book, though knowing it front-to-back isn't a requirement for a good game. Particular areas of focus for the aspiring GM are as follows:

- ✠ Chapter 2 - The Rules
- ✠ Chapter 5 - The Rebellion
- ✠ Chapter 6 - The Foray
- ✠ Chapter 7 - Downtime
- ✠ Chapter 9 - The Campaign

As a Reference

This book is laid out in a progressive form, designed to make quick reference easy. Starting from **Chapter 6 - The Foray**, chapters are laid out to progress through a typical session of *Brinkwood*, leveling on concepts as they are likely to come up in play.

If you are experienced with the *Forged in the Dark* setting, you may choose to skim the **Chapter 2 - The Rules** for specific differences and reference it only for the discrepancies between *Brinkwood* and the base *Forged in the Dark* system. If you forget a rule and choose to pull on your experience with *Forged in the Dark*, your ruling will likely be accurate enough to keep the game moving.

It is recommended that you don't necessarily reference every rule or double check every mechanic during play, both as player and GM. *Brinkwood*, like other *Forged in the Dark* games, is designed to collapse down to simple mechanics. If in the moment you apply a **basic action** or **fortune roll** to make a determination instead of looking up a specific mechanic, you will not significantly harm your campaign or your play experience.

It is recommended that you have a copy of the **GM reference sheet** close at hand during play, and that each player have a copy of the **player reference sheet**, as being aware of the options available and the basic mechanical interactions can often be useful to GM and player alike.

A Note on Language

In a tabletop roleplaying game, it is important to be clear on agency and responsibility for rules and procedures. To this end, this book will clarify between three groups: the GM, the players, and the playgroup. In this context, the term "playgroup" refers to both the GM and the players. Rules not specifically addressed to one of these three default to applying to the entire playgroup.

THE DRINKWOOD

Fletchgrove

Hogswick

INNISFIRTH

Trismont

DRANCASTER BRIDGE

Drancaster

Cardenfell River

WROUGHT BRIDGE

WROUGHT FORTRESS

Stamleigh

Ironholme

Oldleigh

Flaypool

Flinford

The Veins

THE MARSHLANDS

World and Setting

The Bloody Isles

Brinkwood takes place in Cardenfell, a county on the island of Orslae, the largest island in a small archipelago off the coast of a continental mainland called the Crimson Empire. Together, the Orslaen archipelago is often referred to as The Bloody Isles, and its subjects are ruled by the Crimson Crown of the mainland. Almost everywhere else in the so-called "civilized" world, vampires dominate as well.

Cardenfell is rich in natural resources with deposits of coal and silver, as well as large tracts of fertile farmland. In many ways it is the beating heart of the Isles, and as the saying goes, "Blood flows from Cardenfell." It is controlled by one of the most powerful and favored Vampire Lords of the entire Crimson Crown, and is as jealously guarded as it is heavily taxed.

The vast majority of the population is kept at or below a subsistence level of economic growth, with most of the population being peasants obligated to pay rent in blood, silver, or labor to the liege lord or landlord who owns the property they live and work on. Officially, serfdom was abolished on the Bloody Isles shortly after the Crimson Crown took power, but with the land and resources firmly in the hands of vampires, most people have seen little change in their economic station.

Blood Sterling and Vampirism

At least a century ago, someone invented blood sterling. Some say it was a secret cabal of alchemists; others whisper it was the Crimson Queen herself. Officially, blood sterling has always existed, and is just as natural as anything else. To say otherwise can get you hanged.

Despite the rumors, *someone* figured out how to mix silver and blood together, transmuting the two substances into something incredibly powerful. When melted down and imbibed, it grants its drinker vampiric power. As the would-be vampire drinks more, their strength grows. At first, they feel hail and healthy: strength returns to old bones, youth colors pallid cheeks. Soon, they shun the light of the sun. Then, silvered fangs grow in. Before long, they find they no longer need the concoction of blood and silver; instead, they may simply feed upon the unsuspecting populace. There are rumors of still more power granted to the now fully-fledged vampire: mesmerism, transformation, foul magic, and other deviltry.

Blood sterling forms the foundation of capital, commerce, and trade throughout the "civilized" world. The Vampire Counts keep great stores of the stuff, and extract blood and silver from their populace in equal measure to manufacture more. Coins of it are minted, and pass from the hands of commoners to the vaults of the rich, inequality steadily growing day by day.

The coins of blood sterling bear grisly monikers, individual to the different realms of the world. On the Bloody Isles, eight tear-shaped "drops" can be exchanged for small "dram" coin. Five drams combine into a "phial." Seventy-two phials taken together are a pound of

blood sterling, though few common folk will ever see so much blood sterling in one place. Instead, it's commonly stored in the vaults of vampires, who trade it with paper notes bearing the heraldry of their lineage.

Important to note is that vampires are not born, forced into their life, or even incapable of leaving it. A vampire who stops drinking blood will find their power wither away and their mortality slowly return, but most are unwilling to sacrifice the "gifts" of the blood, even if it means they no longer need to feast upon their fellow man.

Still, vampires are not invulnerable. The scent of burning ashwood deceives their senses, and while they are supernaturally resilient, arrows and stakes made from the wood of ash trees will pierce and corrode their flesh. Thus, ashwood is highly controlled, and carrying arrows of it is a crime punishable by death. The vampires enforce other bans, though it is uncertain whether these substances are actually dangerous to them, if they just wish to give the impression that they might be, or if there are other socio-political reasons for their control. These substances include pure silver, gunpowder, bows, and steel. Open flames are also strictly controlled, as it said that flame will envelop a vampire as easily it will any other man.

BRINKWOOD

Along the edge of Cardenfell, straddling its border, lies the forest known to all manner of folk as the Brinkwood. Since time immemorial, it has been left unmolested as all know it as a realm of the fae. Mothers and fathers warn their children away from it, telling legends of wights, ghosts, beasts of snapping teeth, birds of sharp talons, and vines with twisting thorns. There are few foolhardy enough to venture within.

But you are not to be deterred by bedtime stories, and where vampires fear to tread, you might find allies. The forest proved itself dangerous and wild, but still you persisted, and in time the fae, curious as they are, sought you out. Under the great trees of the forest, on altars of ancient stone you spilled your blood and pledged yourself to your cause, and the fae pledged their assistance.

Now, the forest is your home. It is no less deadly, but now you exist in detente with it, avoiding the worst of its dangers and harvesting what fruits of it you need to live. The forest is ally and rival, shielding you with its ashwood from the senses of vampires and with its legends from the peering eyes of folk. But each day you must earn its respect and prove your intentions to the spirits and beasts who now call you neighbor.

THE WYLD

What is beyond the world of *Brinkwood*? The Wyld. None have seen the Wyld, the home of the fae, but its reverberations can be felt as its magic ebbs outward from the Brinkwood.

The Brinkwood is a "hedge" of sorts, erected by the fae or their progenitors to separate the two worlds. It was said that in ancient times magic flowed freely from the Brinkwood, but as the Crimson Crown rose to prominence, the fae fortified and sealed the Brinkwood, leaving only a few sparse cracks for magic to flow through.

Ordinary folk may perceive the magic of the Wyld as it grows out of the cracks in the Brinkwood, and it is most prominent in places of wild wilderness. It is perceivable in villages, and nearly dead in cities and towns. Rumors speak of ancient mages, druids, and witches that could weave and use the Wyld's magic to perform great works of magecraft, but that knowledge is all but lost to time. The exact nature of the Wyld in your game of Brinkwood, as well as what it is still possible to do with it, is left to the discretion of you and your playgroup.

Getting Started

If you are planning to play *Brinkwood* as part of a larger campaign, it is advised that you begin with a "Session Zero" where your playgroup can discuss the game, their characters, and the content you will want to include.

Alternatively, you can begin with a one-shot using one of the modules included and pre-generated characters. You can always spin your one-shot into a larger campaign later.

What You Need

✠ 3-7 people, one of whom will act as the GM

✠ This manual, **mask** and **background sheets**, and a copy of each **reference sheet**, including multiple copies of the **player reference sheet**. All reference sheets are available for download from www.brinkwood.net

✠ Pencils, paper, laptops, tablets, or a virtual tabletop such as Roll20

✠ Some standard six-sided dice

Background Reading

Consider beginning your Session Zero by having the players take turns reading aloud from the background reading on the **one-pager document**, in order to set the tone and establish the concept for *Brinkwood*.

Concept

Your group should have a good idea of the intended **concept** of *Brinkwood* from the background reading, but you should discuss whether you want to make any changes to the concept of the game.

AIM

Once the **concept** is established, discuss your **aim**. Your aim should be to have fun as a group, but what exactly that means might vary based on individual expectations. Discuss these questions:

✠ *Brinkwood* is designed with an explicit win state, namely, when you successfully overthrow the Vampire Lord's regime in Cardenfell. Is everyone on board with this goal?

✠ *Brinkwood* can be played with lose states, such as total-party-kills or character death, though even these outcomes do not necessarily mean the end of the campaign. More brigands may take up the Masks your brigands wore and continue the struggle. Is losing in these ways an acceptable outcome? Should character death be mechanically determined or story-based? The answer can vary from person-to-person.

TONE

Take a moment to discuss the **tone** of your game. *Brinkwood* was designed for a dark, though adventurous, tone. It can be played as a black comedy at times, or as a more serious war-and-mud story. Make sure you establish and agree to the tone you want for your game.

Note that you are not bound to a single **tone** for an entire campaign, and that the tone may shift over the course of play. It is worthwhile to check in occasionally throughout a campaign to make sure everyone is still onboard with your evolving tone, or if course corrections are called for.

SUBJECT MATTER

The first step in deciding the **subject matter** of your game is to pick the Vampire Lord your campaign will focus on defeating. Each of the three Vampire Lords creates a different version of Cardenfell we call their **demesne**, and the one you pick will in many ways determine the content and subject matter of your game.

A brief overview of each Vampire Lord is provided below, but for more detail, see the **Chapter 8 - Vampire Lords and their Servants**.

As another option, you can put off the decision of which Vampire Lord you wish to pursue, playing out a few sessions in a less specific Cardenfell before settling on a direction for the campaign. Perhaps a minor noble lord is replaced by the "true" Vampire Lord once you make their incompetence obvious?

THE DUKE

Themes: *Industrial fascism, paranoia, feudalism, replaceable cogs, mechanics, billowing smoke, coal, choking dust, gunpowder, soldiers, tactics, a slow grind*

▌ THE DUKE'S DEMESNE ▐

Air choked with soot. In towns: the banging, clanging of industry during the day, the deathly quiet of a strict curfew after darkness, punctuated by the occasional scream or sob, quickly silenced. Marching boots on cobblestone. Shuffling peasants, their heads bent low, watched over by towering guard posts and panopticons. Turning gears and the wrenching grind. The taste of oil and gunpowder. Monolithic, imposing architecture, draped with tattered banners and propaganda.
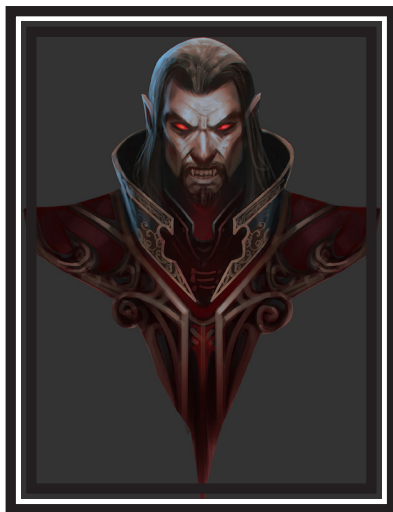
THE COUNTESS

Themes: *The Gilded Age, austerity, rot, inequality, beauty, misshapen, too-perfect forms, uncanny valley, dancing, victorian balls, deception, applause, sycophants, disposable things and people, dolls, The Favorite*

▌ THE COUNTESS' DEMESNE ▐

Cities and towns dotted with tattered tapestries depicting pastoral scenes; high vaulted architecture, and chipped crimson paint. Everything seems covered with layers of cheap gilt, hastily painted over decay and grime. Across village and town, the wind carries the scent of perfume over rot, and the faint strains of hauntingly somber music seem to echo, always at a distance.
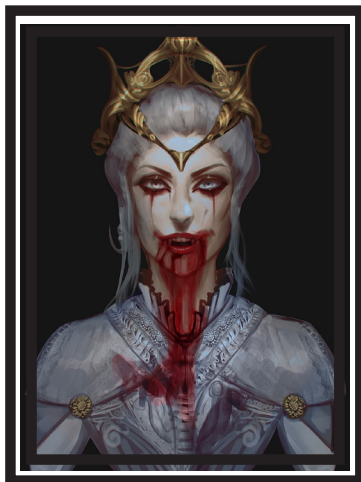
The Baron

Themes: *Late-stage capitalism, hunger, excess, eating, crunching, snapping, thirst, insatiable, hollowness, sunkenness, ravenous, beastial, howling, meat-horror*

▌ The Baron's Demesne ▐

The squeal of pigs, cries of terror, and lonely sobs. Blood—blood everywhere. Messy piles of gore and intestine, gutters choked with bile and filth. The stains of blood and ichor in the cracks of nearly everything. A foul, rotting stench, clinging to the air.

From your chosen Vampire Lord, you should have an idea of the themes and content your game is likely to include. However, it is best to go over the content of your game and make sure Cardenfell is custom-tailored to your playgroup. For this, we recommend Ron Edward's *Lines and Veils*.

Lines and Veils

Lines are hard lines, things you don't want to come up in the game and want the GM and your fellow players to steer away from. Veils are a little looser, describing things you want fast-forwarded through without going into too much detail about the nitty-gritty. Every player should lay out their Lines and Veils, and these should be recorded and made visible to all players. Please note that players are not expected to state why something is a line or veil for them, though room should be made if the player bringing up the topic wants to discuss it.

Some potential lines and veils that should be discussed are listed below:

�֎   Violence: *Brinkwood* contains violence by its nature, but the exact level of that violence is up to the players. Think of movie ratings: PG, PG-13 or hard R. Do you want descriptions of bloody gore? PG-13 action and stakings? Or more cartoon-esque violence where enemies puff away into smoke?

✖   Child Exploitation: Cogscampers are the children who work in the factories that dot the world of *Brinkwood*. This is meant to mirror real-world exploitation of children during the industrial age, but some groups might want to tone down or completely excise this element from the game.

✖   Sexual Violence: It is recommended that sexual violence be a hard line.

✖   Lack of Consent/Compulsion/Mind Control: In a great deal of vampire fiction, vampires are depicted as being able to compel people to do things against their will. Furthermore, by default, some player characters have the ability to "mesmerize" NPCs. How much of this you want in your game is worthy of discussion.

✖   Self-Harm: The *Ruin* mask contains a few references to combining magic and blood. A wearer of the Mask of Ruin does not need to physically spill their blood in order to use these abilities, and can use the magic that now courses through their veins to augment their abilities.

Safety Tools

Your group should also consider which safety tools to use, if any. A full discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of different safety tools is beyond the scope of this manual, but some to consider might be X-Card by John Stavropoulos or Script Change by Brie Beau Sheldon.

No matter which Safety Tools you choose to use, you should make it clear that the safety tool is not intended to override common sense or be leaned on as an excuse to "push" more traumatic content. *Brinkwood* is designed to be an adventure game, not an exploration of trauma or emotional pain.

THERMIAN ARGUMENT

The Thermian Argument is a term used to describe the pattern of justifying objectionable or harmful content in a work by making reference to the fact that it exists in the game world.

This, in the opinion of the designer, is a flimsy and foolish argument, and should not be invoked to keep part of the game that would be harmful or damaging to the players. There is no aspect of *Brinkwood* that should not be changed or excised in order to improve the play experience for your group. There is nothing you can change or alter that will fundamentally break the experience or the world.

Have fun together. Make *Brinkwood* your own.

NEXT STEPS

With your Concept, Aim, Tone, and the Setting established, you are ready to begin making your characters. Turn to **Chapter 3 - Character Creation** for the next steps of your Session Zero.

II

The Rules

The Basics

In *Brinkwood*, everyone sitting down at the game is a participant, and together they share the goal of collaboratively telling an engaging story of rebellion and revolution, using the Concept, Aim, Tone, and Setting established previously to guide them.

The goal of the **players** is to play their brigands to the hilt, creating characters that can grow roots in the world of *Brinkwood*, and are actively trying to overthrow the vampiric regime that controls Cardenfell.

The goal of the **GM** is to establish the dynamic and tone of the world with the players, playing to create an engaging, dramatic, and interesting story. The GM is not in charge of the story, and does not decide ahead of time what *must* happen. Instead, the GM manages a dynamic, interesting world that reacts to the players, and then sets the brigands loose in that world to tear it all down.

The players and the GM **play to find out**, meaning that the fiction of the world is established during play, not beforehand. While your **concept**, **aim**, **tone**, and **subject matter** are predetermined before the game begins, the sequence of events or the direction of the story should not be treated as a foregone conclusion or plotted out in detail by either the GM or the players.

Brinkwood has a unique structure in that it is divided into different phases of play called **free play**, **foray**, and **downtime**. The start of a typical session of *Brinkwood* begins in **free play**, during which the GM might recap the events of a previous session and introduce the current situation the brigands find themselves in (usually relaxing in their forest refuge) and ask the brigands to narrate what they're up to.

The brigands eventually gather to plan their next **foray**, consulting the *Map of Cardenfell* to try and decide which opportunities to pursue or what matters require their most immediate attention.

The game then cuts to the action of the **foray** phase, in which the brigands work together to overcome obstacles standing between them and their goals.

Next, the session typically wraps up with **downtime** where the brigands have a chance to rest, recuperate, and pursue personal or side projects.

Finally, at the end of each session, the GM and players discuss how the session went, assigning experience points (**XP**) to their characters and masks that allow them to gain new abilities.

Note that this session structure is not strict. Sessions can end in the middle of the **foray** for a cliffhanger, or can stop before **downtime** to be picked up at the next session. In this case, the GM will begin the next session by narrating where the players last left off.

Forged in the Dark Changes

While many of *Brinkwood*'s rules are different from the standard *Forged in the Dark* ruleset, there are several major areas that fans of *Forged in the Dark* games should review in detail while learning *Brinkwood*:

- ✠ Consequences and Harm
- ✠ Masks and Mask Actions
- ✠ Resistance Rolls
- ✠ Bans
- ✠ Resources and Resupply

BACKGROUND AND MASK SHEETS

While playbooks and **character sheets** are common features in tabletop roleplaying games, *Brinkwood* uses two separate sheets in order to track and record the mechanical and narrative features of each individual brigand, as well as each individual mask.

Each player records their brigand's information on their **background sheet**, which contains information on the brigand's personal abilities, traits, personal history, and equipment, among other details.

Meanwhile, each mask has its own **mask sheet**. Mask sheets are designed to be passed from player to player between each session when a player dons a new mask. A mask's abilities, stats, and experience are tracked independently of any individual brigand on its individual mask sheet.

*Hable's player takes a **background sheet** and records his brigand's details per the instructions in **Chapter 3 - Character Creation**. Later, during the course of play, Hable puts on the Mask of Violence. Hable's player takes the **mask sheet** for Violence and consults it to discover Violence's abilities, motivations, and attributes. If any changes are made to the mask's **XP**, **essence**, or other traits, Hable's player will record them on Violence's mask sheet.*

*Next week, Tekla's player decides she would like to have Tekla wear The Mask of Violence during a **foray**. She takes the **mask sheet** for Violence from Hable's player, which has the details and information Hable previously filled out. Tekla's player now plays with Violence's mask sheet, building off of the abilities, experiences, and character development previously established by Hable's player.*

THE CORE SYSTEM

Brinkwood is a tabletop roleplaying game. For the uninitiated, a roleplaying game is essentially a conversation in which the players narrate the actions of their characters (the brigands) and the Game Manager, or GM, narrates the actions and reactions of the world and non-player characters (NPCs) that populate the world around them. The typical flow runs something like this:

1. The GM **introduces** a scene, describing where the brigands are and what's around them. The GM **asks** the players what the brigands do.
2. The players take turns narrating their character's **actions** and dialogue.
3. The GM narrates how the world **reacts** to the character's actions, or what the outcomes of the player's actions might be.
4. When the brigands move to a new location, the GM **introduces** a new scene, beginning the cycle over again.
5. When in doubt, you can fall back on this simple cycle of introduction, ask, action, and reaction to play out most of the game.

The playgroup will sometimes introduce **judgement calls** into this pattern, moments where the players or GM need to decide if a roll is needed to adjudicate the outcome of a player's action or determine how the world around them reacts.

Judgement Calls

To decide when to engage the mechanics of *Brinkwood*, the playgroup makes several key judgement calls. Everyone contributes to each decision, but either the players or the GM has the final say for each:

✠   Does this situation call for a dice roll? And if so, which one? *Does the action carry a risk with it? Are you uncertain what should happen next? Has a player picked up the dice and is excited to roll them? Then a dice roll is probably called for.* **The GM has the final say.**

✠   Which actions are reasonable as a solution to a problem? *Can this person be swayed? Do I have to get out the tools and tinker with this old rusty lock, or could it also be quietly finessed?* **The players have final say.**

✠   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?* T**he GM has final say.**

✠   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.**

Rolling the Dice

Once a player decides that a dice roll is called for, they pick up the dice. *Brinkwood* uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the single highest result.

✠   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.

> *Merryn attempts to jump nimbly across the rooftops of Innisfirth. Merryn's player rolls 3d6 and gets 6, 6, 5. A Crit! Merryn crosses the distance easily and, as a bonus, finds an unlocked window at his destination, perfect for silently creeping into...*

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

> *Merryn creeps silently through the open window, and begins to search the room for the letters and documents he came for. Merryn's player rolls a 5 and a 3, a partial success. Merryn finds the documents, but the noise of his search has attracted the attention of one of the guards in a room below him.*

�ខ 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.

> *Merryn hides in a shadowy corner of the room, waiting for the guard to pass by. Merryn's player rolls a 3 and 1, a failure. The guard passes a lantern over the room and spots Merryn, shouts a warning, and draws his blade. Merryn is now in a desperate situation!*

> 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.

To create a **dice pool** for a roll, you'll use a **trait** (like your Finesse or your Prowess) and take dice equal to its rating.

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

✖ **Action roll**. When a brigand 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.

> *Jump from rooftop to rooftop. Engage a vampiric socialite in a duel of witty banter. Study ancient tomes of forgotten fae lore.*

✖ **Resistance roll**. A player can make a resistance roll when their character suffers a consequence they don't like. The roll tells us how much stress their character suffers to cancel out the consequence.

> *Steel yourself against blood magic sorcery. Nimbly dodge an incoming blow. Disarm a blood-soaked trap before it springs.*

✖ **Fortune roll**. The GM can make a fortune roll to disclaim decision-making and leave something up to chance. Players might make a fortune roll if there's no risk to failure, but they want to see how effective their action was.

> *How loyal is an NPC? How much does the plague spread? How much blood sterling is stolen before the guards kick in the door?*

✠ **Downtime roll**. When the brigands 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.

> *Rest and recover from the travails of brigandry. Reconnect with friends and allies. Pursue personal side projects.*

Actions and Action Rolls

Action Ratings

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

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

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.

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 your brigand 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.

Mask Actions

Each mask has a set of actions associated with it. These **mask actions** can be used to trigger **action rolls** like any other action, and are purposely defined a bit more broadly than normal actions.

Actions

When you ATTUNE, you open your mind to arcane power.

> *You might communicate with the fae. You could try to perceive beyond sight in order to better understand your situation (but **Surveying** might be better).*

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 reins of a carriage 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 guns to bear in a melee (but **Skirmishing** might be better).*

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 backstab or blackjack. You could try to waylay a victim in the midst of battle (but **Skirmishing** might be better).*

When you SKIRMISH, you entangle a target in close combat.

> *You might brawl or wrestle with them. You might hack and slash. 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, newspapers, 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).*

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 gadget or alter an existing item. You might pick a lock or crack a safe. You might disable an alarm or trap. You might use the various anachronistic, magic, or clockwork devices in towns to your advantage. You could try to use your technical expertise to control a carriage (but **Finessing** might be better).*

When you WRECK, you unleash savage force.

> *You might smash down a door or wall with a sledgehammer or an explosive. 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.

ACTION ROLL

When a player character does something challenging, you make an **action roll** to see how it turns out. An action is challenging if there's an obstacle to the brigand's goal that is dangerous or troublesome. If an action is something that a brigand can simply accomplish, then don't make an action roll.

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

To make an **action roll**, there are six steps. In play they flow together, but are broken down here for clarity.

1. The player states their **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 the group judges the result.

1. THE PLAYER STATES THEIR GOAL

Your goal is the concrete outcome your character will achieve when they overcome the obstacle at hand. Usually the character's 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 you 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 their 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.

> *"I want to **Command** him to tell us where Lord Shrieve is going. My mask twists in a distorted grin, 'We're parched dry, wisp. The question is, will we be drinking your blood, or your masters?'*

3. The GM Sets the Position

Once the player chooses their action, 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 considers the situation as follows:

By default, an action roll is **risky**. You wouldn't be rolling if there was no risk involved. If the situation seems particularly perilous, make it **desperate**. If the situation seems relatively safe or under control, make it **controlled**.

> *"This wisp is probably more scared of what Lord Shrieve will do to him if he survives and finds out he helped you than losing some blood. I'll say this **position** is **risky**."*

4. The GM Sets the Effect Level

The GM assesses the likely **effect level** of an action, given the factors of the situation. Essentially, the effect level tells you how much this action roll 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 wrong to say it's a **desperate position** and probably has **limited effect**. The GM might decide that Consorting would be a much better fit, and suggest as such to the player. The players are always free to choose the action they perform, but that doesn't mean all actions should be equally risky or effective.

> *"That said, he definitely knows where Shrieve went, since he was given orders to meet up with him later. I'll say this is **great effect**... if you can get him to talk."*

4. Add Bonus Effect

The players can upgrade the effect of their action after the GM has judged the **effect level**, either by invoking a fitting **mask ability**, **trading position for effect**, invoking **mask coherence**, or by **pushing themselves**. For more information on **bonus effect**, see the effect section on page 31.

> *"I want to **trade position for effect**. If this wisp doesn't tell us what we want to know, he's done. I'm not going to ask twice. Let's make it **desperate** with **extreme effect**."*

5. Add Bonus Dice

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

For one bonus die you can get **assistance** from a teammate. They take 1 **stress**, describe how they help you, and give you **+1d**.

For another bonus die, you can either **push yourself** (take 2 **stress** or spend 2 **essence**) or you can accept a **mask bargain.** Note that you can't get dice for both; it's one or the other.

> *"I want to help out, so I'll play 'nice brigand.' "Tell us what you know, wisp, and you can start a new life far from here. Shrieve will never find where we hide you." I'll take a **stress** to give a **bonus die**."*

Mask Bargains

The Masks that the brigands don have magic, goals, and personalities of their own, and they may offer additional strength to the players in exchange for taking additional risks. These **mask bargains** are offers from the mask the brigand is currently wearing, either asking the brigand to perform some **risky action**, ensure a shared goal is completed, or otherwise letting the mask act "through" the wearer. Common mask bargains include:

�ខ Collateral damage, unintended harm. *The fires of Riot will burn out of control, likely consuming this entire building.*

✗ Commit to an unnecessary course of action or a more "complete" solution to a problem. *It's not enough to just kill this vampire. Judgement wants a full confession of his crimes.*

✗ Start and/or tick a troublesome clock. *You'll have to take your time to make sure you're not spotted, and Lord Shrieve is already getting ready to leave the ball. I'll tick the "Shrieve Departs" clock.*

✗ Add **heat** to the crew from evidence or witnesses. *Violence is a bit messy. You'll leave behind quite a few blood stains. I'm adding 2 heat.*

The penalties for breaking a bargain with your mask are the same as breaking an **oath**, described in greater detail in **Chapter 4 - Masks**.

Both players and the GM can suggest possible **mask bargains**, but the GM has the final say on which bargains are offered. If a player accepts a mask bargain, they gain **+1d** or **+Effect** as the mask gives the brigand's action an extra push.

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, organized by position, in the **action roll summary** below.)

The **action roll** does a lot of work for you. It tells you how well the character performs as well as how serious the **consequences** are for them. They might succeed at their action without any consequences (on a 6), they 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.

Each 4/5 and 1-3 outcome in the summary below 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**. Brigands have the ability to avoid or reduce the severity of consequences 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 Fletcher to convince her. When you face the Porcelain, what's your fighting style like?*

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 in any applicable **bonus effect**.

✠ Add up to two **bonus dice**:

✠ 1) **Assistance** from a teammate.

✠ 2) **Push yourself** (take 2 **stress**) or accept a **mask 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.

- �֍ **1d** for each **action rating** dot
- ✤ **+1d** if you have **assistance**
- ✤ **+1d** if you **push** yourself -or- you accept a **mask 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 **lesser 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.

DOUBLE-DUTY ROLLS

Since NPCs don't roll for their actions, an **action roll** does double-duty: **it resolves the action of the brigands as well as any NPCs involved**. The single roll shows how those actions interact and which **consequences** result. On a 6, the PC wins and has their effect. On a 4/5, it's a mix—both the PC and the NPC have their effect. On a 1-3, the NPC wins and has their effect on the PC.

EFFECT

In *Brinkwood*, you achieve goals by taking actions and facing **consequences**. But how many actions does it take to achieve a particular goal? That depends on the **effect level** of your actions. The GM judges the effect level using the profiles below. 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**.

	Effects	Ticks
Great	*You achieve more than usual. How does the extra effort manifest? What additional benefit do you enjoy?*	3
Standard	*You achieve what you would consider "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 impact diminished? What effort remains to achieve your goal?*	1

ASSESSING FACTORS

To assess **effect level,** first start with your gut feeling, given the situation and the *tier* of any obstacles, if *tier* is a consideration at all. If needed, assess three factors that may modify the effect level: *potency*, *scale*, and *quality*. If the brigand has an advantage in a given factor, consider a higher effect level. If they have a disadvantage, consider a **reduced effect level**.

Potency considers particular weaknesses, extra strengths, and other conditional or situational factors. For example, an infiltrator is more *potent* if all the lights are extinguished and they move about in the dark.

Quality represents the effectiveness of tools, weapons, or other resources. If a brigand does not have the **equipment** necessary to effectively take the action, their *quality* is reduced, possibly to zero if the action would be nearly impossible (such as trying to scale a sheer cliff without climbing gear). If a brigand equips an item that is helpful, but not necessary (such as using demolition tools to destroy a door made of wood), their *quality* is increased.

Scale represents the number of opponents, size of an area covered, scope of influence, etc. Larger *scale* can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the situation. In battle, the more people on your side, the better. When infiltrating, trying to move a whole platoon with you is a hindrance.

Tier represents the general toughness of an enemy or obstacle when compared to the capabilities of the rebellion, represented by the rebellion's **aspects**.

If the main difference between the brigands and the obstacle is...

... one of material goods, such as using the right lockpicks to open a fancy lock, compare *tier* to **organization**.

...one of social machinations, investigation, knowledge, or connections, compare *tier* to **influence**.

...one of martial strength, weapon strength, training, or discipline, compare *tier* to **force**.

Tier	Example Obstacles
0	A small pack of ghouls, a few sleepy guards, some grumbling townsfolk, a cobblestone fence.
1	A patrol of dramcoats, a wary wisp, a local merchant, a mass-produced brass lock, a tall wrought-iron gate.
2	A team of bit-bloods, a loanfang vampire, a savvy courtier, a crenellated stone wall, a masterwork lock.
3	A kith-level vampire escorted by guards, a master spy or infiltrator, a well-patrolled castle wall, a magically sealed lock.
4	A pure line vampire, a banquet dinner with you on the menu, the walls of the Wrought Fortress, a working of old magic meant to keep you out.

Also note that the *tier* of vampire servants represents their strength when acting in the capacity they are best suited for.

�֍ A *courtier* will be at full effect when posing an obstacle during a social scene, perhaps by trying to suss out the brigand's true motives, resist deception, or to manipulate or sow discord among allies. However, they will falter if trying to detect stealthy brigands and might be near useless in a straight up fight.

✖ An *enforcer* will be at full effect during combat, or when seeking to terrify or brutalize a population. They will be less useful at detecting ambushes or at investigating the brigand's activities, and will typically be rather useless in scenarios that call for subtlety, etiquette, or charm.

✖ An *investigator* will be at full effect when seeking out the brigands or keeping watch for them. They are difficult to ambush and will attempt to hunt the brigands down at every opportunity. They are not easily misled, outpaced, or fooled. In a fight, they might be able to hold their own, though they typically prefer to call in more blunt instruments. Likewise, they will be at **reduced effect** in social scenarios, though they may still be potent at sussing out hidden motives.

✖ An *officer* will have their full effect so long as they are attended by an appropriate number of subordinates. They excel at politics, investigation, and combat equally, but if stripped of their underlings they will quickly falter.

When considering factors, the **effect level** might be reduced below **limited**, resulting in **zero effect**—or increased beyond **great**, resulting in an **extreme effect**. In some especially dangerous cases, where the brigands are greatly outclassed, effect can even be reduced below zero effect to **negative effect**, which adds another level of penalty to effect that must be overcome before the brigands can even get a **limited effect** for their action.

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 but don't feel beholden to them.

Bonus Effect

Bonus effect (aka +**Effect)** is added in after the GM has assessed the **effect level**. As the GM, you should be sure to advise the other players about what bonus effects they have available, especially if the effect level you judged is below **standard**.

For example, if a brigand uses a **mask ability** that gives +**Effect**, it raises the **effect level** of the brigand's action, from **limited** to **standard**.

If a brigand wields a *fine* item that is helpful for their action, they gain +**Effect.**

If a brigand has an appropriate **action rating** that overlaps with a **mask action** for the mask they're wearing, they are said to have **mask coherence.** The brigand can choose to roll the lower of the two action ratings to gain +**Effect**. The GM has the final say as to whether or not a **basic action** and mask action have mask coherence.

If a brigand was **set up** for their current action by a fellow brigand using a **set up action**, they gain +**Effect**.

A brigand may **push themselves** or take a **mask bargain** to gain either +**Effect** or +**1d**.

Trading Position for Effect

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

*Ifig is in disguise at a masquerade ball thrown by the Countess. He needs to get into the inner chambers of the manor where the ball is held, and suspects that one of the servants, Lyessa, who is lingering by the door, might have sympathies to the rebellion. It would be *risky* to *Prowl* past, and he would only make it through the door and would still need to search for the exact chamber. If Ifig's player *trades position for effect* and instead tries to *Sway* Lyessa as a *desperate action*, his effect will increase and she might lead him exactly where he needs to go.*

Progress Clocks and Threat

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 vampire's manor? Make a clock to track the alert level of the patrolling guards. When the brigands 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**.

Suspicion

Ghouls (-1)

Threat

The playgroup uses **threat** to help keep track of the most likely effect the brigands will have on an obstacle. **Threat** is not useful for every roll and can usually be discarded if no **progress clock** is in play.

Threat is the average penalty to the **effect level** the brigands will have when acting upon an obstacle, with a threat of 0 indicating **standard effect**. The maximum threat that can be assessed is -3, signaling that the brigands will start at **negative effect** when acting upon an obstacle.

When creating a **progress clock**, **threat** should be displayed with the clock so that all players have a rough idea of how dangerous the obstacle the clock represents is, or if additional preparation might be necessary before they can effectively engage with the obstacle.

Likewise, if an obstacle is likely to require the brigands to resist a **consequence** before they can engage with it, mark the obstacle's **progress clock** with a **(E)** to denote an "elite" obstacle.

> *A pack of hungry ghouls roams the outskirts of Hogswick. The GM draws a 4-segment* ***progress clock*** *with a -1* ***threat*** *to indicate their relative scale and danger.*

Note that **threat**, as well as the effect of the brigands actions, is flexible by design. It should be used as a reminder of a set baseline in order to make it easier and more obvious where the effect will typically be set when acting upon the obstacle in question.

> *It is easier to mislead ghouls than it is to fight them. One of the brigands throws a juicy hamhock over a wall, and the ghouls swarm after it. This action is at no penalty to effect despite the -1 **threat**, because the brigands chose not to fight the ghouls.*

Threat can also be used dynamically to track the relative balance of power between the brigands and an obstacle. As the brigands gain the upper hand, perhaps by breaking armor off an enemy or wounding them, the threat will likely increase in their favor. If the balance of power shifts against the brigands, such as if an enemy calls in additional reinforcements or unveils a new, powerful ability, the threat may decrease.

> *Ifig takes up position at a door into the warehouse, forcing a chokepoint as the ghouls pursue him. Because they cannot effectively use their numbers, the **threat** of the ghouls is reduced by one, down to 0.*

RESOURCES AND RESUPPLY

When brigands use resources that may be in short supply, such as ashwood or black powder, the GM may choose to tick the **resupply clock**. If the resupply clock is filled, it means the rebellion is dangerously low on supplies, and the brigands should take immediate action to remedy this. The exact narrative and mechanical penalties for a full resupply clock are left to the GM, but some possibilities might include -**1d** to **engagement rolls** or the inability to use certain **downtime activities**.

The **resupply clock** starts at 4 segments, but increases in size depending on the **organization** of the rebellion, adding +2 segments for each rank of organization.

The **resupply clock** may be emptied through the **requisition asset downtime action** or by appropriating resources during **forays**.

RESOURCES

Black powder is a combustible substance used to fire pistols and rifles without fouling them and to detonate large, (relatively) controlled explosions.

> *Merryn uses some black powder when setting up an explosive trap in the vampire's castle. By using black powder, Merryn's player gains +**Effect** on his **Tinker** roll to create the trap.*

Ashwood is gathered from the fallen branches of ash trees, a special tree that grows only in forests home to the fae. The garlicy smell of ashwood confounds a vampire's senses, and piercing a vampire's flesh with ashwood causes them dire harm.

*Hable uses some ashwood arrows when fighting off a gang of loanfangs. Hable's player gains +**Effect** on his **Hunt** roll because he is using ashwood against vampires.*

Blood sterling is the dire currency of the Bloody Isles, and while you may find it distasteful, it does have its uses—namely bribing guards or purchasing supplies.

*Tekla tries to bribe a guard with some blood sterling to look the other way while she and her compatriots sneak into a manor. Tekla's player gains +**Effect** to her **Sway** roll because she's offering some blood sterling as a bribe.*

Using Resources

When a brigand first wishes to use a resource such as black powder, ashwood, or blood sterling, you should place a tick on the **resupply clock** and create a 4-segment clock for that resource with one tick filled. Every subsequent time the resource is used, put another tick on that resource's clock. If the clock fills, another tick should be placed on the resupply clock and a new **resource clock** should be started.

*When Merryn uses some black powder in his explosive trap, the GM marks a tick on a **resupply clock** and creates a clock labeled "black powder" with one tick already filled.*

Later, Ifig uses some more black powder to improve the effect of his pistol, and the GM marks another tick on the clock labeled black powder.

*When the **black powder clock** fills, it is erased, and the GM will tick another mark on the **resupply clock** and create a new black powder clock if the brigands decide to use black powder again.*

Consequences & Harm

Enemy actions, bad circumstances, or the outcome of a roll can inflict **consequences** on a PC. There are five types of consequences:

�֍ Reduced effect ✖ Worse position
✖ Complication ✖ Harm
✖ Lost opportunity

A given circumstance might result in one or more **consequences**, depending on the **position** and result of a roll, as outlined in the table below:

Controlled

6: You do it.   **Crit**: You do it with **+Effect**.

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 **lesser harm**, you end up in a **risky position**.

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

Risky

6: You do it.   **Crit**: You do it with **+Effect**.

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 take one or two **consequences**: suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate position**, you lose this opportunity.

Desperate

6: You do it.   **Crit**: You do it with **+Effect**.

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

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You take up to three **consequences**: **severe harm**, a serious **complication** occurs, you lose this opportunity.

Reduced Effect

This **consequence** represents impaired performance. The brigand'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 brigand's action by one after all other factors are accounted for.

> *Tekla throws ashwood into the air, hoping to blind her loanfang pursuers. They gag and choke on the noxious ash, but it quickly dissipates due to a **reduced effect** consequence.*

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 **heat** from evidence or witnesses, you lose status with a faction, the target evades you and now it's a chase, reinforcements arrive, etc.

The GM might tick a **danger clock** for the complication instead. These clocks represent a countdown to a more serious threat or obstacle being brought to bear on the brigands. 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**.

It is highly recommended that if, as the GM, you wish to bring in a complication or obstacle with a high *threat*, you telegraph its arrival first with a **danger clock**.

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, your target escapes out of sight, etc. Fill three ticks on a **danger clock** for a serious complication.

A **minor complication** is less severe. Typically, a minor complication will only create or put a tick on a **danger clock**, and usually only a single tick at that.

Don't inflict a complication that negates a successful roll. If a brigand 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 instead, the brigand has to wrestle them into position, and during the scuffle, the enemy grabs the brigand's pistol.

LOST OPPORTUNITY

This **consequence** represents shifting circumstances. 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.

> *Ifig **Skirmishes** with a Porcelain to trap her on a balcony, but she evades his blade and leaps out of reach. If Ifig wants to trap her now, he'll need to try a different method—maybe **Hunting** the Porcelain with his crossbow to try to pin her in place.*

WORSE POSITION

This **consequence** represents losing control of the situation—the action carries you into a more dangerous **position**. 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 brigand gets deeper and deeper in trouble.

> *Tekla follows Merryn's lead across the rooftops. She makes a leap across to the next rooftop, only to end up dangling by her fingertips—a **desperate position** indeed!*

HARM

Harm is physical and mental strain that is imposed on the character, typically during a fight or other physical challenge. In *Brinkwood*, harm is assessed directly to the **stress track**, unless it is reduced or countered by **armor**, a **resistance roll**, or soaked into a **ban**.

- ✠ Minor Harm - adds 1 stress
- ✠ Moderate Harm - adds 2 stress
- ✠ Severe Harm - adds 3 stress

> *Ifig ends up with a few cuts and bruises after crossing blades with a rustcoat. He takes **minor harm** as a consequence and marks 1 **stress**.*
>
> *Merryn's grasp slips as he swings from the pulley rope in a warehouse, sending him tumbling to the ground. He takes **moderate harm** as a consequence and marks 2 **stress**.*
>
> *Vallya Crown, a vampire assassin rakes her claws across Tekla's throat, causing **severe harm**. Tekla marks 3 **stress**.*

Narratively speaking, brigands are made hardier and tougher by their connection to fae magic and their masks. Despite grievous injury, a mask will simply not allow a brigand to die until its objective is completed.

Note that you will likely want to tailor the gore and description of **harm** depending on the desired tone and any safety concerns of your playgroup. Just because the **harm** mechanic allows for grievous, bloody injury that doesn't stop the story dead, it doesn't mean that excessive blood and guts are required.

A **ban** bars a mechanical or narrative aspect of a character, the exact effect of which is negotiated between the player and GM. Bans come in four different levels, three of which can soak up **harm** so it isn't assessed onto a brigand's **stress track**. For more information on bans, see "Bans" on page 40 .

| Level 1 Ban - Soaks 1 harm |

| Level 2 Ban - Soaks up to 2 harm |

| Level 3 Ban - Soaks up to 3 harm |

Note: Once a **ban** has been used to soak **harm** received as a **consequence**, it cannot be used to soak up additional harm from a different consequence, even if the initial ban didn't soak its maximum amount of harm.

> *Hable gets a nasty cut from the jagged edge of a Porcelain's arm, inflicting **moderate harm**. Hable is running out of **stress**, so his player decides to soak the **harm** into a level 2 **ban**. He doesn't mark off any stress and instead asks the GM for a level 2 ban.*

RESISTING CONSEQUENCES

When a brigand suffers a **consequence** that their player doesn't like, they can choose to resist it. Resistance is always automatically effective—the GM will tell the player if the consequence is reduced in severity or if you avoid it entirely. Then, you'll either expend **armor** or make a **resistance roll** to see how much stress your character suffers as a result of their resistance.

ARMOR

If you have a type of **armor** that applies to the situation, you can mark an armor's **load** to avoid a **consequence** instead of rolling to resist. For more information on **load**, see "Loadout" on page 98.

> *Silas has taken 2 **harm** and the fight isn't even over yet, so Silas's player decides to use Silas's **armor** to avoid the harm. He marks off 3 **load** and circles **plated jacket** under **equipment** on his **background sheet** and the harm is avoided.*

When a type of **armor** is used, it can't be used again until it's restored. All of your armor is restored when you choose your **loadout** for the next **foray**.

Shields

Shields provide a +**1d** bonus on **resistance rolls** where they are relevant to the situation, and may improve the **position** of a character.

> *The fight is getting tough,with multiple enemies attacking Silas at once. Normally, this fight would put Silas in a **desperate position**, but his player marks off a **buckler** shield and the situation becomes **risky**. When a foe lands a blow on Silas, his player is told to take **moderate harm**, but his player decides to roll to try and reduce the stress he has to take. He rolls his **Prowess** with a bonus die, because he can use his shield to block the incoming sword blows from his opponents.*

Resistance Rolls

You may make a **resistance roll** to reduce the severity of a **consequence** or avoid it completely, gambling your **essence** and **stress**.

You make the roll using one of your character's **attributes** listed below. The GM chooses the attribute based on the nature of consequences:

✠ *Insight*: Consequences which come from deception or misunderstanding
✠ *Prowess*: Consequences which come from physical strain or injury
✠ *Resolve*: Consequences which come from mental strain or lack of willpower

The rating for each **attribute** is equal to the number of dots in the first column under that attribute on a brigand's **background sheet**. The more well-rounded your character is with a particular set of actions, the better their **attribute rating**.

A brigand suffers **stress** or expends **essence** depending on the result of the resistance roll:

✠ Crit: 0 stress
✠ 6: 1 stress
✠ 4/5: 2 stress
✠ 1-3: 3 stress

> *Silas is in a desperate fight with several duelists and one of them lands a blow with their sword. Since the **position** was **desperate**, the GM inflicts **severe harm**. Silas's player tries to **resist** the harm, and rolls **Prowess** to try and dodge the sword blow. He rolls 4 and a 5, and only takes 2 **stress**, as opposed to the 3 stress of severe harm.*

Usually, a **resistance roll** avoids a **consequence**. Typically, only an elite obstacle will force you to reduce rather than avoid a consequence. If you're going to suffer **severe harm** from an elite opponent, a resistance roll would reduce the harm to **moderate** instead. Or, if you have a complication when you were sneaking into the manor house, and the GM was going to mark three ticks on an elite **alert clock**, they'd only mark two (or maybe one) if you resisted the complication.

You may only make one resistance roll against a given consequence.

The GM may also threaten several **consequences** at once, up to a maximum determined by the **position** and the roll result, as per the **Consequences and Harm** table on page 36 . Then, the player may choose which ones to resist. Players may choose to resist one consequence, see the outcome, and then go on to resist other consequences.

> *"She stabs you and then leaps off the balcony. **Moderate harm** and you **lose the opportunity** to catch her with **Skirmish**."*
>
> *"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** or expend the **essence** indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take and then decide whether or not to resist.

Resistance Roll Summary

✠ **Roll 1d** for each **attribute rating** (*Insight*, *Prowess or Resolve)*

You avoid the effects of the **consequence** or reduce the effects if the obstacle is elite.

Suffer stress or expend essence according to your roll:
- ✠ Crit: 0 stress or essence
- ✠ 6: 1 stress or essence
- ✠ 4/5: 2 stress or essence
- ✠ 1-3: 3 stress or essence

BANS

When a brigand wishes to succeed at a cost without rolling, they may take a **ban**. A ban bars the brigand from using an important part of their character's abilities while they remain under it. Think of traditional bans in fairy tales against silver, cold iron, wood, etc. and you'll have the right idea.

The GM and brigand should negotiate the mechanical and narrative nature of the **ban**, and the ban should be recorded in its relevant slot on the **background sheet**.

✠ **Level 1 - Light Ban**: The brigand succeeds with **limited effect**. This ban usually bars an object/class of object.

✠ **Level 2 - Normal Ban**: The brigand succeeds with **standard effect.** This ban usually bars a class of object, a mechanic, or an action.

✠ **Level 3 - Dangerous Ban**: The brigand succeeds with **great effect**. This ban usually applies to several actions, a major mechanic, or entire masks.

✠ **Level 4 - Final Ban**: The brigand succeeds with **extreme effect** and, when narratively appropriate, their character dies, transitions into a fae NPC, becomes part of their mask, or some other outcome created collaboratively by the GM and player. **The player has final say** on the outcome of a Final Ban.

*A group of drowners swarms the brigands rowboat as they start to cross Cardenfell River. Ennor senses the situation is about to go from bad to worse, and his player decides to take a **normal ban** to succeed on a **Skirmish** action with **standard effect** in order to fight off the drowners. The GM assigns a normal ban: his mask bids him renounce laughter, and Ennor may no longer **Consort** or **Finesse**.*

SCARRING A BAN

If a brigand wishes to succeed at a cost but has the relevant level of **ban** already marked, they may **scar** the current ban and take another. Scars are more permanent than bans, though they may fade with time. A scarred ban stays on a brigand's background sheet until it fades, usually due to completing a **long-term project**.Once a ban scars, it is immediately removed from the ban slot and is instead recorded as a **scar** on the **background sheet** while its mechanical effects remain in play.

*Later, Ennor clashes in a climactic fight with a vampire noble and is about to finish the fight with a longbow. His player decides this opportunity is too important to risk failure, and wants to take another **ban**. Because Ennor's **normal ban** is already marked, his player needs to **scar** it in order to ensure success on this **Hunt** roll. His ban on laughter is scarred, and he must now finish a **long term project** in order to remove it. He erases the ban on laughter from his normal ban slot and marks it down as a scar.*

Flipping a Roll

Bans can be taken after an action roll to "flip" it to a success by taking a ban equal to the current **position**, such that: **Desperate** - Dangerous Ban, **Risky** - Normal Ban, **Controlled** - Light Ban

*Hable silently creeps up behind an unsuspecting rustcoat, knife at the ready. He rolls **Prowl** from a **controlled position** to ambush the rustcoat, but rolls a 3, 3, and 1, a failure. Unsatisfied with that outcome, Hable's player takes a **light ban** to "flip" his roll to a success.*

*Hable successfully ambushes the guard, and the GM assigns a **light ban** since he was acting from a **controlled position**. Hable's mask forbids him from touching powder, and Hable cannot use firearms until the ban is cleared.*

Example Bans

	Light (Lv. 1)	Normal (Lv. 2)	Dangerous (Lv. 3)
1	Silver - all blood sterling	Diligence - TINKER or FINESSE	Esprit - **teamwork maneuvers**
2	Iron - all blades	Tears - SWAY or ATTUNE	Worries - Any **stress/essence** expenditure
3	Wood - all bows	Bravado- COMMAND or CONSORT	Burdens - any item costing **load**
4	Powder - all firearms	Quiet - PROWL or STUDY	Patience- HUNT, FINESSE, STUDY
5	Leather - all armor	Writing - STUDY or SWAY	Associations - SURVEY, CONSORT, SWAY
6	Parchment - documents, papers, etc	Laughter- CONSORT or FINESSE	Strife- COMMAND, SKIRMISH, PROWL

Recovering a Ban

A brigand may recover from a **ban** and erase it from their **background sheet** by using the **recover downtime action**. The brigand may take part in a short scene where they negotiate with their mask or Fae, take action to feel more human, or receive aid from another brigand. Next, they erase the **highest level ban** from their background sheet, and no longer suffer its mechanical effects.

*Back at camp, Hable's player takes the **recover downtime action** to clear his **ban**. Hable reminisces with Tekla about the time they snuck out from under the nose of a squad of rustcoats and feels a bit more at ease. The ban on **powder** is lifted, and Hable can use firearms again.*

STRESS AND ESSENCE

Brigands have a special reserve called **stress**, and the Masks they wear have a similar pool called **essence**. When they suffer a **consequence** that they don't want to accept, they can take stress or spend essence instead. The result of the **resistance roll** determines how much stress it costs to avoid a bad outcome.

*During a knife fight, Ifig gets stabbed in the chest. Ifig's player rolls his **Prowess** rating to resist, and gets a 2. It costs 3 **stress** or **essence** to **resist** the **consequences**. Ifig's player marks off 1 essence and 2 stress and narrates how they keenly dodge the blade.*

REMOVING STRESS

As noted in the **Downtime Actions** section, you may remove **stress** from your character by performing a downtime action: Reconnect.

When you rest, roll a number of dice equal to your lowest **attribute**, and remove **stress** from your **stress track** equal to the highest die roll.

GAINING ESSENCE

Essence, in contrast to **stress**, is first gained, then later spent. A brigand may gain essence by taking an **oath** when they put on their mask.

✠   If you swear an **oath**, roll dice equal to your current **oath rating** and gain **essence** accordingly. **1-3**: 2, **4/5**: 4, **6**: 5, **Crit**: 6

✠   When you fulfill your **Pact**, gain a dot in your **oath rating**. If you fail to fulfill an oath you have pledged, lose a dot.

PUSHING YOURSELF

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

✠   Add +**1d** to your roll. (This may be used for an **action roll**, **downtime roll** or any other kind of roll where extra effort would help you.)

✠   Add +**Effect** to an action.

✠   Take action when you're incapacitated.

Drinking the Rich

The Masks you wear allow you to drink the blood of vampires, converting it into **essence**. The more powerful the vampire, the more essence you will gain from drinking their blood.

Drinking is usually a time-intensive process, and if time is an issue, you may require either a **fortune roll** to determine how much blood you drain before you need to move on, or multiple **action rolls** if draining the blood of a struggling vampire.

Action Roll Effect	Essence Gained
Limited	1
Standard	2
Great	3

Fortune Roll	Essence Gained
1-3	2
4, 5	3
6	4
Critical	Full Essence

Roll Modifiers

✠ Start with 1d

✠ **+1d** if vampire is unconscious/incapacitated

✠ **+1d** if you have more than a few minutes to drain the vampire's blood

✠ **+1d** if you are in a rarely patrolled quiet place, or locked room

✠ **-1d** if guards are patrolling nearby or are likely to investigate soon

Filling the Stress Track

When a brigand's **stress track** fills, they may choose to be **taken out** of the scene, and their highest level **ban** becomes a **scar**. If a brigand is taken out in this way, all other bans are erased and the stress track is emptied.

*Tekla's player marks her last **stress** as she's thrown off Drancaster Bridge into the river below. Tekla's player decides she doesn't want to add drowning onto an already pretty terrible day, and says her character is **taken out**. The GM suggests that Tekla is washed downstream and will wake up later on the banks of the river, and Tekla's player agrees.*

*Tekla has a **ban** on touching iron as a level 1 ban, which becomes a **scar**. Tekla's player erases the iron ban from her level 1 ban slot and marks it down as a scar. She also clears her stress track.*

When a **ban** becomes a **scar**, it is erased from the ban slot on the **background sheet**, but the mechanical effect persists. A scar may heal over time, usually as the result of completing a **long-term project**.

If a brigand does not currently have any bans when their **stress track** fills, they may still choose to be **taken out** of the scene, emptying their stress track.

If a brigand chooses to remain in the scene after filling their **stress track**, the mask they are wearing takes hold and their stress track is emptied. For the duration of the foray or scene, the brigand *may not refuse a **mask bargain** in-character*, though safety rules *always* apply, and the player retains final say over their character's actions.

> *Ifig is in the middle of fierce fight with a gang of powdermen when he runs out of **stress** and **essence**. Ifig's player decides that now is the time to go all-in, and narrates how Ifig's mask, the Mask of Violence, takes hold.*
>
> *As Ifig continues to **Skirmish** the powdermen, the GM offers a **mask bargain** that Ifig will be consumed by his bloodlust, and will need to be literally dragged away from the fight when it's time to go. Ifig's player decides this is in keeping with Ifig's character and makes no objection.*

TEAMWORK MANEUVERS

When a team of brigands works together, they have access to four special **teamwork maneuvers**. The four maneuvers are:

- ✠ **Assist** another brigand who's rolling an action.
- ✠ Lead a **group action**.
- ✠ **Protect** a teammate.
- ✠ **Set up** a character who will follow through on your action.

ASSIST

When you **assist** another player who's rolling, describe what your brigand does to help their character. 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 may assist a given roll. If you really want to help and someone else is already assisting, consider performing a **set up action** instead.

A character may assist a **group action**, but only if they aren't taking part in it directly. You decide which character in the group action gets +**1d**.

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 brigand leads the team in a coordinated effort. Do you bark orders, give subtle hand signals, or provide charismatic inspiration?

Each brigand who's involved in the **group action** makes an **action roll** (usually using the same action) and the team counts the single best result as the overall result for everyone who rolled. However, the character leading the group action takes 1 **stress** for each brigand that rolled 1-3 as their best result.

The **group action** result covers everyone who rolled. If you don't roll, your character doesn't get the effects of the action.

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 about ability.

> *The brigands need to sneak past a few patrols of guards in order to enter Lord Shrieve's manor. Hable takes point, scouting the grounds briefly and asking the other players if they'd like to* **Prowl** *along the nearby walls as a* **group action** *in order to enter the manor. The other brigands agree, and since it's Hable's idea, he offers to lead the group action.*
>
> *Since all brigands are participating in the* **group action** *(they all need to enter the manor, after all), they each roll their* **Prowl** *and announce their highest result. Hable happens to get the highest roll, a 6, and so the brigands will successfully sneak across the garden, avoiding the bit-blood patrols.*
>
> *However, Tekla's player rolls a 2 as her highest result, a failure. As the leader of the* **group action***, Hable takes 1* **stress** *and narrates how he covers for Tekla, quickly pulling her behind a hedge when a bit-blood passes nearby.*

Leading Allies

You can also lead your allies with a **group action**. Roll Command if you direct their efforts, or roll another appropriate **action rating** if you participate alongside them. Your allies will roll dice equal to the relevant **aspect** you are using.

> *Hable makes contact with a circle of loyal Scribblers in Stamleigh, and convinces them to help him infiltrate a ball at the local lord's manor. The Scribblers will aim to bog the guests down in dry, boring conversations, leaving the guests practically begging for a more interesting conversational partner, in this case, Hable. Hable's player will roll* **Consort** *and lead a* **group action***, while the Scribblers roll the rebellion's* **influence***.*

PROTECT

When you **protect**, you step in to face a **consequence** that one of your teammate's would otherwise face and suffer it for them. You may roll to resist it as normal. Describe how you intervene.

> *Ifig and Ennor are fighting a group of powdermen mercenaries. Ifig **Skirmishes** up close and personal while Ennor **Hunts** with his longbow from a distance. When Ennor fails a hunt roll, the GM narrates that the powderman he was hunting quickly dives out of the way, returning fire and inflicting **moderate harm** as the powderman's shot shatters Ennor's collarbone.*
>
> *Ifig is unhappy with the idea of his ranged support getting shot in the middle of the fight, and declares that he'll **protect** Ennor by diving in front of the bullet. Ifig narrates that the bullet catches against his **plated jacket armor**, soaking the **harm**. Ifig marks off 3 **load** for using the plated jacket, but takes no stress. "Your fight's with me, bootlick," Ifig growls menacingly.*

SET UP

When you perform a **set up 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 +**Effect** or improved **position** for their roll. You choose the benefit based on the nature of your setup action.

> *The brigands are attempting to sneak into a grand fête thrown by the vampire lords and ladies of Drancaster, but they don't exactly have an invitation. Typically, sneaking into such a gathering would be **desperate.***
>
> *Merryn announces that he'd like to try creating a distraction, quickly **Tinkering** with a faulty gas pipe on the roof of a nearby building. Merryn's roll succeeds, and all but one of the doormen rush off to investigate the nearby disturbance. The rest of the brigands seize the opportunity, **Prowling** in with **risky position** instead of **desperate** due to Merryn's **set up action**.*

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 **set up action** lets you help the team indirectly. Multiple follow-up actions may take advantage of your set up (including someone **leading a group action**) as long as it makes sense in the fiction.

*Later on, Ifig challenges a vampire courtier to a duel in the manor's courtyard. Tekla announces that she'd like to do a quick **flashback** to her poisoning the vampire duelist's goblet of bloodwine with some ashwood as a **set up action**. Her **Finesse** roll succeeds, and Ifig will have +**Effect** against the now weakened vampire duelist.*

Since a **set up action** can increase the effect of **follow-up actions**, it's also useful when the team is facing tough opposition that has advantages in *tier, threat, quality, scale,* and/or *potency*. Even if the brigands' **effect level** is reduced to **zero effect** due to disadvantages in a situation, the set up action provides a bonus that allows for **limited effect**.

Fortune Roll

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

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

*Two rival vampire nobles, Lord Shrieve and the Houndsmistress, are engaged in a vendetta against one another. When one of the brigands investigates how this internal conflict is progressing, the GM makes two seperate **fortune rolls** for each vampire, rolling a number of dice equal to each vampire's tier, three dice each since they are both Tier 3 Kine vampires.*

*Lord Shrieve rolls a 6, while the Houndsmistress manages only a 4. The GM narrates how Lord Shrieve had **great effect** and has managed to considerably undermine the Houndsmistress's position at court. Meanwhile, the **Houndsmistress** only gained **standard effect** from her roll, which the GM narrates as a few secret raids on Lord Shrieve's holdings.*

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

*While pilfering the workshop of an alchemist, Tekla inhales dangerous fumes, choking the life from her. As control of her body slips away, Tekla grabs a random potion bottle and drinks it down. Will the arcane concoction cure her affliction? Will it poison Tekla to near-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 **rating** to determine the dice pool of the roll.

For example, when a faction or enemy force takes an action with uncertain outcome, you might use their *tier* or one of the rebellion's **aspects** as the rating to make a **fortune roll**.

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 the results.

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.

Other examples of fortune rolls:

✠   The brigands instigate a war between two rival vampires, then sit back and watch the fireworks. How does it turn out? Does either side dominate? Are they both made vulnerable by the conflict? Make a few **fortune rolls** to find out.

✠   A strange sickness is sweeping Cardenfell. How badly is a village hit by the outbreak? The GM assigns a *tier* to the plague, and makes a **fortune roll** to judge the extent of its contamination.

Fortune Roll Summary

✠   **1d** for each trait rating

✠   +**1d** for each advantage

✠   -**1d** for each disadvantage

Critical: Exceptional result/Great, extreme effect

6: Good result/Standard, full effect

4/5: Mixed result/Limited, partial effect

1-3: Bad result/Poor, little effect

Flashbacks

In *Brinkwood*, the mechanics do not distinguish between actions made in the present and actions made in the past. At any time, a player may call for a **flashback** in order to take an action in the past that would affect the current situation.

The GM sets a **stress cost** for activating a **flashback** based on the complexity and likelihood of a given opportunity.

0 Stress: An ordinary action for which the brigand would have had ample opportunity: *Surveying the vicinity of the vampire's manor, so as to know its general layout.*

1 Stress: A complex action or an unlikely opportunity: *Finessing an ashwood stake into a hiding spot near the manor wall, so as to have one ready after being searched by the guards.*

2 (or more) Stress: An elaborate action that involved special opportunities or contingencies: *Studying an ancient vampire tome that contains intricate knowledge of the blood magic used to seal the lost spirits who defend the manor, and how to negotiate with them for their aid.*

After the stress cost is paid, a **flashback action** 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 you just need to find out how well (or how much, or how long, etc.) something went. Sometimes a flashback won't call for a roll at all because you can just mark the **stress** and its goal is accomplished.

If a **flashback** involves a **downtime activity**, mark a tick in the **resupply clock** for it instead of paying **stress**. The GM has final say over what downtime activities can occur during a flashback, but in general, only **command cohort**, **requisition asset**, or **hone equipment** are appropriate.

Flashbacks can be immensely powerful, and their exact scope, and usage of, should be negotiated by your group. When in doubt, think about your established **tone** and whether a particularly powerful or dramatic flashback will help your entire group have a good time.

GATHERING INFORMATION

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

If it's common knowledge, the GM will simply 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 you want, but often the opportunity is fleeting and you'll only get one chance to roll for that particular question.

INVESTIGATION

Some questions are too complex to answer immediately with a single **gather information** roll. For instance, you might want to discover the network of contraband smuggling routes in a city. In these cases, the GM will tell you to start a **long-term project** that you work on during **downtime**, called an **investigation project**.

You track the **investigation project** using a **progress clock**. Once the clock is filled, you are rewarded with the following:

✠ You have the evidence you need to ask several questions about the subject of your investigation as if you had **great effect** on a **gather information** roll.

✠ Any **engagement roll** (see "Engagement Roll" on page 103) that follows up on an **investigation** gains **+1d**.

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**.

Fortune Roll: *Crit*: Great effect, *6-4*: Standard Effect, *1-3*: Limited Effect

✠ **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.

EXPERIENCE AND ADVANCEMENT

At the end of each session, the group should discuss the **XP** questions asked at the bottom of the **background sheet** for each character, as well as each mask used. XP gained from the background sheet should be recorded in the **XP clock** on the background sheet. When the XP clock fills, mark a new **action dot** in an **action rating** of your choice.

XP gains from the questions on the **mask sheet** should be recorded on the mask **XP clock**. When this bar fills, the group should discuss whether to add a new special ability to the mask or to add an **action dot** to one of the **mask actions**. The player who last used the mask has the final say on how to use this advancement.

▌ BACKGROUND XP ▌

At the end of each session, mark 1 attribute XP...

✠ If you brought into play your upbringing, profession, or personal history.

✠ If you took a course of action because of or expressed your tragedy, triumph, or scars.

✠ If you brought into play some aspect of your relationship to your fellow brigands, the rebellion, the Masks, or the Fae.

▌ MASK XP ▌

At the end of each session, mark 1 Mask XP (or 2 if performed multiple times)...

✠ If you fulfilled your **oath**.

✠ If you defeated a vampire of a higher *tier* than your highest **aspect**.

✠ If you fulfilled the condition unique to your mask.

Tragedy is the prime motivator for brigands, but it cannot sustain them forever. Eventually, the sorrow and rage of **tragedy** is replaced by the joy and hope of **triumph**. When your character has found their purpose in the revolution, or has something they want to accomplish—something bigger they're fighting for—re-write their tragedy into a triumph. Some examples might be:

- ✠ I am the bedrock of the rebellion; though I weather, I will not break.
- ✠ I have tasted the blood of my oppressor, and will hunt and hunt again.
- ✠ Though my family is gone now, I am mother to many—the mother of a revolution.

Death, Verancy and Retirement

As time passes, your brigands may begin to feel the weight of their **scars**, or gain so much **experience** that their value to the rebellion is better served behind the front lines.

When a brigand gains their 18th **action dot**, they become a **veteran**. The player may continue to play the brigand, but the brigand will not gain any more **XP**.

The player may at any time choose to promote their **veteran** to a **vanguard**. Vanguards increase the rank of one rebellion **aspect**, and players are encouraged to create a new brigand to play as.

> *Tekla gains a new **action dot**, bringing her to a total of 18 action dots. Tekla's player decides that her story is about wrapped up and decides to promote her to a **vanguard**. She narrates how Tekla takes over organizing the alchemical labs in the rebellion-held town of Stamleigh, increasing the rebellion's **force**.*
>
> *Her player brainstorms a new character, an apprentice of Tekla's named Sparrow who takes up her teacher's former place in the rebellion.*

When a brigand earns their fourth **scar**, they **retire**. The rebellion has taken its toll and the time has come for their story to end. The player narrates how their character steps away from the front lines, either by retiring to the ranks of an allied faction, through the sacrifice of their life in a climactic battle, or by any other means the player chooses.

> *Hable marks his fourth **scar**, and his player decides it's time for him to **retire**. He joins the ranks of the Fletchers, putting his talents as a thief and a marksman to good use training the next generation of archers and scouts. Hable's player decides it's time for a change of pace and introduces Tines, a brash deserter with a chip on his shoulder and a penchant for rushing into battle.*

Whether a brigand is dismissed through becoming a **vanguard** or **retirement**, the next brigand their player creates gains bonus **action dots** equal to their previous brigand's **scars**.

> *Tines takes over for Hable, and inherits four bonus **action dots** due to Hable's **scars**. Tines is no novice; his career has made him an expert in both **Command** and **Skirmish**.*
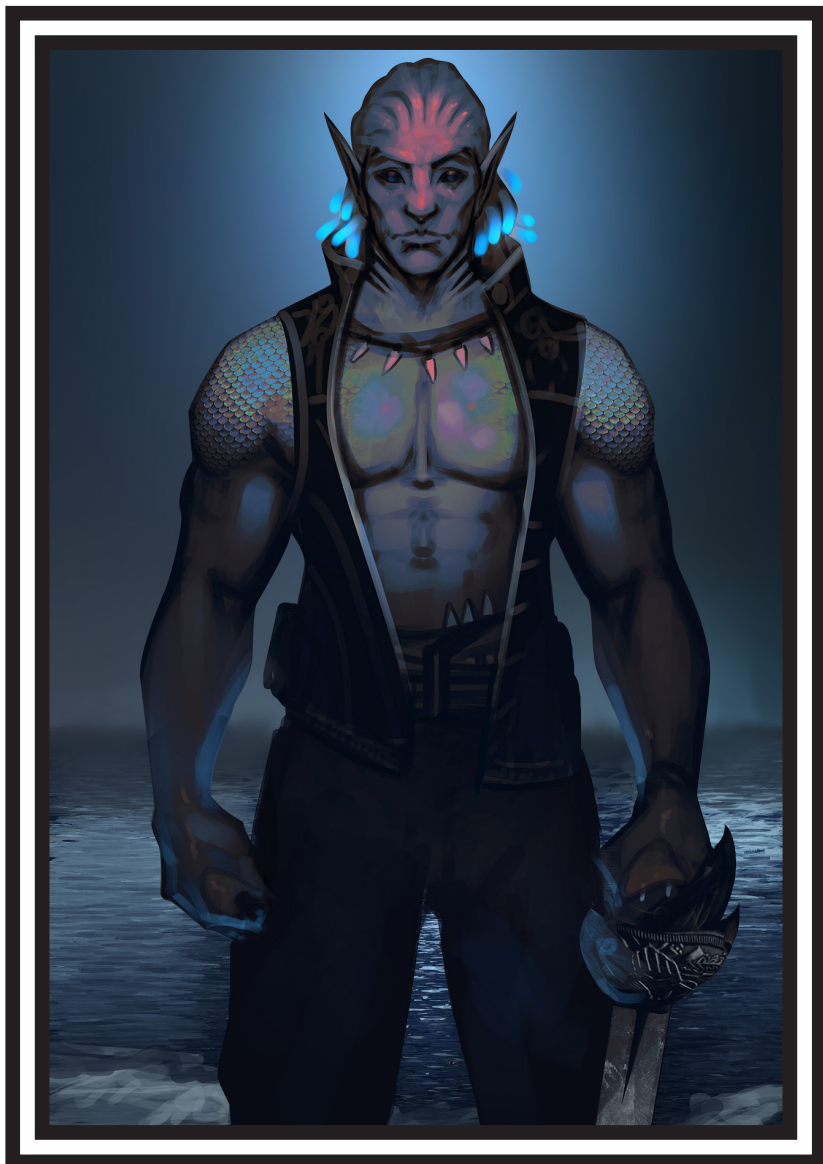
III
Character Creation

Every player except the GM will create a player character, referred to in this text as a **brigand**. You will build one **Fae** character together as a group. It is the GM's role to guide and help the players during character creation. It is recommended that you read through these sections one by one, and consider printing off multiple copies of this section for each player.

Folk and Look

Choose any mix of **Folk** you like and record it on your **background sheet**. This represents your character's ancestry and heritage, and while it has no mechanical effect on the game, you may choose to have it affect the **Look** of your character.

Upbringing

Choose an **Upbringing** for your character, and select one **trait** and **associate** from your chosen Upbringing.

Profession

Choose your brigand's former **Profession**, and select one **trait** from those listed and one **associate**. Next, mark down a dot in the action listed under your Professions's **training**.

Class

Choose a **Class** for your brigand, and mark down the **action dots** it gives you.

ACTION DOTS

After choosing your **Profession** and **Class**, you should have 4 action dots on your background sheet. Assign 3 additional dots, for a total of 7. Keep in mind that these dots may not raise an action rating over 3 dots.

TRAGEDY

Mark down your character's **Tragedy**, the inciting incident that caused them to leave their old life behind and join the rebellion.

BONDS

Choose **Bonds** for your brigand, be it to people, places, pastimes, or something else entirely that reminds your brigand why they fight. A brigand can **reconnect** with their bonds as a **downtime action** to recover **stress**. Typically, one or two bonds will suffice, with a maximum of three bonds being the limit for most brigands.

FAE PACTS

Choose a **Fae Pact** for your character. Your brigand will swear **oaths** on this Pact to gain **essence** and be rewarded with **XP** if they fulfill its terms.

NAME, ALIAS, AND PRONOUNS

Next, choose a **Name** and **Alias** for your brigand. Most folk in Cardenfell go by a given name, with only noble houses claiming family names. Peasant folk typically give their profession or village as a last name i.e., Gwenneg the Miller or Aedel of Cliffsblack.

Aliases can be anything you choose, and may serve as a "nom de guerre" for your brigand.

Finally, note down the pronouns your brigand should be referred to with.

Names: Gaël, Gwenneg, Judoc, Ronec, Luhan, Matelin, Kirill, Gothian, Jovan, Katarin, Ahez, Lizig, Servanne, Gaid, Maele, Awen, Riwanez

Aliases: Hooks, Fetch, Thicket, Lark, Badger, Oak, Laurel, Delight, Crow, Fox, Red, Jacket, Feathers

FOLK

Legends say that in the Old Kingdoms, the folk of the world were often distant from one another. Separated by culture, geography, and language, the folk of the world nonetheless slowly grew together. Now, none can truly claim a "pure" heritage without sounding like a dolt, as the fortunes, cultures, and peoples of the world have integrated and woven together. Some characters may show signs of their ancestry in their appearance, while others will not.

SALTFOLK

Saltfolk were the most common folk in the Bloody Isles during the Old Kingdom, and many count at least a few Salters among their ancestors. Saltfolk are diverse in all things, and culturally tend to seek accord and agreement with one another.

Look: *Tall, short, plump, skinny, dark, tanned, hardened, soft, cheery, dour.*

SYLFOLK

Sylfolk are people of the woods, and their legends claim that the first of their kind grew from the soil.

Look: *Tall, stocky, broad, willowy, multicolored, sun-dappled, oak-skinned, emerald-skinned, leaf-haired*

FAIRFOLK

The fairfolk, or "elves," are descended from the fae of the wilds who fell in love with other folk of the world. They are marked by their extremes, in beauty and in stature, and they can appear almost otherworldly to some.

Look: *Tall, lanky, cherubic, alien, gaunt, gleam-eyed, twisting, willowed*

DVARFOLK

The dvarfolk, or "dwarves," are an industrious people who once lived in great holds of stone and in clever mines dug into mountains. Their descendents tend to be a bit on the stockier and shorter side, and their culture values endurance and fairness in all dealings.

Look: *Short, stocky, broad-shouldered, well-muscled, rough, bearded, sharp-eyed*

DEEPFOLK

The Deepfolk come from the sea and the rivers, descended from merfolk and other peoples of the ocean, who followed their curiosity to find love and acceptance among the sailors that plied their waters.

Look:*Scaled, wide-eyed, gilled, tattooed, befinned, azure, emerald*

BEASTFOLK

Beastfolk are as diverse in their nature as the beasts they resemble, taking features of fur, horns, claws, and hooves down from their ancestors.

Look: *Ram-horned, stag-horned, befurred, clawed, satyr-hoofed, bepawed, snouted, winged, betailed*

SCALEFOLK

Scalefolk descend from small, scaled races of beastfolk, varying from dragonfolk, to goblins, to kobolds.

Look: *Emerald, auburn, shining scales, forked tongue, slick, long-eared, nimble*

Upbringing

While vampire propaganda preaches that any folk may rise to stations of power and influence if they are only willing to work hard enough, in actuality most of a person's life on the Bloody Isles is decided by their upbringing.

Foundling

You were not born, per se, but found. Left near the Brinkwood when times grew lean and another hungry mouth was unwelcome, your fate seemed grim. But then you were taken in, possibly by a kindly villager, or perhaps by a curious fae of the wild. Your adoptive parent loved you and raised you into what you are today.

Traits:

✠ Fae-loved: Raised by the fae, they take a special interest in you. They may offer you things, provide guidance, and generally dote upon you.

✠ Village-raised: It takes a village, or so it is said. To take in a foundling is said to bless a village, and you were raised by many hands. Choose a village as your home and you are always welcome there, no matter what.

Associates:

✠ Ather, a beast you met in the forest.

✠ Holgin, a village elder who taught you near everything you know.

Peasant

You were born into hardship. Your parents were simple sharecroppers who did their best, but were often tired and worn down from their labors and anemia. Still, the adversity strengthened you, hardened you, and taught you a few things about the natural world.

Traits:

✠ Farmer's Knack: You know a thing or two about agriculture, farming, seasons, and raising livestock. You can **assist** competently with farm work. Gain +**Effect** whenever this knowledge and competence would help you.

✠ Peasant Song: You know the best manners, jokes, and tone to take with your fellow peasants to help win their trust. Gain +**Effect** whenever this knowledge or competence would help you.

Associates:

✠ Ovan, another youngster from a neighboring farm

✠ Qain, the baker your family brought their grain to

Scion

You were raised in the lap of luxury, your every whim catered to by your parents and their servants. You drank blood sterling, and for a time blinded yourself to the pain and agony your good fortune was built on. But such ignorance cannot last, and eventually you turned away.

Traits:

�֍ Light Mesmerizing: You learned the basics of mesmerizing your fellow folk, to make them more pliable to your will. Funny, no one mentioned it also works on vampires.

✖ Quick-Drain: You learned how to quickly drain the blood from a body. A grisly task, but a vampire can be drained just as quickly as anyone else.

Associates

✖ Quell, a loanfang charged with protecting you

✖ Samsor, a servant who attended you as a child

Cogscamper

When the blood rent came due, you were sold or seized by a landlord and put to work in a mine or factory as a "cogscamper," a small child laborer who can squeeze between the billowing machines, scamper down tight tunnels, or sweep the soot-stained chimneys. It was arduous, dangerous work, and many of your fellows were taken by a black cough or maimed by an errant loom. But you survived, "graduating" when you grew too tall to scamper and sweep, a crust of bread and a dram or two of blood sterling your only severance.

Traits:

✖ Cogscamp Veteran: Having survived the factories, you learned a great deal about them. You also can COMMAND a certain amount of respect from your fellow workers. Gain +**Effect** whenever this knowledge or competence would help you.

✖ Scampsense: You don't survive the factories without being very lucky or very observant. You will always have a chance to avoid a trap, machine, or other environmental danger.

Associates:

✖ Fillin, an unlucky cogscamper who lost a limb

✖ Pullo, the "head" cogscamper who taught you what you needed to know

Apprentice

Your parents were able to scrape together enough blood, silver, or connections to have you apprenticed to a master craftsman or merchant. You worked long hours learning your master's craft or going over their books, enduring harsh punishments for simple mistakes, and working your fingers to the bone. But by the end of it, you knew a trade or how to balance a ledger. Valuable skills… until they devise a machine to replace you.

Traits:

✠ Keen Eye: You know good or shoddy work when you see it. Gain +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.

✠ Bookish: You are proficient in searching through records, documents, and papers to pull out relevant information. Gain +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.

Associates

✠ Anndr, a fellow apprentice

✠ Vogan, your master who taught you your trade

STUDENT

You had the good fortune to be born into a family that could afford to send you off for proper schooling. Perhaps you studied diligently; perhaps you took the opportunity to learn the ways, manners, and games of high society. Either way, you're reasonably sure you got your parent's money's worth.

Traits:

✠ Educated: You have a proper education, granting you the ability to read and write in several languages, understand natural philosophy, and do a bit of arithmetic. Gain +**Effect** when this knowledge or competency would help you.

✠ Etiquette: You know the manners, etiquette, and subtlety necessary to survive in ennobled circles. Gain +**Effect** when this knowledge or competence would help you.

Associates

✠ Cullugh, another student who came from a wealthy family

✠ Dr. Avern, a teacher who took a special interest in you

FAITHFUL

Some children are said to have a touch of the divine. Perhaps they have a knack for easing the troubles of others, or maybe they hear words or see signs that are invisible to everyone else. Whatever the reason, such children are usually secretly raised in the traditions of the Old Faith.

✠ Faithful: Such is your faith that it allows you to push past injuries to your flesh. Expend **special armor** to cancel one **harm consequence**.

✠ Truesight: Choose one of the following sights:

✠ **Step**: You may see the footsteps of others

✠ **Heart**: You may see the hearts of folk

✠ **Evil**: You may see the evil that lurks within folk

✠ **Sighs**: You hear the most ardent thoughts of folk

Associates

✠ Friar Gallin: A kindly monk who helped raise you

✠ Corban: A sprite who was your playmate when you were young

PROFESSIONS

POACHER

From the Old Kingdom to the Crimson Crown, the prohibition on poaching in the Lord's woods remains. Still, when the grip of winter tightens, and the blood rent comes due, risking the hangman's noose for a scrap of meat begins to look like a worthy trade.

Traits

✠ Passle: You always have the ability to scrounge up a bit of meat. Useful for making a good impression with folks or to trade with if you need it.

✠ Tracker: You're experienced in tracking targets over distances, both in urban and rural environs. Gain +**1d** when using this ability.

Training: +1 HUNT

Associates

✠ Sezig, a former huntsman and ranger

✠ Illec, a retired fletcher

CUTPURSE

Thievery is a common, if risky occupation in the Bloody Isles. Those who get caught robbing the rich of their blood and silver can expect little mercy if caught. Still, if you have quick hands and a good batch of luck, it's not an awful way to make a living.

Traits

✠ Thief: Gain +**Effect** when climbing or breaking into a location.

✠ Pickpocket: Gain +**Effect** when picking someone's pockets or picking a lock.

Training: +1 PROWL

Associates

✠ Ael, a cutthroat assassin

✠ Ionea, a reliable fence

FRIAR

Many a second son or daughter of the nobility, or those touched with a sense of the divine, turn to a life of quiet contemplation in a monastery. A monastery education is one of the best you can get, and having access to blessed waters and an actual, readable prayerbook leads many to doubt the Reformed Faith and the lies of the vampires.

Traits

✠ Blessing: Once per session, you can give +**Effect** to another brigand's action.

✠ Preacher: Gain +**Effect** to *Resolve* actions when interacting with the faithful.

Training: +1 Sway

Associates

- ✠ Steon, a doubtful abbot
- ✠ Yanna, a wandering minister

Bard

To make one's coin through song or story is no easy task, but some hardy few choose it. They serve as scribes when demand for their art is on the wane, and entertain many a tavern or village square when the occasion calls for it. Few are those who would turn away a Bard, and they are welcome in humble hearths and grand palaces alike.

Traits

- ✠ Scribe: The ability to read and write is uncommon on the Bloody Isles, and the ability to scribe down letters, histories, bills of sale, or anything else can be quite the boon. Gain +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.
- ✠ Song: Gain +**Effect** when using song or instrument to entertain. Useful to earn a bit of coin or entertain hospitable folk.

Training: +1 Consort

Associates

- ✠ Elid, a duplicitous courtier
- ✠ Seza, a tavern keeper

Deserter

Conscription is the order of the day among the peasantry, as any able-bodied folk may be called upon to take up steel to fight for their lord's petty vendettas or conflicts. As such, there are many soldiers that become disillusioned with fighting a pointless war for a rich man's profit, and desert quietly into the night.

Traits

- ✠ Tactics: **Flashbacks** where you use your military training to set up future advantages cost -1 **stress**.
- ✠ Scout: Gain +**1d** when **gathering information** about the vampire's forces.

Training: +1 Skirmish

Associates

- ✠ Seve, a grizzled sergeant
- ✠ Gwenael, a practised blacksmith

Healer

The wise women common to villages in the Old Kingdom faced persecution of their craft by the Crimson Court and agents of the Reformed Faith, but some still practiced in secret, or passed their learned craft down to cunning and loyal students.

Traits

�҉ Chirurgeon: You know how to treat basic wounds and ailments without the aid of masks or magic. You may use Suture or Tend without wearing The Mask of Torment.

�҉ Barber: You possess a kit of barbers tools, allowing one to do everything from performing surgery to give a nice shave. Barbers are welcome most everywhere, and they do get so very close to their noble patrons…

Training: +1 Study

Associates

�҉ Youn, a cunning poisoner

✬ Clervi, a banished court physician

Ascetic

To desert one's home and to venture into the forest is typically a death sentence, but a few hardy folk make it their practice. You survived on the fruits of the forest—a canopy of trees for a roof, branches for your bed—while you contemplated the mysteries of the universe. Such contemplation may have brought you wisdom, but it did not grant you the peace you sought. But when the fae beckoned to you, you traded such disillusionment for clarity.

Traits

✬ Tranquil: You have learned how to rest deeply, even in adverse conditions. Recover 1 extra **stress** whenever you take the **reconnect downtime action**.

✬ Foresight: You may use one free flashback per session.

Training: +1 Attune

Associates

✬ Azvent, a traveling scholar

✬ Colledoc, an observant mendicant

Sailor

Trade via waterways and the sea is still the mainstay in the Bloody Isles, and the cargo rigs and junkers that ply river and wave are crewed by hardy sailors. Sailors keep to themselves more than most, and are thus less susceptible to the temptations of the vampire lords and the blood sterling. Still, the long reach of the vampires can extend even to the sea, and where the vampires tread, tragedy likewise stalks.

Traits

✬ Rigger: You know how to tie knots, climb quickly, and scramble in and out of tight holds. Gain +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.

✬ Navigator: You're well-versed in navigating both on land and by sea. Gain +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.

Training: +1 Survey

Associates

- ✠ Breval, a skilled navigator
- ✠ Alis, a subtle smuggler

Wastrel

Vast wealth flows easily into the pockets of a select few. The scions of vampiric houses are those most likely to end up as wastrels, frittering away the blood and sweat of the peasantry in games of chance or houses of pleasure. Still, it is a path that ends only one of two ways: in death and misery, or in renunciation and redemption. Let's hope you aim for the latter.

Traits:

- ✠ Gambler: A proper wastrel knows when to switch out some "special" dice, which usually seem to come up the way they want. Gain +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.

- ✠ Paperwork: You can cobble together a smudged writ bearing an official-looking seal. It is probably long since expired or irrelevant, but held out to a bailiff or guard who can't read, who's to know? Take +**Effect** whenever this would be helpful.

Training: +1 Finesse

Associates

- ✠ Gaelle, a well-informed foreign spy
- ✠ Fanch, an inveterate gambler

Alchemist

Chemistry is a new science, still blended with old folk practices and the magic of alchemy. While many of the old formulae are bunk, the mere existence of blood sterling is enough to vouchsafe the merits of alchemy. Many a student aspires to be an alchemist in the court of some crimson noble… But many quickly realize the dark toll their would-be masters expect from them. To be a rogue alchemist is to be a living threat to vampiric secrecy— hunted for the very wisdom you possess.

Traits:

- ✠ **Resourceful**: You may take 2 extra **loads** worth of items on every foray.

- ✠ **Chemist's Eye**: You are always able to identify the most dangerous alchemical substance present in a scene. You may expend your **special armor** to say such an alchemical of your choice is present.

Training: +1 Tinker

Associates

- ✠ Agata, a witch in hiding
- ✠ Brigal, a mentor who taught you terrible secrets

Class

When you went into the Brinkwood, you left your old life behind. You had to learn new skills, unlearn old biases, and leave behind old things. What emerged from this process is your **Class**, borne of your role within your **band,** and the skills you learned to fill it. When you choose your Class, note down the **action dots** you received in the action section of your **background sheet**.

Commander	Herald
✠ 2 Command	✠ 2 Sway
✠ 1 Skirmish	✠ 1 Finesse

Ranger	Rogue
✠ 1 Prowl	✠ 2 Prowl
✠ 2 Survey	✠ 1 Hunt

Messenger	Mage
✠ 1 Prowl	✠ 2 Study
✠ 2 Consort	✠ 1 Attune

Warrior	Saboteur
✠ 2 Skirmish	✠ 2 Wreck
✠ 1 Wreck	✠ 1 Prowl

Tragedy

No one upends their life, flees into the woods, and fights in a revolution on a whim. Your character, like many others, was motivated by a **tragedy**, be it political, social, economic, or personal. Perhaps your village was burned down. Maybe you knew someone who was unjustly executed by the local lord. Or maybe one day you saw the last of your family ripped apart because they could not afford to pay the blood rent.

It is recommended that you tie your **tragedy** into your brigand's history, either by invoking a connection between your tragedy and the vampires who rule Cardenfell. Alternatively, tie your tragedy into the demesne of the Vampire Lord or the themes of your game.

Whatever your **tragedy**, write it down. The memory of it will keep the fire within you burning hot on those cold nights in the forest.

BONDS

While your **tragedy** may have brought you to the brink of despair, it was your **bonds** that kept the spark of hope alive inside you. Bonds are the people, places, or activities your brigand returns to when in need of solace, comfort, and rest. Listed below are several categories and examples of potential bonds, though you are encouraged to invent your own as well.

Hobbies: *Sporting, Games, Cards, Bird-watching, Archery, Wrestling, Cooking, Darning and Stitching, Weaving, Carving*

Places: *A childhood hideout; a favorite tavern or inn; the banks of the Cardenfell River; a hidden grove of the Brinkwood; the village square of your hometown*

People: *A favorite niece or nephew; your wife, husband, or children; an old friend or rival; a kindly mentor or gracious lover*

Note: There is a trend in some tabletop roleplaying games to attack or threaten the people who matter the most to player characters. In *Brinkwood*, it is highly encouraged that any danger or risk to a brigand's **bonds** be carefully negotiated and that ultimate agency be left to the player. In the event that a brigand becomes unable to reconnect with their bonds, they must form new bonds in order to recover **stress**.

ASSOCIATES

By now, you should have selected two **associates** from those listed in your **upbringing** and **profession**. These represent friends, contacts, or allies that you developed over the course of your life. During **forays** and **engagement rolls**, they can be invoked along with your **conclave allies** (see "Conclaves" on page 90) and **bonds** to gain bonuses to engagement or to assist you in their areas of expertise. As a group, your **associates**, **conclave allies**, and **bonds** are referred to in the text as your **associates and allies.** The GM has the final say as to whether or not an **associate or ally** is available and willing to aid you.

FAE PACTS

The fae do not lend their power to the unsure or uncommitted. The price they ask for their help is simple: an **oath**, written in your own blood, to follow a Fae Pact. This oath will allow their **essence** to flow through you, feed your mask, and lend you the power you need. Choose your Pact from the list below, and consider carefully why your character chose to swear themselves to it. Changing your Pact can only be done with great consideration, and would require a rededication ceremony, performed by your entire band and your Fae. Once you choose your Pact, set your **oath rating** on your background sheet to 1.

Before each foray, you can swear an **oath** that the next time you wear a mask, you will honor your Fae Pact. When you do so, you will gain **essence**. But beware, if you fail to honor your oath, the mask will haunt you, demanding you fulfill your bargain until it is done, causing you **stress**. Finally, if you honor your Pact, you will earn **experience** for your chosen mask.

You swear a Pact of **Vengeance**, to humble the proud, to punish the wicked, to succor the weak, and exact retribution.

You swear on a Pact of **Justice**, to balance the scales, to free the chained, to cast down the oppressor, to let the blood of the wicked flow in the streets and the cries of the powerless be heard.

You forswear yourself in **Solidarity**, to stand with the weak, to shoulder their burdens, to meet their pain as your own.

You take up the Pact of **Freedom**, to liberate, to destroy, to burn down every corrupt institution that comes before you, and to let free the raucous joy within your very soul.

You swear a Pact of **Wisdom**, to lay your plans carefully and precisely; to follow through on your promises while remembering your failures; to wait for the right moment and then strike, decisively and entirely.

You swear a Pact of **Industry**, to create, to forge, to build friendships and alliances; to stoke the flames of passion, to cool and temper fury, and to hone yourself and your comrades into the finest blade ever to plunge into the heart of evil.

You swear your Pact to **Beauty**, to write, to paint, to inspire and sing and celebrate; to demand bread as well as roses, to feed hearts and minds as well as stomachs; to find love, to share hope, and to build a world as marvelous as any yet imagined.

THE FAE

"The Fae" is a loose descriptor attached to a group of beings who inhabit the Brinkwood, and likely many of the other deep woods and forgotten places of the earth. They are terrifying to behold, as strangely beautiful as they are alien. Their conception of other folk is difficult to explain, and they communicate only with great difficulty. In general, they prefer to avoid others, but strange times have made them into strange allies.One fae has come forward to aid your band in your shared struggle, granting you a piece of their forest and gifts that will allow you to fight the vampires on equal footing.

THE FAE COURTS

As the fae warred against the Crimson Crown, they split themselves into four "courts." The courts are allied in their goals, but split on the best method to achieve them.

In choosing your Fae, you should also choose the Court they belong to.

SPRING, THE COURT OF ROSES

A thousand springs shall bloom, and from a thousand gardens shall our roses grow.

The fae of the Spring Court believe that mass movements, going beyond all borders, are the key to overthrowing the Crimson Crown, and they take inspiration from the revolutions that have dotted the Crown's colonies. They have largely been the most successful, as more and more former colonies break away from the Crimson Crown each day. Still, some question if all the lessons of decolonial warfare can be applied to an imperial core such as Orslae or the continent.

Aspect: The Court of Roses values mass organization, and are quite capable of helping you tend to basic necessities. Start at Rank 1 in **organization**.

Specializations: Rallies, Riots, Meetings, Propaganda, Deeds, Legends

Summer, The Court of Flames

Let the fire catch the very heart of wickedness; let it consume the vampire in his dwelling, and from the ashes a new world shall be born.

The Summer Court emphasizes the importance of fighting in the imperial cores of the Crimson Crown, in overthrowing the vampires at the heart of their power. They seek to bind together the disparate factions within Orslae to form a rebellion that will, from within, burn out the very heart of vampiric corruption.

Aspect: The Court of Flames is skilled in the ways of guerrilla warfare, training they are more than happy to pass onto you. Start at Rank 1 in **force**.

Specializations: Ambushes, Traps, Smuggling, Etiquette, Assassination, Warfare, Logistics

Autumn, The Court of Leaves

A thousand pages, a million words, kept warm in the hearts of folk shall never fail.

The Court of Autumn focuses their efforts on the philosophy and soul of revolution, emphasizing the importance of teaching, education, and discussion, in order to build the "consciousness" necessary for the overthrow of the vampires. Some deride them as more passive, but their slow, steady path is always active, always teaching, tending a garden of thought that shall never truly wither.

Aspect: The Court of Leaves has carefully cultivated influence across centuries, and what remains of their contact network is yours. Start at Rank 1 in **influence**.

Specializations: Stealth, Education, Information Gathering, Secrets, Magic

Winter, The Court of Frost

The frost does not plot, or plan, or scheme. Slowly, surely, it spreads. Winter cannot be stopped—it is as inevitable as the snow.

The Winter Court takes the position of inevitable victory, hard-fought though it may be. It considers the overthrow of the vampires a natural outcome of history itself, one that may only be expedited by the actions of individuals or revolutions. It focuses on this acceleration, highlighting the contrasts of the vampires' lies, driving home the heart of the vampires' cruelty, and spreading, slowly but surely, the frost that will crack and destroy the crumbling edifices of the Crimson Crown.

Aspect: The Court of Frost seeps into the cracks of the world, and has studied all the routes to power you might pursue. Start with 2 ticks in all **aspect progress clocks**.

Specializations: Opportunity, Raids, Vulnerabilities, Sowing Dissent, Manipulation, Survival

Your Exquisite Fae

Your Fae should be designed collaboratively. As the GM, hand out slips of paper from the **exquisite fae handout**, one to each player. If you are playing with three other players, take one for yourself. If you are playing with four other players, discard the last paper slip.

Have the players secretly answer the first question, then pass the slip clockwise, with each player answering a subsequent question on the slip until it is completed.

Next, read the following aloud:

Your curious Fae did not show themself wholly to you (at first). They spoke and whispered their true nature, until they lead you to meet your companions in a small clearing. There, you spoke of what the Fae told you of themselves, and as you spoke, your Fae did appear.

Have each player describe the features of the Fae on the sheet of paper they ended up with, in character if they so choose.

As a GM, next ask these questions of your players, either as a group or written down privately. From the answers and the descriptions of the Fae detailed previously, a "picture" of the Fae should begin to emerge.

✙ *What terrifies you about this Fae?*

✙ *What enthralls you about this Fae?*

✙ *What was the first physical feature you noticed in this Fae?*

✙ *What did this Fae do or say to convince you of their good intentions?*

✙ *What aid, mercy, or comfort did this Fae offer you? How did you respond?*

✙ *What do you admire most about this Fae?*

As the GM, choose the True Name of the Fae, as well as their Title. Playing as the Fae, speak your True Name, bid the brigands say why they have come. This is a chance for your players to talk about the **tragedy** they have chosen, in character, if they so wish.

As the GM, have the Fae, in their own words, promise an answer to the tragedies that have brought the brigands together. Considering their Court, promise them the Masks, and offer them a *secret* about the Masks, should they swear their oaths.

THE NATURE OF MASKS

Your group should decide on what precisely is the nature of the Masks the Fae will offer them. Choose from one of the options below, or invent your own explanation for the Masks:

�֍   The Masks are pieces of your Fae, their emotions, spirit, memories, and magic woven into each one. Your Fae is, quite literally, offering you a piece of themselves.

✖   The Masks are ancient weapons, forged centuries ago, entrusted to the fae. Your Fae cannot wield them, but were chosen to keep them safe until they were needed once again.

✖   The Masks were once siblings who swore themselves to a noble but doomed cause. When the day was lost, the siblings forged themselves into Masks, so that they might carry on a war lost long ago.

✖   The Masks are literal embodiments of the forces they describe, made manifest into the real world. They have always existed, in some form or another, and will exist for a thousand centuries hence.

✖   The Masks are carved things of simple wood, indifferent but for a few carved sigils. It is the blood they drink, the tragedy of those that wear them, and the oaths they extract that give them power.

✖   The Masks grew slowly, over time, as each wearer left a piece of themselves within them. They carry within the spirits of multitudes, and when you fall, they will carry you too.

SWEARING THE PACT

As a group, choose how you will swear your Fae Pacts, picking from one of the options below or by inventing your own ritual.

✖   Spill blood upon an ancient stone altar as you speak your Pact, and swear to spill the blood of the vampires.

✖   Hold your hand within a magical flame and do not cry out as you meditate upon the suffering of the world, and upon your Pact.

✖   Whisper a secret to a companion. Swear to never speak of it again until your Pact is honored.

✖   Each of you fletch an arrow, and speak your Pact into its ashwood. Swear that the arrow shall pierce the heart of the Vampire Lord.

Once you've decided how you will swear your Pact, play out a short scene where you do so, with each player describing their brigand's Pact in their own words, as well as how they swear themselves to it.

Onto The First Foray...

With your brigands, their Fae, and the seeds of their alliances set, you should be ready to start your first **Foray**. However, you may consider beginning with a "home" scene, having each character describe how they live in their forest refuge, what actions they are taking to prepare for their first foray, and how they interact with their Fae patron. To spur the decision-making of what the first foray will be, it is recommended that the Fae call the brigands together, and ask them one of the following questions:

Spring: *Our garden will blossom, but first we must sow. You have friends and comrades whose aid we must secure. I ask you to go forth and bring me the seeds of our rebellion. Where will you find this seed?*

The players should choose a faction they would like to assist, and the GM may choose to prepare an interaction with a leader of said faction, including a goal that the brigands could assist them with.

Summer: *The winds blow warm, and there is dry grass and tinder. Tell me, where shall we strike our first match?*

The Fae of Summer hope to start things off with a bang. An assassination, a raid on a factory, or some other act of sabotage or show of defiance is what they're after.

Autumn: *The leaves fall from my forest, but must be gathered together. Where will you go to find me my leaves? What will you teach? What will it cost?*

A Fae of Autumn wishes that the players go out amongst the populace and strike a blow that will raise the consciousness of the people. What action can the players take that might endear them in the hearts of the populace? The assassination of a greedy tax collector? A prison break? An execution interrupted?

Winter: *Frost gathers on the tips of our forest leaves, but we must shake the bough. Many are the cruelties of the vampires. Many are the contradictions of their rule. Where will your avalanche begin?*

The Fae of Winter hopes that the brigands will go forth and illuminate, expose, or reveal some cruelty of the vampires. Will they perhaps save some vampire's latest meal? Will they gather evidence of injustice?

IV
Masks

The Masks are the Fae's most potent gifts, given with special care and great trust, to be worn, to be used, but then put aside. Most importantly, the Masks feed upon the blood of vampires as their users do, gaining in power as they are put to use.

Physically, The Masks look rather nondescript. Plain things of bark and wood, rough-hewn, easy to confuse for a child's plaything or a mummer's mask. But when worn with intent and conviction, they shift and change, taking on aspects of their own dread nature, combined with the inner nature and expression of the wearer. In practical terms, you decide what a mask looks like when you play it. Its appearance may shift and change with time and will certainly change from wearer to wearer.

Donning the Mask

At any time during a **foray,** a brigand can **flashback** to which mask their character brought with them and wear it. When a brigand dons a mask, they must choose whether to pledge an **oath** to honor their Pact. If they do so, they will gain **essence**, but will need to take actions that honor their Pact during the **foray**.

Players should choose their mask based on what they feel the situation calls for and what abilities they might need. Note that a player's choice is far from permanent; it is meant to change from foray to foray. A brigand might wear The Mask of Terror one session, and The Mask of Violence the next.

OATHS AND PACTS

When a brigand swears an **oath** to honor their Pact, they agree to take action during the **foray** that aligns with their Fae Pact. The player then rolls a number of dice equal to the **oath rating** recorded on their **background sheet**, and gains **essence** depending on the highest die roll. Note that the **oath rating** for every brigand starts at 1, since their initial oath to honor their pact is counted.

OATH ROLL

Roll **1d** for each **oath rating**:

✠ **Critical:** Gain 6 essence
✠ **6:** Gain 5 essence

✠ **4/5:** Gain 4 essence
✠ **1-3:** Gain 2 essence

At the end of the session, the GM and players should discuss whether or not they honored the **oath** they pledged. If they did, they can add a dot to their **oath rating**. If they did not honor a pledged oath, they lose a dot in their oath rating.

ADJUSTING THE MASK

Players can choose to **adjust their mask** when they wear it, choosing to switch a selected **mask ability** to one that might be more useful in their current situation. This can only be done once per **foray** when the brigand first puts on their mask.

When a brigand dons a mask, their player should narrate the mask's appearance. Describing how it contorts and twists to form an appearance representative of the character, the mask, and the interplay and interpretation of the former on the latter.

If a brigand chooses to take off their mask before the end of the **foray**, they do not gain any additional **essence** and may not **adjust** their mask if they decide to put it back on later.

MASK CREATION

The first time a mask is brought on a **foray**, the player who brought the mask should assign 2 **action dots** to one of the **mask actions** and a single dot to another mask action. They should also choose a **mask ability** from those listed for the mask.

Each subsequent time a mask is used, even if used by a different brigand, the **action ratings**, **essence**, and **mask abilities** of the mask carry over and remain on the **mask sheet**

MASK ACTIONS

An observant player might ask "Why would I use a **mask action** when I have more dots in a similar action?" The answer to this is two-fold:

First, **mask actions** are meant to fill in areas where brigands might be weaker/allow brigands to take any role and be effective. Therefore, mask actions are designed to be more broadly interpreted than other actions. For example, SLIP can allow a brigand to disappear into a crowd, SLIP a knife into between someone's ribs, or SLIP something out of a pocket.

Second, **mask actions** should be treated by the GM as essentially magic, meaning you should be more lenient in their effectiveness and what is possible to do with a mask action. A mask action might allow superhuman feats of physical ability, or even let brigands employ straight up magic. Each GM and playgroup should tailor the power level of the mask actions to their personal tastes.

MASK ABILITIES

Mask abilities range in their purpose and utility, and are meant to provide options to the brigands that may not otherwise be usable in the game. In order to use a mask ability, players must spend at least 1 **essence** from the mask, though some abilities may call for 2 in their description text.

In the wording of **mask abilities**, some will call for an action to be taken before their effect takes place, while some others take effect as soon as the necessary **essence** is spent.

MASK BARGAINS

The Masks that the brigands don have magic, goals, and personalities of their own, and they may offer additional strength to the players in exchange for taking additional risks. **Mask bargains** are offers from the mask the brigand is currently wearing, either asking them to perform some **risky action**, ensure a shared goal is completed, or otherwise let the mask act "through" the wearer. Common mask bargains include:

✠ Commit to an unnecessary course of action or a more "complete" solution to a problem.
✠ Start and/or tick a troublesome clock.
✠ Add **heat** from evidence or witnesses.
✠ Suffer **harm**.

The penalties for "breaking" a bargain with your mask are the same as breaking an **oath**, namely that your brigand will lose a dot in their **oath rating**.

Both players and the GM can suggest possible **mask bargains**, but the GM has the final say on which bargains are offered. If a player accepts a mask bargain, they gain **+1d** or **+Effect** as the mask gives the brigand an extra push.

Mask Coherence

If a brigand has an **action rating** on their sheet that overlaps with a **mask action** for the mask they're wearing, they can choose to roll the lower of the two action ratings to gain +**Effect**. Narratively, this represents the mask "aligning" with the brigand's talents in order to make their actions more potent, deadly, or otherwise effective.

Doubling Masks

It is not recommended to have more than one instance of a given mask in any given **foray**. Masks are designed to serve different narrative and mechanical roles, and duplicating these roles may detract from the individuality and spotlight of each mask.

Masks and Magic

You may ask, what type of magic do the Masks use? The fae magic of the Wyld, or the blood magic of the vampires? Again, the answer is left to your discretion, or is perhaps a mystery to be discovered through play. One possible explanation, however, is that these magics are tied together intrinsically in some way.

It may be that the blood of all folk carries magic within it, flowing into them through their connection to the Wyld. This is perhaps why the vampires keep so many folk in a semi-feudal state, preserving the magic in their blood by keeping them connected to the soil through farmwork and toil. Blood sterling allows a vampire to "fix" this magic and concentrate it, essentially transforming them from a conduit of magic into a vessel for it, able to store "Wyld" magic for later use.

Therefore, we can suppose that the Masks—made from ashwood that is antithetical to the vampires—instead "release" the essence of vampiric magic back into its natural state, and that the transformation from vampiric blood to **essence** is a bit like burning fuel to produce warmth.

Masks in the Narrative

The Masks serve several purposes in the narrative and fiction of the game. They can symbolize the brigands committing to action, the act of putting them on symbolizing a sort of "go time" where they leave their previous identities behind.

For the GM, the Masks can be a vehicle for interaction with the brigands. Consider the Masks stated personalities, or build your own, and have them occasionally talk back to the brigands. Ultimately the brigand is running the show, but the mask might voice their opinion on their performance and options.

Finally, in the fiction, the Masks serve as an immediate disguise for the brigand's identities. The Masks morph and change in their appearance with each new wearer, and while patterns might be discerned by keener investigators, they separate the brigand from the immediate consequences of their actions, allowing them to be bolder, brasher, or more daring than usual.

TERROR

The Mask of Terror was born of fear and pain. The fear of the lash, the bludgeon, the rent, and starvation. But fear can become strength as easily as it becomes hate. Terror can be righteous, instilled into the hearts of oppressors like a shock, a sudden jolt of animal empathy. It can be a shield to guard the oppressed, to give the masters pause, to force the boss, the foreman, the lord to consider the dangers of pushing a populace too far.

Intended Roles: *Defensive, Assault and Social*

Potential Looks: *Sharp, twisting vines; fierce, circling horns; wide maws, grinning with razor-sharp teeth; twisted, misshapen oak*

ACTIONS

When you FRIGHTEN, you instill fear into others.

✱ You might sow terror into the ranks of enemy soldiers, or scare a guard into fleeing. You might also try to influence a large group of people with fear, but AWE or COMMAND might be better.

When you AWE, you create a spectacle so fantastic it cannot be ignored.

✱ You might gather the attention of a group of townsfolk by using deft illusions and a booming voice. You might distract a garrison of enemy troops with a series of well-timed explosions, but EXPLODE might be better.

When you DISARM, you remove the ability of another to harm you.

✱ You might use snarling and threats to convince an enemy to give up a fight, or the deft twirl of a dagger to knock a blade aside, or soothing words to convince a would-be ally that you mean them no harm. You might persuade an angry crowd into hearing your side of the story, but AWE or SWAY might be better.

When you EXPLODE, you use your emotions or literal explosive devices to make things go "boom."

✱ You might use a passionate outburst to convince others of your cause. You might carefully set a series of powder kegs around an enemy garrison, wait for the right moment, and set them off. You might try to gather the attention of a large group using lights, illusions, explosions, and other trickery, but AWE might be better. You might use a detonation, or the threat of one, to cow an enemy into surrender, but FRIGHTEN might be better.

- ✠ **No Lords, No Masters:** Gain +**Effect** when either soothing the souls of the oppressed or inspiring them to action.

- ✠ **Fear Your Slaves:** Gain +**1d** whenever you try to turn servants or followers against their master.

- ✠ **Sow Discord:** Gain +**1d** when you take a **set up action** to terrify an enemy force, reducing their *scale* as combatants flee in terror.

- ✠ **No Excuses for the Terror**: Gain +**1d** when you AWE a friendly group. You may grant them *potency* on a success.

- ✠ **Primal Terror**: You may spend 2 **essence** to summon a small cohort of ravens, spiders, or rats that you can COMMAND.

- ✠ **Silenced Fears**: You may expend **special armor** to cancel a consequence that increases your **heat**.

- ✠ **Shock and Awe**: Whenever you perform a **desperate action**, pay only 1 **essence** to take +**Effect**, as all are shocked and awed by your sheer audacity.

XP

- ✠ If you instill terror into the heart of an oppressor

VIOLENCE

Violence was the last of its brothers and sisters to be forged. A blunt instrument, cruel, keen, and vicious. It has no mercy for the oppressor, no compassion for those that would grind the humanity of others beneath their heel. It does not negotiate. It does not waver. It acts, it protects, it directs, and when the last vampire is slain, it rests.

Intended Roles: *Aggressive and Defensive, Assault and Stealth*

Possible Looks: *Red tears, gashes. Spikes and twisting tattoos, ram horns, sharp antlers, crimson flowers*

ACTIONS

When you SLAUGHTER, you use close, personal violence with unparalleled viciousness.

✠ You might fight off a gang of ghouls using only a sword and a dagger. You might cut through ranks of loanfangs to get at their vampiric master. You might hold back an enemy force using only your wits and your blades, but COVER might be better.

When you sow CARNAGE, you fight at a distance, using deft bow work or powder rifles to clash with a foe.

✠ You might take up a defensive position and rain death down upon your enemies. You might fight through back alleys, using rapid-fire arrows to fight off your pursuers, but SLAUGHTER might be better. You might pick off pursuing enemies one by one to give a comrade enough time to escape, but COVER might be better.

When you DIRECT, you use shouts, orders, planning, and signals to execute a plan or rally your allies in the heat of battle.

✠ You might signal for an ambush to begin at the perfect moment, striking with precise coordination. You might lead your forces into close combat or ranged attack, but SLAUGHTER or CARNAGE might be better.

When you COVER, you use violence to protect your friends and allies.

✠ You might rain down arrows from a rooftop to harry and drive back a gang of powdermen. You might stand between your allies and your enemies, shield raised, sword drawn, taunting them with insults and daring them to attack. You might order a cohort to retreat while you hold the line, but DIRECT might be better.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

✠ **Taunt**: Gain **+1d** when taunting an enemy into focusing its attention on you.

✠ **Threaten**: Gain **+Effect** when using boasts, threats, and general shouting to intimidate your foes.

✠ **Wholesale Carnage**: Gain **+Effect** when using CARNAGE to fight a group that is at a larger *scale* than your own.

✠ **Fleshmend:** You may expend **special armor** to cancel a **consequence** of **physical harm**.

✠ **Lead from the Front**: Add +2 ticks to any **morale clock** of a cohort or allied group you personally lead.

✠ **See Red:** Spend 2 **essence** to "see" the blood of everyone at your current location, even through walls, until the end of the scene.

✠ **Bloodtaker:** Instantly gain 2 **essence** whenever you defeat a vampiric enemy.

XP

✠ If you used violence to protect a comrade or ally

LIES

Lies is the oldest mask, the teacher and instructor of its brethren. It was made when the world was young, worn by the first shamans to speak of things that were not; to teach of things that could be; to explain the darkness of the world and add tinder to the thin flames of hope and progress. It aids as it harms, it educates as much as it deceives. It has lived so very long, it knows when a lie will heal, when the truth will cut. But its work is never done; there is always another story, another performance, another moral to be learned, another lesson to teach. Won't you help it at its work?

Intended Role: *Defensive, Social and Stealth*

Possible Looks: *Grinning, laughing mouth; a crown of branches or antlers; jeweled, emerald eyes; twisting golden filigree over amber-colored wood*

When you Deceive, you use lies, half-truths, and trickery to coerce others.

✠ You might lie to a guardsman, or put on airs that you are someone you're not. You might sow dissent or spread rumors among an enemy camp. You might hide your true identity or that of your comrades, but Hide might be better.

When you Hide, you use shadows, disguises, crowds, and any other available means to veil yourself and your allies.

✠ You might stick close to the shadows, waiting for your moment. You might put on a guardsmans' uniform to infiltrate an enemy camp. You might stow a few revolutionaries under the floorboards when the bailiff comes a-knocking. You might use deceit to hide your true intentions, but Deceive might be better.

When you Reveal, you discover what was hidden or dramatically disclose new information to others.

✠ You might investigate a crime, search for evidence, or track down something horrid. You might pour over arcane tomes, searching for hidden wisdom. You might dramatically uncover a vampire for the foul leech that they are, or disclose the culprit of some terrible crime. You might impart wisdom and teachings to others, but Educate might be better.

When you Educate, you teach, elucidate, or hold forth on a topic of expertise.

✠ You might remind your allies of the best way to dispatch a particular type of monstrosity or vampire. You might take time to tutor a peasant family on their letters, earning their trust. You might read stories, tell legends, or record folklore. You might disguise yourself as a travelling scholar, but Hide might work better.

Special Abilities

✠ **Many Faces**: If you are able to get a single drop of blood from someone, you may spend 2 **essence** to change your face so that it matches theirs.

✠ **Simple Truths**: Gain +**Effect** when countering propaganda or exposing some commonly accepted lie.

✠ **Honeyed Words**: When using lies or flattery to influence your enemies, gain +**1d** or +**Effect.**

✠ **Unseen, Unheard**: You may expend **special armor** to avoid a **consequence** that would lead to your discovery.

✠ **Taste Truths**: If you are able to drink a dram of blood from a person, you may **gather information** about their past, seeing some of their life through their eyes.

✠ **Twist the Lie**: When you catch an enemy in a lie, you immediately **harm** them for 2 ticks on a relevant clock or with a -1 to their *threat*.

✠ **Cloak of Rumors**: Spend 1 **essence** and use the Deceive action to whisper a "rumor" in someone's ear. They will believe that rumor and will most likely act on it within the next hour. You may need to spend additional **essence** for more dangerous rumors.

XP

✠ If you taught someone else something or learned something important.

RIOT

Riot is multitudes. Forged of many trees, many branches, many magics. They speak in echoing voices, a cacophony of riotous sound. They are the voice of the unheard, the agitator of action, the spark that lights the flame. They urge, they cajole, they sway and persuade and never, it seems, shut up. They are perpetual action, almost exhausting in their thirst for justice, for the end of villainy, for the blood of the wicked. They have such things to tell you, to tell the world. Wear Riot, and let your voice, and the voice of multitudes, ring out for all to hear.

Intended Role: *Aggressive, Social and Assault*

Possible Looks: *Fiery reds and oranges; orbs of flame for eyes; branching horns, tipped with smoldering embers*

Actions

When you Rouse, you gather people to take action.

�֎   You might hold court with fiery rhetoric in a town square or a quiet hideaway. You might rally the oppressed to fight against their oppressors. You might bolster your allies flagging morale by stoking their passions and reminding them of what they fight for, but Inspire might be better. You might lead a crowd through the streets, riotous and free, but Burn might be better.

When you Burn, you set fire: to hearts with your words, to buildings with torches, to vampires with more torches (and possibly lamp oil).

✖   You might set a warehouse of blood sterling or a store of powder aflame, dealing a blow against your enemies. You might use fiery rhetoric to rouse the passions of the downtrodden, but Rouse might be better. You might threaten your oppressors with a crowd of angry villagers with pitchforks and torches, but Provoke might be better.

When you Inspire, you fill the hearts of your allies with passion, and their minds with purpose.

✖   You might rally a flagging band of revolutionaries to redouble their efforts. You might convince a crowd of peasants, pushed past the breaking point, to take collective action, but Rouse might be better.

When you Provoke, you use rhetoric and other means to get your enemies to do things they really shouldn't.

✖   You might denounce a vampire lord in the public square, drawing the attention of the guardsmen while your allies slip away. You might provoke a bailiff or hunter into firing the first shot or taking the first swing. You might use jabs, reminders, and harsh, fiery language to demand your allies take action, but Rouse might be better.

XP

✖   If you led others or spoke truth to power.

�له **Language of the Unheard**: Gain +**Effect** when you invoke a known cause or common struggle to stir others to action.

�له **Common Struggle**: Gain +**1d** when gathering information by talking with a commoner.

�له **Friends, Comrades, Countrymen**: Gain +**Effect** or +**1d** when addressing a crowd.

�له **Fiery Rhetoric**: Whenever you deliver a speech, you may spend 2 **essence** to spontaneously cause something in the scene to catch on fire.

✦ **Torches and Pitchforks**: Any crowds or cohorts you lead gain *quality*.

✦ **Righter of Wrongs**: You may invoke some crime, tragedy, or other horrible deed committed by the vampires to gain +**1d** or +**Effect**.

✦ **A Single Spark:** Gain +**1d** or +**Effect** to any arsons or explosions you help engineer.

TORMENT

Torment is agony and relief, suffering and mending. It is the necessary pain: the sharp knife that cuts out the caustic tumor, the pinprick of the suture that closes the wound, but also the aloe that soothes and the bandage that protects. It was made to help its brethren, to keep them safe, to protect and heal where it can. It loves all and cares for all, enough to urge the end of those that are past all hope of redemption. A quick blade is its mercy; tearful and empathetic, it does not kill with joy, but with sorrow. The greatest torment is its own, but only slightly less will be the suffering of the oppressor.

Intended Role: *Defensive, Stealth and Social*

Possible Looks: *Tears of azure lapis lazuli; a face twisted in permanent grief; sharp thorns and knotted branches*

ACTIONS

When you SUTURE, you use stitches, powders, and unguents to repair people and things.

✦ You might sew closed an open wound, dressing it to keep a comrade in the fight. You might bind an enemy with ropes to prevent their escape. You might stitch together some cloth into a makeshift rope, but TINKER might be better.

When you EXSANGUINATE, you draw blood from the veins of another.

✦ You might drain the blood from a vampire, quickly and efficiently. You might draw blood from a willing patient to help you better diagnose their malady. You might administer blood to an anemic ally, but TEND might be better. You might use quick swipes of a blade to open up the arteries of an enemy, but VIVISECT might be better.

When you Vivisect, you use quick, precise blade strikes on the living and dead.

✠ You might rend a foe limb from limb, opening arteries, slicing deeply, and generally causing havoc. You might dissect a dead body, performing an autopsy to attempt to determine who or what killed them. You might perform delicate surgery to remove some tumor or other plague flesh from a patient, but Tend might be better.

When you Tend to another, you care for your comrade's well-being, both mental and physical.

✠ You might treat a wound, set a fractured bone, or cure some foul sickness with powerful medicines. You might look after emotional needs, providing support, encouragement, advice, or just a friendly ear. You might seek to understand how a person was harmed or how a corpse came into its present state, though Vivisect might be better. You might wrap a bandage over an open wound or cut, though it might be better to Suture the wound closed.

Special Abilities

✠ **Lure**: You gain +**1d** when attempting to lure someone away or **set up** a future ambush.

✠ **Suffer in Silence:** You may expend **special armor** to avoid being detected while doing violence.

✠ **A Stitch in Time:** Gain +**1d** when repairing something or rigging up a trap.

✠ **Tormenting Laughter**: You may expend 2 **essence** to make a target hear mocking laughter coming at them in all directions.

✠ **Thousand Needles:** You bid wounds stitch themselves closed. You may use Suture or Tend on a nearby group.

✠ **Agony of Multitudes**: Spend 2 **essence** to make ghostly apparitions appear around you, increasing your *scale*.

✠ **Shared Pain**: You gain +**1d** or +**Effect** when trying to understand the pain of others, or by invoking shared hardships.

✠ **Expert Vivisection**: Gain +**1d** when performing an autopsy to determine how someone died, or when using blades to rend someone limb from limb.

XP

✠ If you cared for an ally or fellow brigand, either physically, emotionally or mentally.

JUDGEMENT

Without judgement, there can be no true peace. Judgement was born from a desire for truth and reconciliation. It was made to execute the guilty, to spare the penitent, to strike down the wicked and strengthen the oppressed. It is placid, almost gentle in its stoicism. It speaks simply, directly, without embellishment or theatrics, stating only the facts of the matter as it discerns them. It does what must be done—nothing more, nothing less—a cold executor of the will of a collective whole.

Intended Role: *Aggressive, Stealth and Assault*

Possible Looks: *Placid ivory overlay, subtly featured, imperceptible, dark, concealed ebony wood, expressionless*

ACTIONS

When you SNIPE, you shoot at targets from long range.

�֎   You might set up a well-concealed position to shoot at a target from concealment. You look for a good place to shoot from, but SCOUT might be better.

When you SCOUT, you gather intelligence on terrain and enemy forces.

✖   You might seek out a location for a raid or ambush. You might investigate ahead of your party, searching for any hidden dangers. You might keep an eye on a situation from a distance, ready to step in, but Read might be better.

When you READ, you scan and interpret writing or situations.

✖   You might scrutinize and decipher an ancient text or an encoded message. You might read a room, searching out hostile intent. You might search the face of an ally or enemy, attempting to discern their emotions. You might judge a situation, a case's evidence, or a trial. You might get the lay of the land, searching for a clear path through difficult terrain, but SCOUT might be better.

When you SLIP, you quietly fade away.

✖   You might slip away into a crowd or the shadows. You might give a pursuing enemy the slip. You might push a dagger into the bowels of a nosy bailiff, or a pull keyring off the belt of a prison warden, but FINESSE might be better.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

�֍ **Executioner**: Gain +**Effect** or +**1d** when attacking a target that is badly wounded.

✖ **Review the Evidence**: +**1d** when gathering information about a specific target.

✖ **The People's Razor**: Gain +**Effect** when using bladed weapons.

✖ **Swift Justice**: When there is a question as to who acts first, you do.

✖ **Careful Aim**: Gain +**1d** when shooting a target from a **controlled position**.

✖ **Pronounce Sentence**: Your words carry the weight of democratic authority. Gain +**1d** when giving information to others or COMMANDING them to action.

✖ **Read the Room**: You can always tell when danger is coming your way. The GM will warn you of upcoming danger, or provide you with a free **flashback** to prepare for it.

XP

✖ If you pronounced your judgement on a situation or character.

RUIN

Ruin is the slow death, the crawling chaos, the inexorable drumbeat and the march of time. It is the end that comes for all things, but it is only by its consumption that rebirth becomes possible. Ruin was forged in the waning days of war when defeat seemed inevitable. It was made to be a glowing coal, a slow simmer, that it might one day reignite.

Intended Role: *Defensive, Assault and Social*

Possible Looks: *Cracked, aging wood, dry rot spreading; mushrooms, crumbling bits of stone, unfinished, half-made.*

ACTIONS

When you CORRUPT, you use the power in your blood as a weapon.

✖ You might inflict the effect of your alchemical blood by using it as a dire poison, or perhaps by altering the blood of a foe, though SPOIL may be better.

When you CRACK, you force a small but critical break.

✖ You might force a break in an enemy's defenses, or shatter a key support in some structure. You might tear apart a door or other barrier, though WRECK may be better.

When you Quarry, you strengthen, reinforce or pursue.

�֍   You might stabilize a defense or imbue old stone or wooden fortifications with renewed strength. You might stalk prey across a great distance, though Hunt or Prowl may be better.

When you Spoil, you rot and spread illness from within.

✖   You might ruin an enemy's food supplies, or spread disease and rot throughout an enemy encampment. You might use magic or poison to weaken or debilitate a foe, although Corrupt may be better.

Special Abilities

Note: **Ruin** always begins the game with **Alchemic Blood** unlocked, but an **XP advancement** must be spent to unlock additional effects of the blood.

✖   **Alchemic Blood**: You may infuse your blood with one of the following powers and use it's power to augment your magic. You may unlock additional effects by spending additional advancements.

> ✖   *Soporific*, puts folk to sleep
> ✖   *Ashen*, spend ashwood to spread ash into the air
> ✖   *Caustic*, melts armor
> ✖   *Flechette*, cuts and maims flesh
> ✖   *Naptha,* flammable, "sticky" fire
> ✖   *Narcotic,* causes euphoria; may be ingested to allow allies to ignore their wounds

✖   **Envenom:** You may apply the effect of your blood to a weapon for a scene.

✖   **A Slow Poison:** If you poison an enemy or mark them with your blood, they cannot hide from you. You may always sense them and track them across Cardenfell. Gain +**Effect** when harming your quarry.

✖   **Transfusion:** You may reverse the effects of Corrupt, granting your allies *potency*.

✖   **Cruel End**: When your poison kills someone, it does so horrifically, terrifying your foes and increasing your **position**.

✖   **Bulwark:** Gain +**1d** to all **resistance rolls** when leading a cohort.

✖   **Old Stone:** You can **gather information** about a place by touching shaped stone, mortar, or brickwork.

XP

✖   If you strengthened a fellow brigand or an ally.

V

THE REBELLION

Revolutions begin in strange circumstances, perhaps none stranger than yours. The vampires' spies are ubiquitous, their minions ever present, except, of course, in the depths of the Brinkwood. There, you take your refuge, protected from vampires by the forest and protected from the forest by your oaths, discretion, and wisdom.

In this section, we cover how you will go about building your refuge, expanding your forces, and what goals you must set if you one day wish to see the vampires overthrown.

✠   **Aspects** covers the various parts of the revolution you will develop and improve over the course of the game, turning your rebellion from a small gang of brigands to a full-fledged movement.

✠   **Friendly Factions** provides a brief overview of the various factions and groups that may be willing to join your cause, should you win their trust and loyalty.

✠   **The Conclave** describes a special sort of downtime, in which the different allied factions you have gathered will come together to make decisions about the future of the rebellion.
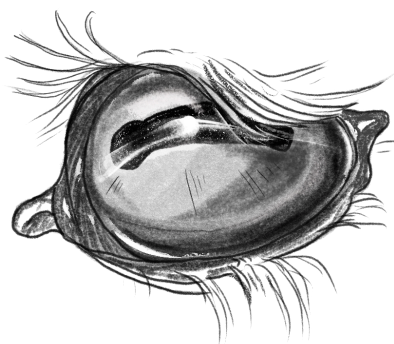
Aspects

In order to succeed, your rebellion will need to grow and change. You will track your rebellion's growth along three different, abstract paths, each one useful to your rebellion and its goals.

Organization reflects your rebellion's logistics, scale, and ability to provide for communities in Cardenfell. As your organization increases, so too will your supply lines, as well as the material aid you can provide to your allies.

Force represents your rebellion's militancy, training, and equipment. It determines your rebellion's military capability, and as it grows, so too does your ability to engage your foes on a more equal footing, as well as what defenses you can muster against vampiric raids and other attacks.

Influence covers your rebellion's intelligence network, communications, and the spread of your influence among the factions and communities of *Brinkwood*. As your influence expands, ignorance will diminish, radicalization will increase, and you will have better and better spy networks with which to keep an eye on the vampires and their schemes.

Using Aspects

Narratively, **aspects** contribute to the feel, reputation, and status of your rebellion. The players should feel comfortable introducing helpful elements into the fiction such as safehouses, allies, or **flashbacks** that are supported by the aspects of their rebellion.

Mechanically, **aspects** allow the brigands as a group to take more actions during **downtime**. Each **rank** in an aspect gives an extra **downtime action** to the band as a whole, though these downtime actions are limited by the aspect they correspond to.

For example, if a band had a rank of 2 in **organization** and 1 in **force**, one brigand could take an additional **reconnect action**, another an additional **recover action**, and still another a **hone equipment action**.

Influence	Organization	Force
✠ Long-Term Project	✠ Prepare	✠ Hone Equipment
✠ Reconnaissance	✠ Recover	✠ Command Cohort
✠ Reduce Heat	✠ Reconnect	✠ Requisition Asset

Aspect Ranks

As you progress your rebellion, you will accumulate progress towards higher **aspect ranks**. Each rank will reward you with an additional **downtime action**, and will also be reflected in the state of the world and your rebellion.

Typically, you will gain **progress** towards **aspect ranks** by completing **forays**.

Aspect Progress

- ✠ **1 tick:** A minor success or set up for a future foray
- ✠ **2 ticks:** A modest win or helpful action
- ✠ **3 ticks:** A major victory or a crushing blow to your foes
- ✠ **+1 tick:** Accomplished an objective or fulfilled a need for a community

Aspect Clocks and Ranking Up

To increase an **aspect rank**, you must fill a 4-clock to reach Rank 1, A 6-clock to reach Rank 2, and an 8-clock to reach Rank 3. Progress does not roll over between each rank.

When you increase your rank in an **aspect**, you have the opportunity to add a new faction to your **Conclave**, discussed in the Conclave section below.

Organization

Rank 0: Your rebellion is limited to just your brigands, the Fae, and a few scattered allies. You must steal, barter for, or make anything you need.

Rank 1: Your refuge has grown to encompass a few dozen or so people. You have enough resources to support yourself and are nearing self-sufficiency.

Rank 2: Your rebellion spans at least a few villages, and your refuge is a sizable village in its own right. You have the logistics necessary to distribute necessities and a few luxuries across the territory you control.

Rank 3: Your rebellion rivals the official holdings of the vampires in terms of the amount of resources it controls. A well-run economy ensures all your citizens enjoy a standard of living that is drastically superior to those still under vampire rule. Your logistics are such that far-flung operations are well within your capabilities.

Force

Rank 0: You have only your brigands, your masks, and whatever steel, ashwood, and powder you can steal.

Rank 1: You've recruited a few allies and have put together a guerrilla gang capable of small ambushes. You have a few training yards set up in your refuge, and the basics of a command and control structure. Villages you control are defended by palisades and minutemen-style militias.

Rank 2: You have a trained guerrilla cell available to you whenever you need it, and the beginnings of a proper army that can defend against vampiric forces. Your territory is defended by patrols, walls, and other static and dynamic defenses. You have a reliable system of foot messengers that can facilitate communications between different rebel cells.

Rank 3: Your military rivals, and in some ways surpasses, that of the vampires. Your territory is entrenched and well-defended, and every child, adult, and elder knows how to slay a vampire, and has the tools necessary to do so. Your command structure is fully realized and incursions against vampires are near constant. You have siege weapons capable of demolishing walls and specialists capable of nearly any military operation. Nowhere in Cardenfell is safe from you, no fortress impregnable.

Influence

Rank 0: You must rely on your own personal friends, some scattered contacts of your Fae, and a few shaky rumors to influence others and to hear of vampiric plans.

Rank 1: Rumors of rebellion are common, but are frequently dismissed or countered with vampire propaganda. Chances are, most folk have at least heard of you, though many will not be willing to aid. A few sympathizers and supporters report on the most obvious actions the vampires take against you.

Rank 2: You have the makings of a fully-fledged spy network, with infiltrators in most villages and towns reporting back to you. Chances are, if you need a safe house, you can find one. Your own leaflets and literature are commonplace in intellectual circles, and the truth of the vampires' deeds is becoming common knowledge. Even a few quiet grumbles are occasionally heard on the streets.

Rank 3: The vampires' forces are riddled with spies, informers, saboteurs, and conspirators that hamstring nearly every move they take against you. The Queen of Crimson herself doesn't take a sip of blood without you hearing the disposition of every droplet. You are known in every city, and vampires shut themselves up in their manors and castles for fear of how the commonfolk will punish them for their crimes.

Aspect Ranks and Goals

As your rebellion grows in size and strength, your goals will shift. This section is meant to instruct on what goals you should pursue in order to increase your **aspect ranks**.

Organization

Rank 0: Find safehouses, establish contacts, steal food, medicine, and blood sterling to finance your rebellion.

Rank 1: Establish cells of resistance in villages and towns. Arrange covert supply lines. Stage larger raids to steal supplies.

Rank 2: Establish farm land. Protect supply lines and allies. Deal with economic issues.

Force

Rank 0: Steal weapons, armor, and black powder. Fletch ashwood and practice archery. Recruit small bands of allies or guerrillas. Take in deserters.

Rank 1: Establish local militias in towns and villages. Recruit and train peasants. Establish blacksmiths and other underground manufacturers. Raid supply depots for additional supplies.

Rank 2: Enforce military discipline. Promote leaders and lieutenants. Steal siege weapons, seize caches of supplies, and defend your own supply lines.

Influence

Rank 0 : Establish contacts and allies in villages and towns. Do favors and earn loyalty. Counter the most obvious vampire falsehoods. Steal any intelligence you can get your hands on.

Rank 1: Bolster your allies. Turn potential collaborators against their vampiric masters. Place spies in positions of power and defend them against intrigue. Steal valuable intelligence, take prisoners, and provide your own counter-propaganda to intellectual circles.

Rank 2: Foster rebellion and sedition in villages and towns. Put together reading circles and educational facilities to radicalize and educate the common folk. Help your spies advance in the vampire ranks and aid them in recruiting more agents into their fold. Consider reforming some vampires or turning them against one another.

FRIENDLY FACTIONS

You are not alone in your struggle. There are many other groups in Cardenfell who share your disdain for the vampires, and whose ideology aligns with your own. However, each has their own priorities, goals, and challenges to overcome. Your task is to do your best to coalesce these factions into a unified whole, capable of overthrowing the Vampire Lords who oppress you all.

Diggers are a hearty group of renegade farmers and agriculturists, dedicated to reclaiming land deemed unusable by the powers that be and using it to build communal farms.

Strengths: Logistics, Agriculture, Community

Coggers are the beginnings of a workers movement in the factories and workhouses of the Bloody Isles. Their focus is on improving working conditions, better wages, and protecting their fellow workers.

Strengths: Sabotage, Solidarity, Labor

Fletchers are those who practice the forbidden crafts of fletching arrows and crafting bows. Hunted relentlessly, they do their work in secret, and hope to keep the knowledge of their craft alive.

Strengths: Bows, Hunting, Scouting

Scribblers are writers, teachers, and scholars, seeking to spread knowledge and literacy throughout the Bloody Isles. While they do not face official sanction from the vampires, radical writers and thinkers have been known to turn up dead.

Strengths: History, Writing, Academics

Stokers are arsonists and radicals, devoted to burning down everything the vampires hold. They are well known for the collateral damage their activities cause.

Strengths: Arson, Black Powder, Ideology

Poisoners are scholars of alchemy and nature. They seek to build up toxins in their own blood that are harmful to the vampires, pass their blood as rent, and in doing so, subtly weaken the vampiric hold on society.

Strengths: Poisons, Alchemy, Healing

Guilders are the progressive elements within the few remaining crafting guilds. They see the writing on the wall with regards to the rise of industry, and seek to dismantle the vampires' reign before it claims their own vocations.

Strengths: Artisanry, Trade, Logistics

Prayers are a radical strain of persecuted monks, nuns, priests, and layfolk who reject the bloody "prosperity theology" of the so-called Reformed Faith, instead turning back to core tenants of aiding the poor, communal duty, and respect for individual expression of faith.

Strengths: Hope, Lore, Customs

Weavers are the radical unions, women's groups, and secret circles of workers that labor in the great textile mills that dot Cardenfells' rivers. They are known for their militancy as well as their secrecy.

Strengths: Organization, Secrecy, Espionage

Witchers are the remains of old healing and magic traditions, coupled with some modern healers, academics, and doctors that still respect and value healing for the sake of social good rather than personal enrichment.

Strengths: Medicine, Herbalism, Lore

CONCLAVES

Every time an **aspect** of your rebellion ranks up, your rebellion changes. You will have the opportunity to add a new ally to your **conclave**, a grouping of factions and allies who have sworn their loyalty to your rebellion.

During **downtime** or **free play**, you can invoke a **conclave ally** with a relevant strength to gain **+1d** on any roll, so building a **conclave** that reflects your strategic priorities (or shores up your weaknesses) is vital.

MOOT DECISIONS

Whenever an **aspect** ranks up, a **moot** is held to determine some feature of your rebellion going forward. This will usually be a decision between two different paths, or an opportunity to answer a question about your rebellion. Your **conclave** members and Fae patron may weigh, but in the end, it is your decision as to how your rebellion is shaped by your new allies and the decisions of the moot. Sample questions and decisions are included below.

ORGANIZATION

✠ **Rank 1: Safehouses or Refuges**

As the rebellion grows, a split over strategy emerges. The safety of the Brinkwood is a true boon, and many advocate for expanding the rebellion's presence within it. Others argue that the rebellion needs to be able to react quickly throughout Cardenfell, and call for resources to be diverted towards setting up safehouses in villages and towns.

✠ **Rank 1: Tall or Wide**

As your influence spreads through country and town, a disagreement arises as to whether your focus should be on bringing new folk into the fold or developing the villages and holdings that have already pledged their loyalty to the rebellion. Providing necessities to those still under vampiric rule is a sure way to win more supporters, but others advocate for building up your base, so that you can someday aid not just a few villages, but all of Cardenfell.

�֍ Rank 2: Lines or Smugglers

As your holdings grow, so too does your need for logistical distribution. Some argue that setting up formal, well-patrolled supply lines will allow you to quickly funnel a great many resources to where they are needed most. Others urge caution against such flagrant visibility. They instead suggest developing your relationships with smugglers so that a steady stream of hidden contraband can flow all over our territory and beyond.

✖ Rank 2: Property and Compensation

While private property is held as sacred among the vampires, your view is more lenient. Few voice much concern about seizing supplies and wealth from your oppressors, and it is a foregone conclusion that any seized factories and land will be handed over to the workers and peasants who work them. However, the issue of personal property is somewhat more contentious. Some argue for relying solely on trading in appropriated wealth and donations to sustain your movement, while others have proposed issuing "scrip," redeemable for other rebellion resources, to traders and artisans when the rebellion needs to requisition goods.

✖ Rank 3: Law and Order

As your movement grows into a society all its own, the question of law and order presses on the minds and hearts of many. Under vampire rule, there is little justice and seemingly arbitrary enforcement that primarily benefits the rich and powerful. As you work to build a new society, some argue that you should rebuild the Reeves of old as a corps of civil servants trained to non-violently handle most behavior currently deemed criminal. Others argue that your greatest threats are external rather than internal, and propose leaving justice and enforcement to local town councils and village moots, and instead focusing your organizing efforts on collective community defense.

Force

✖ Rank 1: Guerrillas or Partisans

The first choice that must be made for any aspiring rebellion is whether to emphasize offense or defense. Some in the rebellion advocate for forming small, heavily drilled bands of guerrillas capable of striking deep in enemy territory. Others emphasize the value of training and equipping partisans that can go on to organize and train their own communities in the arts of sabotage and community defense.

✖ Rank 1: Powder or Ash

The benefits of black powder and ashwood are obvious, but both require training and care both to produce and use effectively. Should you have your forces focus on sharpening stakes or making bombs?

✖ Rank 2: Vanguards and Lieutenants

As your forces expand, the need for leadership emerges. As bands elect their own leaders, some advocate for training and specializing these lieutenants, offering training in both strategy and tactics. Others argue that these resources would be better served training "vanguards," specialist organizers who are trained in strategy, politics, and ideology. These vanguards would be placed into bands and communities to train, motivate, and educate militias and units as a whole.

✣ Rank 2: Sickness and Disease

Throughout history, illness has stalked armies. Your forces must eventually confront this reality, and the decision must be made whether to focus your attention on widespread preventative practice and sanitation, or to instead focus resources on recruiting and training skilled healers who can assist with outbreaks of serious illness, whether in your camps or in Cardenfell at large.

✣ Rank 3: Rustcoats and Deserters

As the tide turns in your favor, many rustcoats have begun deserting their vampiric leiges, and some are eager to prove their loyalty to the revolution on the front lines. Some of your veterans grumble about this, as retraining rustcoats and integrating them into your forces may prove a logistical nightmare. Others, however, point to the in-depth knowledge of vampire tactics and fighting experience of these deserters, and advocate for their "fast tracking" into the rebellion's military.

INFLUENCE

✣ Rank 1: The Quill or the Silver

In order for the rebellion to succeed, it must win allies. A quick and easy shortcut is bribery, using stolen silver and supplies to offer quick relief to the most needy, or to corrupt the servants of your enemies. Alternatively, these resources could be used to hire and train teachers, educators, and organizers capable of running underground "circles" that will feed both the bodies and minds of your recruits.

✣ Rank 2: Rumors or Facts

As your influence and spy networks develop, you have the opportunity to influence both the popular perception of your movement as well as to counteract the propaganda of the vampires. Your scholars and intellectuals debate whether it is better to focus on using rumors of the Conclave's deeds and victories to attract support, or whether to instead focus on educating the general populace as to the nature of vampirism.

✣ Rank 2: Servants or Scampers

Your agents and spymasters have come to you asking to expand the intelligence network to the house servants of vampiric manors, or the urban cogscampers of factories. Servants in vampire holdings make excellent spies—nearly invisible to the monsters they serve, they are positioned perfectly to feed valuable intelligence back to the rebellion. And cogscampers serve a valuable role in the workings of more urban events, able to quickly pass messages, organize sabotage, and keep an eye on the comings and goings of enemies within towns and factories.

✣ Rank 3: Wisps and Treachery

As your intelligence network reaches beyond your shores, infiltration and counterintelligence begin to become serious issues. Your spies and informants are split on how to handle the threats of wisps and other vampire collaborators infiltrating your networks. Some argue that you should prioritize rooting out and liquidating threats as quickly as possible, while others advocate a more velvet glove, focusing on long-term ploys aimed at turning enemy agents to our cause.

Blood Rent This is a notice of blood rent due two days hence.

As per the decree, all residents unable to pay the required blood rent will be found and required to submit their payment to the authorities.

Attempts at physical resistence will be dealt with summarily.

VI
THE FORAY

A revolution does not succeed just with plans and honeyed words—it relies on action. In *Brinkwood*, you will need to periodically leave your forest refuge in order to scavenge resources, build alliances, or to wage guerrilla warfare upon the vampires. The success of your rebellion depends on these missions, missions that we call **forays**.

A foray is a single mission with an explicit goal: *Sabotage the supply of Steel flowing to Afforshire; assassinate a collaborator in Hogswick; smuggle supplies from the Diggers into the forest,* etc. Usually, a foray's goal will be one of the following:

✠ **Developing your rebellion** via its **aspects**: **organization**, **force**, and **influence**. See the previous chapter for details on what sorts of missions will aid you in advancing these aspects.

✠ **Building your relationships** with other factions is vital, and typically the best way to increase the rank of your rebellion's **aspects** is by helping allied factions get what they need.

✠ **Waging guerrilla warfare** is a necessary evil. The vampires won't fall because you wish it so. You'll need to sabotage supply lines, destroy outposts, assassinate key figures, and bring the fear of their people to the very heart of your oppressors. As your rebellion grows, you may move towards open warfare, attempting to seize control of villages, towns, and eventually all of Cardenfell.

Setting up a foray consists of a few key elements, detailed in this chapter: **planning**, **prepwork**, **entanglements**, **loadout**, and **engagement** & **disengagement**.

PLANNING

Forays are not to be undertaken lightly. Your band will gather in the refuge, huddled around maps and candlelight, the sage advice of your Fae close at hand, arguing, debating, and planning your next move. In *Brinkwood*, we abstract out most of these details, flashing back as needed and focusing in on what you need, as players, to get to the action.

The plans your brigands make do not need to be explored in detail up front. In *Brinkwood* you play to find out what happens during a given foray. To begin, all that is needed is a **goal**, an **approach,** and a **detail**.

GOAL

The goal of the **foray** will depend on what the brigands want to accomplish. As a GM, you might prompt your players to consider their current situation from a few different viewpoints.

First, consider if there is a pressing opportunity or something the brigands are excited to do next. If so, go with that.

Next, consider your refuge and your rebellion's priorities. Is your **resupply clock** getting close to full? It might be time to raid your enemy's stockpiles for more supplies. Are there opportunities to increase the **organization**, **influence,** or **force** of your rebellion? Do any of your allies require aid?

Once you have a goal firmly established, make a note of it somewhere visible to all players. Keep in mind that a single **foray** may have multiple goals (steal some black powder *and* increase your **force**), and you should feel free to note down as many goals as you like, though setting more than two goals in a single foray may put a few too many eggs in one basket!

APPROACH AND DETAIL

Your **approach** indicates how your band plans to engage with the **foray** and accomplish their goal. The **detail** of an approach is posed as a question to the players, usually filling in some key part of their plan or providing context from which to build the bones of the foray. See the table below for the detailed questions posed to the players for each approach.

Keep in mind that an **approach** is not a guarantee or a fail condition. **Forays** can start as stealthy infiltrations and wind up as all-out assaults. Likewise, approaches are not mutually exclusive, and if you're hung up on which to use, pick the one that seems the easiest to come up with a **detail** for and move forward. When in doubt, encourage your fellow players to consider what they think would make the best story, or what kind of foray they're most excited to play out.

Approach	Detail
Dramatic	How will you command attention?
Subtle	How will you remain unnoticed?
Tactical	How will you gain an advantage?
Rapid	How will you strike quickly?
Cautious	How will you prepare?
Charismatic	How will you rally others to your cause?

Prepwork

As the GM, you should fill in a few more details for each **foray**. Either ask the brigands these questions, or come up with answers yourself:

✖   What do the brigands need to do to accomplish your goals?

✖   What obstacles do you think the brigands might need to overcome?

✖   Who do you think might try to stop the brigands?

✖   What other opportunities might the brigands be able to exploit to make this go smoothly?

The idea here is to establish a clear enough picture of the **foray** so that you can successfully improvise the remaining details.

Next, as the GM, you will want to generate a **possibility cloud**, a list of potential threats, enemies, or obstacles that might stand between the brigands and their goals during the **foray**. You might consult your notes for ideas on which enemies are nearby, or consult the *Almanac* for ideas on what sorts of threats, opportunities, and enemies make sense for where the foray is taking place.

Note: You might want to split up the work, having your players answer the prepwork questions while the GM plots out the **possibility cloud.** If the players need more time to answer these questions, or the GM needs time to brainstorm a possibility cloud, you might call for a short break, and/or pull out a storytelling aid, such as tarot cards, *Spindlewheel*, or story dice.

ENTANGLEMENTS

As your brigands plot their **foray**, so too do the vampires plot against them. In the planning phase of each foray, the GM should roll on the **entanglements chart** (found in the **entanglement summary** below and on the **GM reference sheet**) in order to determine what, if any, vampiric schemes may be interfering with the brigand's mission.

Most of the time, these **entanglements** will act sort of as "B plots" for **forays**, with the vampire schemes showing up incidentally, and not always directly concerned with what the brigands are doing. Early on, vampires are just as likely to scheme against one another as they are to plot against the upstart rebels.

Consider weaving these **entanglements** together into larger narratives about the goals and plans of individual vampires and the Vampire Lord, using their time on screen as a chance to illustrate some of what the vampires are up to, and perhaps providing the seeds of further **forays** aimed at thwarting vampiric plans.

How well informed of these **entanglements** the brigands are will vary depending on the **sedition** present in the **foray** location, as well as the rebellion's **influence**. At a high influence, the rebel's spy network is likely to keep the brigands up to date about the latest schemes and movements of the vampires. At lower influence or at moderate levels of sedition, they might receive some advanced notice of vampiric schemes, but without a lot of details. At high levels of sedition, local allies, informants, or rebel cells may be on hand to help distract or foil vampiric schemes while the brigands go about their business.

ENTANGLEMENT SUMMARY

Roll a number of dice corresponding to the current level of heat on the following chart.

- ✠ Heat 0: 2d, take lowest
- ✠ Heat 1-3: 1d
- ✠ Heat 4-6: 2d
- ✠ Heat 7-9: 3d
- ✠ Heat 10+: 3d, apply two highest rolls

Roll	Tyranny 0	Tyranny 1	Tyranny 2	Tyranny 3	Open Rebellion
1	Do Nothing	Do Nothing	Do Nothing	Investigate	Investigate
2	Do Nothing	Investigate	Investigate	Investigate	Extort
3	Do Nothing	Investigate	Extort	Terrorize	Extort
4	Investigate	Extort	Extort	Terrorize	Assault
5	Extort	Extort	Terrorize	Assault	Assault
6	Terrorize	Terrorize	Assault	Ambush	Ambush

During the foray, apply the the highest rolled **entanglement**.

Investigate: The vampires hunt out **sedition**, treachery, and rebellion. They round up innocents, interrogate captives, and generally try to discover more about the rebellion and its plans. A vampiric investigator may have been dispatched to the current **foray's** location, or it might be crawling with spies. If ignored, add +2 **heat** at the end of the foray.

Extort: The vampires squeeze the populace for blood, silver, and labor. Bailiffs seize property, terrified peasants line up to pay the blood tax, and chests bursting with blood sterling make for a tempting target. A vampiric bureaucrat or functionary likely leads this effort.

Terrorize: The vampires attempt to terrorize the citizenry into submission. Random executions and beatings are doled out. Curfews are imposed. Violence, fear, and blood pour through the streets. It is likely that a vampiric enforcer has been dispatched. If ignored, remove **1d6 sedition** at this location.

Assault: The vampires bolster their forces, increasing patrols, stationing more guards, or, more rarely, preparing to assault a friendly safe house or allied encampment. A vampiric lieutenant or commander likely leads these forces. If ignored, -1d to the next **engagement roll**.

Ambush: The vampires lay a clever trap for the brigands. Once it is sprung, the brigands are placed in a **desperate position** and will likely need to fight their way out or run for their lives. It is likely that a powerful vampire, a high-ranking lieutenant, or a talented mercenary leads the vampires.

LOADOUT

In *Brinkwood*, players do not need to decide up front what equipment their brigand will use during a **foray**. Instead, players choose their brigand's **loadout**, which determines how much equipment their character can bring on a given foray. **Load** is spent during a foray whenever a player wants to use a certain item.

There are three types of **loadout** to choose from, each with advantages and disadvantages.

Light (3 Load): Your brigand looks harmless to all but the most practiced observer. Your lack of encumbrance makes feats of agility easier, usually in the form of +**Effect** during Prowl or Finesse actions.

Normal (5 Load): Your brigand looks like a traveller, equipped to handle the dangers of the road.

Heavy (7 Load): Your brigand is obviously a rebel, ready to do violence. Your encumbrance makes climbing, running, and other activities which require dexterity or stealth more difficult, usually in the form of a penalty to the effect of such actions.

Encumbered (8 - 10 Load): Your brigand is carrying something very heavy and can only manage to move slowly. This Loadout cannot be selected at the start of a foray, and is only used if the brigands pick up something extra, like a chest full of blood sterling.

*Hable wants to pull out **A Blade or Two** during a skirmish with some loanfangs. Because he chose a **normal loadout**, he spends 1 **load** to pay for the blade and has 4 left over.*

LEGALITY

Some **equipment** is described as being **illegal**, and players may question how a character with **light** or **normal load** is able to get away with having stashed an obviously illegal item or weapon on their person. The assumption here is that due to the high **load** cost of these items, the brigand took the time to break down, disguise, or otherwise conceal the weapon before it's used.

CONCEALMENT AND SEARCHES

While typically the concealment of an item is abstracted by its **load**, there are circumstances where more active measures are required. If a brigand has been previously searched for weapons or contraband and later decides to pull out such an item, they will first need to play out a short **flashback** detailing how they evaded the search or concealed the item they wish to pull out.

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS

- �֎ **Blackjack**

A dull, hefty bludgeoning weapon, also known as a "sap," these weapons are useful mostly for their silent and non-lethal nature. A favored tool of kidnappers and other rogues, they are highly concealable but illegal if discovered. [**1 Load**]

BLADES

- ✖ **A Blade or Two**

Small daggers, knives, and shortswords are the most common forms of personal defense in Cardenfell. Used more as tools than as weapons, these blades can nevertheless be deadly in the hands of a skilled wielder, but are mostly useful due to their ubiquity and ease of concealment. [**1 Load**]

- ✖ **Longsword**

A weapon hearkening back to the Old Kingdom, long blades such as foils, arming swords, and dueling blades have begun to fall out of fashion in favor of pistols and other more advanced weaponry. Nevertheless, they are often useful for fending off multiple foes in melee, especially when used in conjunction with a shield. [**2 Load**]

✠ Spear

Once the most common weapon to see on a battlefield, owing to it being cheap to produce and simple to wield. Now only desperately poor hunters and outlaws will risk being caught with these illegal weapons, and even they may choose to break and abandon them after a single use rather than keep such contraband on their person. [**3 Load**]

Firearms

✠ Flintlock Pistol

A very short ranged weapon capable of penetrating most types of armor. Most widely available types of shot are cheaply made and will quickly wear down the gun's mechanisms, so the danger-prone would be wise to invest in a contact for high quality ammunition. They are often carried in pairs due to the difficulty in reloading a single pistol. [**1 Load**]

✠ Flintlock Rifle

Likely the most accurate and deadly weapon in the world, but also the slowest to reload. As is always the case, great power must always come with a cost. [**2 Load**]

Bows

✠ Crossbow

One needs not to be strong, swift, patient, or even terribly precise to wield this deadly ranged weapon with reasonable efficacy; they need only have plenty of time to reload. [**3 Load**]

✠ Hunting Bow

Best for shooting animals at under 30 paces, homemade bows aren't ideal for combat, and despite their limited utility, they are just as illegal as more effective weapons. Some peasants in isolated rural areas will nonetheless risk a possession charge for the sake of making their hunting easier. [**3 Load**]

✠ Shortbow

These ranged weapons are ideal for firing repeat shots at unarmored targets from a comfortable range. While often thought of as weapons meant for the dexterous, a good deal of strength is needed to use them effectively. [**3 Load**]

✠ Longbow

While it has a greater effective range than other bows, it's somewhat cumbersome and demanding to wield. Only carried by those intent on ambushing targets from a great distance, or who wish to chase some romantic ideal of traditional brigands. [**3 Load**]

Shields and Armor

✠ Buckler

+1d resist. A small shield, easily carried on a belt, with a metal protrusion for deflecting attacks. In a skilled hand it can be effective at parrying blows, but it cannot meaningfully defend against the strikes of heavy weapons or ranged attacks. [**1 Load**]

✠ Heavy Round Shield

+**1d resist.** While not optimally shaped or weighted, a great hunk of wood is the best choice for one who wants to ensure that a blocked attack will be completely absorbed regardless of the skill or positioning of the blocker. [**2 Load**]

✠ Knightly Shield

+**2d resist.** These uniquely shaped wooden shields reinforced with leather are only produced for the upper echelons of the military, and bear the heraldic markings of their rightful owner. [**3 Load**]

✠ Leather Armor

Soaks 1 harm. Treated leather can absorb impacts quite well, but can only defend against bladed attacks if it suffers a relatively glancing blow, and should only be worn as armor by the swift and brave. [**2 Load**]

✠ Chainmail

Soaks 1 harm, +1d to resist. While a solid enough hit can pierce through or break apart the chain links, this lightweight metal armor will stand up at least once to a strike from nearly any weapon while still allowing its wearer plenty of maneuverability. [**3 Load**]

✠ Plated Jacket

Soaks 2 harm. Decent armor that is simple to craft and repair; any scrap metal can be sewn into the interior of a quality coat. Unfortunately, any well aimed thrust or shot can land in between the arrangement of the plates, nullifying the armor's effectiveness entirely. [3 **Load**]

TOOLS

✠ Lantern

While most brigands prefer to let their eyes adjust to the darkness rather than risk the attention a light brings, a lantern remains an occasionally useful tool. [**1 Load**]

✠ Censer

A vessel for burning wood, attached to a sturdy chain. Despite their weaponization by brigands, they have yet to be officially restricted, perhaps in anticipation of resentment from the churches that use them to officiate certain ceremonies, or perhaps for fear of making this utility more popularly known. [**1 Load**]

✠ Manna Wood

Unknown to all except the fae, who keep track of such things, the foreign sweet flowering manna tree is actually a distant cousin of ashwood. In arrow form, its wood is no different from that of any other tree, and when burned, its smoke has only a fraction of its relative's potency. It is only the tree's legal status that makes it an alternative worthy of consideration. [**1 Load**]

✠ Burglary Kit

A bird call instrument, a set of cleverly disguised lockpicks, a spare set of clothes, some cured meat, a bottle of inhalational anesthetic, and a shuttered lantern all have one or two obvious uses, but a clever thief can find many more than that. [**1 Load**]

✠ Tinkering Tools

Metal instruments for both detail work and heavy maintenance, an essential chemistry apparatus, and all that is needed to collect and refine certain basic elements make up a tinkerer's toolkit. The function of any one piece is unlikely to be guessed by the layman, but the intent behind the set as a whole is plainly obvious. [**2 Load**]

✠ Demolition Tools

Packets of saltpeter, timing mechanisms, and vials of various alchemicals are all essential for making a proper explosion. Typically disguised as fireworks or in smoking pipes, these tools are capable of providing little more than a colorful distraction without an additional key component: black powder. [**2 Load**]

✠ Subterfuge Supplies

Capes and cloaks are common guards against the cold in Cardenfell, and combined with a bit of coal paint or mud, one can make a reasonably stealthy disguise to guard against detection in the dead of night. Creating more sophisticated costumes able to pass muster at vampiric social events typically requires access either to more fanciful clothing or a talented tailor. [**1 Load**]

✠ Climbing Gear

Rope, rigging, pitons, and a hammer are common enough in Cardenfell, as being able to climb over the jagged bluffs and hills of the countryside often requires their use. Still, when used in an urban environment, these tools are likely to raise a few eyebrows. [**2 Load**]

CONTRABAND

✠ Ashwood

The wood of ash trees can cause grievous harm to vampires, and its smoke can hide one's presence from their supernatural senses. Ashwood is highly controlled, and carrying arrows of it is a crime punishable by death. [**1 Load**]

✠ Black Powder

The ideal substance for making bombs and ammunition for firearms, as the much more common saltpeter creates more smoke than it does explosive force, and tends to foul a firearm's mechanisms quickly. [**1 Load**]

UNDISCOVERED

✠ Alchemist's Fire

Some say the first nations targeted by the vampires were those whose alchemists knew how to produce this intensely flammable ooze. Whatever the reason, none alive today know the secret to its production, but what was lost can always be rediscovered. [**2 Load**]

✠ Sleeping Powder

A special blend of mysterious herbs found near the Brinkwood, this tincture produces fits of coughing followed by unconsciousness in those who inhale it. The exact recipe is long since lost to time, but could likely be reproduced with enough diligence and study. [**2 Load**]

ENGAGEMENT

In *Brinkwood*, you jump straight to the action, the point in the story where your band first meets resistance in accomplishing their objective. To determine what the situation is when you first face that challenge, you use a type of **fortune roll** called an **engagement roll**.

ENGAGEMENT ROLL

✵ Start with **1d** for each **sedition level** at the **foray's** location.

✵ Remove **1d** for each level of **tyranny**. This cannot drop the number of dice below zero.

✵ Is your **approach** something your enemies are particularly weak against? Take +**1d**. Are your enemies strong against your chosen approach? Lose -**1d**.

✵ Are any of your **associates, bonds or allies** able to help you with your approach? Gain +**1d** if you invoke a helpful relationship.

✵ Can any factions in your **Conclave** provide assistance? Gain +**1d**.

✵ Does your Fae patron's court specialize in this action? If so, gain +**1d**.

✵ Does your average **load** affect your **approach**? Are you trying to sneak in somewhere with a **heavy load**? If so, take -**1d**. Are you at an average of a **light load** while trying to infiltrate a location? Take +**1d**.

✵ Are you spending any **downtime actions** or special resources to gain an advantage on your **engagement roll**? If so, take +**1d.**

Once you have gathered all the dice necessary, roll them and consult the chart below to determine the starting situation. The GM should begin the **foray** by narrating a short descriptive scene to establish the setting. Next, the players should narrate how they enter the scene, as well as how they are keeping to their chosen **approach**. Finally, the GM should confront the brigands with the first obstacle, and ask them how they will react to it.

✵ **Crit**: Controlled position, and remove one obstacle!

✵ **6**: Controlled

✵ **4/5:** Risky

✵ **1-3:** Desperate

GM Note: During a **foray**, a back-and-forth pattern should emerge, with you presenting your players with obstacles, them stating how they overcome them, and then you confronting them with new obstacles. Don't be afraid to move the camera from obstacle to obstacle, as the players can always **flashback** or ask for a pause if the action grows too hectic.

DISENGAGEMENT

A **disengagement roll** can be made when running short on time for a **foray** or when the group wants to abstract their exit strategy.

Once the brigands have accomplished their goal for a **foray**, if nothing is standing between them leaving, it is often best for the GM to narratively wrap things up and get the fiction to **downtime**. Otherwise, use this mechanic.

DISENGAGEMENT ROLL

✠ Start with **1d** for pure luck.

✠ Add **+1d** if you rely on a **bond**, **associate or ally** that can aid your escape.

✠ Add **+1d** for each advantage you establish to aid your escape. This is a good chance for **flashbacks** or flash-forwards to set up escape routes, find secret exits, or sabotage pursuers.

✠ Add **+1d** if you are in seditious territory, subtract **-1d** if the vampire presence is strong here.

✠ Subtract **-1d** if you have not yet accomplished your main goal.

✠ Subtract **-1d** for each side objective you would like to still try to accomplish on your way out. This covers quick actions that are possible to accomplish, such as stealing some documents or detonating a previously rigged explosive.

✠ Subtract **-1d** for each brigand that has been **taken out** by their **stress track**.

Roll fortune dice and adjudicate the result:

✠ **Crit**: A clean getaway, with everything you tried for, and a bit extra. Maybe you snag a bit of extra reputation or lose some heat.

✠ **6:** A good getaway. You get everything you tried for and everyone gets home safe.

✠ **4,5:** A messy escape: You get away, but there are **consequences**. Maybe you take additional **heat** as you are chased across Cardenfell. Maybe a brigand or two takes **harm** holding back enemies while retreating. Maybe something important is left behind, or a side goal left unaccomplished.

✠ **1-3:** The skin of your teeth: You escape, but only barely. Everyone takes **harm**, your **heat track** is filled, or you leave behind something of vital importance.

DISENGAGEMENT CONSEQUENCES

It is important to note that a brigand cannot die or suffer permanent injury (unless they choose to do so) during an escape. Do not threaten permanent **consequences**, and do not subvert the **foray** by canceling out/rendering pointless their main goal with a consequence to a **disengagement roll**.

Remember that any **consequences** gained from this roll can be resisted, **harm** can be canceled by **armor**, and brigands can protect their allies.

VII

DOWNTIME

After the band completes a **foray** (either through success or through a **disengagement roll**), they return to their forest refuge in order to recover, regroup, and prepare for their next expedition. This phase of the game is called **downtime**.

Downtime fulfills three purposes in *Brinkwood*:

✠ First, it's a break for the players. During the action of the **foray**, the brigands 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 move into a new phase of the game signals a change 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.

✠ Third, the shift in perspective allows us to "zoom out" the focus of the game. It can be easy to focus on certain objectives or moment-to-moment decisions during a **foray**. **Downtime** allows the players a chance to take stock and focus on the larger goals of the rebellion, their allies, and the needs and daily necessities of their refuge.

Downtime is divided into three parts, which are resolved in order:
1. **Payoff**. The brigands receive their rewards from a completed **foray**.
2. **Heat**. The brigands accumulate suspicion and attention from the vampires and their servants as a result of the last **foray**.
3. **Downtime Activities**. The brigands rest up to remove **stress**, work on **long-term projects**, recover from injuries, etc.

Payoff

After a **foray**, the brigands take stock of what they have gained. A successful foray may empty the **resupply clock**, add **progress** to one of the rebellion's **aspects**, or add ticks to a location's **sedition clock**.

Sedition

Sedition represents the overall strength of the rebellion in a specific location. A combination of informers, disgruntled peasants, local leaders, and guerrilla cells form the backbone of the rebellion, and cultivating these local contacts often means the difference between victory and defeat.

In general, villages have 6-segment **sedition clocks**, and towns have 8-segment sedition clocks. When a location's clock fills, you add one **sedition level** (up to a maximum of 3) to that location and empty the location's sedition clock.

- ✠ **1 tick**: Mildly seditious activities such as making contacts.
- ✠ **2 ticks**: Moderately seditious activities such as setting up a cache of supplies or negotiating with locals.
- ✠ **4 ticks**: Majorly seditious activities, such as creating a cell of agents, recruiting a spy, or establishing a safehouse.
- ✠ **+1** to each if you aided a community by filling a need, learned something new about them, or made a sacrifice for them.

Aspect Progress

As your rebellion wins important victories and gains new allies, it develops along three axes termed **aspects**. Fulfilling a **foray's** objectives will typically result in **progress** being added to an **aspect clock**.

When an **aspect clock** fills, you will increase the **aspect's rank** by 1 and may add a new ally to your **Conclave**. See **Chapter 5 - The Rebellion** for further details.

Progress:

- ✠ **1 tick:** A minor success or **set up** for a future foray.
- ✠ **2 ticks:** A modest win or helpful action.
- ✠ **3 ticks:** A major victory or a crushing blow to your foes.
- ✠ **+1 tick:** Accomplish an objective or fulfill a need for a community.

GM Note: Do not screw around with the players when it comes to the payoff. A potential **foray** may turn out to be an ambush or bait, but the brigands should have the chance to discover the enemy's plans in advance, and if they escape after accomplishing their objective, they should get to keep what they earned.

Resupply and Contraband

If the brigands manage to get their hands on a resource useful to the rebellion, such as black powder, blood sterling, or ashwood, the GM may choose to empty an existing **resupply clock** or other **resource clock**. Generally speaking, small caches of contraband, like a keg of black powder or a purse of blood sterling, should reset a resource clock, or perhaps remove a single tick from the resupply clock. Larger raids and robberies, at the scale of ambushing convoys or robbing manors should empty the resupply clock.

Finally, as the rebellion advances in its **aspects**, bigger and bigger scores may become necessary in order to empty the **resupply clock**. A single ambush might feed a small band of brigands, but resupplying an entire rebellion necessitates seizing territory, raiding stores, or setting up your own supply lines between friendly territories.

Heat

Cardenfell is full of prying eyes and informants loyal to the vampire regime. Anything you do might be witnessed, and there's always evidence left behind. To reflect this, your band acquires **heat** as they steal, sabotage, and assault their way across Cardenfell. After a **foray** or conflict with an opponent, your crew takes heat according to the nature of the operation:

Heat:

- ✠ **0 heat:** Smooth & quiet; low exposure.
- ✠ **2 heat:** Contained; standard exposure.
- ✠ **4 heat:** Loud & chaotic; high exposure.
- ✠ Add +1 **heat** for a high-profile or well-connected target. Add +1 heat if the foray or conflict took place in a high-security location. Subtract -1 heat for each action taken to reduce exposure.

You mark **heat** on the **heat track** on the **rebellion record sheet**.

If you gain **heat** when your **heat track** is already filled, Cardenfell gains a **tyranny level** and you clear all of your heat.

Tyranny

As you gain notoriety, the Vampire Lord of Cardenfell will attempt to crack down on your activities, allies, and the communities you aid. Every time would mark **heat**, but your **heat track** is already filled, Cardenfell gains an additional level of **tyranny**.

As **tyranny** rises, the vampires' actions will grow more vicious, focused, and dangerous. At a low tyranny level, the vampires are too busy with infighting and their own schemes to consider you much of a threat. As tyranny rises, they will begin taking more direct action against you, as well as sending more powerful servants against you.

Going Underground

If the players find that the **tyranny** level is rising too quickly, they may choose to go underground for a period of time.

The playgroup should choose a thematic period of time, perhaps a year or a few seasons, and players should decide how their brigands spend this **downtime**. Some questions to consider might be:

�֎ Do you return to your family? How do they welcome you?

✖ What personal comforts did you miss most?

✖ Who keeps you hidden and safe? What do they risk by doing so? Are there any close calls?

✖ Why do you return to the Brinkwood? Who must you say goodbye to?

Remove one level of **tyranny** and erase all **heat**, **stress** and **essence**. Next, the GM should make a **fortune roll** with a number of dice equal to the current **organization** to check how the rebellion itself has fared during this period.

Crit: The rebellion grows. Add 2 ticks to any **aspect progress clock**.
6: All is accounted for. Make no changes.
4/5: Supplies have gone missing. Add 2 ticks to your **resupply clock**.
1-3: Plans have unfurled. Empty the **aspect progress clock** with the least amount of ticks.

DOWNTIME ACTIONS

Between **forays**, your band spends time at their liberty, usually in their forest refuge, attending to personal needs and side projects. These are called **downtime actions** (see the list below). During a downtime phase, each PC has time for one downtime action.

INFLUENCE

✖ Long-Term Project
✖ Reconnaissance
✖ Reduce Heat

ORGANIZATION

✖ Prepare
✖ Recover
✖ Reconnect

FORCE

✖ Hone Equipment
✖ Command Cohort
✖ Requisition Asset

> Activities on the downtime list are limited; normal 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 action**, take **+1d** to the roll if an **associate** or **conclave ally** with a relevant strength helps you.

GM: 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.

Rebellion Downtime

In addition to the individual brigand's **downtime actions**, the rebellion as a whole can perform downtime actions. The amount of rebellion downtime actions is limited by the rebellion's **aspects**. For each rank in an aspect, the brigands may perform a downtime action related to it. For example, with an **organization** of rank 2, two brigands could take an additional **reconnect action**.

Note that you may choose the same **downtime action** 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.

Downtime Actions

Long-Term Project

A **long-term project** can cover a wide variety of activities, like doing research into a vampiric ritual, investigating a mystery, establishing someone's trust, courting a new friend or ally, recovering from a **scar**, 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 **long-term 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 uncover the schemes of the Duke's Houndsmistress, but have no connection to her. You could first work on a project to Consort with her huntsmen so you have the opportunity to spy on her. Once that's accomplished, you could start a new project to start unraveling the Houndsmistress's plans.

When you work on a **long-term project** (either a brand new one, or an already existing one), describe what your character does to progress the project, and make an **action roll**. Mark segments on the clock according to your result: **1-3:** one segment; **4/5:** two segments; **6:** three segments; **Critical:** five segments.

Note that **long-term projects** can also be used to **craft** or **invent** new equipment. See the Crafting section (page 123) for further information.

Reconnaissance

Describe how you use your rebellion's intelligence network, informants, or scouts to assist you in **gathering information**. Make a gather information roll as normal, but add +**Effect** to it.

Reduce Heat

Say what your character does to reduce the **heat level** and make an **action roll**. Maybe you Consort with your friend who's able to make a few incriminating dispatches disappear. Or maybe you Hunt collaborators and spies.

Reduce **heat** according to the result: **1-3:** one; **4/5:** two; **6:** three; **Critical:** five.

PREPARE

Narrate how your brigand **prepares** for an upcoming **foray**. They might make plans and consult maps, practice their skills, or even just do various chores around the refuge. On your next **engagement roll**, gain **+1d**.

RECONNECT

Narrate how your character spends their time resting and reconnecting with their **bonds**, perhaps by visiting a favorite place, spending time with their friends and family, or by practicing a relaxing hobby.

When you reconnect, roll a number of dice equal to your lowest **attribute**, and remove **stress** from your **stress track** equal to the highest die roll.

RECOVER

Describe how you receive aid from another brigand, an associate, an ally, or a fae. Receiving aid involves playing out a short scene in which your friends and allies help you to feel more "human." Remove your highest **ban**.

HONE EQUIPMENT

Describe how you spend time honing, improving, or practicing with a certain weapon or a piece of equipment. Add the *fine* tag to one piece of equipment, granting it +**Effect**. This tag is removed at the end of a foray in which the equipment was used.

COMMAND COHORT

Describe how you assemble, requisition, or train a group of rebels. Narrate any standing order you give them. You gain the assistance of a cohort of allies for a single mission. See further rules for **Leading Allies** on page 49 .

The cohort is dismissed after their assigned mission is accomplished.

REQUISITION ASSET

Describe how you beg, borrow, steal, or assemble a needed asset, such as a unique piece of equipment, an expert on an obscure subject, or a particular tool for an upcoming **foray**. The GM will create a **use clock** for the asset, and will tick a segment every time you need to use the asset. When a use clock fills, the asset is exhausted and will need to be reacquired before being used.

The **requisition asset action** can also be used to resupply resources and supplies for the rebellion. Describe how you steal, gather, bargain for, or otherwise acquire resources necessary for the success of the rebellion and make an **action roll**. You might HUNT for game in the Brinkwood, or maybe COMMAND a vampire courier into parting with some steel or silver. Unmark a number of segments on the **resupply clock** according to the result: 1-3: one segment; **4/5:** two segments; **6:** three segments; **Crit**: five segments.

CRAFTING

During downtime, a mechanically-minded brigand can use these **crafting** rules to alter their equipment or produce entirely new items.

In order to craft an item for which a formula or design exists, a brigand must complete one or more **long-term projects**. The default starting clock size for a crafting project is 4-segment.Consult the following modifications to clock size:

- ✠ +2 if the item is complex
- ✠ +2 if no blueprint exists, relies on oral tradition
- ✠ +2 if there are no drawbacks to item
- ✠ +2 if the item requires illegal components, such as black powder or ashwood
- ✠ -2 if all resources are easily accessible
- ✠ -2 if you tick the **resupply clock**
- ✠ -2 if allies in your **Conclave** can assist

Note that crafting clocks can be reduced to zero, requiring only a single **long-term project downtime action** to complete.

Inventions can be created using the following steps.

- ✠ *Player answers*: What type of creation is it and what does it do?
- ✠ *GM answers*: What magnitude does this item's effect have?
- ✠ *Player answers*: What rare, strange, or adverse aspect of this formula or design has kept it in obscurity, out of common usage?
- ✠ *GM answers*: What drawbacks does this item have, if any?

The GM then calculates a **long-term project** based on the item's magnitude, where the number of segments in the **research clock** is equal to double the magnitude of the item.

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 city	Across Cardenfell

Tier & Quality/Force

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent	Superior	Impeccable	Legendary
Weak	Moderate	Strong	Serious	Powerful	Overwhelming	Devastating

Quality Examples

6	A mansion, large ship, rare essences or arcane artifacts, powerful magics
5	A large townhouse, small ship, custom-tailored clothing, expensive alchemicals
4	A luxury vehicle, townhouse, typical alchemicals
3	A coach, boat, military rifle, fashionable clothing, small home
2	A pistol, respectable clothing, private rented room, a minor spirit or sprite
1	A fighting blade, ordinary clothing, shared apartment, cheap food or drugs
0	A rusty knife, worn & tattered clothing, rickety shack on the street

Force Examples

6	Hurricane wind, molten lava, tidal wave, electrical maelstrom
5	A ship's cannon, raging thunderstorm, 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

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	A small gang (3-6)	A medium gang (12)	A regular patrol (20)	A full division (40)	A small army (80)	A regular army (160)

Once a **long-term project** is complete, a brigand can produce a **prototype** based on the crafting rules, with an additional segment for each point of the item's magnitude (rounded down to the nearest even number).

Once a **prototype** is produced, any player with access to the blueprints can craft the item without the "no blueprint" penalty, so long as the item's crafting does not rely on oral tradition.

The following chapters are designed for the use of GMs. If you are not a GM, you need not read any further.
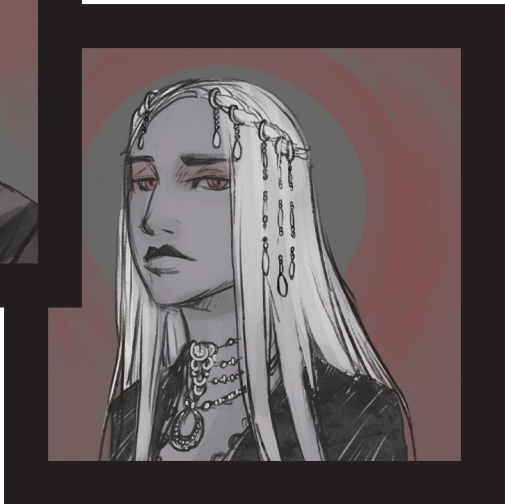
VIII

VAMPIRES AND THEIR SERVANTS

SERVANT CLASSES

While the servants that serve vampires (as well as the vampires themselves) are diverse, they can be grouped into several unique classes, best suited to certain circumstances. This expresses itself in modifications to the effect of a servant's *tier* when they pose an obstacle to the brigands.

✠   A *courtier* will be at full effect posing an obstacle during a social scene, perhaps by trying to suss out the brigand's true motives, resist deception, or manipulate or sow discord among allies. However, they will falter if trying to detect stealthy brigands, and might be near-useless in a straight up fight.

✠   An *enforcer* will be at full effect during combat, or when seeking to terrify or brutalize a population. They will be less useful at detecting ambushes or at investigating the brigand's activities, and will typically be rather useless in scenarios that call for subtlety, etiquette, or charm.

✠   An *investigator* will be at full effect when searching out the brigands or keeping watch for them. They are difficult to ambush, and will attempt to hunt the brigands down at every opportunity. They are not easily misled, outpaced, or fooled. In a fight, they might be able to hold their own, though they typically prefer to call in more blunt instruments. Likewise, they will be at **reduced effect** in social scenarios, though they may still be potent at sussing out hidden motives.

✠   An *officer* will have full effect so long as they are attended by an appropriate number of subordinates. They excel at politics, investigation, and combat equally, but if stripped of their subordinates, they will quickly falter.

Lesser Servants are those that might appear in any campaign, and should be used by GMs to bolster the forces arrayed against the brigands. In general, these servants should be regarded as *Tier 0* or *Tier 1*, but their *tier* may be raised, perhaps if led by a loanfang or other vampiric officer.

✠ **Huntsmen** - Skilled hunters that help vampires out in sporting "hunts" of faeries, track runaway serfs, flush out rebels, etc. They prefer to fight at a distance, ambushing or picking off their foes. ***Investigator***

✠ **Bailiffs** - Men with clubs who keep peasants in line, enforcers for Landlords. They prefer to fight in melee, preferably against a weak or defenseless foe. They may quickly rout if faced with a "real" fight. ***Enforcer***

✠ **Powdermen** - Gangsters with a bit of vampire backing that use a monopoly on gunpowder to terrorize the underworld. They are versatile, fighting at a distance with rifles before closing in on prey with their pistols. That said, they are fundamentally motivated by greed, and few are the powedermen that will fight to the death. ***Enforcer***

✠ **Ghouls** - People drained of all but a single drop of vampiric blood. Slaves, carrion-eaters, underclass. Literally dehumanized, they are perhaps the fate of those who don't make rent. Mindless and rabid, they are easy to deal with at a distance or in small numbers. Their primary use is as cannon fodder, or to overwhelm distracted enemies. ***Enforcer***

✠ **Dramcoats** - Soldiers in the service of a Vampire Lord, so named for the dram of blood sterling they are paid weekly. Treated mostly as disposable cannon fodder in the vendetta wars between vampires, they wield a shortsword and either a pike or a rifle depending on their role. Their coats are frequently colored in the livery of their vampire lord, but all seem to bleed to a rust color at the fringes over time, earning veterans the nickname of rustcoat. ***Enforcer***

✠ **Landlords** - Vampiric and Non-Vampiric Squires and Lords who own property and charge rents to peasants. These lords will rarely fight their own battles, and prefer to hire bit-bloods, bailiffs, or powdermen to fight for them. ***Courtier***

✠ **Bit-Blood**: A human enforcer who gets a bit of blood from their vampiric masters. They are stronger, tougher, and frequently led by vampires or found leading lesser servants. They are hardy, disciplined foes that can be difficult to face down in a one-on-one fight. The best advice is to not fight them fair: ambush them, rally other folk against them, or cut them off from their allies. ***Enforcer***

✠ **Wisp** - Collaborator folk who aspire to vampirism and rising through the ranks. They spy on their fellows, sow discord, and keep the myth of "ascending" to vampirism alive. Wisps are a cowardly lot, through and through, and will nearly always run rather than stand and fight. ***Investigator***

Vampiric Classes

Even within the ranks of vampiredom there is a strict hierarchy. Largely based on the accumulation of blood and silver, the "ladder" of vampiric privilege is held up as a meritocracy, hiding the bloody and vicious truth of the violence and cruelty necessary to ascend through their ranks. Each rank both hates and aspires to the rank above, putting on airs or attempting to emulate the fashions and practices of the level above them. In this way, vampire society is bound together, not through love or loyalty, but through envy and greed.

�֍ **Loanfang** is a derogatory term for an unlanded vampire beholden to another for blood sterling. They are addressed as Niece or Nephew in the polite terminology. They are occasionally employed as spies, bounty hunters, or found leading groups of more "mundane" muscle or bit-bloods. Peasants who wish to stay in their good graces will address them as Master or Mistress. Loanfangs are typically *Tier 1* or *Tier 2* threats. *Enforcer*

✖ **Kith** are vampires with a bit of blood sterling and land. They control minor fiefdoms, and are little better than landlords. They are addressed as Sir, Madam, or Squire. Kith are typically *Tier 2* threats. *Courtier*

✖ **Kine** are vampires of society, a true bourgeoisie above "sullying" their hands with the lesser details of extracting blood and rent from the peasantry. To address Kine as anything other than Lord or Lady will earn a peasant a whipping. Kine are typically *Tier 3* or *Tier 4* threats. *Officer*

✖ The **Pure Lines** are vampire high nobility, who control other vampires and large vaults of blood sterling. They are the most powerful and most removed from day-to-day affairs. Their name is a bit of propaganda, as many claim their blood is "purer" than lesser vampires. Pure Line vampires are typically either *Tier 4* or *Tier 5* threats. *Officer*

✖ The **Outcasts** are a rumor, a scary bedtime story told to naughty Scions, of vampires who have been completely consumed by their lust for blood and power. Depending on who you ask, they are a fairy tale, a bit of clever propaganda (after all, the Crimson Crown is not as bad as *those* vampires), or a very real threat: the vampires who predated the Crimson Crown, whose stolen magic perhaps made the first blood sterling. *Enforcer*

Blood Magic

The magic used by vampires is left purposely vague, with only the stipulations that it is tied to the blood they drink, and that greater concentrations of blood produce greater effects. On the next page are some suggested abilities that vampires may gain from blood-drinking, but these are not hard rules, and should be adapted to the playstyle and vision of your group.

Vampiric Abilities

The exact nature of the blood's gifts is left purposely vague so that you can tailor your preferred vision of the vampires. Some basic powers that nearly all vampires have might include:

Charm - The ability to sway folk to their cause. The brigands are inured to the effects of this by the protection of their masks, but a vampire can stir folk to their defense.

Authority - When the carrot fails, the stick will suffice. Vampires can use threats, commanding tones, and raw charisma to inspire the forces they lead to fight harder and longer.

Toughness - Killing a vampire is no easy feat. They heal quickly from mundane injury with only ashwood dealing lasting harm.

Speed - Vampires are trained, usually, to fight quickly and decisively, emphasizing their inhuman speed to deliver quick, critical blows in rapid succession.

Blood-Drinking - While a vampire will prefer a more "dignified" feeding method, in the heat of battle it is not unheard of for a vampire to drain their foes (or even their allies) in an effort to heal themselves or bolster their strength.

Vampiric Schemes

Intrigue is a necessity for a vampire, as vital to their survival as air. The roiling courts of vampire nobles are choked with mistrust, envy, and vicious brutality. Every vampire learns early on that if they are to climb the ladder of dominion and blood, they must put their own schemes and plans above all others.

In *Brinkwood*, we represent the progress of these schemes with **scheme clocks**, which tick up to completion as vampires marshall their forces or set their plans in motion. The completion of these schemes might signal shifts in power, control, and rarely, the destruction of a rival.

While some example schemes (along with clock segment counts) are described alongside the vampires that serve each Vampire Lord described below, you are not bound to these schemes and are encouraged to invent your own.

As the GM, after each **foray**, you may choose one or two schemes you are interested in (or invent new ones) and do a quick **fortune roll** to see how they fare. In general, you should focus on schemes for "on screen" vampire nobles that the brigands are aware of and may soon have need to contend with, as their schemes are the most immediately pertinent to the story.

As the campaign progresses, these schemes will likely impact the world of Cardenfell, and may even directly impact the brigands themselves if the vampires turn their vicious attention towards the rebels. Be sure to reflect schemes coming to fruition when a **scheme clock** fills, and inform the brigands of the **consequences** of the vampire's dark deeds.

The Duke

Stern, Foreboding, Ruthless

It is rumored that the Duke was the last to fall to the Crimson Crown. As a warmaster and feudal lord of the Old Kingdom, he held the line against the encroachment of vampirism, hunting the vampires of old with ruthless efficiency. Still, even the strongest of feudal bulwarks crumble eventually.

It is said that he took the blood sterling to preserve what he could of the Old Kingdom—preserve the privileges granted to the aristocracy, the titles and authority his family held for generations. Truth be told, he hardly needed to worry about such things. His interests and those of the Crimson Crown aligned almost perfectly, and it is with some bitterness that the Duke recalls how long he fought against his new masters.

Now his power is maintained in much the same way his ancestors did for centuries: with blood, iron, and fear. The Duke embraced gunpowder and steel, seizing their potential for control and rigid authority. He wrote the propaganda of the Crimson Crown, tying the feudal families of the Old Kingdom to the Pure Lines of the Crimson Crown. He rules with an iron grip, carefully choking his peasants for every drop of blood, every sliver of silver, every grain of gunpowder, every ounce of steel.

Motto: *I am the heel that grinds forever.*

Themes: *Industrial fascism, paranoia, feudalism, replaceable cogs, mechanics, billowing smoke, coal, choking dust, gunpowder, soldiers, tactics, a slow grind*

THE DUKE'S DEMESNE

Air choked with soot. In towns: the banging, clanging of industry during the day; the deathly quiet of strict curfew after darkness, punctuated by the occasional scream or sob, quickly silenced. Marching boots on cobblestone. Shuffling peasants, their heads bent low, watched over by towering guard posts and panopticons. Turning gears and the wrenching grind. The taste of oil and gunpowder. Monolithic, imposing architecture draped with tattered banners and propaganda.

VAMPIRES

The Antiquarian, a propagandist for the Duke who views the bloodlines and breeding of the mortals and the vampires under the Crimson Crown to be worthy of exploration. The Antiquarian believes the blood of ancestral lines can lead to a profound mandate which will define the fate of the Empire. They see baleful potential in the phrenological and bone structure of all in their purview, and they will champion those they believe have been chosen by the "will of blood."

Schemes: *Extract Samples (6), Study Bloodlines (6), Cull the Lines (8)*

The Patroned Artist, the ideal citizen who was granted wealth, power, and opportunity by the Duke who uplifted them from the hoi polloi. The Patroned Artist has languished in misery and bleakest hedonism, each piece they create a presentation in the art of diminishing returns. They will do anything to feel cherished again.

Schemes: *Pursue Pleasure (6), Grisly Art (6), Create Masterpiece (8)*

The Knight, so enchanted by the idea of honor within their privileged rank, continues the systemic corruption they claim to hate. To challenge the violence of the status quo would be to risk reprisal, and any realization of their many flaws and crimes leads only to catastrophization. An egotistical savoir who will bring peace to the land on some destined day they know will never come.

Schemes: *Bolster the Legend (6), Enforce Status Quo (6), Hunt the Extremists (8)*

The Courtier, an intolerable and debauched noble from the mainland whose vicious sadism is slowly being challenged by others in the Duke's court. The Courtier is a guest, someone the Duke is forced to entertain for sake of hospitality and appearances. The Courtier would drain anyone if it made for a fun anecdote in the mainland courts of the Crimson Crown, and the Duke would just as soon catspaw rebels into ending their blight upon the colony before another incident occurs.

Schemes: *Practice Debauchery (6), Sadistic Schemes (6), Go Too Far (8)*

The Artificer has always valued ingenuity more than life; this is what has made them such a precious asset. The creator of the Sacrophages, the Artificer's loyalty to the Duke has allowed for even the most profane acts to go unpunished. The Artificer would work gladly for anyone who provided them resources and opportunity, who is, for the moment, the Duke. The Artificer would put him in a Sacrophage if given the chance, but no other colonial power is tolerable to the Artificer's limited patience.

Schemes: *Plan the Masterwork (6), Find a Fitting Subject (8), Complete the Sacrophage (10)*

The Houndmistress was spared the indignity of a Sacrophage for her many failures, but the Duke saw her withered to a husk all the same. She is a broken thing, but she is cunning. She knows that enemies gather within the Brinkwood, and she has given herself false hope that should she tame the woods, she may once again be respected. She will break the wilds with fire and iron, by blood-addled hounds and desperate huntsmen who hate the fae more than any vampire.

Schemes: *Study the Woods (6), Break the Dryads (6), Burn Out the Rebels (8)*

Servants

Tier 2

The **Forsworn** are the personal guard and army of the Duke. Bit-bloods all, they are equipped with the finest armor and the sharpest swords the Duke can muster. Rumors persist of cruel experimentation, hidden behind black helmets and mechanical oculars, performed by the Duke's surgeons to make his soldiers loyal, unthinking, and unfeeling. *Enforcer*

Officiants are the functionaries of the Duke's rule. They are the tax collectors, the officials, the bishops, and the bosses that answer to the Duke. They drape themselves in fine raiment and robes, their lips stained with blood. They often serve as officers over lesser, mundane guardsmen, using blood and cunning to augment and order their charges. *Courtier*

The Duke's Hands are everywhere and nowhere. Mixtures of stone and metal, they loom from the imposing edifices of the Duke's fortresses, or spring up from the ground of his demesne. They snatch and harry the Duke's foes, a hostile architecture to instill paranoia and dread in Cardenfell's populace. It is rumored that the stone that forms the hands was raided from the sacred places of old, despoiled, quarried, and made to serve the Duke who maimed them. *Investigator*

The **Kidnapped Dryads** are unwilling captives of the Duke, for where others saw the Brinkwood as enemy only to be burned or driven back, the Duke plotted to raid and capture. He took the dryadic heart trees of the Brinkwood, shutting them up in some dark iron greenhouse, and forced the dryads who loved them to work on his behalf. The dryads were once beautiful, but the corruption of the Duke has seeped into them, as well as their trees. Now their bark skin is marred with barbed wire, long tendrils of which they use to flay the flesh of the Duke's enemies. They are perhaps the Duke's most dangerous hunters since they know the very heart of the Brinkwood, and travel through it, scouting, searching, and hunting with ease. *Investigator*

| **TIER 4** |

The **Sacrophages** are the war-engines of the Duke, great beasts of brasswork and metal, at the center of which is a golden sarcophogi, emblazoned with the heroic visage of the elder vampire that dwells within. In actuality, to be encased in a Sacrophage is a cruel fate, visited upon the elder vampires who were supplanted by the Crimson Crown, but whose blood and lineage still serve useful propaganda purposes. So the poor wretches are encased in their Sacrophage, withered black hearts at the core of golden machines, their vampiric blood powering its brassworks. Occasionally, a bellow might emanate from the mouth of one of these bronze beasts, though perhaps it is the screaming of the vampire trapped within.

The Lion - A golden lion, emblazoned with the visage of Dur Antagne, the elder vampire who first brought vampirism to the Bloody Isles from the continent. *Officer*

The Scorpion - A mechanical, multi-jointed brass scorpion containing what is left of Val Hashek, a brilliant elder vampire, rumored to be one of the first alchemists. *Enforcer*

The Ox - A great bronze ox, who's lowing bellows strike fear into the hearts of the Duke's enemies. The Ox houses Bartre Vellet, the oldest, most dangerous of the Duke's foes, whose fate is rumored to be the most cruel. *Enforcer*
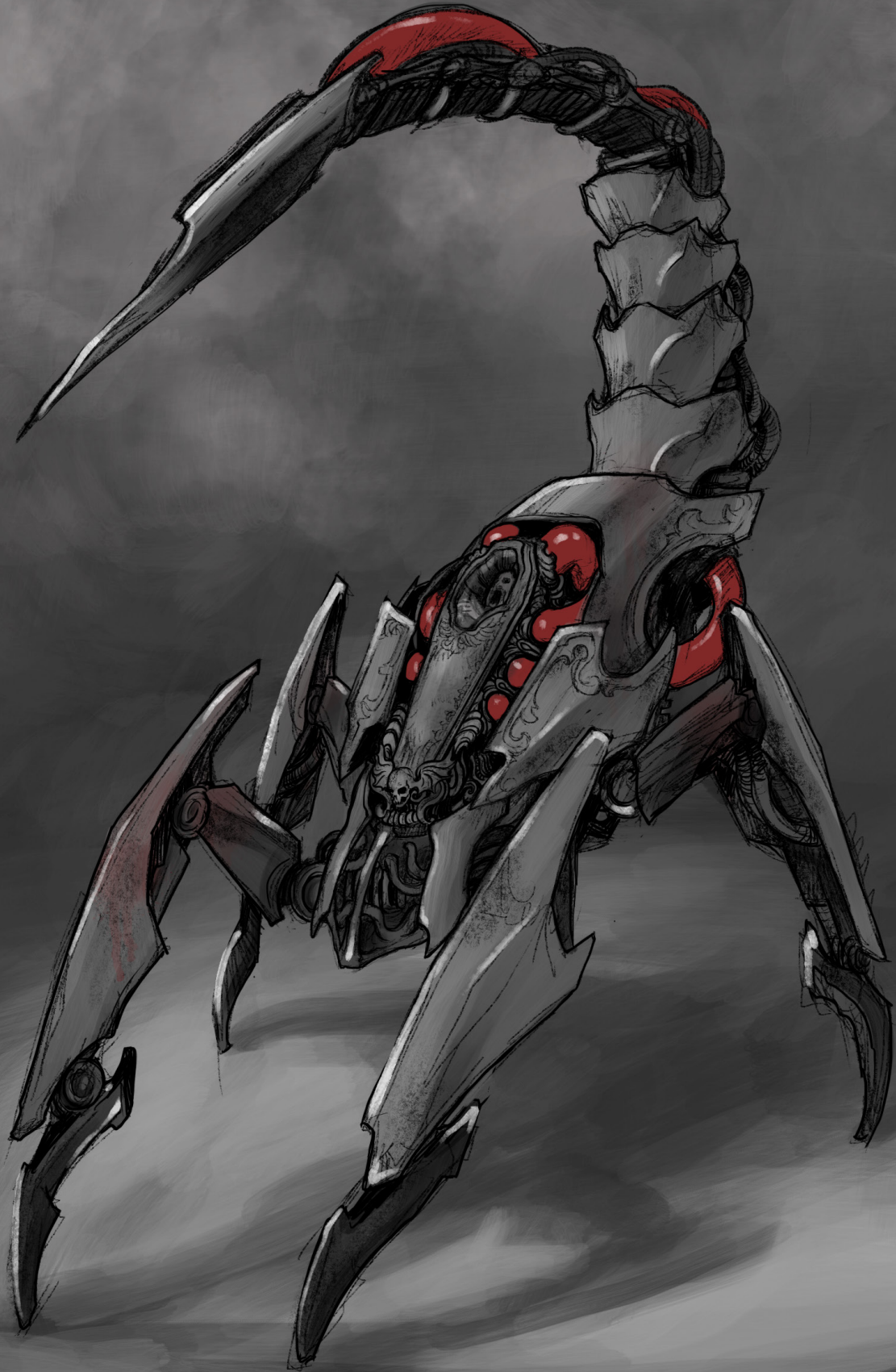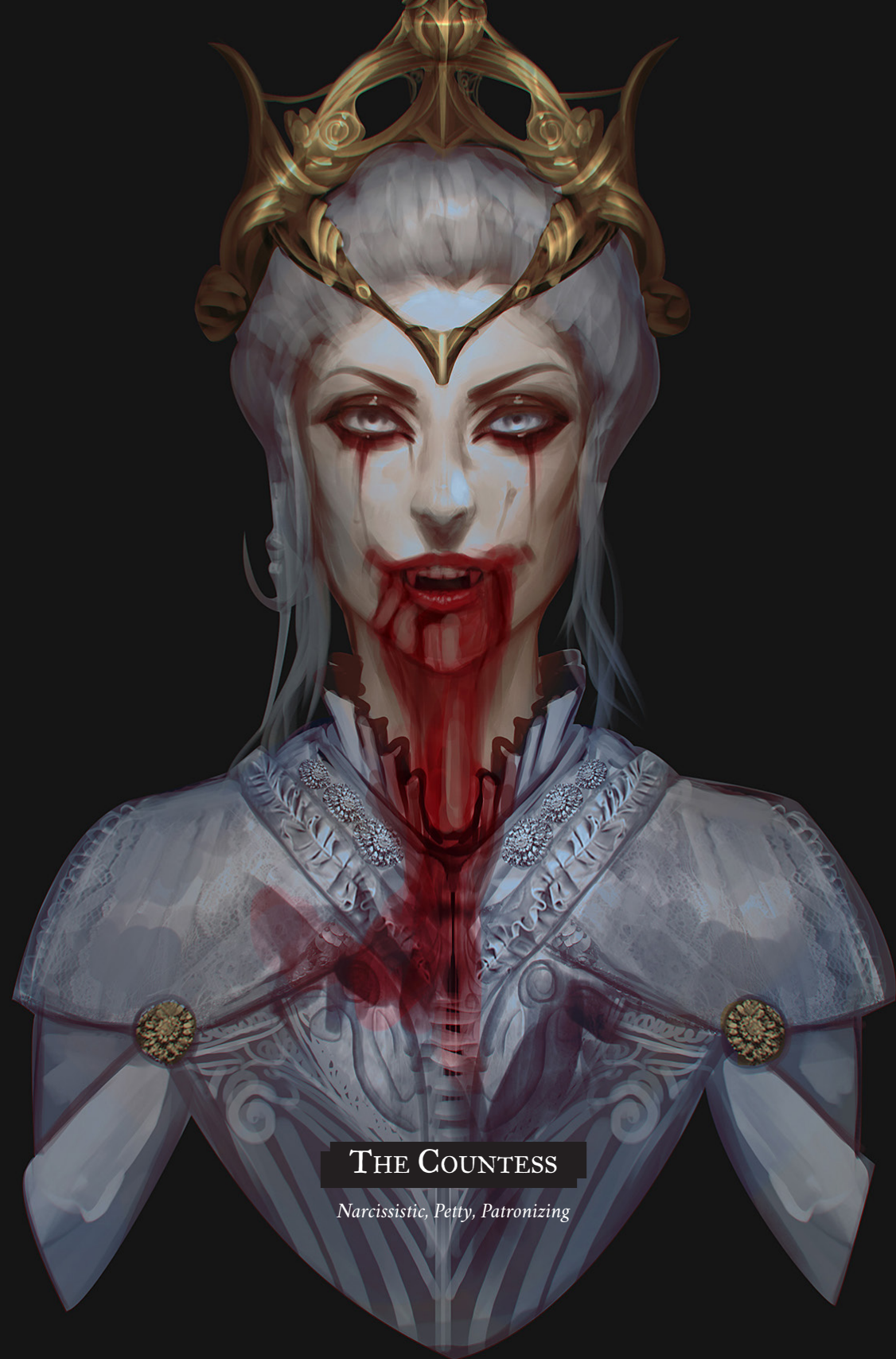
THE COUNTESS

Narcissistic, Petty, Patronizing

The Countess will spin a tale of sorrow and heartbreak, of forlorn love and filial piety to any who will hear it. The death of her poor father, the late Count—how tragic! And she, forced to assume the mantle of power at such a tender age! The enemies she had to fend off! The hardships she had to endure! All to rebuild her ruined house and name from such a destitute state, using naught but her wits and pluck!

All lies, of course. She murdered her father, a petty baron in the Old Kingdom, and promptly set to work frittering away his gold and influence on any flight of fancy that took her interest. When there was no more gold in the vaults, she squeezed the peasantry. When her serfs fled, she swore herself to the Crimson Crown in exchange for the means to wreak terrible cruelties on those she felt had abandoned her.

Now she is older by centuries, and wiser. She lusts for perfection, and any weakness, frailty, or infirmity are quickly whisked from her sight. The Countess has established herself as a patron of art, of beauty, of culture. She rules by the pen and the brush, constructing a fanciful—if false—image of her reign. To be fair, many are the naive artist who seek patronage at her court, but they all end their careers the same: a tragic "suicide," corpses conveniently drained of all blood, dead when their inspiration ran dry, for some perceived slight, or simple boredom.

Motto: *I, alone, obtain perfection.*

Themes: *The Gilded Age, austerity rot, inequality, beauty, misshapen, too-perfect, uncanny valley, dancing, deception, applause, sycophants, disposable things and people, dolls, The Favorite*

THE COUNTESS' DEMESNE

Cities and towns dotted with tattered tapestries depicting pastoral scenes; high vaulted architecture, and chipped crimson paint. Everything seems covered with layers of cheap gilt, hastily painted over decay and grime. Across village and town, the wind carries the scent of perfume over rot, and the faint strains of hauntingly somber music seem to echo, always at a distance.

VAMPIRES

The Fleshwarper is no bootlick to the Countess; it is only the mutual desire for a more perfect world which joins the two in bleakest union. Making use of foreign unguents which make flesh as malleable as loam, as well as the usual cutting tools of the sculptor's trade, the Fleshwarper carves their victims into more perfect forms meant to accentuate a singular purpose. The abattoir beneath their manse is filled with the mournful moans and discordant shrieking of derelict parts, damned eternally to an unlife of imperfection.

Schemes: Study the Flesh (6), Warp the Flesh (8), Perfect the Craft (10)

The Masked Hunter is no profligate, unlike his betters and peers. A minimalist and a utilitarian at heart, he takes in the beauty of the void where others would lavish themselves in extravagant plenty. The Masked Hunter dresses simply, no ostentation beyond an obfuscating iron mask. When the Countess cries out for aid, he answers first among his peers. What has earned such loyalty of him is an unknown curiosity, the sort the Countess delights in.

Schemes*: Hunt the Disloyal (6), Enact Purges (8), Hunt the Factions (10)*

The Conductor's haunting music laces the evening winds of the Countess' domain like poison in a wine goblet, promising comfort but seeding only strife. In a decade's long experimental phase, the Countess values the Conductor's pursuit of perfection within such a mercurial field. Those who dare play a discordant note, or fail to live up to their place within the Conductor's orchestra, are damned to the brutal form of an **Organist** and cast out into the wilds until they have lived their art.

Schemes: *Compose Beauty (6), Practice the Concerto (8), The Greatest Symphony (10)*

The Master of Ceremonies maintains the realm's petty matters on behalf of the Countess: enacting laws, arranging the many frivolous fêted events, and ordering the purges of undesirables who might dare blight the perfection of the realm with their presence. Despite the social obligations of their position, the Master of Ceremonies enjoys only the company of the **Porcelain**, favoring them for the grace the Countess once granted them and enjoying her greatness via their proximity.

Schemes: *Discover Inconsistencies (6), Purge Undesirables (8), Embezzle Blood Sterling (10)*

The Janus-Faced Devil is a true horror of the Countess' delight. A towering, rail-thin vampire who wears a gilded theatrical mask of three faces, the Janus-Faced Devil operates the various upscale stage productions desired by the Countess. Such displays are as baroque as they are abstract, with copious razor wire and vicious, vile deeds performed to the fervor of a lustful crowd.

Schemes: *First Performance: A Dazzling Regatta (6), Second Performance: A Queen of Crimson (8), The Final Encore (10)*

The Rat King is an amalgamation of a dozen sycophants, false spies who suffered this indignity for the honor of the Countess. Bound by their spines in wretched knots and mangled, melded flesh, they can assume a partially human silhouette—a disconcerting sight to behold. The Rat King desires for the destruction of all the Countess' rivals, such that they might be returned to their original forms when their long service is completed.

Schemes: *Seek Secrets (6), Seek Redemption (8), Reveal All (10)*

SERVANTS

TIER 2

Sculptors are the crude muscle of the Countess' forces. They are lumbering, hulking things that use adze, chisel, and hammer to shape and form flesh, rending it piece by piece into forms more pleasing to the Countess. ***Enforcer***

Sycophants are pitiful, chittering creatures that appear as emaciated skulls and spinal cords, leathery wings sewn to their vertebrae. They are rumored to be the Countess' spies, and are the horrible fate of those deemed unworthy of living in her most perfect demesne. ***Investigator***

Porcelain are strangely beautiful creatures of marble skin, cracked and worn. Rumored to be playthings the Countess has grown weary of, they hunt the Countess' enemies relentlessly, eager to earn some small measure of her grace once again. They fight with slender throwing knives of silver, or if damaged, with pieces of their own jagged limbs and flesh. ***Investigator***

Mimics tend to drive their enemies to paranoia, appearing often as common household objects until the time to strike draws nigh. Smashed cups, lanterns, or brooms are common sights in the homes of those who defy the Countess. When they do strike, they transform into horrifying things of gnashing metal teeth and fiery smoke. Some say a mimic can be spotted by its quality and makesmenship, as the Countess would loathe to allow anything of base quality to serve her. *Enforcer*

▌ Tier 3 ▐

Headhunters are creatures of twisted metal and golden filigree who wear long coats and tricorn hats to hide the gears, smoke, and coalworks that drive them. Unthinkingly loyal, it is they that snatch up those deemed "unworthy" to live in the Countess' domain and render them into **Sycophants** with raw, brutal, steam-powered might. They have been known to use powder-driven rifles to wear down foes before closing in to collect their grisly trophies. *Enforcer*

Formerly musicians of the Countess who lost her favor, **Organists** are melded together with their instruments so they might "better practice at their craft." Their agonized bellowing is amplified by the great organs sewn into their backs. They appear frequently in the Countess' armies, and their haunting "music" seems to direct the efforts of "lesser" creations. *Officer*

So enamored is the Countess with certain talents that she will force herself to enjoy them slowly. Such is the fate of a **Malefactor**, suspended and mellified in honey, their physical and spiritual tissues congealed into a psycho-pheromonal miasma, the opium of a dream. They walk the Countess' demesne as strange, ethereal messengers, able to put down a riot with a waft of their sticky-sweet smell. It is said that the Countess will occasionally dab the fruit of a Malefactor behind her ears, to enhance her beauty and keep the memory of her favorites with her forever. *Courtier*

The Countess outsources the sorting and evaluation of the artists she patronizes to her **Majordomos**. The Majordomos are students of failure, seeking to drain it, sublimate it, or otherwise excise it from the flesh of those that might someday be worthy of the Countess' attention. It is they that sew the **Organists** and mellify the **Malefactors**, but they offer crueler fates to those that disappoint. They have been known to "juice" the despair from disappointing artists, and run this liquified failure through byzantine calculating brassworks in their chests. By starting at a false premise, their mad calculations and studies have changed them, allowing them to phase through reality, teleporting through walls, melding and changing their form as they hunt for more failures to excise. *Officer*

▌ Tier 4 ▐

Favorites are the chosen of the Countess, those "fortunate" few that have—through flattery, sycophancy, and unwavering devotion—earned some small portion of the Countess' power. They are as twisted as they are beautiful, appearing in artful gowns, masks of gold filigree, and the latest silk fashions. Lesser vampires all, they wield the Countess' blood and powers as their own.

The Tailor is favored for his deadly suits and dresses, each one hiding some hidden weapon or terrible trap for those who venture too close to the wearer. He is the Countess' chief executioner and hunter of her enemies. *Enforcer*

The Oracle is a mystic and fortuneteller, always carefully coding her predictions so as to not upset the Countess' temperament. *Investigator*

The **Cosmetologist** is an expert of their craft, able to alter both the faces of The Countess' victims as well as their fates. *Investigator*

The **Sommelier** is always close at hand, devising and administering the ideal cocktails, poultices, and wines to keep the Countess in whatever whimsical mood she desires. *Courtier*

The Reflection was once an unlucky peasant girl, born with the misfortune of resembling the Countess. But rather than jealousy, her features earned her the Countess' love. The Countess was never content with crude looking-glasses of silver, and longed to gaze upon her own face. And so she molded her Reflection, slowly but surely, until none could tell which was which. *Officer*

THE BARON

Agonized, Bitter, All-Consuming

Pity the Baron. None have seen its wretched form for centuries. Bilious, skeletal, horrid, oozing; words such as these trickle from the madmen who have caught glimpses as it stalks, lonely and wretched, through the ruined halls of its keep. And yet everywhere are signs of its terrible appetites: offal and sweetmeats litter banquet tables, halls of bloody remains and torn flesh, the squealing of pigs drowned out only by the wretched groans and screams of the Baron itself.

They say it was once a man, or perhaps a woman. It does not make a difference. A noble, to be certain, driven by lust: for power, for wine, for flesh, for excess and orgy, it threw in its lot with the Crimson Crown as the Old Kingdom fell. And still, its greed and gluttony were its downfall. Its thirst for power grew too great, and so the Crimson Crown cursed it for looking above its station. It would forevermore thirst, hunger, and gnaw, but no longer would anything bring it saetity, every bite like ashes in its mouth, no drop of blood quenching its thirst.

But still it rules, in quiet damnation, unable to stop hungering, stop eating, stop crunching and snapping and breaking those poor peasants damned to live in its demesne.

Motto: *We feast, we drink, but it is sand upon our throats.*

Themes: *Late capitalism, hunger, excess, eating, crunching, snapping, thirst, insatiable, hollowness, sunkenness, ravenous, beastial, howling, meat-horror*

THE BARON'S DEMESNE

The squeal of pigs, cries of terror, and lonely sobs. Blood—blood everywhere. Messy piles of gore and intestine, gutters choked with bile and filth. The stains of blood and ichor in the cracks of nearly everything. A foul, rotting stench, clinging to the air.

VAMPIRES

The Warlock hates the Baron; of this no secret is made. The Warlock, however, desires no dominion over this land, nor would he ever desire to attend to the petty problems of those who dwell upon it. The curse is the Warlock's concern: he can taste it in the air. It ripples out from people and places here, and such items of concern are subjected to terrible experimentation. The Warlock enjoys immolating that which concerns him in a terrible apparatus and imbibing upon the fumes. He seeks to weaponize the curse and the insight to do so without succumbing to it himself.

Schemes: *Study the Curse (6), Contain the Curse (8), Spread the Curse (10)*

The Bell-Ringer was blessed once, a campanologist well-versed in the study of their trade, as much of a trade as could be made in the pulling of ropes for sake of calamitous din. The Baron once held them as a boon companion, and of all the servants the Baron holds, it is the Bell-Ringer who serves unceasingly. When a feast is called, the bells are rung; when war is sounded, the bells doth clang. Mad and wild and with reckless abandon, the bells are rung ragged by this desperate, pathetic soul.

Schemes: *Signal the Feast (6), Ring in the Terror (8), Unceasing Noise (10)*

The Immolated One was a trained scholar, an alchemist who thought the curse of this domain could be treated like any illness or frailty: it was a challenge, it could be overcome. Whatever it was they imbibed, it brought them low. Their body withered to the bone, muscle and organ sweating from the skin in tar-like ichor. When they speak, fire gouts forth, as though whatever remnants of a soul this vampire has is dying a horrible death. They hunger for warmth that will not come, and those marred by the tarry ichor find themselves blighted to ghoulish mien in a matter of days.

Schemes: *Scourge the Sickness (6), Burn the Weak (8)*

The Holy Fool was emaciated in recent memory, yet a flicker of the flame imperishable and raw ego lingered within. The Holy Fool found solace and purpose in its hunger. It praised the Baron for such clarity. Naked and disjointed, with elongated jaws and carrying always with it a banner in praise of the Baron, the Holy Fool seeks to slake its thirst by consuming what it claims to be the souls of cowards, traitors, and the weak. It eats in ritualized ways, and the truth of how it has retained its mind is lost in the gnashing of teeth and the rending of flesh.

Schemes: *Study the Rituals (6), Obtain the Flesh (8), Order the Feast (10)*

The Wormhost is among the most vile of the Baron's minions. His human chattel turned on him many years ago: they cut him to ribbons and bound him in irons and threw his wretched frame into a cesspit, thinking the maggots would finish him off. But this land is cursed and it is unkind. He arose a year later, a host for ten thousand burrowing worms. They leak from every orifice and they know the blood of those who buried him. He hunts their lines still, and his new chattel suffer for the transgressions of old.

Schemes: *Rise, Reborn (6), Punish the Treacherous (8), Spread the Host (10)*

The Hieromancer came from the mainland in ages past. She spoke the words of the Reformed Faith and the world seemed to cling to her heels in awe of it. She would be that which saved the Baron from the cursed calamity of this land, but she lost whatever grace she had when she arrived. She became the sort to cackle and devour the raw earth, slather poison upon her breast, and stab wildly at nothing. Part of her returns to stability when she gazes upon items of the Faith, and it is then she demands fresh bodies, fresh entrails to read that will grant all those cursed their dismal release. Countless dead have yet to prove her auspices fruitful.

Schemes: *Study the Entrails (6), Spread the Sickness (8), Devour the Land (10)*

Servants

Tier 2

Emaciants are said to be those unlucky ghouls who died of hunger within the Baron's demesne. Cursed with a fraction of the Baron's blood, they hunger as the Baron hungers, beings of gnashing teeth and gaunt, emaciated frames. Their strength over other ghouls lies in their all-consuming hunger, as they will fight until the death for even a single scrap of flesh, whereas ghouls can be cowed by displays of overwhelming force. *Enforcer*

The **Roaming Goremass** resulted from attempts to quench the Baron's hunger through raw quantity. It is said that these lumps of meat—raw scraps and flesh—cannot die and are always growing and metastasizing, cancerous in the way they spread throughout the Baron's demesne. Unsettlingly, they always seem to be emitting an impossible shriek, like that of a squealing pig. *Enforcer*

Gristlegobs are nasty little creatures, spat up gobs of dead tissue and indigestible bits from the gullet of the Baron and their **Masticators**. Made up of connective tissue, bone shards, bits of cloth, and other indigestible parts, these goblin-like creatures seem to be held together principally by a bad attitude. *Investigator*

▌ TIER 3 ▌

The **Butchers** are willing servants of the Baron, lesser vampires who devote themselves to feeding, creating, and marshalling the Baron's forces. They are the lieutenants, and more hands on than most vampires, they are marked by their bloody smocks, cruel hooks, butcher blades, and ravenous hunger. *Officer*

The **Starvling Vine** sought to solve the problem of the Baron's hunger by investing in quality over quantity. An invasive species, it quickly spread throughout the Baron's Demesne, drinking blood and nutrients from the soil. It refines the blood into a sort of vampiric wine, potent and heady in the power it offers vampires, though it still does not sate the Baron. It is only held back by its massive waste, even as it tries to choke soil and man alike, as even a single drop of bloodwine requires acres of land be ruined and gallons of blood be spilled. *Investigator*

Masticators are frankensteined bits of ham scraps sewn together to produce the simple, heavy shock troops of the Baron's armies. Its principal feature is a distended jaw, made up of four wheels of teeth arranged in a rough diamond shape, each made from the jawbone of a different creature. Horrifyingly, a Masticator cannot swallow what passes through its maw—it may only chew it. The Masticator must be kept alive via intravenous blood transfusions lest they burn out, be left for dead, or tear themselves apart trying to create some opening for food to nourish them. *Enforcer*

▌ TIER 4 ▌

The **Ferals** are the Baron's mightiest enforcers and perhaps its only true companions. It is said that they were once a traveling troupe of acrobats, performers, and charmers. They entertained the Baron, day after day, ignoring the suffering of the peasantry around them as their pockets filled with gold and their bellies with meat. When the curse fell upon the Baron's castle, it fell in the middle of one of their performances, and so too did it fall upon their heads.

They are locked forever in a grisly pantomime, entertaining their patron with screams, blood, and havoc, mummer's animal masks permanently affixed to their faces.

The **Rabbit** is the swiftest, an assassin capable of dashing forth to slay the Baron's enemies, almost impossibly difficult to catch. *Enforcer*

The **Fox** is the cleverest, their madness tinged with method. They organize the festivals of flesh and blood, putting script to the torments of the peasantry, and directing its companions. *Courtier*

The **Boar** is general of the Baron's armies, marshalling forces on impossibly long marches, burning whole villages for even the slightest hint of sedition, and taking, taxing, and pillaging more silver, more blood, more feed for the unquenchable maw that is the Baron. *Officer*

The **Wolf** is the hunter of the pack, sniffing out rebellion before dragging peasants, screaming, off into the night. *Investigator*

IV
The Campaign

Your role as the GM is special, in that you are, in many ways, responsible for the tone and experience of the game. Long gone are the days of the GM shouldering the entire burden of the game's experience, and you should rely on your fellow players as much as possible to lighten the load. However, as the GM, there are responsibilities you will have to shoulder.

Guiding Principles

When running *Brinkwood*, you should keep in mind several guiding principles common to other *Forged in the Dark* games.

Be a fan of the players. As the GM, you are not the adversary of your fellow players. Instead you are a collaborator, a guide, and a fan of their story. You should bear this in mind in all your decision-making. Oftentimes in *Brinkwood*, the dice will be the player's worst enemy. You do not need to take it upon yourself to make sure that the players are "earning" their victories.

Be their guide. In your role as the GM, you will often be the player at the table with the greatest command of the rules. This means that it is, on some level, your responsibility to advise your players. If the players are struggling to get together enough **effect** to beat a potent enemy, suggest **set up actions**, using **mask abilities**, or spending **essence**. If they are feeling helpless or desperate, suggest putting on a mask to increase their options. After you hit them with a **consequence**, remind them that they can resist with their **stress**, **essence**, or **armor**. *Brinkwood* is designed to give the players many options on how to overcome their enemies, but they must be aware of those options in order for the game to work properly. While it is not your role to ensure the brigands succeed, it is your role to give the other players all the tools they need.

The rules serve the game. The rules of *Brinkwood* exist to give structure and guidance to the story you and your fellow players are telling. Don't be afraid to bend, break, or disregard the rules-as-written if it makes for a better story or game. Encourage improvisation in your players; if someone comes up with a clever solution, your answer should always be "yes, and…" or "yes, but…"

Setting Effect

One of the trickiest parts of running any *Forged in the Dark* system is learning how to tailor the **effect level** you set on a player's actions. The system gives you a lot of options in terms of what to consider, from *scale*, to *potency*, to *tier*, to *quality*. However, it is highly recommended that you do not treat **effect** as a mathematical formula or an equation to work through in order to arrive at a "correct" effect level.

Instead, consider the conditions that seem most important to you in the moment. If it takes you more than a few seconds to remember a factor such as *scale*, it likely isn't a part of the fiction anyone is paying attention to, and therefore it shouldn't change your decision-making. When in doubt, go with your gut.

Remember that *tier* and *quality* assume that the brigands are engaging an enemy on equal footing, playing to the strengths of the foe. Deceiving an **enforcer** may be a whole lot easier than fighting them, just the same as killing a **courtier** is a lot easier than trying to trick one.

If your players despair when you bring out **zero** or **negative effect**, first advise them to check the **player reference sheet** for ways to boost their **effect**. Also, consider telegraphing your punches better. When you say what the effect of an action will be, you want your players to say: "Yeah, that makes sense." If they're reacting with surprise, it could be a sign that there is a disconnect between how you're envisioning situations and how your players are imagining them. Consider explaining or vocalizing your process when setting effect.

*Hm, well, there's a lot of dramcoats here, right? So they have **scale** on you, but their equipment and **quality** is about the same as yours. So, **limited effect** if you're going to try and **Skirmish** with them head-to-head.*

Lastly, bear in mind how **effect level** changes the game's pacing. A low **effect level** slows the game down, as obstacles will take longer to overcome. This will mean the brigands will take more **stress**, spend more **essence**, and use more resources, but also, that the game will take longer. Consider the pacing of your game when setting effect. No one wants to get hit with a **negative effect elite threat** ten minutes before they planned to pack up the game.

Pacing the Session

Pacing is important in all tabletop roleplaying games, and as the GM you bear some responsibility for it. Remember that a great deal of the character building, relationship development, and fiction of the world is built into **free play** and **downtime**, so if your playgroup enjoys the more narrative aspects of the game, be sure to take your time with these phases. Contrariwise, **forays** are more active, direct, and action-packed.

A **foray** is not the time to present the brigands with a wide-scope view of how to tackle things, or to ask the players *where do you want to go next*? Instead, you should drive towards obstacles and goals.

"A group of dramcoats is approaching you, rifles at the ready. What do you do?" "The villagers are tense, ready to start a riot, and all they need is a spark. What do you do?"

To control pacing, it is useful to use camera language. When a scene starts to drag or peter out, zoom out.

"Alright, I think the camera sees you settle up with the merchant and head back to the refuge. Sound good?" "We watch as you dispatch the remaining few powdermen and head off into the night, your objective complete."

Likewise, swivel the camera around, giving ample screentime to players who might be more shy or reserved.

"Let's cut away from this for a minute. What is Hable doing while this is going on?"

If players are playing brigands that are more taciturn, give them a chance to vocalize their character's thoughts to the group, delivering soliloquy or internal monologue.

"As you two discuss matters with Aza, we see Tekla listening in. What does she make of all this? What does she think about this plan?"

In playtesting, for a 4 hour session, the most success was found in dividing the play evenly between **forays** and **downtime/free play**, with an hour devoted to free play to start, followed by a 2 hour foray, with a 1 hour downtime at the end. This is, of course, a loose guideline, and your playgroup will vary in how much time you want to spend on the different phases.

USING MANEUVERS AND CONSEQUENCES

In *Brinkwood*, the GM has two primary ways to interact with the fiction and the mechanics: **maneuvers** and **consequences**.

Consequences are relatively simple. When the players roll below a 6 a new **complication** occurs, they take **harm**, or the situation worsens in some other tangible, mechanical way. In other roleplaying games, a consequence might be called a "hard move."

Maneuvers are a little more ephemeral. In other games, they might be referred to as a "soft move." Sometimes, when playing a *Forged in the Dark* game, it can be hard for the GM to make their threats and obstacles feel potent, especially if the players are on a hot streak with their rolls. To alleviate this, use maneuvers.

Maneuvers rarely, if ever, affect the mechanics of the game, but they do affect the fiction. And since the fiction in turn affects the mechanical options open to the players, you are able to dramatically alter the game flow without directly causing any **consequences** to the brigands.

While hardly exhaustive, here is a list of example **maneuvers** for the GM to consider:

✠ Remind the brigands what's at stake, with threats or taunts in the voice of their enemies, or with questions or requests posed by their friends and allies.

✠ Sneer, look down on, or abuse the less powerful.

✠ Flee from power, reposition to strength, throw underlings at a problem.

✠ Haunt the brigands, use blood magic, temporarily confound their senses.

✠ Make unreasonable demands, abuse power.

✠ Cryptically hint at grand schemes, terrible works, or ancient plots and vendettas.

✠ Toy with prey, make idle threats, soliloquize.

Remember, the goal of using a **maneuver** is not to subvert the brigand's goals, or to "win in the cutscene," but instead to make your villians and obstacles feel alive and reactive, and in so doing, make their defeat that much more rewarding.

Campaign Pacing and Progression

As your campaign progresses, the world around your brigands will shift and change, both because of their actions and in reaction to their deeds. As the GM, your role is to mirror these shifts back to the players, to show them how the world changes.

Spreading Sedition

As the **sedition level** grows in the towns and villages the brigands visit, it should affect everything from what the brigands see to how the residents of a location respond to their actions. Villagers and townsfolk who once might have been wary of, or outright hostile to, the brigands, will rally to the rebellion's cause and provide support as the sedition of their home rises. There should be a palpable sense of nervousness in the brigand's enemies as those they oppress become more and more empowered. As the GM, consult the list below for ways to communicate the shifting attitudes that sedition represents.

Low Sedition (0-1): Fearful villagers and townsfolk. Boarded up windows. Soft, distant cries in the night. Casual, unguarded bailiffs patrolling the street and bold wisps praising their vampiric masters. Unhelpful folk, frightened of the brigands.

Moderate Sedition(1-2): Grumbling villagers and townsfolk. Pro-rebellion graffiti. Watchful, sneering patrols of bailiffs. The occasional outcry against the brutality of the vampires. Helpful townsfolk, willing to aid passively, provide info to, or hide the brigands.

High Sedition (3+): Fearful vampires and their servants hunker down in the few garrisons they have left. Townsfolk and villagers proudly walking the streets. Guerrilla cells take over local governance and begin passing sweeping economic and social reforms. Democratic rule and moots become commonplace. Statues of Vampire Lords are torn down, and instruments of oppression such as jailhouses or gallows are destroyed or repurposed. Most supporters of the rebellion are well-trained and willing to aid the brigands directly, share intelligence with them, or provide a base of operations already set to go.

As the **tyranny** in Cardenfell rises, its effects should be reflected both in the *tier* of the opposition the brigands face, as well as the general tone of their **forays**.

Low Tyranny (0-1): *Tier 0* or *Tier 1* enemies such as bailiffs and huntsmen are the most common opposition that the rebels face. Opponents are typically off-guard, apathetic, and spread out. Discipline is lax, and business is typically allowed to proceed as normal in both villages and towns.

Moderate Tyranny (1-2): *Tier 1* and *Tier 2* enemies become more common. Vampiric schemes ramp up in their intensity. Guards and patrols become more frequent and more brutal. Repression increases in villages while security tightens in towns.

High Tyranny (3+): *Tier 2 and Tier 3* enemies become commonplace, with some *Tier 4* and *Tier 5* vampires occasionally becoming direct threats while actively pursuing their own agendas. Repression tightens even further, with frequent executions, martial law, and hourly patrols of industrial centers and other high-value targets. Campaigns of terror and surveillance pervade in vampire-controlled territory.

ENDGAME AND OPEN REBELLION

When the total **rank** of all of your rebellion's **aspects** equals 6, the campaign progresses towards its final phase. Some groups might want to wrap up a few **forays** before this shift, or to consider a narrative time skip forward in order to drive home their progress in the campaign.

In this final phase of the game, the land of Cardenfell erupts into open rebellion against its vampire overlords, and your task will now be to guide this revolution towards victory. Any town or village with a **sedition level** of 3 or higher should be considered to have joined the rebellion wholeheartedly, and is now directly controlled by your rebellion. All other towns and villages remain occupied and controlled by the vampires… for now. Depending on which **aspect** of your rebellion is most developed, three distinct endgame scenarios may emerge, detailed below.

HIGH INFLUENCE - CIVIL WAR

In this scenario, the rebellion's **influence** has managed to crack the very foundations of vampiric power and erode the delicate balance of alliances which held the vampire court together. Old allegiances break apart, each petty vampire lord or marquis seizing control of whatever towns or keeps they can manage to hold, while feuding with one another as much as their subjects.

To succeed, you must take and hold any remaining towns that are not yet flying your banner, a task made somewhat easier as the remaining vampire nobles plot against one another.

High Organization - Total War

As your rebellion's **organization** rises, the economic contradictions and failures of the vampiric system become more and more obvious. The standard of living in areas you control rises, as all citizens are empowered to participate in the democractic control of their labor, and the myths which have given the vampires sway over their dominion rapidly erode.

In this scenario, the vampires are left with only one option: your utter destruction. Expect vicious assaults and armies marching against your holdings as the vampires try to crush your nascent rebellion with any means at their disposal.

To succeed, you must weather the vampire onslaught while also raising the **sedition** in all remaining towns. Once all towns are at least a sedition level of 2, you can organize a final, massive uprising that sweeps the vampires from power.

High Military - Foreign Intervention

As your rebellion's military **force** grows, it becomes more and more obvious that the vampires are trapped in a guerrilla war of attrition that they cannot possibly hope to win. In this scenario, expect the most powerful vampire lords to retreat back to the Continent… but for the Continent to send their own forces in retaliation against your uprising.

To succeed, you must make the cost of keeping Orslae under vampiric control higher than what the Crimson Crown is willing to pay. This can be accomplished through naval victories, destroying expeditionary forces, taking the fight to the Continent itself, or by using your influence, spies, and allies on the mainland to convince the Crimson Crown that it has greater worries elsewhere.

Even Aspects - Revolution by Many Means

If your rebellion possesses an equal rank in **influence**, **organization**, and **force**, they have cultivated a revolutionary movement that has many options available to it for success. In this scenario, the Vampire Lord's attention will be split three ways trying to undermine your logistics, attack your holdings, and infiltrate or dispel your influence.

To succeed, you must liberate three towns from vampiric control and face a final showdown with the Vampire Lord. In liberating towns, you can choose any means available to you, whether it be influencing the population and institutions of a town to ally with your cause, organizing the people of a town for a rebellion, or applying direct military force to seize the town directly.

Epilogues and Conclusions

When the final blow is struck and your revolution takes power, you may wish to wrap up your campaign of *Brinkwood* with a short epilogue. Based on the factions your rebellion has added to their **Conclave**, consider reading the faction epilogues present in the *Brinkwood Almanac* aloud.

Next, consult the **moot decisions** you have made and have each player choose a moot decision they are particularly interested in. Ask them to describe how this decision shapes the society you build, and what institutions are enshrined to maintain the progress your revolution has made.

Next, go around the table to give each player a chance to describe the final epilogue for their character. This should be fairly freeform, but feel free to use the questions below as a guide.

Finally, have each player answer one of the questions below as if they were your Fae, in order to bring your Fae Patron's story to a close.

�֍ What feelings and emotions fill your character as they realize the rebellion has succeeded? What are their most immediate concerns?

✖ What's next for them? Leadership in the new society they will build? Continuing the fight against vampiric tyranny in other lands? Peaceful retirement and rest?

✖ What are your hopes and dreams for the future of their society? What do they do next to help make these dreams a reality?

✖ How are they remembered in the ages to come? What tales are told of their deeds, what is written about them in the history books? Who writes the history of their rebellion?

NOM-DE-GUERRE

Listed here are the names of the brave brigands who pledged their support in the earliest days of our rebellion. Feel free to use their Nom-de-Guerre's for NPCs in your own campaigns of Brinkwood.

1	Aaron Sheehan	Andreva the Seer
2	Acar Altinsel	Agnan of Aberwen
3	Ada Ostrokol	Abriel the Outlander
4	Adam "Haggis" LaMascus	Agnan the Lantern
5	Adam Howe	Agnan the Hollek
6	Adam Warman	Andreva the Ward
7	Addison Allen	Agnan of Ashhalgh
8	Adrian Ridley	Brewen the Reizhel
9	Adrian Rook	Argant the Reizhel
10	Aisling Jensen	Brewen the Just
11	Akemi Maniwa	Audren the Mannered
12	Al Smith	Argant of Southwich
13	Alaina Dawn	Brewen of Dunburn
14	Alan&XandraThe-Bothersome	Andreva of Caewen
15	Alex Delaney	Aouregwenn the Dirk
16	Alex Feby	Agnan of Foxwood
17	Alexander Mattson	Arzel of Millhey
18	Alexander Rodriguez	Agnan of Redthorpe
19	Alexander Yan	Audren of Yalewood
20	Alexander Yeghi	Brewen of Yalewood
21	Alexandra Cummings	Audren of Caewen
22	Alice Marks	Agnan of Marsthwaite
23	Alma Nicholson	Argant the Nevez
24	Alonso O. Rubio	Agnan of Redthorpe
25	Alonzo Cornelius	Audren the Curlew

26	Anastasia Walters	Arzel of Woolhall
27	André "JohnnyCa-nuck" Lalonde	Brewen of Loxdale
28	Andrew & Jackie Snyder	Argant the Sanguine
29	Andrew Delaney	Aouregwenn of Dunburn
30	Andrzej Krakowian	Azenor the Kindly
31	Andy Blanchard	Abriel the Brun
32	Angelito Villamena Jr	Agnan the Vole
33	Sarah Helstrom	Annakiya of the Hearth
34	anotherpanacea	Arthmael of Presbury
35	Arctem	Arzel of Aberwen
36	Ares Marzocchi	Arzel of Millhey
37	Ariadne Ishmael-Taylor	Brewen the Illusive
38	Arielle Skwirut	Brewen the Sanguine
39	Artemos Wolfe	Arthmael the Wist
40	Asher Holy	Azenor the Hollek
41	Ashton Carver	Audren of Caewen
42	Augustus Graves	Arzel the Gallant
43	Austin Leavitt	Aouregwenn the Leaper
44	Autumn Vale	Argant the Verdant
45	Aylah Rosewood	Agnan the Raven
46	Bantaro Blackmoon	Bleiz of Barburn
47	Bastian DuVane	Briac of Dunburn
48	Bavo	Bleiz of Oxthwaite
49	Bearhat Walker	Bran of Westbeck
50	Beauseph	Benniget the Just

51	Bedwynn D'Ombres	Bran the Digor
52	Bellamy Hart	Budoc of Harfold
53	Bellfounder Branch.	Brannoc of Birchburn
54	Ben Worley	Bleiz of Woolhall
55	Benedikt Betz	Briegen the Baleful
56	Benjamin Drury	Briac the Digor
57	Billy J Ros	Budoc of Redthorpe
58	Blankthought	Budog of Guildthwaite
59	Bob Clifford	Bél of Cilbach
60	Bobby Kennedy	Budoc of Kinhampton
61	Bobby Lee	Bleza the Lantern
62	BPR	Bleiz of Caewen
63	Brent Jans	Bleza the Jimp
64	Brent Norcross	Briac the Nevez
65	Brent Taylor	Bleza the Thriceblooded
66	Brian Cooksey	Briegen of Caewen
67	Brian Kearns	Bran of Kinburn
68	Bryan Capitulo	Briegen the Cross
69	Bryan Patchoski	Bran of Portswell
70	Bryon Casebolt	Bél the Curlew
71	Bryon Kershaw	Bleiz of Kinhampton
72	Buffalo Zechariah	Budog the Zeal
73	Cal (Thesp)	Corre the Vole
74	Caleb Elias Kanely	Corentin the Kindly
75	Caleb Hines	Cadoc of Hopbrook
76	Calliope Quessenberry	Clerve the Quenched
77	Camilla Greer	Corre the Gallant
78	Capt. PandaPants	Corentin of Portscaster
79	Casey Cain "Warvigilent"	Carro the Crossed
80	Casey Leugemors	Corre of Langhurst
81	Caskemei Reideth	Conogan of Redthorpe
82	Cassandra Massey-Allen	Conogan the Mendicant
83	Cautious Dan	Corentin the Digor
84	Celina the Unyielding Rose	Clervi of Redthorpe
85	Charles Noble	Cadoc the Nox
86	Charles Tomb	Callac the Trist
87	Charles_Bailey	Conogan the Badger
88	Chops McColl	Conogan the Mendicant
89	Chris Czerniak	Cyran the Crossed
90	Chris Morris	Clervi of Millhey
91	Chris Olsen	Corentin the Outlander
92	Christina Shirley	Corre the Seventh
93	Christopher Fletcher	Cadoc the Fair
94	Christopher Gunning	Conogan the Guile
95	Christopher Maloney	Carro the Measured
96	Ciaran Carbery-Shaha	Corentin the Cald
97	Clay	Cyran of Northhaven
98	Clay "Clooby" McDermott	Clervi the Mannered
99	Codex	Callac of Gellinant
100	Cody Creekmore	Clervi the Caul
101	Cody Duncan	Conogan of Dunbeck
102	Cody McNally	Corre of Millhey
103	Cody Nill	Conogan the Nevez
104	Cole Lorenzen	Carro of Loxmere Cross
105	Cole Stephan	Clervi the Stoat
106	Colin Lindgren	Corentin of Langwick
107	Colin Repetti	Clervi the Reizhel
108	Comrade Curmudgeon	Corentin the Cross
109	Connor Mason	Corre the Mendicant

110	Cory "The Gentle Shark" Hockman	Corentin of Hopbrook
111	Crom	Callac of Blackburgh
112	CybearG	Corre of Hartcaster
113	Cypress Bromaz	Callac the Blade
114	DaggerPaths	Denmat of
115	Dak Apologencia	Dunvael the Adamant
116	Dakota McCarthy	Denoel the Mannered
117	Dalton Long	Drev of Oxthwaite
118	Daniel Baluris	Denoel of Blackburgh
119	Daniel Henley	Denoel the Honest
120	Daniel Hosterman	Dogvael the Hollek
121	Daniel Masters	Drev the Melancholy
122	Daniel Peterson	Dunvael of Portswell
123	Daniel Stack	Dewi the Stoat
124	Daniel Waldron	Dewi the Weathered
125	Darren Davis	Drev the Dirk
126	Dave, Exploiter of Weakness	Denoel the Wist
127	Dave Jones	Drev the Jest
128	David Hayes	Denmat the Hollek
129	David Murphy	Drev the Marten
130	David O'Mahony	Dewi of Overley
131	Declan J Keane	Dewi of Kirleigh
132	Denis Gaty	Drev the Gyre
133	Dhorim	Dunvael of Southwich
134	Diego Bosi	Denoel of Blackburgh
135	DJ Ludwig	Denmat of Loxdale
136	Dmitrii "Csahes" Tretiakov	Drev the Thriceblooded
137	Dodds Colley	Drev of Cilbach
138	Dominique	Drev the Verdant
139	Donald Gori	Dewi of Guildthwaite
140	Douglas M Crawford	Denmat of Cilbach

141	Doxson Tesh	Denmat the Twoborn
142	Drake Claud	Dunvael the Crossed
143	Drew Pessarchick	Dewi the Pukish
144	Drew Stevens	Dogvael the Sanguine
145	DruelTheGamer	Denmat of Guildthwaite
146	Dustin Blottenberger	Denmat of Birchburn
147	Dutch_Orange	Dewi the Quenched
148	Dylan Hill	Drev the Honest
149	E. A. Bisson	Eler the Beaver
150	Echo	Enored the Dous-soul
151	Eeyore Page	Evemer of Portsdale
152	Elgin Scott	Edernig the Sanguine
153	Eliot	Erwan the Eil
154	Elisabette Harloque	Evemer the Holdfast
155	Eliska Reynald	Eler of Redmouth
156	Elizabeth Bolden	Eudon of Barburn
157	Ellie Elian	Ennor of Eastmarsh
158	Elyezer	Eudon the Vole
159	Endria	Evemer of Aberwen
160	Enoch Starnes	Erwan the Shrew
161	Erdo Fourfirst	Eler of Foxwood
162	Eric Delgado	Eudon of Dunbeck
163	Erich von Lichnowsky	Evemer the Lean
164	Erik (Medium Monstrous Humanoid)	Eler of Harfold
165	Erik Wallenius	Enored the Ward
166	Erika Eby	Enored the Enk
167	Erika Rebecca Belsaas	Erwan the Blooded
168	Erin Faye Karo	Edernig of Kinburn
169	Eris Brittam	Enor of Blackburgh
170	Esteban C.	Enor of Cilbach
171	Ethan Khanolkar	Ennor the Kozh

172	Ethan Rosefist	Eler the Raven
173	Farmer Zanath	Fransoez the Zenith
174	Fiona	Fantig of Foxwood
175	FreedomXIII	Fantig the Ire
176	Friend-of-Moths	Fantig the Quarted
177	Fyzah Azarov	Fanchig the Aberendlic
178	galazor	Gilles the Kindly
179	Gareth Anderson	Gwihen of Aberwen
180	Garrett Peter Hermen	Gwenneg of Hartcaster
181	Gary Only	Gwenneg of Oullea
182	Gavin and Aine Moore	Gilles the Mannered
183	Geoff Skinner	Gwenneg the Seventh
184	Gideon Descartes	Grall of Dunburn
185	GM Ray Nagle	Rivela the Nox
186	Grace Black	Galand of Birchwood
187	Graeme Vaughan Copeland	Gwenneg the Curlew
188	Grant Ball	Gwenaël the Brun
189	Griffin Morgan	Galand the Merited
190	GrimJack	Gwenneg of Marsthwaite
191	Gryphon Ludwig	Gwihen the Lean
192	Guppy G	Gralon of Gellinant
193	Hades Erasmjs	Houarn the Enk
194	Haley Tlus	Helias the Thrice
195	Hamish Elmer	Houarn the Enk
196	Hans Chun	Helouri of Caewen
197	Harald Coin	Houarn the Caul
198	Hekate V. Lunasri	Haude the Leaper
199	Henry Tremains	Haude the Thrice
200	Hexturn	Houarn the Bennak
201	Honeybee	Helias of Barburn
202	Ian Anderson	Iltudig of Ashdon
203	Ian Hopkins	Iltuda of Henlea
204	Ian Lee	Iltuden of Oxthwaite
205	Ian McClung	Iltudig the Melancholy
206	Ian Meisinger	Iltudig the Masterless
207	Ian Selinger	Igneuc of Southwich
208	Ian van de Laar	Ifig the Leaper
209	Ikenna Omalara	Ifig the Orange
210	Ilias Eraclid	Ininor of Eastley
211	Ingrid Havlik	Ivon of Hopbrook
212	Isaac VanDuyn	Ininor the Verdant
213	J Geyer	Joeva the Guile
214	Jace Hilbert	Judikael the Hollek
215	Jacob Kriegisch	Jaffrezic the Kept
216	Jake "ChiefMcClane" Cook	Jaffrezic the Cloak
217	James Knevitt	Judoc of Kirworth
218	Jarred	Janed the Undrowned
219	Jarred Davis	Judual of Dunburn
220	Jarrett	Judual the Reizhel
221	Jasmine Ib	Joeva of Ildon
222	Jason Carl	Janed the Cald
223	Jason Ostrowski	Jaffrezic the Once-loved
224	Javier Beltrán	Judikael of Barburn
225	Jayson Jones	Jaffrezic the Jinxed
226	Jennifer Fuß	Judikael the Fetch
227	Jerry "LordJerith" Prochazka	Janed of Presbury
228	Jerry B.	Judikael the Badger
229	Jesse Breazeale	Janed the Breo
230	Jesse L Zimmerman	Judoc the Zeal
231	Jessica Lanning	Joeva the Leaper
232	Jessy Maldonado	Judoc the Measured
233	Jim DelRosso	Joeva the Dirk
234	Joe Rooney	Judual the Roe
235	Joel Notsch	Judoc the Nevez
236	Joel Plott	Janed of Preswood
237	Joep	Jaffrezic the Leaper
238	John Cardoso	Judual of Caewen

239	John Fay	Joeva the Fetch
240	John Swanson	Judoc of Southwich
241	John Thomas	Judoc the Twoborn
242	John Toe	Joeva the Trist
243	John V. Stella	Judoc the Seer
244	Jonathan Finnegan	Judual of Foxwood
245	Jonathan Livingston Gutshot	Jelvest of Gellinant
246	Jonathan Lopez	Joeva the Lantern
247	Jose Placeres	Jelvest of Porthffrwd
248	Joseph Thater	Judual the Trist
249	Joseph Towler	Jelvest the Thrice
250	Joseph Vandersyde	Judoc the Vole
251	Josh Flora	Judual of Foxwood
252	Josh Hittie	Judikael of Hopthwaite
253	Joshua Binder	Joeva the Blade
254	Joshua Pevner	Judoc the Pipistrelle
255	Joshua Reubens	Judual of Redthorpe
256	Jujo	Jelvest the Uvel
257	Julian Behrens	Janed of Barburn
258	Juliana the Fierce	Jelvest the Vigilant
259	Just Jess	Joeva the Jumper
260	Just Jest	Judikael the Jumper
261	Justicar Alexander Angel	Brewen of Ashhalgh
262	K.Horigan	Kaourintina of Hindmoor
263	KaiKakubi	Kaourintina the Jest
264	Kami Kojima	Karenteg the Keen
265	Karna Artesia	Kanna the Adamant
266	Katie Q	Karneg the Quenched
267	Kay Quinn	Klerwi the Quenched
268	Kayda Finnick Yarrow	Klervi the Year
269	Kaylee Oliver	Kavanin the Outlander
270	Kelly J Clark	Karenteg the Curlew
271	Kenneth Centers	Kann the Crossed
272	Kevin James Tyler Oden	Klerwi of Oakmere
273	Kevin Konieczko	Koulmez of Kirbury
274	Kiji Marie Anastacio	Klaoda the Aidful
275	Kiri J McClure	Klaoda the Measured
276	Kjollnir Grimsson	Klervi of Gellinant
277	Kore	Klaoda of Ashhalgh
278	Kuenga Lhaden	Karenteg the Lantern
279	Kuskurro	Klerwi the Mendicant
280	Kylarn Deltrite	Karenteg the Dous-soul
281	Kyle Maxwell	Karenteg of Middlewood
282	Læge Sølvdød	Loane the Seventh
283	LaVelle	Levenezig of Presbury
284	Layfon Forsyth	Louenn of Foxwood
285	Legendary Vermin	Luzel the Verdant
286	Leo De Verdi	Louenn the Vole
287	Lester	Luzel the Nox
288	Liam DiNapoli	Luhan the Drowned
289	Livia L.	Levenezig the Leaper
290	Lone Oni (Sean A.)	Sezny the Adamant
291	Lord Bloodington	Louenn of Barburn
292	Lord Revinant	Luzel the Roe
293	Lori Krell	Luzel of Kirhurst
294	Lucas Bell	Lizig of Birchburn
295	Luis Enrique Aurelio Leal	Luhan the Aberendlic
296	Luiz "Mezuera" Mattos	Luhan of Marsthwaite
297	Luluja Harken	Luhan of Hopbrook
298	Lux Hart	Luzel the Honest
299	M. Quintanilla	Mailennig the Quenched
300	Mack McLoughlin	Melaine the Melancholy

301	Madison Tinsley	Molve the Twoborn
302	Maeve Morrigan	Morvan the Merited
303	Magnus Vanskelig	Melaine the Verdant
304	Manko	Mailennig of Kinburn
305	Marcelino Roberto Pereira	Mailennig of Porthffrwd
306	Marco	Maelysse of Foxwood
307	Marilyn Mannino	Maodana of Marsthwaite
308	Mark Featherston	Morvan the Foran
309	Mark Watson	Melaine the Welcome
310	Marley Griffin	Maina the Gallant
311	Marquez Ragueneau	Morvan of Redmouth
312	Mason Barber	Maelys of Barburn
313	Master Blackwood	Mailennig of Barburn
314	Matthew Farleo	Meriadoc the Fallow
315	Matthew Hale	Maina of Hartcaster
316	Matthew Nevers	Meriadoc the Nox
317	Maurizio de Galleani	Maulde the Gallant
318	Max giganti	Molve of Guildthwaite
319	Maxine Stirner	Molve the Seventh
320	Melissa Harbour	Maelys the Hare
321	Melody Balistreri	Maodana the Blackguard
322	Michael Crowley	Maelysse of Caewen
323	Michael Gilmore	Matelin the Gyre
324	Michael Miley	Maodana of Marsthwaite
325	Michael Nason	Maelys of Northhaven
326	Michael Richards	Maelysse the Reizhel
327	Michael Roebling	Mazheaz the Raven
328	Michael Russell	Maulde the Reizhel
329	Michael Shumate	Maodana the Shrew
330	Mika Johannes	Maulde the Jest
331	Mike Teuscher	Morised the Thriceblooded
332	Milenko Vuckovich	Maelysse the Verdant
333	Miranda L	Millian the Leaper
334	Mitchell Daily	Maina the Drowned
335	Mnemnoth Blackclaw	Maina of Birchburn
336	Moofah Heart	Morvan the Hare
337	Morgan Rogowski	Mazheaz the Reizhel
338	N. Vivian	Neven the Vole
339	Nathan Gay	Nolvenn of Guildthwaite
340	Nathan Merritt	Nolvenn the Merited
341	Nathan Roché	Nolwenn the Raven
342	Nathaniel	Neven of Dunburn
343	Nicholas Detweiler	Nolwenn of Dunbeck
344	Nicholas Sanz	Nikolazig the Seventh
345	Nick Prezioso	Neven of Portsdale
346	Nicole Lynette	Nikolazig the Lean
347	Niv Levy or Eryndir	Nennok of Langwick
348	Noah G Hirka	Nikolazig the Honest
349	Nod	Nikolazig the Blackguard
350	Noelle of the Starry Leaf	Nolvenn of the Starry Leaf
351	Nook Sarrasri	Nikolazig of Southwich
352	Nova 'the Cobra' Sulprizio	Nikolazig of Southwich
353	Nynaeve Masters	Nolwenn of Middlewood
354	Ophelia	Oanell of Hindmoor
355	OptimusZaque Cullimore	Ollo the Cloak
356	Orthros Pekliczko	Oanell the Pipistrelle
357	Ozymandias	Ollo the Cross

358	Pallas Ovidius	Pergrad of Overley
359	Pascal	Privel the Kempt
360	Patricia Arce	Privel of Aberwen
361	Paul Weston	Pieran of Westwick
362	Peter LaVoie	Paskel the Leaper
363	Phil Hanley	Pergrad of Harfold
364	Philip W Rogers Jr	Pennec the Raven
365	Phoebe Ogden	Paskel of Otterthwaite
366	Possum	Privel the Polecat
367	Prince Emmanuel Maxi	Eudon of Marsthwaite
368	Puckett	Piarik of Overhaven
369	Quillion Redusk	Querre of Redmouth
370	Quinn Bea Rodriguez	Quiviger of Redthorpe
371	Quinn Eastly Felty	Querre of Foxwood
372	Rakesh Malik	Reunan of Millhey
373	Randy	Riwanon of Redmouth
374	Raven Daegmorgan	Ropars of Dunburn
375	Ravnius	Ropars of Overmouth
376	Reeperetta Fiffian Black	Riog of Barburn
377	Rhyer	Ropars the Thriceblooded
378	Rhys Cahts	Renan of Cilbach
379	Rianne Goodman	Reunan of Guildthwaite
380	Rick M	Rault of Millhey
381	River G	Rioc the Guile
382	Robert Reynolds	Rivela the Roe
383	Robert Shade	Rault the Seer
384	Rollo the Raven	Ropars the Raven
385	rom rom	Riog of Redmouth
386	Rosen	Rivela of Porthffrwd
387	Rufus de Rham	Rault the Roe
388	Russell Hoyle	Reunan of Harwick
389	Ryan Manny	Rioc the Marten
390	Ryan Patterson	Riwanon of Porthffrwd
391	S. "Chaotic" Jamgochian	Soaz the Just
392	Saba	Saba the Blooded
393	Salvador y Patricio Montes	Steredennig the Mannered
394	Sam Mercer	Soaz of Marsthwaite
395	Samantha Bracey	Selyf of Barburn
396	Samuel Kilpatrick	Sulio the Kempt
397	Samusmaximus	Sulian of Southdale
398	Sans Tempest	Sulio of Tear
399	Sara Rivman	Soaig of Redthorpe
400	Sax	Salaun of Oullea
401	Scott Bennett	Segondel of Barburn
402	Scott Brown	Sidwell the Brun
403	Scott Paquette	Sulian the Pukish
404	Scott Wilkin	Sezny the Woe
405	Sebastian Antoñio	Segondel the Aberendlic
406	Shane Cox	Sezny the Curlew
407	Shanna Broussard	Soizic the Badger
408	Shervyn	Soaz the Marten
409	Sidney Straub	Soaig the Sanguine
410	Silas "The Bloodless" Hoadley	Zozic the Bloodless
411	Simon Moody	Soaig of Middlewood
412	Simon Ward	Selyf the Wounded
413	Sir Robert Bombalier	Rioc of Barburn
414	Sir Wilhelm Tinnin-Timm	Wonnen the Trist
415	SirenwithanX	Sulian the Eil
416	Skyler Crossman	Salaun the Curlew
417	Sohum Banerjea	Sev of Birchwood
418	Solomon Barestir	Sezny the Blooded
419	Son of Ahriman	Sezny of Aberwen
420	Soriana	Soaig the Reizhel
421	Stefano Lanticina	Sulio of Loxmere Cross
422	Stephen Kissinger	Sidwell the Keen

423	Stephen Moon	Segondel the Mendicant
424	Steve the Wiz	Soaz the Wounded
425	Stormclouds	Servan of Ilbeck
426	Sylvan Grey	Sulian the Gyre
427	Taco	Tallec of Foxwood
428	Tadelesh	Trefin of Oxthwaite
429	Tanukish	Tedvil the Jeweled
430	Tanya Floaker	Tela of Foxwood
431	Tawg	Tallec of Gellinant
432	tech ghoul	Turien the Guile
433	The Blood Prince	Benniget of Porthffrwd
434	The Gamefiend	Tedvil the Gyre
435	The Laughing Chaos	Louenn the Caul
436	The Real Nate Bob	Neven the Blooded
437	The Void	Tela the Verdant
438	TheOrrery	Tallec of Northhaven
439	TheQuietestLilBucket	Quiviger the Blooded
440	Thyme	Turien of Tearwood
441	Tim Pen	Tela of Presbury
442	Tina Rose	Trefin of Redmouth
443	Tom Fowler	Trefin the Frank
444	Tory	Tela the Drowned
445	Travis Whitman Evans	Tallec the Estoc
446	Tren'del AKA "The Cicada"	Tela the Caul
447	Tyler	Tella the Undine
448	Tyler Doyon	Tallec of Dunbeck
449	Tyler Maximus Dean	Trefin the Dirk
450	Tyler Nikolich	Tedvil the Nevez
451	Tzeneth Amiamera	Turien the Aberendlic
452	Unseenlibrarian	Urloes of Langhurst
453	V.J. Harris	Veig of Hindmoor
454	Valerie Jamison	Vouga the Jinxed
455	Valius Locke	Veig the Leaper
456	Valos Lowe	Veig of Langwick
457	Void Critter	Vouga of Caewen
458	Volk Kommissar Friedrich	Velen of Foxwood
459	Wade Brooks	Wanig the Blooded
460	Wesley Bryant	Wenin of Blackburgh
461	Whit	Wanig the Twoborn
462	Will M.	Woan of Marsthwaite
463	William Arnott	Woeva of Aberwen
464	William T Wright	Weig the Ward
465	wyrder	Woeva the Quarted
466	Xam Sewoh	Xam of Southwich
467	Xavier Martres	Xavien of Middlewood
468	Zach P.	Zalk of Presbury
469	Zachary T. Cross	Zalk the Caul
470	Zane Schneider	Zarn of
471	Zeus	Zarn the Ire
472	Zoe Daxa	Zaig of Dunburn
473	Zooey Furiosa	Zast of Foxwood
474	Zophiel	Zarn of Eastley
475	Asha Fortuna	Agnan of Foxwood
476	Asthore MacRowyn	Aouregwenn of Marsthwaite
477	Bracken	Bél of Hindmoor
478	Brad Faun Henderson	Bleiz of Harmarsh
479	Catherine of the Hill	Carro of Hartcaster
480	Claude Weaver III	Corre the Wounded
481	Danii Goldstein	Drev the Guile
482	Glenn Hifumi	Galand of Hartcaster
483	jaccarmac	Jaffrezic the Cross
484	Jacob Cadena	Judual of Cilbach
485	John Patrick Rogers	Judoc of Redmouth
486	John Paul Jones	Judoc the Jinxed
487	Kieran O' Mahony	Kieran the Merited

INDEX

U

V

W

X