

Blood & Spice | Complete Rulebook

Thoughts, blood, spice, fate, and mercenary war



English release | Seven-die pools | Three officer modes | Eight Great Spices

Current tabletop playtest candidate: v0.5-PT1.4-rc1 (2026-08-23). This is the complete, independently playable English rulebook. It follows the structure and rulings of the Traditional Chinese authority text; where bilingual wording conflicts, [blood_and_spice_rulebook_v0.5.md](#) governs.

How to Read This Book

Your purpose	Recommended route
Meet the world for the first time	Begin with the opening fiction. Each major part of the complete book opens with a chapter of A Name Owed to the Wind. Fiction conveys setting and theme; it is never a rules precedent.
Meet the game for the first time	Read How Play Moves , the complete table conversation , and Your First Character Check . You do not need to memorize the glossary.
Play a first character scene now	Read sections 00-05, then place the One-Page Character Check Card at the table.
Run the game as Groundkeeper (GM)	Read sections 00-10, the Fate module , and the general combat core . Keep the expanded reference at the table and use the complete battle example before the first squad battle.

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Part I - Core Rules v0.5

Opening Fiction - “Before the Rain Bell”



In cold rain, the Ashen Ember wagons carry an ancient spice cauldron and four sealed jars while Cenya guards a contract bearing three seals.

Before the north wind turned, an ancient spice cauldron and four sealed jars had to reach the Frost River treasury. The contract had been written three times—in guild black, frontier vermilion, and a ritual script no one could read. Its three seals waited like mouths ready to swallow the name of anyone who broke it.

Cenya tucked the contract back beneath her breastplate. One heavy wagon carried the cauldron, shaped like a bronze heart under lock. Another carried one jar each of Red-Crown Saffron, Mist-Silver Cardamom, Quiet-Night Clove, and Wind-Weeping Cassia. Oilcloth could not contain their scents; they quarrelled through the dusk of the Salt-Mirror Waste.

The Copper Scales called the cauldron an expensive device for safely blending the four true spices. Miners said it warmed by itself whenever someone cried for help beneath a cave-in. Cenya did not know which account was worth more. She knew both sides would kill for it.

“Ten gold crowns if the cauldron and all four jars reach the treasury intact,” said her officer, Lorn, reciting the clauses from horseback. “Six if the cauldron and at least two jars arrive. If the cauldron is damaged or only one jar remains, we owe twelve. The company flag and horses become guild property.”

“You missed the last clause.”

“Which one?”

“The guild accepts no responsibility for deaths on the road.”

Lorn looked along the company. Ninety-seven soldiers remained: wagon veterans, skirmishers on both flanks, spears in the rear. Each had a line in the pay ledger. The contract gathered them all into the phrase necessary escort labour.

“That is not a clause,” he said. “That is how merchants breathe.”

A copper whistle sounded ahead. The skirmishers had found a barefoot child beside a broken marker, hands raised, white wrist cloth grey with sweat. The Throat-Stone mine to the north had collapsed. More than forty rescued miners now burned with fever, and the well tasted of rust. A little Mist-Silver Cardamom could cleanse the water; Quiet-Night Clove might quiet whatever heat had awakened below.

The company cursed—not because the villagers were unworthy, but because every mercenary understood the arithmetic. Break a seal and lose the intact-delivery bonus. Deliver too little and the living had no winter boots, the dead no compensation. The child pressed his forehead to the salt earth.

“We will pay.”

The amount would not buy the copper clasp on a jar.

Cenya looked northwest. An unnatural red stained the horizon, as though something behind the hills breathed slowly. She ordered the child to travel with them as far as the waystation. She promised nothing and refused nothing.

The first lesson a mercenary learns is not how to kill. It is how to make an answer arrive later.

Reading note: This story establishes the world, mood, and kinds of choice found in this part. It is not a rules precedent. The rules text below governs play.

00 - Using This Book and the Game

The spirit is upon me, for the god has anointed me.

This is an old phrase within the setting, used for anointing, being charged with a duty, and accepting responsibility.

The game at its core

Blood & Spice is a fantasy tabletop roleplaying game about mercenaries, war, bloodlines, the spice trade, and political intrigue. Players portray heroes who command mercenary companies of roughly sixty to one hundred and twenty people. They negotiate, investigate, trade, and take risks in person; when war begins, they command squads; when a contract ends, they must answer for the political consequences they created.

The game supports **one to four players plus one Groundkeeper**, with two to four players recommended. Before play, agree who portrays each captain and officer. The complete rules support Single-Team Play, Paired Play, and Cross-Portrayal.

The two halves of the title answer different questions:

Blood asks who a hero is, what they inherit, and what they will pay. Spice asks how power is produced, traded, consumed, and fought over.

Bloodline decides what a hero inherits. Iron and shed blood decide what they earn. Spice decides what all of it is worth.

Situation example: One chest of Mistsilver Cardamom could treat a poisoned officer, conceal wounded soldiers during a retreat, or buy a ceasefire from Red Spring. The question is not only whether the spice can heal. It is whom the captain chooses to give a finite resource to.

Rules authority

When a summary, card, ability, or scenario is shorter than this book, use this order:

1. A specific rule in the current core text.
2. A more specific ability or scenario rule that explicitly states its timing, cost, target, and duration.
3. The one-page reference and examples, interpreted through the full rule.
4. A temporary Groundkeeper ruling that keeps the scene moving and is recorded for review after play.

An example demonstrates a rule; it does not silently add a new exception. Fiction never establishes a mechanical precedent.

01 - How Play Moves

See what happens at the table first

A session of Blood & Spice is not a chain of tests, and no one rolls for every sentence. The Groundkeeper describes the situation. A player says what their hero wants to change and how. If nothing meaningfully resists the attempt, it simply happens. Roll only when the outcome is uncertain **and** failure would create a change worth playing.

A normal exchange has six steps:

1. **The Groundkeeper describes the situation.** State what is happening, who is acting, and which time or resource pressure matters.
2. **The player states an aim and method.** Describe what the hero actually does before naming mechanics.
3. **The Groundkeeper decides whether to roll.** If there is no meaningful risk, the action succeeds. If a check is needed, state difficulty, the basic effect, the likely Scatter consequence, and any fixed cost that happens regardless of success.

4. **The player chooses and rolls.** Choose one Thought for the hero's attitude and method, then one relevant Expertise to set the number of random dice.
5. **The table reads the result together.** Gather matching faces. The player chooses which Thought Group the hero ultimately follows; the Groundkeeper applies the effect and consequences already established.
6. **The fiction moves forward.** A door opens, an ally changes position, cargo is spent, troops move, or a debt returns. The Groundkeeper presents the next changed situation.

A whole contract often follows this larger arc:

Accept or rewrite a contract → gather intelligence and leverage → choose roads and allies → face personal or military conflict → bear costs → decide who finally holds the goods, land, and promises.

Players decide what their heroes say, do, and willingly endure. They also issue orders and deploy forces in squad combat. The Groundkeeper controls the outside world, non-player characters, enemy forces, announced risks, and consequences. Remember the first division of authority: **players choose; the Groundkeeper lets the world answer honestly.**

A complete table conversation

This example uses a new hero with no bloodline, spice, or Fate effects in the pool. Yan Ge has Calculation 0 and Investigation 2, so this check receives no Root Die and no Attunement. The player rolls **2 + 2**, or four six-sided dice.

Groundkeeper:

"The second rain bell sounds. The city gate is descending. The witness you are escorting lies across the wagon, blood soaking through their cloak. Soon the gate-and the city's only infirmary-will be closed to you."

Yan Ge's player:

"I run to the gate first. Is that a roll?"

Groundkeeper:

"No. Nothing in the street can stop you, so you arrive in time. The ordinary guards see your mercenary badge and prepare to let you through, but the night officer raises a hand. Rumours of plague reached the city. No wounded person and no sealed cargo may enter."

Player:

"I show him the guild pass and ask him to follow the written order."

Groundkeeper:

"He can read it and knows the seal is genuine. The document alone is not enough to make him violate tonight's new order. Try another method, or tell me how you force him to decide now."

Player:

"Is there a night ledger beside the gate? I ask him to write his name, the time, and his reason for refusing medical care to a witness. I say, 'When someone investigates tomorrow, they will not see only that we were late. They will see who closed the gate.' I use Calculation to put procedural responsibility on him, with Investigation."

Groundkeeper:

"That works as a method. This is Standard difficulty. A matching pair gets the wagon into the city. If you roll no matching pair, the gate closes and the officer records you as attempting a forced entry. Do you proceed?"

Player:

"Yes. Investigation 2 gives me four dice."

Roll: 4, 4, 5, 5.

Player:

"The two 4s form one group and the two 5s another. Four is my Acting Thought, Calculation. Five is Drive, right?"

Groundkeeper:

"Right. Both Paths can succeed. Stay with Calculation and you make him answer to procedure. Choose Drive and describe how this becomes a direct contest of will. The groups are tied. If you Hold Fast to Calculation, Gloom rises by 1, and the unchosen Drive group leaves a minor Echo in the scene."

Player:

"I do not threaten him. I push the pen across, recite the accountability clause, and wait for him to choose. I take Calculation."

Groundkeeper:

"The officer stares at the pen, then orders the gate raised. The wagon and witness enter. You kept your original method, so Gloom rises by 1. The unchosen Drive pair also matters: he remembers that you looked ready to force the gate, and sends a guard to follow the wagon. You have a chance to save the witness-and another pair of eyes watching. Do you go to the infirmary first, or hide the wagon before its cargo is registered?"

The exchange used four principles:

- The player stated a concrete aim and method; the Groundkeeper first decided whether a roll was needed.
- Before the roll, the Groundkeeper stated the basic effect and the failure consequence.
- Matching faces formed groups; a pair was already a viable Path.
- The player chose how the hero succeeded. The result changed the situation instead of merely answering "pass or fail."

Your first character check

For a first check, use five actions:

1. **State the aim.** What should be different if the hero succeeds?
2. **State the method.** Choose one of the six Thoughts as the Acting Thought and one relevant Expertise.
3. **Take dice.** Begin with 2 + Expertise random d6s. Later rules may add Root, bloodline, aid, spice, Fate, or Transgression dice.
4. **Gather matching faces.** Two matching dice form a basic success; three or four matching dice give the Path more force. If no face appears twice, the attempt normally fails.
5. **Choose a group and describe it.** Follow the Acting Thought if it formed a Path, or follow another viable group and change the method. The Groundkeeper translates the group through difficulty, effect, and the consequences stated before the roll.

For now, learn five names: the facilitator is the **Groundkeeper**; the Thought declared first is the **Acting Thought**; matching dice form a **Thought Group**; two matching dice are a **Formed Thought**; training in a kind of work is **Expertise**.

The sixty-second core: state aim and method → choose Thought and Expertise → roll 2 + Expertise dice → find two or more matching faces → choose one group and change the situation.

One sentence: the pool decides possibility; faces decide direction; groups decide force; collisions decide cost.

Ask four questions of every rule

Question	Plain meaning	Who answers?
When is it used?	Which trigger must exist; if it does not, set the rule aside.	The rule and Groundkeeper
What do we do?	What must be declared, taken, spent, or chosen?	The acting player, following the rule
What happens?	What changes on success; how do failure, cost, and side effects enter play?	The Groundkeeper, following what was announced
What does it sound like at the table?	A concrete exchange that identifies when each person speaks, rolls, and chooses.	The rule's examples and the group

Small example - Borrowed Heart: Another character can genuinely help and share the risk. Before rolling, that character describes the help and adds one random aid die. On Scatter, the helper may also be exposed to the original danger. An officer braces a falling shelf while the captain examines its broken seal; once the Groundkeeper confirms that both can be struck by the collapse, the aid die enters the captain's pool.

If a rule gives only a name and number but cannot answer these questions, consult the full text rather than guessing from the name. Temporary rulings should use the same order.

World framework

This setting reference may be skipped on a first read. Continue at [Six Thoughts](#) if you want to learn the procedure first.

The world lives in the **Age of Dragons**. Dragons do not necessarily fly over every city. Their presence, absence, and inheritance still shape the present: dragon blood lies in family lines; bones and ruins alter the land; ancient covenants uphold kingship; spice sources grow along supernatural traces. Armies and temples fight over the authority to interpret these remains. Some dragons are dead, some sleeping, some missing, and some may have changed form. No living authority holds the complete answer.

An ancient disaster, covenant, or betrayal broke the direct mortal transmission of Arcana. Its true name and cause remain unsettled. Arcana can no longer be taught like an ordinary craft or safely reproduced at will. Openly pursuing power called Arcana brings the attention of temples, crowns, and other powers. Mortals usually approach the supernatural through bloodline, Blessing, spice, Great Rite, Pending Fate, or an explicit Transgression cost. Some ancient techniques survive only because long acceptance gave them safer names.

Earth, Water, Fire, and Air are principles of matter, character, civilization, and magic; they are not four particular gods. Dragons can carry or rewrite those principles in flesh. Gods use worship, ethics, vows, rites, and anointing to give power identity, duty, and taboo. Dragons, gods, and elements are related but not identical. Wonder and Gloom lie outside the four elements: Wonder concerns possibilities beyond present reality; Gloom concerns responsibility, cost, erosion, and passing away within it.

Layer	Contents	Central question in play
Cosmos	Four elements; the Aether directions Wonder and Gloom	Which direction is power pushing people and the world?
History	Dragon inheritance, the severing of Arcana, ancient covenants, lost Great Rites	Which concealed past supports the present order?
Supernatural	Bloodlines, Blessings, spice, Great Rites, Fate, Transgression	Who provides power, and what will return to collect its price?
Society	Bloodright, Deeds, class, temple recognition, local custom	Which has legitimacy: birth, sacrifice, or actual control?
Economy	Spice sources, roads, materiel, tax, monopoly, black market	Will this power be used, hoarded, delivered, or sold?

Layer	Contents	Central question in play
Politics	Nobles, temples, guilds, armies, source communities, mercenary companies	What does the other side need, and what leverage do the heroes possess?
Players	Captains, officers, squads, contracts, rising station	Whose heroes will the mercenaries become, and who will pay?

Six broad kinds of power depend on different resources. Nobles preserve descent, estates, and military authority. Temples preserve faith, rite, and legitimacy. Guilds seek roads, information, and monopoly. Armies need pay, supply, spice, roads, and recruits. Source communities defend water, land, survival, and autonomy. Mercenary companies need contracts, pay, reputation, loyalty, and another job. No side naturally represents complete justice. Political conflict comes from mutual dependence and the desire to send the cost elsewhere.

Common knowledge

Subject	What ordinary heroes know	What remains disputed or concealed
Elements and Aether	Earth, Water, Fire, and Air shape matter, character, civilization, and power. Wonder opens toward possibilities not yet real; Gloom settles toward responsibility, wear, and loss.	Aether is not a universally accepted fifth element. Schools call it an outside, a fracture among elements, a projection of mind, or a name left by severed Arcana.
Six Thoughts	Drive, Outreach, Calculation, Composure, Wonder, and Gloom are ordinary words in heroic philosophy, military teaching, and ritual language.	Cultures interpret them as virtue, divine will, psychology, fate, or stages of discipline. No school owns the only correct reading.
Dragons	Dragons have will and bodies capable of carrying, consuming, or rewriting elemental power. Their blood, bones, ruins, and covenants still matter.	Which dragons died, sleep, vanished, or changed form-and whether they caused the severing of Arcana-has no accepted answer.
Arcana and accepted arts	"Arcana" is a political category as well as a technical one. Untransmitted, unguaranteed, order-changing powers invite surveillance, confiscation, recruitment, or pursuit.	Ancient Arcana may survive under accepted names: temple rite, spicecraft, star reckoning, ancestral craft, court secret, or guild technique. Authority often determines which name is lawful.
Bloodright and Deeds	Bloodline can grant standing to request a test, enter ancestral ground, touch a relic, or press a claim. Deeds prove what someone has borne for a community.	Bloodline grants standing to make a claim; it does not make the claim true. Law, temple ruling, Deeds, contracts, and actual control still matter.
Spice	Waking Spices can be grown, processed, weighed, taxed, and militarized. Dream Spices touch memory, ancestors, omen, and collective illusion.	Powers conceal recipes, output, contamination, and true use. Possession and politics often decide whether the same spice is medicine, relic, materiel, or contraband.
Mercenary scale	A player captain usually commands sixty to one hundred and twenty people. Two squads on the table are the forces committed to the decisive front.	A squad is roughly twenty to forty people, not a fixed establishment. Several captains together command something like a small battalion.

Fate Cards and dice are table tools, not visible objects in the fiction. Heroes experience omens, coincidence, dreams, elemental changes, and recurring fate. They do not say "I drew the Jack of Diamonds." **Groundkeeper** is a table role, not an omniscient god within the setting.

Accepted-Arcana example: A court astrologer uses lost symbols to predict a flood and is called an officer of the calendar. A wanderer using the same symbols to predict an army's defeat may be prosecuted for Arcana. The force may be identical; the first has an office, witnesses, and an institution expected to answer for consequences. If the court falls, yesterday's ancestral art may become tomorrow's taboo.

Time units and scale

Term	Definition	Begins and ends	Common rules
Check	Build and resolve dice for one complete risky intention.	From clarifying aim and risk through effect, Echoes, costs, and track movement.	Attunement, Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, Momentum
Round	Both sides complete one Situation, Orders, Movement, Engagement, and resolution cycle in battle.	A new round begins with its Situation phase.	One Captain Action per captain; one action per squad
Scene	Continuous time, place, and immediate conflict.	Ends with a clear time jump, location change, or resolution of the immediate conflict.	Once-per-scene officer abilities; a second spice dose in one scene is excessive
Battle	Armed conflict handled through zones and rounds.	Ends when an objective is achieved, or a side accepts ceasefire, withdraws, surrenders, or loses the ability to continue.	Zone control, Casualties, Disorder, round effects
Session	One real-world meeting or connected online sitting.	From opening the session to formally closing it.	Once-per-session Manifest Blood and embodying an Exemplar
Contract	A mercenary mission or adventure arc, possibly spanning sessions.	From accepting a commission or declaring an independent aim until delivery, breach, abandonment, or revision.	Pay, supply, faction consequences, spending Deeds between contracts

A **risky character check** is a check in which a hero personally uses the six Thoughts. A captain's Key Order is also a character check; a squad-only Cluster roll is not. Pending Fate is removed only after a risky character check. Pending Fate, Blood Debts, Mirages, Deeds, Injuries, and Fate tracks do not clear merely because a scene, session, or contract ends unless a rule says so.

Complete rules glossary (safe to skip on a first read)

Core glossary

You do not need to memorize these terms before playing. If you can state an aim and method, choose a Thought and Expertise, and find two matching dice, you can make an ordinary character check. **Acting Thought**, **Thought Group**, **Formed**, and **Hold Fast / Turn Thought** are formal names for those table actions. Look up Root Dice, Momentum, Echoes, Pending Fate, Transgression, Blood Debts, and Mirages when those situations first arise.

Characters, facilitation, and scale

Term	Meaning
Groundkeeper	The game' s name for its facilitator or GM. The Groundkeeper describes the world, portrays non-player characters, announces risks in advance, and rules on consequences; this is not an omniscient god within the setting.
Hero	A player' s principal character. A hero may adventure personally and may command squads as a captain.
Captain	A hero who commands a mercenary company. In squad battle, each captain has one Captain Action per round, while each squad still has its own Movement and Engagement activation.
Officer	An important hero who shares a captain' s contract. An officer may aid, act independently, and form Bonds, but does not automatically gain the captain' s Road powers. In Single-Team Play, portray the officer as agreed before play; in Paired Play one player portrays the officer; in Cross-Portrayal the officer is portrayed by a player other than their Commanding Player.
Commanding Player	The player of the officer' s captain. They decide mission, deployment, equipment, office, and orders, but cannot directly decide the officer' s speech, emotions, or choices.
Officer Creator	The person who establishes an officer' s origin, secret, important relationships, wish, and personal limits. They may reveal the past at an appropriate moment, but cannot use authorship to seize control of the officer' s present choices.
Portraying Player	The person who decides the officer' s present speech, emotions, and choices, and rolls their checks. This is normally neither that officer' s Commanding Player nor the Groundkeeper; Single-Team Play may assign either one by opening agreement because of player count.
Squad	An abstract military unit of roughly twenty to forty people, represented by Force, Morale, Mobility, Protection, Casualties, and Disorder rather than by simulating each soldier.
Contract	A mercenary mission or adventure arc, beginning when the company accepts a commission or declares its own goal and ending when it delivers, breaches, abandons, or rewrites that goal.
Risky character check	A check a hero personally resolves with the six Thoughts. A Key Order is a character check; a pure squad Cluster roll is not.

Character checks and dice

Term	Meaning
Thought	One of six directions through which a hero understands the world and acts: Gloom 1, Outreach 2, Composure 3, Calculation 4, Drive 5, and Wonder 6.
Acting Thought	The formal name for the Thought declared before this check: the method the player first intends to use. It must not be confused with Drive , the Fire Thought.
Expertise	Learned ability such as Combat or Command, rated 0-2. It determines the number of ordinary random dice and is not permanently paired with a Thought.
Dice pool	Every die actually assembled for one check. A character begins with 2 + Expertise random dice, then adds an applicable Root Die, Fate, bloodline, aid, Spice Aid, circumstance, or Transgression Die, to a hard maximum of seven.
Random Thought die / fixed die	A random Thought die is rolled to discover which Thought appears. A Root, bloodline, or Extra Fate Die is placed on a specified face before the roll. A Transgression Die is random but explicitly cannot be rerolled.
Three hearts, two minds	The fifth random die gained when aid, spice, or a clear situational advantage adds a third "heart" beyond the two base "minds" and up to two Expertise "hearts."
Borrowed Heart	One random aid die from a hero, officer, or important ally who can genuinely help and shares exposure to the risk. Only one helper can supply one per check.
Root Die	A fixed die added when the Acting Thought is rated 2. It shows that Thought's face and cannot be rerolled with Attunement.
Attunement	When the Acting Thought is rated at least 1, reroll one eligible random die that does not show it. Attunement changes a face; it does not itself move Wonder or Gloom.
Thought Group	A group of dice showing the same face. Its size determines whether that Path can succeed and how much force it carries.
Scatter / Self-Scatter	Scatter is failure because no two dice match. Self-Scatter is choosing failure despite having a Formed Path. In either case, choose Wonder -1 or Gloom -1.
Formed Thought / Formed	A chosen group of two matching dice: enough for basic success, with actual effect still adjusted by Standard, Hard, or Extreme difficulty.
Strong Thought / Strong	A chosen group of three matching dice: Formed success plus 1 Momentum.
Obsession	A chosen group of four or more matching dice: Formed success with Momentum equal to group size minus 2.
Natural Path	The Acting Thought is Formed and is the unique largest group, or there is only one viable group. The player succeeds by the declared method and moves neither Fate track.
Hold Fast / Hold Fast Against the Tide	The Acting Thought is Formed but tied with another group, or smaller than another group, and the player persists with it. Gloom +1; a larger unchosen group creates an Echo.
Turn Thought	Choose a Formed group other than the Acting Thought and change the actual method. Wonder +1.

Term	Meaning
Momentum	Force beyond the first two dice in the chosen group: group size minus 2. Spend it only on this check to improve effect, widen scope, act faster, extend duration, gain information, or resist a lighter consequence. If the difficulty table already spends it to raise effect, it cannot be spent again.
Echo	A strong unchosen group' s secondary desire, opportunity, or cost. An Echo may complicate or extend the fiction, but cannot cancel the established core result.
Mixed consequence	A squad completes its action or holds its objective but also suffers one attached disadvantage of the same scale, such as Disorder, exposure, displacement, Casualties, or wagon damage. Ignoring one mixed consequence does not cancel an enemy' s ordinary attack victory or turn No Cluster into Cluster 2.
Fixed cost	A cost announced before rolling that is paid whenever the hero proceeds, whether they succeed or fail: using the only medicine, alerting guards, or taking a light injury from falling stone. Momentum and improved effect cannot erase it; change method or stop before rolling if it is unacceptable.
Scatter consequence	The main risk announced before rolling that occurs only on Scatter or Self-Scatter, such as advancing a clock, losing position, or letting an opponent act first. Formed success avoids it unless it was separately announced as a fixed cost.
Standard / Hard / Extreme	The three difficulties announced before rolling. They do not change how many matching dice are needed; they translate the same Thought Group into a higher or lower effect. Do not roll for the impossible or the riskless.
Transgression Die	One red random die gained by using Blessing, excessive spice, forbidden Arcana, or a Great Rite to exceed mortal scale. It cannot be rerolled, and its chosen, pre-announced cost applies whether or not the die helps.

Fate, blood, and spice

Term	Meaning
Wonder / Gloom	Two Fate tracks from -3 to +3 and the Thoughts on faces 6 and 1. Wonder concerns possibilities beyond current reality; Gloom concerns worldly duty, erosion, and passing away. As an Acting Thought, each uses the absolute value of its current track.
Fate endpoint	Wonder or Gloom reaches +3 or -3: Dream Made, Dream Eaten, Darkness Bound, or Light Lost. Draw immediately, reset that track to 0, then finish the current check.
Fate Card	A playing card whose endpoint, suit, and rank describe a fate event. The character experiences the omen and world change, not the table's physical card.
Pending Fate	A drawn Fate Card left face up before the hero until their next risky character check. It may remain across scenes, sessions, and interrupted contracts.
Extra Fate Die	The fixed suited face that Pending Fate adds to the next risky character check. It counts toward seven, cannot be rerolled, and is not a Transgression Die with an automatic cost. O / Lightless has no suit and instead fixes Gloom 1 or Wonder 6 according to the triggering track.
C / Generation; true blood	Inherited power flowing into the body: Hearth-Cauldron, Precious Blood, Heart-Jade, or Heavenly Resonance. Bloodline gives standing and supernatural means; it does not prove a claim true.
Manifest Blood	Once per session, a Blood Heir actively calls on C / Generation, adding or fixing one bloodline die and taking one named Blood Debt. It may also provide means to attempt something beyond ordinary mortals.
Blood Debt	A named debt owed by blood to reality after blood power, deflected spice, or Transgression. It may fall on body, mind, relationship, the uncanny, or fate; it is not merely money owed to a person.
Q / Exemplar; blood and sweat	Earned power flowing out of the body through the roads of Hero, Divine Attendant, Maker-Mother, or Warden. A hero earns Deeds through public responsibility and real sacrifice.
Deed	A named, witnessed achievement rather than a bonus-die resource. Three related Deeds may buy a title, claim, contact, item, squad improvement, or foothold between contracts.
Waking Spice	The four material spices that can be produced, traded, and militarized: Red-Crown Saffron, Mistsilver Cardamom, Stillnight Clove, and Windcry Cinnamon.
Dream Spice	The elemental spices that extend effects into memory, ancestors, visions, and omens: Tobacco, Cedar, Mousewort, and Vetiver. Casting one moves Wonder and creates an immediate dream sign.
Aligned casting	The final chosen elemental Thought Group matches the element of the spice. The spice works normally without a deflection cost.
Elemental Deflection	Use a spice of one element to support a different elemental Thought Group or squad action. The caster takes one Blood Debt that preserves a trace of the original element.
Aether Deflection	Cast an elemental spice but finally choose Gloom or Wonder. The caster takes one formal Mirage.
Mirage	A player writes "I want to experience / see / know ..." as an invitation for a future uncanny theme. The Groundkeeper must provide a real encounter and choice, but a Mirage guarantees neither victory nor escape from cost.
Great Rite	A T / Completion campaign-scale public ceremony requiring spice, an officiant, an irrecoverable sacrifice, and witnesses. It can change a throne, bloodline, territory, contract, or other world state.

Term	Meaning
Blessing	Named fictional permission granted by a god, temple, oath, rite, or sacred office. Only invoking it beyond mortal scale provides extra power and a Transgression cost.

Combat and squads

Term	Meaning
Captain Action	Once per captain during each battle round' s Orders phase: issue a Key Order, act personally, independently cast spice / Manifest Blood / conduct a Great Rite, aid another captain, or let an officer act independently. Officer abilities marked as reactions are not limited by this use.
Squad Action	One squad activation used to attack, make difficult movement, Rally, Support, Guard / escort, repair, or interact. A Protection reaction does not spend it.
Key Order	A character check using one of the six Thoughts and Command Expertise to support a squad. It triggers Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, Echoes, and Fate tracks normally.
Force / Morale / Mobility / Protection	A squad' s four main ratings. Force attacks; Morale rallies and endures pressure; Mobility crosses difficult ground and disengages; Protection resists attack and guards ground, people, or cargo.
Cluster	The largest matching set in a squad roll, recorded only as No Cluster (0), Cluster 2, Cluster 3, or Cluster 4+. Faces are not Thoughts, and squad rolls do not use Formed, Strong, or Obsession.
Injury	A hero' s bodily state, normally tracked as Unhurt, Light, Severe, and Dying; distinct from squad Casualties.
Casualties	Losses of squad personnel, equipment, and organizational capacity. At Casualties 2, the squad can no longer fight in formation and withdraws, surrenders, routs, or is destroyed according to circumstances.
Disorder	Temporary collapse of formation, orders, and spirit. At Disorder 2, retreat one zone and return to 1; without a legal retreat, surrender or make a Last Stand.
Encounter check	At battle start, each side chooses a lead squad and rolls 2 + Mobility d6, comparing largest Clusters. The winner gains initiative for the battle.
Initiative	Determines which side activates a squad first during Movement and Engagement each round. It normally lasts for the battle unless a scenario or ability explicitly changes it.
Last Stand	When a squad at Disorder 2 refuses surrender and has no legal retreat, roll 2 + Morale - 1 d6, minimum two dice. Cluster 2+ remains in battle.
Rout	No Cluster on a Last Stand: Casualties +1 and leave the battlefield. Survivors scatter, hide, or are captured; it does not automatically mean every member dies.
Engaged / reserve	Squads within a zone' s per-side capacity can effectively fight, Support, and contest objectives. Excess squads are reserves and can only Rally, repair, prepare, or do rear-line work for themselves.
Support	A squad forgoes a direct attack to give one ally +1 die on its next related pool before the end of this round. Remove it after use or at round end; one pool can receive at most one Support.
Rally	A Morale action that clears Disorder: Cluster 2 clears 1; Cluster 3 clears 2; Cluster 4+ also lets one adjacent ally clear 1.
Zone control	A side controls a zone only if it has a squad still capable of fighting there and no enemy squad still capable of fighting there. Both sides present means contested; one character cannot control an entire military zone in the face of an enemy squad.

Blessings and mortal scale

A **Blessing** is named fictional permission granted by a god, temple, oath, rite, or sacred office. It is not a universal pool of points, and saying “I pray” does not create one. PT1.4-rc1 characters begin without Blessings unless a scenario, Great Rite, or story result explicitly grants one and records its source, requirement, and duration.

A Blessing first provides **fictional permission**: entering a sealed shrine, demanding a temple hearing, recognizing a sacred sign, or trying something a mortal otherwise has no means to do. Exercising an established office or knowledge does not automatically add dice or incur a Transgression cost. If the outcome remains risky, use a normal Thought and Expertise check.

Calling a Blessing to exceed mortal scale, create a direct miracle, or take extra power follows the [Transgression Die](#) rules. No combination of Blessings, spices, Arcana, and Great Rites grants a second Transgression Die. The grant itself states whether the Blessing is spent, lasts until an oath is fulfilled, or becomes a lasting identity; absent such text, it is not consumed, but each Transgression still brings a new cost.

Boundary example: Sarei receives “Blessing of the Red-Spring Watcher” after escorting the spring folk and fulfilling an oath. It lets her enter their closed court and demand a hearing without extra dice. Asking the spring to run backward and bar an army exceeds mortal scale: she takes a red Transgression Die and chooses between “the water carries away a memory” and “the watcher’s oath becomes a Blood Debt.” The Blessing is permission, not a free fixed die.

02 - Six Thoughts

Acting Thought is a role in this check

The **Acting Thought** is the Thought declared for this check, not a seventh attribute. **Drive** is the formal name of the Fire Thought. “Drive as the Acting Thought” means that the hero begins with courage, will, charisma, endurance, or direct force as their method. On the next check, any other Thought may act.

Face	Thought	Type	Correspondence	Common expressions
1	Gloom	Fate track	Ethics and the mortal world	Duty, cost, endurance, detachment, identity
2	Outreach	Elemental Thought	Water	Affinity, mercy, influence, contagion, connection
3	Composure	Elemental Thought	Air	Patience, grace, enticement, labour, harvest
4	Calculation	Elemental Thought	Earth	Strategy, knowledge, technique, observation, analysis
5	Drive	Elemental Thought	Fire	Courage, resolve, charisma, endurance, advance
6	Wonder	Fate track	Miracle and Arcana	Possibility, omen, illusion, hope, hopelessness

The four elemental Thoughts describe both capacity and style. Wonder and Gloom describe how a hero understands the world and their own action.

Every character check declares one Acting Thought. It lasts for that check only. “I use Drive to break the gate” and “I use Outreach to persuade the guards to lower their weapons” describe different methods, even if both use the same Expertise.

Situation example: Mirei uses Calculation + Investigation to inspect a destroyed bridge. Later she uses the same evidence to force a guild concession with Calculation + Intrigue. Thought names the method; Expertise names the work.

Thought ratings and Attunement

Drive, Outreach, Calculation, and Composure are rated from 0 to 2. Wonder and Gloom use the **absolute value** of their current tracks in the same way; their signs describe Fate direction, not moral good or evil.

Thought value	State	Root Die	Attunement
0	Fleeting	None	None
1	Familiar	None	Reroll one eligible random die not showing the Acting Thought
2	Rooted	One fixed Acting-Thought die	The same reroll

Set a **Root Die** to the Acting Thought's face before rolling. It participates in Thought Groups and success degree but cannot be changed by ordinary Attunement. It represents a conviction already present before pressure introduces other possibilities.

Situation example: Luodi has Composure 2 and waits for a gap in the patrol. He sets one Root Die to 3, then rolls the random dice provided by Travel. One more 3 forms Composure. Attunement may reroll another eligible random die, but never the fixed Root Die.

Elemental Thoughts normally cannot remain above 2. Blessings, forbidden Arcana, awakened bloodlines, or Great Rites may temporarily cross that mortal boundary only when their rules say so.

03 - Dice, Aid, and the Seven-Die Limit

A character pool begins with two minds. Expertise brings up to two hearts; outside aid may bring a third heart.

The pool decides possibility; faces decide direction; groups decide force; collisions decide cost.

Each random die represents a Thought that may emerge under pressure. More Expertise creates more possible Paths and makes larger Thought Groups more likely, but also creates more collisions. The chosen group's size sets force; strong unchosen groups may return as Echoes.

Expertise	Random dice	Table phrase
0	2	Two minds
1	3	One heart, two minds
2	4	Two hearts, two minds

- Four is the maximum random pool produced by a hero's own Expertise.
- Expertise 2 plus a Borrowed Heart, suitable spice, or clear situational aid may produce five random dice: "three hearts, two minds."
- Root, bloodline, ordinary aid, Extra Fate, spice, and Transgression dice all count toward the total.
- **Seven dice is the hard maximum. There is no separate six-die cap and never an eighth die.**
- A disadvantage removes dice supplied by Expertise first, never reducing the pool below the base two.

PT1.4-rc1 uses eight fixed Expertises:

Expertise	Covers
Combat	Duels, shooting, brawling, personal weapons
Command	Orders, discipline, tactics, morale
Travel	Marching, riding, wilderness, tracking, survival
Investigation	Search, identification, deduction, questioning, perception

Expertise	Covers
Negotiation	Bargaining, calming, persuasion, relationships
Trade	Valuation, purchase, transport, smuggling, markets
Intrigue	Lies, threats, factions, secrets, political plans
Spicecraft	Identification, processing, casting, Mirage, Great Rite

Expertise and Thought have no fixed pairing. The player must explain how the chosen Thought changes the method. The Groundkeeper may request a clearer description or another Acting Thought, but may not forbid a pairing merely because it is unusual.

Situation example: All four captains use Command. Grann uses Drive for a direct advance. Sarei uses Outreach to make squads protect one another. Mirei uses Calculation to adjust supply and fields of fire. Luodi uses Composure to retain a reserve. The Expertise is the same; tactics and possible Echoes differ.

Ordinary aid and Borrowed Heart

1. **Who can help:** another hero, a player-held officer, or a present key ally who can explain concrete help. “I help” is not enough.
2. **When to declare:** after aim, Acting Thought, and Expertise, but before any dice are rolled.
3. **What enters the pool:** at most one helper supplies one random d6, called a **Borrowed Heart**. It has no fixed face and cannot use the helper’s Attunement. Once in the pool, the acting hero may reroll it with their own Attunement if eligible.
4. **Shared exposure:** the helper must be reachable by the risk. On Scatter or Self-Scatter, the Groundkeeper may divide the original consequence reasonably or expose the helper to a lighter involvement. Aid does not create a second full failure consequence from nothing.
5. **At seven dice:** Borrowed Heart adds no die. On success it instead improves one secondary effect, reveals one related piece of information early, takes one **non-fixed minor side consequence** for the actor, or reduces an Echo’s scope. It does not increase success degree, cancel core failure, or transfer a fixed cost.
6. **Several helpers:** only one helper provides the die or cap conversion. Others may secure position, prepare tools, or address different problems for a later action; they cannot stack repeated dice and effects into this check.

Ordinary aid has no universal per-scene limit. A more specific officer card, scenario, or ability may impose one. An officer whose specific aid ability is spent cannot rename the same action “ordinary aid” to bypass that limit.

Example: Sarei uses Negotiation to persuade a gatekeeper while Leika checks every entry in the cargo manifest. Leika declares aid before the roll and supplies a Borrowed Heart. If Sarei is already at seven dice, the aid instead reveals which responsibility the gatekeeper truly fears. On Scatter, Leika may also be detained, but the pair do not each suffer a full duplicate failure.

Transgression Die and Extra Fate Die

A **Transgression Die** is one red random d6 gained when a hero invokes a Blessing, excessive spice, forbidden Arcana, or a major rite to exceed mortal norms.

- A check can contain at most one Transgression Die.
- It is rolled and can join a Thought Group, but cannot be rerolled, changed, or removed by an ordinary effect.
- Before the roll, the Groundkeeper offers two proportionate costs tied to the source; the acting player chooses one. If the fiction permits only one cost, explain why before the player commits.
- The cost happens whether or not the red die joins the chosen group. Further excess enlarges effect and cost rather than adding another die.

PT1.4-rc1 Transgression cost	Immediate record or resolution	Typical sources
Blood owes reality	Take one named Blood Debt.	Manifest Blood, Elemental Deflection, taking Arcana into the body
Heart nears an endpoint	The Groundkeeper chooses Wonder or Gloom and a positive or negative direction; move it 1 and draw immediately if it reaches an endpoint.	Prophecy, Dream Spice, forbidden knowledge, divine attention
Body or gear suffers	Take 1 Injury, or disable important action-related gear until repaired.	Excess, explosive casting, violent rite
The world is entangled	A related squad gains 1 Disorder, a faction clock advances 1, or a named relationship cracks; identify who is entangled.	Battlefield casting, public miracle, using another as medium
Major Echo	Resolve a major Echo after the core result regardless of the chosen Path; it cannot negate the achieved result.	Contamination, uncontrolled Arcana, Great Rite

Choose costs according to what the power can actually harm, not by shopping for the lightest entry. Repeated Transgression from one source may escalate an existing cost or change whom it harms.

An **Extra Fate Die** supplied by Pending Fate is fixed to a suit's face and cannot be rerolled or changed. It is not Transgression and carries no automatic Transgression cost. Both kinds of die count toward seven.

Example: Grann inhales a second dose of Tobacco and declares a red Transgression Die. The Groundkeeper offers "body suffers: take 1 Injury" or "blood owes reality: Furnace-Scar leaves a scent that hounds can track." Grann chooses the named Blood Debt. Even if the red die rolls Water 2 and is not chosen, the scent remains. By contrast, a Spade Pending Fate supplies fixed Air 3 without an automatic Transgression cost.

The hard seven-die cap and order of addition

The cap does not authorize the Groundkeeper to delete arbitrary dice. It determines how sources fill seven available spaces before rolling:

1. **Personal dice:** place the two base random dice, random dice from Expertise, and a fixed Root Die if the Acting Thought is 2. These define the check and cannot be omitted to make room.
2. **Pending Fate:** add Extra Fate Dice in draw order. Later choices cannot displace them.
3. **Chosen aid:** bloodline, Borrowed Heart, Spice Aid, and situational aid compete for remaining spaces; the acting player chooses their order.
4. **Transgression:** add at most one Transgression Die last. The total remains seven or fewer.

Source beyond seven	Cap conversion
Second or later Pending Fate	Add in draw order. Any card that cannot fit automatically becomes a Fate Echo in this check. Remove all involved Pending Fate after the check.
Manifest Blood die	Instead fix one of the hero's own ordinary random dice to the C / Generation element. It cannot replace a Root, Borrowed Heart, Spice Aid, Fate, or Transgression die. The Blood Debt still applies.
Borrowed Heart or ordinary situational aid	Add no die. On success improve a secondary effect, reveal related information early, take a non-fixed minor consequence, or reduce an Echo's scope. Fixed costs cannot be transferred.
Spice Aid	Before rolling, cancel the casting and spend no dose; or spend it for fictional permission and scene effect without automatic Momentum. If used, Dream-Spice movement, immediate omen, and Elemental or Aether Deflection costs still apply.

Source beyond seven	Cap conversion
Transgression Die	Add no eighth die. If the check produces a Formed Thought, gain 1 immediate Transgression Momentum. The announced cost still happens on success or failure.

A chosen resource not placed, used, or converted is not consumed. Once a hero commits to Transgression after hearing the cost, they cannot withdraw merely to avoid it. Fixed dice are placed rather than rolled. Ordinary random Thought dice, Borrowed Heart, Spice Aid dice, and ordinary situational dice are eligible for Attunement; Root, bloodline, Extra Fate, and Transgression dice are not.

Example: Sarei has four random dice, one Root Die, one Extra Fate Die, and one bloodline die: seven. An officer cannot add an eighth Borrowed Heart, so the player chooses “reveal which responsibility the guards truly fear.” If Sarei also declares Transgression, a Formed result gains 1 Transgression Momentum, and the announced divine attention still occurs.

Suggested physical identification

Source	Suggested colour or position	Treatment
Random Thought dice and Borrowed Heart	White or central rolling area	Roll together; Attunement may reroll an eligible die.
Root and bloodline dice	Element colour or fixed area beside the sheet	Set to a face before the roll; normally cannot reroll.
Extra Fate Die	Black or beside the Pending Fate card	Set from suit; do not roll or reroll.
Transgression Die	Red	Roll separately; never reroll or change, and always pay the announced cost.

If colours are unavailable, use four areas: centre, beside the sheet, beside the card, and beside a red marker. Dice compare together when forming groups, but the table must still identify whether Fate or Transgression entered the chosen group.

04 - Thought Groups, Paths, and Echoes

Success degree

Matching dice in the chosen group	Name	Degree
1	Scatter	Not enough for a risky action
2	Formed Thought	Standard success
3	Strong Thought	Formed success and 1 Momentum
4 or more	Obsession	Formed success and 2 or more Momentum

Momentum = dice in the chosen Thought Group - 2.

Momentum is force in this result, not a banked resource. Begin with the Formed column for the check’s difficulty, then spend each Momentum on one option:

- Raise effect one level: Opening → Limited → Full → Powerful → Decisive.
- Expand a reasonable area or affect one additional similar target.
- Finish sooner, last longer, or secure a firmer position.
- Gain additional information, evidence, or a condition worth +1 die on a later check.
- Protect the hero or an ally from one minor secondary consequence.

The Strong and Obsession columns in the difficulty table are the **default spend** of one or the first two Momentum to raise effect. A player may instead take the Formed effect and allocate Momentum to range, speed, information, or protection. Never take a higher listed effect and spend the same Momentum again. An Obsession of five or more matching dice may have Momentum left after reaching the table's listed effect.

Momentum cannot cancel a fixed cost and never carries to another check.

Example: Mirei rolls three Calculation 4s during a Standard attempt to expose a false seal. The Formed effect confirms that the seal is forged. She spends her one Momentum for extra evidence: the ink came from the East Gate arsenal. She cannot save or spend that point again.

The single complete resolution order

Every risky character check follows this order. A shorter summary never overrides it.

1. **Announce intent and risk.** The player states the desired change. Before the roll, the Groundkeeper states difficulty, the Formed effect, any compromise built into Limited effect, the likely Scatter consequence, and any fixed cost paid regardless of success.
2. **Declare Acting Thought and Expertise.** Explain the Thought-method and kind of work.
3. **Build personal dice.** Take 2 + Expertise ordinary random dice; if the Acting Thought is 2, place one fixed Root Die.
4. **Add other sources.** Apply Pending Fate → bloodline / aid / Spice Aid / situational aid → Transgression, resolving the seven-die cap immediately.
5. **Roll and Attune.** Roll all random dice. With Acting Thought 1+, reroll one eligible random die not showing it. Root, bloodline, Extra Fate, and Transgression dice cannot be rerolled.
6. **Form Thought Groups.** Use only the final dice after Attunement. Gather matching faces and identify every group of two or more.
7. **Choose a Path.** Choose the Acting Thought or another viable group; identify Natural Path, Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, or Self-Scatter, and mark the severity of unchosen Echoes.
8. **Move tracks and draw first.** Resolve track movement from the chosen Path, Dream Spice, or announced costs one point at a time. On reaching an endpoint, draw immediately, place the Fate Card face up, and reset that track to 0. A new card does not enter dice already rolled.
9. **Calculate effect.** Begin at the Formed column for difficulty. Allocate Momentum once. If Momentum buys other benefits, do not also claim an upgraded listed effect.
10. **Make the result true.** Establish the achieved result-or confirm that Scatter did not achieve the aim-then apply remaining fixed costs, Scatter consequences, Echoes, Transgression costs, Blood Debts, Mirages, and resource consumption. Secondary consequences may create new trouble but cannot erase an achieved core result.

Five distinct parts of a result

Category	Decided	Happens	Can Momentum or higher effect remove it?
Effect level	State Formed effect before rolling; finalize from difficulty and Momentum.	On Formed or better	Yes; each Momentum may raise one level.
Built-in compromise of a lower effect	State with Limited effect or Opening, such as saving only one person or recovering half a ledger.	Only if the result remains at that level	Yes; raising effect removes that level's compromise.
Fixed cost	Explicitly state "this happens if you proceed."	On success or failure	No; change method or withdraw before rolling.
Scatter consequence	State the principal thing at risk on failure.	Only on Scatter or Self-Scatter	Formed success avoids it naturally; do not spend Momentum separately.
Secondary resolution	Generated by dice, abilities, and resources.	After the core result	Follow its source. Minor side consequences may be protected against; Echoes, Transgression, Blood Debts, and Mirages cannot erase success.

The phrase "there is a cost" is too vague. The Groundkeeper should classify it before rolling. For example: "A Formed result pulls your officer only halfway from the rock gap; Full effect frees them. The cliff is already collapsing, so if you stay and try, you take 1 Light Injury regardless. On Scatter, the officer is washed down to the lower ledge." Half-free is Limited effect's built-in compromise. Injury is a fixed cost. Being washed away is the Scatter consequence.

If one check produces several track movements, do not cancel them against one another. Resolve them in this order, one point at a time: Path movement → Dream Spice actually used → announced Transgression or event movement. Check endpoints after every point. If Wonder begins at +2, Turn Thought reaches +3, draws, and resets it; Dream Spice then moves it from 0 to +1.

Attunement changes dice only. It never moves Wonder or Gloom by itself.

Complete short example: Sarei uses Outreach + Negotiation to calm miners. Negotiation 2 gives four random dice; Outreach 2 adds a fixed Water 2 Root Die. The random dice roll 2, 4, 5, 6, so the Root and random 2 already form a Path. She declines Attunement rather than risk another possible road. Choosing Outreach as the sole largest viable group is a Natural Path. Standard effect succeeds; neither Fate track moves.

Complete collision example: Mirei must disarm charges before pursuers arrive. The Groundkeeper calls it Hard: Formed removes only the primary fuse; Strong reaches Full effect; Scatter advances the countdown. Mirei uses Calculation + Investigation 2 for four ordinary random dice and a fixed Calculation 4 Root Die. A Heart Pending Fate adds fixed Outreach 2. An officer adds one random Borrowed Heart, filling all seven spaces. Five random dice roll 4, 2, 2, 5, 6; with Root 4 and Fate 2, Calculation has two dice and Outreach three. Mirei could Attune one random Outreach 2, but not the fixed Heart die. If she keeps Calculation, she Holds Fast Against the Tide: Gloom +1, Limited effect, and a significant Outreach Echo. If she Turns Thought to Outreach, Wonder +1; the Strong Thought's one Momentum defaults to raising Hard from Limited to Full, disarming the charges. She may instead keep Limited effect and spend Momentum to preserve the bridge or trace the explosive. If Wonder began at +2, Turn Thought reaches +3, draws immediately, and resets; the new card does not enter this check. The Heart Pending Fate is removed after the check either way, while changes it brought into the world remain.

Choosing a Path

"Largest" always means **most dice in the group**, never the highest face.

Final situation	Choice	Result	Track movement
Acting Thought is the sole largest viable group	Follow it	Natural Path	None
Acting Thought ties another largest viable group	Choose it	Hold Fast	Gloom +1
Acting Thought is viable but smaller than another group	Choose it	Hold Fast Against the Tide	Gloom +1
Choose any viable group other than the Acting Thought	Change method	Turn Thought	Wonder +1
No viable group exists	Accept failure	Scatter	Choose Gloom -1 or Wonder -1
A viable group exists, but reject every Path	Choose failure	Self-Scatter	Choose Gloom -1 or Wonder -1

Self-Scatter is a legitimate strategy. A player may deliberately pursue Dream Eaten or Light Lost, but still suffers the announced failure consequence. It is not a free way to draw negative Fate.

Hold Fast preserves an Acting Thought that already contains at least two matching dice. It cannot turn a lone Acting-Thought die into success. If the Acting Thought did not form, choose another viable Path, Scatter when no Path exists, or Self-Scatter by rejecting the Paths that do exist.

Example: Luodi begins with Composure. The final dice contain two Composure 3s and two Drive 5s. Choosing Composure is tied Hold Fast and moves Gloom +1. Choosing Drive is Turn Thought and moves Wonder +1. Refusing both is Self-Scatter; the action fails and the player chooses Gloom -1 or Wonder -1.

Collisions and Echoes

An unchosen group tied with the chosen group becomes an Echo. When the hero chooses a smaller group, every larger unchosen group must return as an Echo. Echoes may create secondary achievements, lost benefits, NPC reactions, Mirages, Blood Debts, relationships, or battlefield consequences.

Unchosen group compared with chosen group	Severity	Common scale
Tied	Minor Echo	Omen, brief exposure, attention, or small cost
One die larger	Significant Echo	Lose a secondary benefit, advance a clock, harm a relationship, or establish a lasting problem
Two or more dice larger	Major Echo	Alter the scene, introduce a powerful foe, create a Blood Debt, severe Mirage, or long-term consequence

An Echo cannot negate the chosen group's achieved result. It is the road the hero refused or did not take.

Example: Mirei chooses two Outreach 2s to persuade a storekeeper, while three Calculation 4s remain unchosen. Her persuasion succeeds. The one-die difference creates a significant Echo: the storekeeper opens the door but notices that Mirei deliberately avoided discussing the accounts, and later carries that suspicion to the guild.

05 - Difficulty and Effect

Hard actions do not require three matching dice to "count." The current rule is: **a Formed Thought determines success; group size determines force; difficulty translates that force into effect.**

Before the roll, the Groundkeeper selects difficulty and states what a Formed result achieves and what Scatter most likely loses.

Difficulty	Scale	Conditions	What Formed means
Standard	Comparable to a person	Tools, time, and position are suitable; one ordinary obstacle	Success directly resolves the intended ordinary obstacle.

Difficulty	Scale	Conditions	What Formed means
Hard	Prepared foe or clear advantage	Missing one of tools, information, time, or position	Formed solves the principal part only or includes one announced built-in compromise.
Extreme	A difference of scale	Missing a key qualification, resource, or opening	One action cannot complete the aim; it creates the next real possibility.

One major disadvantage normally raises difficulty one step. Effective information, leverage, tools, or allies may lower it one step. Standard is the minimum and Extreme the maximum. If an action is impossible, state what is missing and do not roll. If failure carries no meaningful risk, do not roll.

Five effect levels

Effect	General definition	Example: crossing a blockade
Create an Opening	The original aim is not complete, but the hero gains a real entrance, qualification, or foothold and removes one condition blocking a later action.	Find the gap during guard change; the next action can attempt the crossing.
Limited effect	Complete the principal part with limited range, time, quality, or safety, or one announced built-in compromise; another action is normally required.	The hero crosses but the cargo remains; or only one small squad passes.
Full effect	Complete the aim within the scope the player declared, without Limited effect's built-in compromise.	Hero and escorted cargo both cross.
Powerful effect	Full effect plus meaningful range, speed, duration, information, or positional advantage.	The whole party crosses and learns the patrol route or secures a safe return.
Decisive effect	Resolve a wider conflict within reasonable fictional scale so this obstacle cannot return unchanged in the same scene.	The guards mistake the party for their own orders, ending this blockade for the scene.

Raising effect removes the **built-in compromise** of the lower level. Raising "only one person escapes" from Limited to Full lets the declared group escape. It does not cancel an independently announced fixed cost, Transgression cost, Echo, Blood Debt, or Mirage. Decisive effect still respects fictional scale: one negotiation may resolve this scene's conflict, not make an entire kingdom permanently loyal.

Difficulty	Formed Thought	Strong Thought	Obsession
Standard	Full effect	Powerful effect	Decisive effect
Hard	Limited effect	Full effect	Powerful effect
Extreme	Create an Opening	Limited effect	Full effect

Always resolve by **finding the Formed column first, then allocating Momentum**. The Strong column assumes its one Momentum raises effect one level. The Obsession column assumes its first two Momentum raise effect twice. A player can instead remain at the Formed effect and spend Momentum on area, speed, information, or protection. Never claim the higher listed effect and spend those same points again.

PT1.4-rc1's only difficulty procedure lowers effect; it never changes Formed Thought to require three or four matching dice. If a challenge needs several achievements, use a clock, staged objective, or prerequisite instead of changing the definition of success.

Difficulty example: With rope and time, climbing a scree slope is Standard and Formed gives Full effect. Hauling a wagon up it in a storm is Hard: Formed advances the wagon with a built-in equipment compromise, while Strong reaches Full effect. Stopping an entire collapsing mountainside by hand is Extreme: Formed can only Create an Opening for evacuation. Finding old mine supports is effective information that may lower Extreme to Hard.

06 - Wonder, Gloom, and Fate Cards

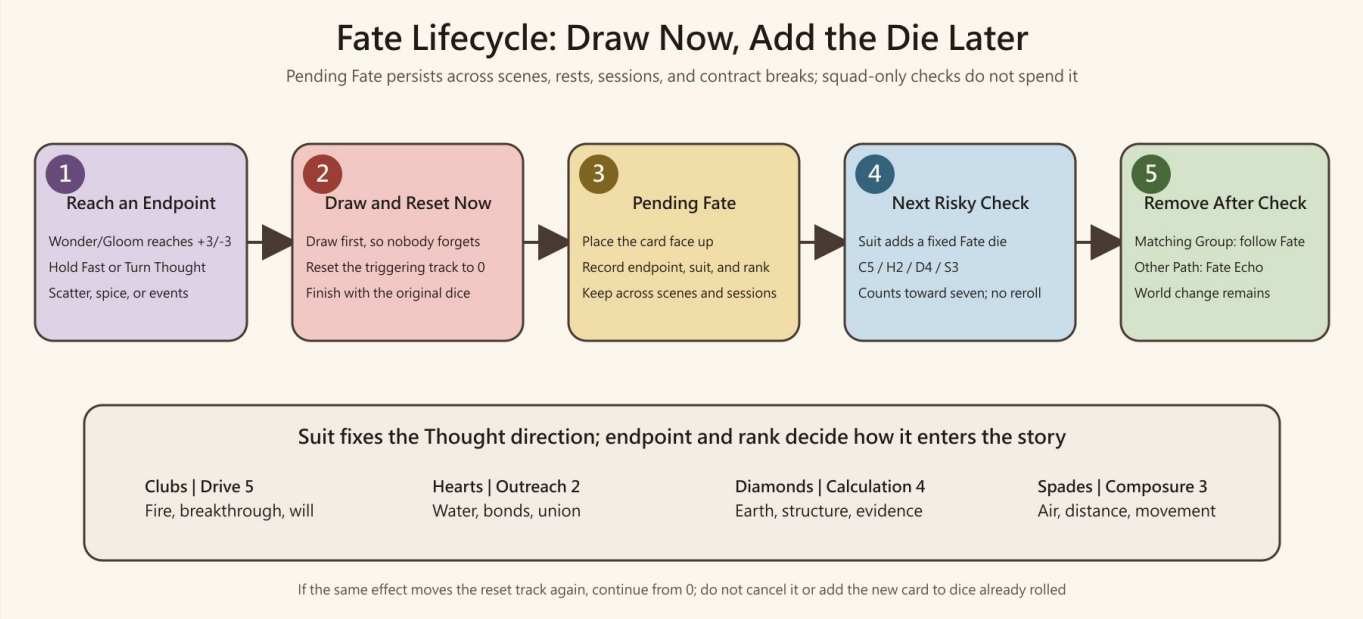
Wonder: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3
Gloom: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

- A new hero normally begins at Wonder 0 and Gloom 0.
- When Wonder or Gloom is the Acting Thought, use the track’s absolute value under the ordinary Attunement rules.
- At 0 it grants no rating benefit. At absolute value 1, it permits one eligible Attunement reroll. At absolute value 2, it also grants a fixed Root Die.
- When either track reaches +3 or -3, **draw a Fate Card immediately** and place it face up before the hero. Reaching an endpoint does not remove the hero from play.
- Immediately reset the triggering track to 0, leaving the other track unchanged; then complete the result, Momentum, and Echoes of the check that triggered it.

The sign shows which direction of fate the hero approaches; the absolute value shows how familiar and rooted that attitude has become. Wonder +2 is practiced hope, creation, and clarity. Wonder -2 is equal familiarity with hopelessness, illusion, and broken possibility. Gloom +2 is practiced responsibility, truth, and cost. Gloom -2 is practiced detachment, distance, and release from worldly connection. Either direction can grant a Root Die because strength comes from habit, not from a moral judgment that positive is good and negative is evil. The sign matters when the track reaches an endpoint.

You may begin character scenes now. You already know how to build a pool, find Thought Groups, choose a Path, and move Wonder and Gloom. Keep the [One-Page Character Check Card](#) nearby; consult blood, spice, and Fate details when they enter play.

Endpoint	Name	Direction of fate
Wonder +3	Dream Made	New possibility, creation, or an omen fulfilled
Wonder -3	Dream Eaten	Hopelessness, illusion, mistaken identity, or reality collapsing
Gloom +3	Darkness Bound	Truth, oath, duty, and cost crystallize
Gloom -3	Light Lost	Detachment, isolation, memory, identity, or worldly connection fades



Diamonds Calculation 4, and Spades Composure 3. The die counts toward the hard seven-die limit and cannot be rerolled or changed. Choosing a Thought Group that contains it is **Following Fate**. Choosing another group makes the card a **Fate Echo**. Pending Fate survives rest, scene end, session end, and an interrupted contract until that hero's next risky character check. Remove its die after the check; the world changes made by the card remain. The complete procedure appears in the [Fate and Pending Fate module](#).

Situation example: Sarei Holds Fast and brings Gloom to +3. She immediately draws Diamond T, **Great Sacrifice**, and resets Gloom; the negotiation still resolves as rolled. On her next risky attempt to establish a joint-rule compact, Great Sacrifice supplies fixed Calculation 4. Choosing a group containing that 4 Follows Fate. Choosing another Path can still succeed, but the sacrifice demanded by the card becomes a Fate Echo.

07 - Blood: C / Generation and Q / Exemplar

Blood has two directions. True blood and inheritance flow into the hero; blood, sweat, and Deeds flow out.



The dual nature of blood: essence and inheritance enter the hero, while blood, labour, and shared Deeds flow outward.

Rank	Direction of blood	Question answered	Character contents
C / Generation	True blood, inheritance	What made you?	Bloodline origin, mark, gift, claim, Blood Debt
Q / Exemplar	Blood and sweat, achievement	Who will you become through your own effort?	Heroic road, oath, Deeds, station, comrades' expectations

C / Generation: four sources of blood

Element	C / Generation	Bloodline direction
Fire	Hearth-Cauldron	Blood made through refining, warfire, sacred flame, or dragon blood
Water	Precious Blood	Sacred blood, healing, fusion, and ancestral memory
Earth	Heart-Jade	Crystallized hearts, ore-vein descent, artificial life, and undying flesh
Air	Heavenly Resonance	Inheritance through breath, name, song, prophecy, or soul

A C card establishes the blood mark, bloodline gift, bloodright claim, and Blood Debt.

Situation example: Grann' s C is Hearth-Cauldron. His mark is a furnace scar on his chest; his gift is briefly using his body as a furnace core; his claim is the standing to demand that the old East-Gate smiths hear him. Each Manifest Blood may deepen the Debt, "The Red Dragon has caught my blood' s scent."

Q / Exemplar: four heroic roads

Element	Q / Exemplar	Road of blood and sweat
Fire	Hero	Establish station through courage, duels, sacrifice, and victory
Water	Divine Attendant	Earn recognition through service, healing, faith, and connection
Earth	Maker-Mother	Become a foundation for others through building, craft, provision, and creation
Air	Warden	Bind comrades through vigilance, travel, protection, and freedom

A Q card establishes the hero' s oath, how they earn Deeds, the title they desire, and what comrades expect.

Situation example: Luodi' s Q is Hero. He swears that an unjust military order will never decide his loyalty. When he faces pursuit with Drive, gives up a safe retreat, and personally holds the road for the wounded, he earns a Deed; soldiers begin calling him "Hero of the Grey Flag."

Two Blood Roads for character creation

Road	Elemental Thought array	Primary blood rank	Defining feature
Blood Heir	2, 1, 1, 0	C / Generation	One more bloodline gift and one more Blood Debt; can call inherited power
Blood-and-Sweat hero	2, 2, 1, 0	Q / Exemplar	More mature elemental Thoughts; earns Deeds and station by embodying the Exemplar

Every hero has both a C and a Q: C says where they came from, Q says who they hope to become. The chosen Blood Road determines which card has the stronger mechanical effect. Matching elements indicate continuity with the bloodline; different elements establish tension between birth and achievement.

The arrays intentionally do not have equal point totals. A Blood Heir has only one Rooted Thought, narrowing daily reliability in exchange for once-per-session Manifest Blood, bloodright claims, and Blood Debts that return to make demands. A Blood-and-Sweat hero has two Rooted Thoughts and lasting reliability in two directions, but no equivalent burst of inherited force: they must pay costs and accumulate Deeds before gaining station. This is a choice between **unstable inherited power** and **stable ability that must be earned**, not a "weak build" and a "strong build." Actual value remains a playtest question.

Situation example: Blood Heir Sarei normally has only one Thought at 2, but can Manifest Blood at an ancient altar, add a fixed bloodline die, and make an ancestral covenant recognize her. Blood-and-Sweat Luodi has two Thoughts at 2, making travel and command more reliable, but must actually escort civilians through a blockade before earning a Deed that can change his station.

What blood puts into play

True blood and inheritance:

- Blood marks.
- Bloodline gifts.
- Bloodright claims.
- Blood Debts and family duties.
- Blessings and divine anointing.

- Kinship, marriage, and order of succession.

Blood, sweat, and Deeds:

- Injury and sacrifice.
- Deeds, reputation, and station.
- Oaths and covenants of blood.
- Officers, comrades, and soldiers' loyalty.
- Squad Casualties and command responsibility.
- Rights earned through Deeds that birth did not grant.

The central cycle of blood is:

Call true blood for power and take a Blood Debt; spend blood and sweat to earn Deeds and alter station.

Situation example: Sarei uses Precious Blood to wake an ancestral memory, immediately finding the old spring's entrance and taking the Blood Debt "My grandmother uses my memories in dreams." Blood-and-Sweat Luodi runs into a fire with Drive and carries out three soldiers; he suffers Injury and gains one Deed under the Hero Exemplar. Both alter the situation through blood. One borrows power first and repays it later; the other pays first and gains a place afterward.

Blood abilities at a glance

Direction	Ability	When it applies	What it brings	Cost or limit
True blood / C	Blood-mark response	Encounter a related material, place, person, or oath	Notice a bloodline sign ordinary mortals cannot see	Usually information, not an automatic die
True blood / C	Bloodright claim	Ask ancestral ground, altar, old retainers, or a blood covenant to acknowledge identity	Standing and a voice that an ordinary mortal lacks	Guarantees the right to press the claim, not obedience
True blood / C	Manifest Blood miracle	Once per session for a Blood Heir, declared before rolling	Add or fix one C-element bloodline die and attempt something for which mortals lack means	Immediately take one named Blood Debt; Thought Group and difficulty still decide the result
True blood / C	Blood Debt relationship	A Debt warns, comes due, or is invoked by the Groundkeeper	Bring a god, ancestor, land, dead person, blood relative, or other claimant truly into the story	Repay it, accept permanent change, or refuse after suffering a major announced consequence
Blood and sweat / Q	Embody the Exemplar	Once per session for a Blood-and-Sweat hero acting with the Q element and accepting public responsibility	Record one named Deed	Pay a real cost for comrades, oath, or company and leave an actual result
Blood and sweat / Q	Redeem Deeds	Between contracts after collecting three Deeds	Gain a title, claim, contact, item, squad improvement, or territorial foothold	Deeds never add dice to checks; the three events must support the new station

Memory line: A blood mark lets a hero perceive what mortals cannot see. Bloodright lets a hero demand what mortals lack standing to demand. Manifest Blood lets a hero attempt what mortals lack means to do. Blood Debt lets the power return to collect. Deeds turn the price already paid into a station the world recognizes.

Deeds: the world acknowledges a price already paid

A Deed is neither money, general experience, nor a roll resource. It cannot add dice, grant rerolls, or cancel consequences during a scene. Name each Deed for an event that witnesses can see, recount, or cite in support of a political claim. Never record only "Deed +1."

A Blood-and-Sweat hero can earn at most one Deed per session and must meet all three conditions: act through the element of their Q / Exemplar; accept a real cost for comrades, an oath, or the company; and leave a result that can be witnessed or retold. Routine work without risk, words without sacrifice, or repeated attempts that change nothing do not create Deeds.

After accumulating three Deeds, redeem them between contracts for one result of station. Cross out or archive the three and explain what qualification they prove together. The Groundkeeper then brings a title, political claim, reliable contact, quality item, squad improvement, temple or guild recognition, or territorial foothold into the world. Station is not a prize bought from nowhere; it is the world finally acknowledging who the hero has become.

Deed example: Luodi records “The Grey Flag held the East-Gate retreat,” Mirei records “Published the Gray Scale black ledger,” and the company records “Repaired the Red-Spring channel while wounded.” A hero who personally holds and redeems three Deeds that support local trust may gain the title “Warden of the Spring Road,” with corresponding safe passage, recruiting rights, or a voice in council. Three unrelated errands cannot buy a throne.

Blood Debt: what blood owes reality

A Blood Debt is not merely someone arriving later to demand payment. It is a price not yet paid to reality after blood bears power, deflects spice, or crosses mortal limits. Any hero may take Blood Debt; a Blood Heir merely begins with one and calls blood more readily.

Where the Debt falls	Common forms
Body	An old wound reopens; fever, crystallization, mutation, sensory loss, or dependence on a spice
Mind	Ancestral memories bleed in; nightmares, compulsions, mingled identity, or loss of one’s own experiences
Relationship	Kin, comrades, descendants, temple, former master, or a blood-covenant relationship makes a demand
Uncanny	Dragon blood wakes; the dead follow blood; a god leaves a mark; land demands sacrifice
Fate	A wound in the future, a request from someone not yet born, or an ancestral choice that must be repeated

Track zero to three **named** Blood Debts, not contentless boxes. When taking one, the player first chooses Body, Mind, Relationship, Uncanny, or Fate. The Groundkeeper collaborates to phrase a concrete line tied to the source and scene: “My left hand is becoming Heart-Jade,” “My grandmother uses my memories in dreams,” or “The Red Dragon has caught my blood’s scent.”

Step	Who handles it	PT1.4-rc1 procedure
Gain	Rule / Groundkeeper	Manifest Blood, Elemental Deflection, a Transgression cost, or a story event explicitly gives one Debt. Finish the current result first.
Name	Player chooses category; Groundkeeper collaborates	Write one sentence saying which power is taking what from which part of the hero. Never write only “Blood Debt 1.”
Warn	Groundkeeper	In a short game, show at least one sign within two scenes of gaining it so the player knows how collection may arrive. A warning is not an immediate punishment.
Invoke	Groundkeeper	After a check or at a suitable turn, make it a symptom, demand, pursuer, or uncanny event. It cannot erase a result already earned.

Step	Who handles it	PT1.4-rc1 procedure
Repay / refuse	Player	Fulfil the demand or accept a commensurate permanent change to clear it. Or accept a major, previously explained long-term consequence, refuse payment, and clear it. The distinction remains in what changed in the hero, relationships, and world; no universal resource is settled.

When a hero already has three Debts and would gain another, do not open a fourth box. Finish the current check, then make the oldest Debt immediately come due in the scene. After the hero repays or refuses it and clears that slot, write the new Debt there at once. If the scene must end before the choice, note in the oldest slot “coming due → [new Debt]” ; resolve the old choice at the next opening, then replace it. The new Debt is not lost and cannot be invoked before it enters the slot. Collection still cannot erase the success that just created it.

A Debt from Elemental Deflection must retain a trace of the element forced off course. Use: **I used ___ to force the element of ___ to obey the Thought of ___; now ___ is collecting from me.** For example, using a Fire spice with Calculation to melt a precision lock might become: “I forced fire to obey Calculation with my hands; now my knuckles cool into gears.” This points back to the deflection more clearly than an unrelated family enemy.

Situation example: Grann carries “The furnace scar heats at night.” At the East Gate, the Groundkeeper invokes it: a temple hound recognizes dragon blood. Grann keeps the wagon rescue he already accomplished but faces inspection. Accepting a temple brand and permanently losing the ability to conceal his blood clears the Debt; refusing after accepting long-term exclusion from the city also clears it. One changes body and identity, the other his relationship with the place.

Bringing bloodlines into scenes

Write four practical triggers for each C / Generation bloodline:

1. **Blood-mark response:** what material, place, person, or oath makes the blood reveal itself? This usually gives a clue, not a die.
2. **Bloodright claim:** what may the hero demand-entry to ancestral ground, an altar’ s judgment, or a hearing by old retainers? If opposed, make a character check.
3. **Manifest Blood miracle:** once per session, a Blood Heir adds or fixes the C-element bloodline die and takes one named Blood Debt. It may make something mortals lack means to do attemptable, but never guarantees cost-free success.
4. **Blood Debt collection:** the Groundkeeper invokes one named Debt so a bodily symptom, ancestral memory, relative, temple, former master, enemy, uncanny being, or blood taboo enters the scene. It creates a new situation and cannot cancel an established result.

C / Generation	Common triggers	Exceptional manifestation	At-the-table example
Hearth-Cauldron / Fire	Forge, warfire, dragon blood, molten metal, ancestral weapon	Flesh as furnace: heat skin and old wounds, identify a forging flaw, briefly endure flame, or use the body as a furnace core	Grann places a hand on the burning East Gate and Manifests Blood with Drive. Fixed Fire 5 and one named Debt let him find the latch’ s melting point within the blaze.
Precious Blood / Water	Living water, wound, poison, blood covenant, blood of kin	Life returning: sense pollution and kinship, stabilize the wounded, wake ancestral memory, or let an old covenant recognize a guardian	Sarei lets her spring mark touch a sick well and Manifests Blood with Outreach. Fixed Water 2 lets her question the ancestral memory in the water; the spirit later demands that she defend the spring fields.

C / Generation	Common triggers	Exceptional manifestation	At-the-table example
Heart-Jade / Earth	Ore vein, stone altar, artificial life, preserved heart, collapsed structure	Crystalline bearing: sense hidden fractures, crystallize the body briefly, brace a structure, or read a will sealed into matter	A Heart-Jade heir Manifests Blood during a mine collapse and uses Calculation to find the load-bearing seam. Fixed Earth 4 gives the group a chance to hold the tunnel; the Debt wakes the craft lineage that made the Heart-Jade.
Heavenly Resonance / Air	True name, song, canyon echo, prophecy, dying breath, ownerless wind	Echo of the true name: carry a voice across distance, identify a soul's echo, track a name borne away by wind, or briefly speak with the dead	A Heavenly Resonance heir says a missing scout's true name in a storm and Manifests Blood with Composure. Fixed Air 3 lets the echo point the way, but another presence that hears the name begins to answer.

Blood phenomena should widen **what the hero can attempt**, not automatically deal extra harm or solve a scene. Thought Group, difficulty, Momentum, and Echoes still determine how much Manifest Blood accomplishes.

08 - The Eight Great Spices

Each of the four elements has one material **Waking Spice** and one visionary **Dream Spice**. Together they are the Eight Great Spices.

Element	Waking Spice	Corresponding Thought	Dream Spice
Fire	Red-Crown Saffron	Drive 5	Tobacco
Water	Mistsilver Cardamom	Outreach 2	Cedar
Earth	Stillnight Clove	Calculation 4	Mousewort
Air	Windcry Cinnamon	Composure 3	Vetiver

The four Waking Spices

Waking Spices can be reliably cultivated, stockpiled, processed, and militarized. They chiefly alter bodies, senses, squads, terrain, and weather. Armies, guilds, temples, and states contest them as strategic commodities.

Situation example: Red Spring has only six doses of Mistsilver Cardamom. Keeping four can treat the mine fever; giving them to the guild can settle a debt; giving two to the mercenaries can Rally the wounded in the finale. The spice is reliable. The hard choice is that one stock cannot pay all three needs.

The four Dream Spices

Dream Spice	Element	Symbolic direction
Tobacco	Fire	Smoke, desire, fervour, addiction, and visions within burning
Cedar	Water	Purification, preservation, memory, ancestors, and dreams passed down
Mousewort	Earth	Medicine, concealment, underground places, stores, and the wisdom of humble life
Vetiver	Air	Travel, calling spirits, scent, rumour, and omens carried by wind

Dream Spices chiefly touch memory, dream, omen, Wonder and Gloom, Fate Cards, spirits, and forbidden Arcana. When a J / Dream card of the corresponding suit appears, fate manifests through that Dream Spice.

Situation example: Luodi burns Vetiver to find a missing scout. It does more than add a die to Travel: the wind brings back the scout's whistle and a last sentence never spoken, forcing the players to decide whether to follow the sound or protect the wagons first.

The spice economy

Spice has source, output, quality, dose, processing, formula, transport, storage, smuggling, price, military supply, consumption, excess, Mirages, contamination, counterfeit product, and monopoly.

Its core cycle is:

Acquire spice → transport or stockpile → trade or cast → change battlefield and market → provoke a new contest.

Situation example: The heroes buy a case of Red-Crown Saffron cheaply, then break the seal and use two doses to drive off an ambush. The company survives but loses the intact-seal bonus. When word reaches the East Gate, House Hesar raises its purchase price because military supply is short. The adventure changed both stock and the next negotiation's market conditions.

Common casting procedure

1. Name the dose and how it is eaten, brewed, burned, scattered, applied, or incorporated into a device.
2. Explain how it supports the character's Acting Thought, a captain's order, a squad action, or a change in the scene.
3. A Waking Spice normally supplies one random **Spice Aid** die. All sources together still obey the hard seven-die limit.
4. A Dream Spice can extend the effect into memory, omen, ancestors, vision, or fate. If used only as numerical aid, it likewise supplies one random Spice Aid die. Before rolling, declare a **Dream Made (+)** or **Dream Eaten (-)** direction. After choosing the final Path and before narrating the result, move Wonder 1 in that direction. The Groundkeeper also introduces an immediately visible dream sign: mistaken identity, a witness's intrusion, emotional contagion, or a future echo. A dream sign is not a formal Mirage and does not occupy a Mirage slot.
5. Remove every used dose from stock. A cast dose cannot later be sold, delivered, or contributed to a Great Rite.
6. A second or later dose used by the same character or squad in one scene is **excessive** and may provide a Transgression Die; if all seven spaces are full, it instead provides Transgression Momentum. The Groundkeeper offers two reasonable excess costs and the player chooses one. That cost occurs regardless of the roll.
7. When a hero personally uses Dream Spice, or adds it to their action or Key Order, move that hero's Wonder. When a squad uses it under a captain's command, move the commanding captain's Wonder. An NPC or independent squad without a commanding hero does not move a character track; instead, create a **scene Mirage** that occupies no character slot or a trackable fate sign, using the rules below for duration and conversion.

Procedure example: Sarei places one dose of Cedar in the negotiation brazier and uses Outreach with Negotiation to awaken a shared memory. She adds one random Spice Aid die and declares Dream Made before rolling. After choosing the Path, Wonder +1 occurs first; if that reaches an endpoint, draw immediately, then narrate the result and deduct the dose. Only another dose in the same scene would be excessive and add a Transgression Die or Transgression Momentum.

Aligned casting, Elemental Deflection, and Aether Deflection

After choosing the final Thought Group in a character check or Key Order, compare it with the spice's element:

Final choice	Result	Additional cost
The spice's native elemental group	Aligned casting	None; express the effect through its native element
Another Fire, Water, Earth, or Air group	Elemental Deflection	Resolve Hold Fast / Turn Thought normally, then the caster takes one named Blood Debt

Final choice	Result	Additional cost
A Gloom or Wonder group	Aether Deflection	Resolve Hold Fast / Turn Thought normally, then the caster takes one formal Mirage
No viable group is chosen	Scatter	This is not Deflection; spend the spice and suffer the announced failure consequence

Table conversation: spice can change course, but not for free

Groundkeeper: "The poisoned courier' s breaths are shortening. Stabilize him and you can ask where the medicine chest is hidden. On a Scatter he loses consciousness and the pursuers arrive first."

Sarei' s player: "I grind one dose of Water-aspected Mistsilver Cardamom into warm water. I make him breathe with me while I ask which road he saw. I use Outreach and Investigation 2."

Groundkeeper: "That adds a Waking Spice to a character check. You have four random dice; Outreach 2 places one fixed 2; Cardamom adds one random Spice Aid die, for six total. The dose leaves the cargo whatever happens."

Player rolls: fixed 2; random 2, 5, 5, 6, 6.

Player: "Outreach, Drive, and Wonder all have pairs. What if I choose my original Outreach?"

Groundkeeper: "Water spice with Water' s Outreach is aligned. You steady his breathing by the original method and take no extra spice cost. Because three groups tie, you are still Holding Fast in a collision: Gloom +1, and the other groups leave Echoes."

Player: "What if I choose Drive?"

Groundkeeper: "You must force the calming medicine into a Fire method-pain or a battle cry to shock him awake. That Turns Thought, Wonder +1, and it is also Elemental Deflection, so you take a Blood Debt."

Player: "And Wonder? I want the reflection in the cup to point out the road."

Groundkeeper: "You can. That also Turns Thought, Wonder +1; pushing Water spice beyond the four elements is Aether Deflection. You learn the medicine chest' s location, but write a Mirage: what do you hope to experience, see, or know later?"

Player: "I write, 'I want to see whose face was once reflected in the poisoned well.' I choose Wonder."

Groundkeeper: "The cardamom water reflects a mountain road with no moon, and the courier' s finger follows it toward the north slope. You know the location; Wonder +1, and the Mirage hangs before you. Unchosen Outreach and Drive become minor Echoes: when he wakes, the courier depends upon your voice and fears that you made water speak. Both trust and fear are real."

This exchange establishes each route' s fictional method and price before the player chooses. **Aligned casting** preserves the spice' s element. **Elemental Deflection** makes blood bear another element. **Aether Deflection** lets the player invite a future uncanny experience through a Mirage. The Cardamom is used whichever Path is chosen and cannot later be sold or delivered.

Elemental Deflection means that the caster uses body, mind, and blood to force one element to work through another. The acting hero takes the Blood Debt in a personal action; the commanding captain takes it when spice enters a Key Order.

Squad dice faces are not Thoughts, so a pure squad check does not determine Deflection after rolling. Compare spice and action type before building the pool:

- Fire aligns with Force, Morale, charges, and fire zones.
- Water aligns with Support, Rally, escort, and collective retreat.
- Earth aligns with Protection, repair, fortification, and countermeasures.
- Air aligns with Mobility, ranged action, flanking, and seizing position.

Spice supporting its aligned action is aligned casting. Forcing it to support another elemental action declares Elemental Deflection in advance; the commanding captain takes one named Blood Debt. If a squad touches Aether through a Gloom or Wonder Key Order, it is Aether Deflection and creates one formal Mirage. For an NPC or independent squad without a commanding hero, the Groundkeeper writes the Debt or Mirage as a named state of that squad, land, or battlefield.

A formal Mirage exists only when a rule explicitly says to gain a Mirage. Dream Spice itself moves Wonder and produces an immediate dream sign; that does not automatically fill a Mirage slot. A formal Mirage is written only when the final choice of Gloom or Wonder causes Aether Deflection. One check creates at most one formal Mirage; multiple sources point to the same invitation rather than filling multiple slots. Deflecting Dream Spice into another element creates a Blood Debt, while its dream sign still appears.

An NPC or independent squad using Dream Spice has no hero Wonder track. The Groundkeeper instead creates one **scene Mirage** or trackable fate sign that occupies no player slot. A single source sustains at most one at a time; triggering it again enlarges or rewrites that Mirage rather than opening another. Clear it when players resolve its central choice, its source leaves or disappears, or the scene ends. If its consequence must continue, convert it to a named fate sign, a faction-clock effect, or a terrain / scene state rather than permanently hanging it as a player Mirage.

Deflection example: Grann uses Water-aspected Mistsilver Cardamom to cool a berserk soldier. Choosing Outreach 2 is aligned. Choosing Drive 5 turns the sedative into a battle cry, an Elemental Deflection that brings a Blood Debt. Choosing Wonder 6 makes the soldiers share a vision of peace, an Aether Deflection that writes a Mirage. If every die is scattered, the spice is still spent but no Deflection is added.

Mirage: a player's uncanny invitation to the Groundkeeper

A Mirage is not ordinary harm and is not another pressure track that explodes when filled. It names an uncanny image, question, or experience that the player wants to encounter. When gaining one, write in an empty slot:

I want to experience / see / know _____.

Examples include "I want to see my future coronation in fire," "I want to speak once more with my dead officer," or "I want to know whether the spring remembers its first guardian." A Mirage cannot demand a successful check, a particular item, or cancellation of a cost. It guarantees that its subject becomes a real encounter and choice.

Step	Who handles it	PT1.4-rc1 procedure
Invite	Player	Write "I want to experience / see / know ..." as an uncanny experience that can be entered, not a prescribed victory.
Add a deviation	Groundkeeper	Note one possible misidentification, danger, witness, emotional contagion, or unknown price. The full answer need not be revealed yet.
Schedule an entrance	Groundkeeper	In a short game, offer the entrance from the end of this scene through the next two scenes. If the session ends first, keep the Mirage and planned entrance for next session.
Deliver	Groundkeeper	Give a real opportunity, clue, or relationship. Do not overturn a core fact established by Formed success as "all false," and do not provide punishment without the invited subject.
Choose and clear	Player	Clear the Mirage after the hero makes a meaningful choice about it. World changes already caused may remain.

A hero may hold at most three Mirages. If a fourth would be gained, make the oldest break into reality by the end of this scene or during the next. After its meaningful choice clears that Mirage, write the new one into the freed slot.

Delivery example: Sarei writes “I want to know whether the spring remembers its first guardian.” In the next scene the old spring speaks a true covenant in that guardian’s voice, while mistaking Sarei for his daughter. Sarei accepts or rejects the relationship and clears the Mirage; the covenant and the spring’s name for her may remain true in the world.



A Mirage: the desired image becomes an enterable reality, while a visible mismatch remains around it.

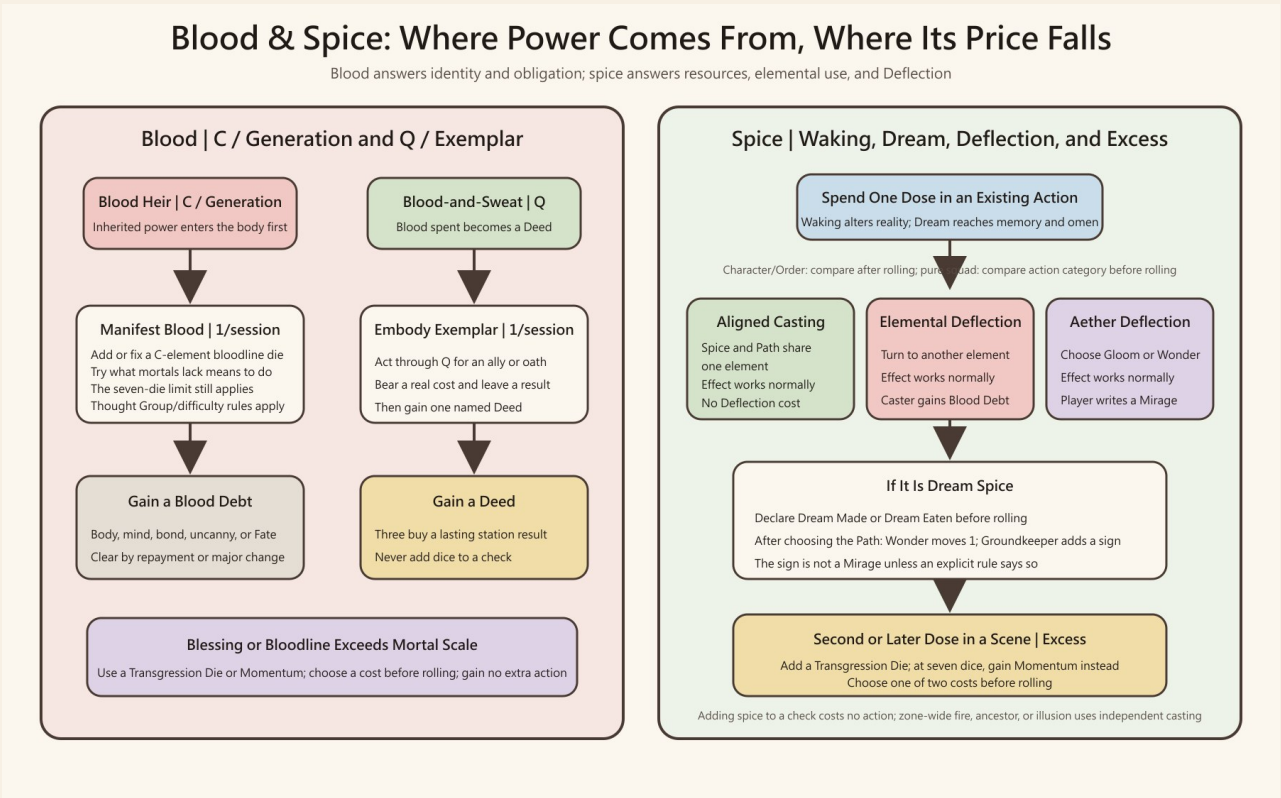
Waking Spices: worldly effects and examples

Waking Spice	What it may cause	Character or political example	Battlefield example
Red-Crown Saffron / Fire	Raise body heat, courage, tolerance of pain, burning, and collective fighting spirit	Grann chews a thread of saffron and uses Drive to make a crowd yield. The Spice Aid die enters the check, and witnesses remember the threat he speaks.	Mix powder into fire arrows; a hit establishes a fire zone and drives crossbow crews out of cover.
Mistsilver Cardamom / Water	Calm, coordinate, purify water, soften poison, synchronize breath and emotion	Sarei brews it into negotiation water and uses Outreach to let hostile parties sit together briefly. It cannot force agreement to terms.	Restore a disordered squad’s breathing rhythm, supporting Rally, wounded escort, or passage through polluted water.
Stillnight Clove / Earth	Preserve, arrest rot, stabilize, identify medicine, reinforce materials and contractual procedure	Mirei preserves a patient’s medicine, tests adulteration, and uses Calculation to obtain evidence fit for a public accusation against the guild.	Mix it into mud walls or bandages to support fortification, repair, wagon guarding, or stabilization of a squad with Casualties.
Windcry Cinnamon / Air	Reveal currents, carry scent and messages, sharpen vigilance, accelerate movement	Luodi scatters cinnamon over a map and uses Composure to find a lee route the ambushers cannot observe.	Redirect smoke, support a flank or long shot, or help a unit find safe gaps through a rockfall.

Dream Spices: uncanny effects and examples

Dream Spice	What it may cause	At-the-table example and immediate dream sign
Tobacco / Fire	Make desire, fervour, addiction, and burning scenes visible as visions	A hero sees their own post-victory investiture in smoke and may use the omen to inspire troops; the immediate sign may also make soldiers see any retreat as cowardice.
Cedar / Water	Preserve or awaken memory, ancestors, dreams, and emotion across generations	Sarei burns Cedar to ask her grandmother how to read a spring covenant. The answer is true, but the grandmother’ s memory mistakes a modern merchant for an ancient invader.
Mousewort / Earth	Reveal concealed medicine, underground secrets, small life, and overlooked people’ s wisdom	After taking Mousewort, Mirei hears granary mice “remember” where the black ledger lies. The clue is real; the immediate sign may make every small sound seem like an informer.
Vetiver / Air	Call spirits, spread scent and rumour, follow travellers, receive omens in wind	Luodi burns Vetiver to track a missing scout; the wind brings back his whistle and carries the company’ s position to an enemy priest.

Information from Dream Spice may be true, but should carry at least one risk of misidentification, a witness’ s intervention, emotional contagion, or a future echo. It is not permission for the Groundkeeper to declare everything false. A core clue established by Formed success remains valid.



Bloodline and spice together: complete pool example

Grann's Combat 2 gives four random dice. Drive 2 adds one fixed Fire 5 Root Die, for five. Red-Crown Saffron adds one random Spice Aid die, making six. He then Manifests the Hearth-Cauldron bloodline: a fixed Fire 5 bloodline die takes the seventh space, and he gains one named Blood Debt. If he also uses Tobacco excessively, all seven spaces are full, so no red eighth die is added; a Formed result instead gains 1 Transgression Momentum. The Groundkeeper offers "suffer 1 Injury" or "take the Debt 'my furnace scar burns incense that temple hounds can track.'" Grann chooses the Debt, which occurs whether or not the roll Forms. Without Manifest Blood, Tobacco's red Transgression Die would take the seventh space directly.

Does casting spend a Captain Action?

- Adding one dose to a chosen Key Order, character action, or squad check is part of that action and does not spend another Captain Action. A squad that spices its own attack, Support, Rally, or Movement still takes only that squad action.
- If casting is the whole action-independently creating a fire zone, calling an ancestor, spreading an illusion over a zone, or changing the scene without another order or squad action carrying it-the captain chooses **cast spice directly** and spends this round's Captain Action.
- One dose cannot both add a die to a check and count separately as an independent scene effect. Strong, Obsession, and Momentum may enlarge the existing result of that same casting.

Action-boundary example: Grann orders the heavy shields forward through arrow fire and adds Red-Crown Saffron to that Key Order. This still spends one Captain Action, and the saffron supplies a die to the order. If he gives no order and personally scatters saffron into an oil trench to ignite a whole zone, that direct casting is the Captain Action; he cannot also duel in the same round.

Excess

When the same character or squad uses a second or later dose in one scene, add at most one Transgression Die to that check. If all seven spaces are full, an effective result instead gains 1 Transgression Momentum: Formed or better for a character, Cluster 2+ for a squad. Further doses only enlarge effect and consequences such as Blood Debt, Injury, addiction, contamination, loss of control, or fate. Announce those consequences before rolling. A Transgression Die cannot be rerolled or changed.

Excess example: Light cavalry already used one dose of Windcry Cinnamon this scene and takes another to pursue. The Groundkeeper offers "outside entanglement: the mounts run wild, Disorder +1 at resolution" or "bodily loss: a lead horse is injured and cannot charge until treated." The captain chooses Disorder and adds the red Transgression Die. Disorder occurs even if that die is not in the largest Cluster. At a full seven-die pool, add no eighth die; only Cluster 2+ gains 1 Transgression Momentum.

Scale limits

Character-scale spicecraft may create cover, open a gap, or ruin one officer's judgment. Directly affecting a whole squad requires a squad-scale dose, sufficient time to distribute it, or Strong / Obsession to raise effect. One ordinary dose and the sentence "I set a fire" cannot erase an entire zone.

Scale example: One dose of Tobacco can make a gate officer see the wrong signal and open a gap for a character. Making a whole spear squad hallucinate requires preparing smoke throughout the zone, using a squad-scale quantity, or enlarging effect through Strong / Obsession. An ordinary Formed result cannot make scores of people vanish from battle.

09 - T / Completion: Four Great Rites and the Complete Fate Table

T / Completion is not four more spices. It names four campaign-scale ceremonies in which the Waking and Dream Spice of one element complete a fate together.

Element	Great Rite	Spice pair	Mode of completion
Fire	Presentation	Red-Crown Saffron + Tobacco	Present achievement, spoils, or spice to a ruler, temple, or supreme power
Water	Revel	Mistsilver Cardamom + Cedar	Join a crowd through shared food, spice, dance, and ecstasy
Earth	Great Sacrifice	Stillnight Clove + Mousewort	Bind a worldly compact through livestock, flesh, wealth, and solemn procedure
Air	Burnt Offering	Windcry Cinnamon + Vetiver	Burn an offering so smoke, scent, oath, and message rise to the unseen

Presentation / Fire



Revel / Water



Great Sacrifice / Earth



Burnt Offering / Air



A Great Rite may alter a throne, bloodline, domain, temple, guild monopoly, military oath, or world state left by a Fate Card. It requires resources and sacrifices that cannot be reclaimed.

Situation example: Three factions want a Great Sacrifice to establish joint stewardship of the spring fields. The heroes contribute Stillnight Clove and Mousewort; House Hesar surrenders taxation rights; Red Spring surrenders one season’ s yield; the guild publishes its black ledger; witnesses press blood to the covenant. The Rite can make joint rule recognized by the world. One Spicecraft check cannot waive each party’ s irrecoverable sacrifice.

Complete Fate Card table

Basic correspondence of the four elements

Element	Suit	Face	Symbol	Temper	Heroic Thought	Spiritual principle	Worldly domain
Fire	C Clubs	5	Red Dragon	Joy	Drive	Radiance	Nature
Water	H Hearts	2	Arcana	Sorrow	Outreach	Communion	Human effort
Earth	D Diamonds	4	Dawn Elephant	Fear	Calculation	Crystallization	Cargo
Air	S Spades	3	Azure Folk	Anger	Composure	Envelopment	Civilization
Aether	None	1 or 6	Star Spirit	None	Gloom or Wonder	None	Power, stability

Rank and elemental imagery

Image	Mark	Fire / Clubs	Water / Hearts	Earth / Diamonds	Air / Spades
Lightless	O	-	-	-	-
Beginning	A	Spark	Source	Foundation Stone	First Wind
Balance	2	Torch	Spring	Pillar	Rain Bath
Bond	3	Spearstaff	Holy Grail	Rule and Compass	Shieldblade
Stability	4	City-State	Fellowship	Vault	Round Table
Disruption	5	Rebuke	Second Thought	Lost Horse	House of Swords
Harmony	6	Victory	Rebirth	Turning Point	Wanderer
Mystery	7	Thunder	Great Marsh	Maple Leaf	Grey Snow
Movement	8	Wildfire	Primordial Flood	Empty Mountain	Amber
Growth	9	Lion	Kun-Peng	Old Monk	Sacrificial Ox
Completion	T / 10	Presentation	Revel	Great Sacrifice	Burnt Offering
Dream	J	Tobacco	Cedar	Mousewort	Vetiver
Generation	C	Hearth-Cauldron	Precious Blood	Heart-Jade	Heavenly Resonance
Exemplar	Q	Hero	Divine Attendant	Maker-Mother	Warden
Symbol	K	Red Dragon	Arcana	Dawn Elephant	Azure Folk

PT1.4-rc1 uses a normal deck with two Jokers. Use A, 2-10, J, Q, and K normally; read 10 as T / Completion. Mark one Joker **C / Generation** and the other **O / Lightless**.

- **C / Generation Joker:** reveal another ordinary card and use only its suit to determine the element and fixed Extra Fate Die; then place that ordinary card in the discard pile. C' s rank image is bloodline, creation, and inheritance awakening.
- **O / Lightless Joker:** reveal no suit. Its Extra Fate Die is fixed to Gloom 1 or Wonder 6 according to the track that triggered it. O' s rank image is Aether, loss of order, and undifferentiated power.
- With only one Joker, use it as C and omit O.

A future custom deck may give C all four suits. No special printed Fate deck is required now.

Draw example: Mirei draws Diamond J: Earth' s Dream Spice, Mousewort. Her next risky check gains fixed Calculation 4, and the scene may introduce an overlooked person exposing a warehouse secret. If she draws C, she reveals a Heart and uses only its suit for Precious Blood and fixed Outreach 2; that ordinary Heart then goes to the discard pile. If she draws O, the triggering Wonder or Gloom track fixes the die to 6 or 1.

System positions of the special ranks

Rank	System position
T / Completion	The Four Great Rites
J / Dream	The four Dream Spices
C / Generation	True blood and bloodline origins
Q / Exemplar	Blood, sweat, and heroic roads
K / Symbol	The world’ s four elemental archetypes

Part II - Four-Element Fate Cards and Pending Fate Module v0.5

Opening Fiction - “The Rider of Bloodright”



Fur uses ancestral blood and an ancient covenant to prove that the spice cauldron remembers the Springward family, while she and Cenya face one another as equals.

Before nightfall, riders in white-scaled cloaks overtook the wagons. Their horses wore cloth around their hooves and raised almost no salt dust. Their leader, Fur, named herself the daughter of the last Springward bloodline in Salt-Mirror Valley. She carried no military writ-only a vial of ancestral blood and a cauldron covenant older than the kingdom.

“The cauldron is not guild cargo,” she said. “The Springwards used it to blend spice and divide water for the whole valley. The guild repaired its wheels and declared ownership. The frontier army means to brew a season of war spice without asking those buried in the spring fields.”

Fur pricked a finger and let blood fall upon the covenant. Faded lines shone like roots. The bronze cauldron answered with a low note. Some spearmen knelt to the miracle itself; others gripped their weapons, afraid the miracle would next demand obedience. The Copper Scales would call it an unregistered mechanical response. A temple might call it blood-witness. Once different people gave the same sound different names, it grew different laws and armies.

“The blood proves standing,” Cenya said. “Is that not enough?” “Enough to prove the cauldron remembers you. Not enough to prove everyone who ever used it belongs to you.” Cenya herself had no surname. A wind bell spoke a forbidden family name on the night of her birth; her mother fled with her and died at the hands of a blood-tithe officer. Cenya had always treated bloodline as stolen property she could neither sell nor return.

Fur looked toward the jar of Wind-Weeping Cassia. All seven seals swelled toward Cenya as if a face behind the clay listened to her breathe. “Blood of the Sky-Chime,” Fur said. “All the more reason to return the cauldron. The army will widen the war with red spice. The Scales will turn every shortage into a price. You know whose blade this contract is sharpening.”

Lorn laid the delivery contract between them. “If we surrender the cargo, we become raiders. The next city will not ask why. It will read the warrant.” Fur offered an exchange: bring the cauldron to the ancestral spring before the rain bell. If her blood received no answer, she would withdraw. If the cauldron acknowledged her, guild, army, and valley folk must meet and read the old covenant again rather than let mercenaries decide ownership beside the road.

“You trust the land to judge?” Cenya asked. “No,” Fur said. “I trust it to remember who bled first.”

Reading note: This fiction conveys the part’s world, emotion, and choices. It is not a rules precedent; the rules text below governs table rulings.

Status: current PT1.4-rc1 Fate rules for character checks. The d6s still decide whether the present action succeeds. A Fate Card is drawn immediately when Wonder or Gloom reaches an endpoint, then supplies one four-element Extra Fate Die on the hero's next risky character check.

1 - The three layers of Fate

One Fate Card answers three questions at once:

Source	What it determines
Triggering endpoint	The attitude in which fate arrives
Suit	Which elemental Thought enters the hero's next check
Rank	The person, object, place, stage, or symbol through which the event appears

Endpoint	Name	Direction of fate
Wonder +3	Dream Made	A new possibility, creation, or omen becomes real
Wonder -3	Dream Eaten	Hopelessness, illusion, mistaken identity, or reality collapses
Gloom +3	Darkness Bound	Truth, oath, duty, and cost crystallize
Gloom -3	Light Lost	Detachment, isolation, memory, or identity fades

Positive and negative endpoints are not simple fortune and misfortune. Dream Made may realize a dangerous wish; Darkness Bound may force people to shoulder a necessary responsibility. A hero may deliberately pursue Dream Eaten or Light Lost.

Situation example: Wonder +3 draws Spade 8. Dream Made says a possibility begins to become real; Spades bring Composure and Air; 8, Amber / Movement, provides the concrete image. The Groundkeeper may reveal an escape road that exists only in spice mist, but the company must immediately decide who crosses first.

2 - Trigger order: draw first, then finish the current result

When a character check brings Wonder or Gloom to +3 or -3, resolve in this order:

1. **Draw immediately.** Draw one Fate Card and place it face up before the triggering hero so it cannot be forgotten during resolution.
2. **Reset the track.** Set the Wonder or Gloom track that reached the endpoint to 0. Leave the other track unchanged.
3. **Complete the current check.** Resolve the d6 result, Momentum, Echoes, and announced consequences.
4. **Leave it as Pending Fate.** The card remains before the hero until their next risky character check.

The card is drawn immediately but cannot enter dice already rolled, overturn a success, or reduce it. The current check makes fate arrive; the next check receives fate's interference.

If the same event brings both Wonder and Gloom to an endpoint, draw once for each track and reset each to 0. The two cards describe one larger fate event and both become Pending Fate.

Situation example: A Self-Scatter brings Wonder to -3 while a scene consequence brings Gloom to +3. Draw one Dream Eaten card and one Darkness Bound card, reset both tracks, then resolve the failure. Neither card rescues this action; both enter the hero's next risky character check.

3 - Pending Fate and Extra Fate Dice

Pending Fate must enter that hero's next risky **character check**. An ordinary squad check does not consume it. A captain's personal action or Key Order does.

Pending Fate persists across scenes, rest, sessions, and interrupted contracts. At session end, copy endpoint, card, and suit onto the hero's record; next session restore the same card face up. If the physical deck must be shuffled, leave

unresolved Pending Fate beside the hero rather than returning it. Only the next completed risky character check, or an explicit campaign rule that rewrites fate, removes it.

When building that next pool, add one fixed Extra Fate Die by suit:

Suit	Element	Extra Fate Die / Thought	Common form of intervention
C Clubs	Fire	Drive 5	Breakthrough, inspiration, conflict, burning, martial spirit
H Hearts	Water	Outreach 2	Adaptation, connection, emotion, people, fusion
D Diamonds	Earth	Calculation 4	Stability, resources, cargo, construction, preservation
S Spades	Air	Composure 3	Movement, distance, news, rumour, change

Rules for the Extra Fate Die:

- Place it directly on the corresponding face; do not roll it.
- It counts toward seven and enters before optional bloodline, Borrowed Heart, Spice Aid, situational aid, and Transgression. If multiple cards would exceed seven, later-drawn cards become automatic Fate Echoes. Do not call an Extra Fate Die a Transgression Die; their costs differ.
- It cannot be rerolled by Attunement, changed by Arcana or another effect, or removed before resolution.
- It can combine with Root and random dice to form Formed, Strong, or Obsession.
- After the check, remove the die; discard the card or record it in the campaign history.

An Extra Fate Die and a same-suit Root Die automatically form a pair. Fate has temporarily opened a real Path; this is intentional. Hard and Extreme difficulty still lower effect, and the card's imagery still requires a world change or price.

Situation example: Grann, Drive 2, enters a scene with Club Pending Fate. Fixed Root 5 and fixed Fate 5 immediately Form. If the Extreme task is "hold off a whole cavalry unit alone," Formed only creates an opening-perhaps one more round for the wagons to escape-not a woundless destruction of the riders.

4 - Following Fate, Defying Fate, and Fate Echoes

Following Fate

When the chosen Thought Group contains the Extra Fate Die, the hero is **Following Fate**. The player describes accepting, using, or being tempted onto the Path the card offers. Endpoint and rank become part of the main result.

Following Fate still resolves Natural Path, Hold Fast, or Turn Thought according to the Acting Thought and moves Wonder or Gloom normally. The die offers a Path; it does not decide whether the hero holds to their original method.

Defying Fate

Choosing another Thought Group is **Defying Fate**. The chosen Path can still succeed, but the group containing the Extra Fate Die becomes a Fate Echo; the Groundkeeper manifests the card through someone else's action, coincidence, side effect, or a new situation.

Even if the Extra Fate Die finds no matching die, the card leaves a perceptible sign. It simply lacks the group needed to govern the hero's action.

The player cannot save Pending Fate for an advantageous moment or refuse to add it because the next action "has nothing to do with the card." Fate matters precisely because it enters actions the hero did not anticipate.

Following / Defying example: Luodi's Spade Pending Fate forms two Composure 3s during an escort check, but the player chooses three Outreach 2s. The escort succeeds through Turn Thought; the Spade card becomes a Fate Echo that carries news of the retreat to the enemy on the wind. Choosing the Composure group would Follow Fate, but still resolves Natural Path, Hold Fast, or Turn Thought relative to the original Acting Thought.

5 - Rank imagery

Use an ordinary deck with two Jokers. A, 2-10, J, Q, and K work normally; read 10 as T / Completion. Mark the Jokers C / Generation and O / Lightless. A future custom deck may use four suited C cards and a separate O. Suit determines the Thought; rank gives the event's stage and concrete symbol. C and O suit handling appears under deck management.

Rank	Shared image	Fire / Clubs	Water / Hearts	Earth / Diamonds	Air / Spades
A	Beginning	Spark	Source	Foundation Stone	First Wind
2	Balance	Torch	Spring	Pillar	Rain Bath
3	Bond	Spearstaff	Holy Grail	Rule and Compass	Shieldblade
4	Stability	City-State	Fellowship	Vault	Round Table
5	Disruption	Rebuke	Second Thought	Lost Horse	House of Swords
6	Harmony	Victory	Rebirth	Turning Point	Wanderer
7	Mystery	Thunder	Great Marsh	Maple Leaf	Grey Snow
8	Movement	Wildfire	Primordial Flood	Empty Mountain	Amber
9	Growth	Lion	Kun-Peng	Old Monk	Sacrificial Ox
T	Completion / Great Rite	Presentation	Revel	Great Sacrifice	Burnt Offering
J	Dream / Dream Spice	Tobacco	Cedar	Mousewort	Vetiver
C	Generation / true blood	Hearth-Cauldron	Precious Blood	Heart-Jade	Heavenly Resonance
Q	Exemplar / blood and sweat	Hero	Divine Attendant	Maker-Mother	Warden
K	Symbol	Red Dragon	Arcana	Dawn Elephant	Azure Folk

A named image may appear literally or only through its function. Earth 4, "Vault," may be an actual strongroom, a person who keeps secrets, a sealed bloodline, or a position that is difficult to break. Use the function before forcing the literal object.

Interpretation example: Heart 6, "Rebirth," need not produce an infant. It might make soldiers from opposing sides reorganize into one unit that carries the wounded. Begin with Water / connection and 6 / harmony, then decide whether literal imagery helps.

6 - Complete example

Sarei Holds Fast in a negotiation, moving Gloom from +2 to +3. The player immediately draws Diamond T, **Great Sacrifice**, resets Gloom, and only then completes the negotiation's result and Echoes. The card does not alter that success; it remains face up as Pending Fate.

Sarei's next risky check tries to persuade Red Spring and House Hesar to share stewardship of the spring fields. After building the ordinary pool, add one fixed Calculation 4 Extra Fate Die.

- Choosing the Calculation group containing the die Follows Fate: the compact can truly be established, but Great Sacrifice requires each party to surrender wealth, rights, or blood that cannot be recovered.
- Choosing an Outreach group Defies Fate: relationship first creates a ceasefire, while Great Sacrifice becomes a Fate Echo and the altar or crowd still demands a public declaration of what each faction will surrender.

After the check, Diamond T's Extra Fate Die leaves. The contractual demands, enemies, prices, and world changes established by the card remain.

7 - Deck and table management

- Keep both Jokers. Mark them C / Generation and O / Lightless; read 10 as T. When C is drawn, reveal the first ordinary suited card and use only its suit. Put that ordinary card in the discard pile. If the other Joker appears first, return it to the draw pile and continue. O supplies fixed Gloom 1 or Wonder 6 according to the triggering track. With one Joker, use C.

- Put Pending Fate face up before the triggering hero. It is not a hand card and cannot be traded.
- If it remains at session end, record it on the character sheet or campaign record and restore it unchanged next session.
- After Pending Fate enters and the risky check is complete, place it in the discard pile. Shuffle it back when the current contract ends.
- If interpretation takes more than thirty seconds, begin with only endpoint plus suit. Add rank detail after the check.
- When the Extra Fate Die’s short-term effect ends, leave at least one world change that can be confirmed in the ending or a later session.

Table example: At session end, Sarei still has Diamond Q Pending. The player records “Darkness Bound / Diamond Q / Maker-Mother,” and the physical card stays beside the sheet rather than returning to the deck. Next session’s first risky character check gains fixed 4. After use, the card is discarded, but a Maker-Mother demanding that Sarei build a public channel remains in the story.

8 - Playtest record

Triggering endpoint	Card	Time pending	Next check	Followed / Defied	Automatic Formed?	Lasting world change

The first playtest should establish whether an Extra Fate Die is too strong, a seven-die pool remains readable, Pending Fate is often forgotten, Following and Defying create a genuine choice, and every card leaves a consequence longer than a one-time bonus.

Part III - General Combat Core v0.5

Opening Fiction - “The Third Flag”



Tobacco in a captured scout's mouth magnifies a handful of real ambushers into an army and an impossible third banner in the smoke.

A contrary wind rose that night. Cenya dreamed that someone beneath the earth struck a bell; with each stroke, a banner that did not exist fell from the sky. When she woke, Lorn had captured a scout with tobacco packed in his cheek.

Tobacco burned fear into zeal and taught the eye to manufacture evidence for desire. The scout swore a thousand saints waited beyond Salt Ridge. The skirmishers saw only a dozen hired killers employed by a Copper Scales factor. They meant to burn the cauldron covenant and the cardamom, then blame Fur. The cauldron could still reach the army while healing spice became a scarcity sold only at guild prices.

Cenya ordered the veterans to lock shields between the wagons, the skirmishers into a dry gully, and the spears to remain visible by the fire. “Use the cassia?” Lorn asked. Opening it forfeited the sealed bonus. Leaving it closed meant the contrary wind would swallow their signals. “Use people first,” Cenya said.

The first flag narrowed the shield wall. The second drew the spears back. The third should have sent the skirmishers into the enemy flank-but an arrow dropped the standard-bearer. As oil jars crossed the ridge, Cenya cut her palm and pressed blood to the witness seal on the Wind-Weeping Cassia.

It was an old seal from the cauldron covenant, not a general art by which any blooded heir could command spice. She never opened the jar. The seal borrowed her blood and sounded once. Wind rose from cart beds, shield gaps, and dead horses’ manes. Cenya heard the flag ropes, the breath of nine skirmishers below, and the slosh of oil in the enemy jars. She struck the flagstaff down, and the wind carried the command into bone.

The skirmishers sprang from the right. Spears drove forward. Veterans opened their wall just enough to admit enemies who could advance but not turn. The wind blew fire back across the ridge; tobacco smoke revealed every hiding place. Victory was not clean. Kemo took an arrow in the neck. A recruit stepped into flame. The skirmisher captain was speared through the thigh. Some enemies knelt; others kept calling to saints that existed only in smoke.

When weapons fell, the wind began reporting names to Cenya: Kemo. Ivan. Little Cape. Morrel, the enemy soldier dying on a spear, whose daughter in Westport had just learned to walk. Nanja, once a Salt-Mirror miner, who took the killing contract to pay a debt. The names could not be proven and would not be refused. They were not wounds, but remained more certainly than wounds.

Lorn bound her hand. “What does the blood demand?” “That I remember where an order lands.” She could have called it an ancestral gift and let the soldiers own the victory. Lorn knew that any tale speaking only of gifts and never of price was usually preparing a lie for the next levy. “For how long?” Cenya looked at the quiet seal. “It did not say I may forget.”

Reading note: This story establishes the world, mood, and kinds of choice found in this part. It is not a rules precedent. The rules text below governs play.

Status: Integrated general combat rules for the first tabletop playtest. This chapter unifies character combat, Key Orders, squad Clusters, zone battlefields, Injuries, withdrawal, and battlefield spice. Damage thresholds, round economy, and treatment times are test values. When The Last Wagon through Red Canyon specifies a scenario map, squad, or timed event, that scenario value takes precedence.

1 - What Combat Answers

Combat in Blood & Spice is not a race to reduce every enemy to zero hit points. It decides who controls a road, cargo, gate, witness, or route of retreat-and who bleeds for that control.



Battlefield spice changes conditions first, allowing ordinary soldiers to complete the violence.

Before battle begins, the Groundkeeper discloses four things:

1. **Objective:** what each side wants to take, hold, deliver, or prevent.
2. **Battlefield:** zones, adjacent routes, capacity, terrain, cover, and important objects.
3. **Deadline:** when reinforcements, a closing gate, weather, fire, or a contract changes the situation.
4. **Principal risks:** rout, Casualties, lost cargo, capture, exposed secrets, or political consequences.

Battle can end as soon as one side achieves its objective, accepts a ceasefire, withdraws successfully, surrenders, or loses the ability to continue. Annihilation is not the default endpoint.

Situation example: House Hesar wants six spice chests back; the mercenaries only need the wagon through the east gate. The Groundkeeper discloses "reinforcements arrive at the end of round 4" and "losing two chests breaches the contract." If four chests leave by round 3 and the pursuit route is sealed, the objective is complete even while three enemy squads remain. Move directly to ceasefire or withdrawal.

2 - Three Combat Scales

Scale	Rules used	One check ordinarily resolves
Character	Six Thoughts + Expertise	One complete exchange, duel intent, rescue, seizure, or escape
Key Order	Six Thoughts + Command	One order that changes the battle' s direction and the squads it can support
Squad	Force / Morale / Mobility / Protection Clusters	One manoeuvre, attack, defence, support action, or rally by dozens of soldiers

A hero may cut down several soldiers, sever a rope, or wound an officer and thereby change a squad' s conditions. One ordinary character check cannot erase a whole squad. In the other direction, a squad' s arrow storm, encirclement, or charge operates at lethal scale against one hero; the hero needs cover, allies, an escape route, or supernatural force before resistance is a reasonable attempt.

Scale example: Grann cuts the suspension-rope with a Combat check. The enemy squad on the bridge suffers -1 to its next Mobility check, but does not immediately take 2 Casualties. If that squad returns an arrow storm, Grann must name the wagon or heavy shields that shelter him; otherwise the Groundkeeper may call the resistance Extreme and disclose a risk of 2 Injuries.

Squad combat at a glance

Item	What it represents	Primary uses
Force	Weapons, training, and direct violence	Attack, charge, and pressure
Morale	Continuing through fear, loss, and confused orders	Rally, resist panic, hold formation, cover withdrawal, refuse surrender
Mobility	Movement, formation change, and use of space	Difficult ground, disengage, flank, pursue, seize position, escort, redeploy
Protection	Armour, shields, cover, and endurance	Resist attacks; guard people, cargo, and positions
Disorder	Temporary collapse of formation, orders, or will	Rally can clear it; at 2 the squad retreats, routs, surrenders, or makes a Last Stand
Casualties	Real losses of people and equipment	At 2 the squad loses organised combat capability

For a squad check, roll **2 + the relevant rating** d6 and compare only the largest same-face Cluster: no pair is No Cluster; a pair is Cluster 2; three alike are Cluster 3; four or more use the actual size. In an opposed check, ties go to the defender or status quo. Attacks normally cause Disorder first; a strong attack or a hit against a target already in Disorder also causes Casualties.

A **mixed consequence** means the squad completes its action or holds the objective but also takes one accompanying setback of the announced level: Disorder, exposure, displacement, Casualties, vehicle damage, or the like. An ability that ignores one mixed consequence cancels only that accompanying setback. It cannot cancel an enemy' s ordinary winning attack or turn an incomplete squad check into a completion.

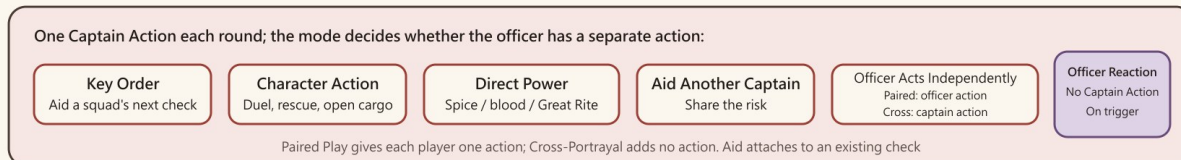
Each round follows Situation, Orders, Movement, Engagement, then Morale and resolution. A captain has only one Captain Action each round, while every squad may still move and take one action. A difficult move uses the squad' s action as well as its movement.

One Battle Round: Captains Set Direction, Squads Act

An encounter check fixes initiative; the battlefield advances together, then sides alternate squad activations



Captain and Officer Track | Choose a Mode Before Play



Each Squad's Track



A Squad Does Not Collapse Along One Hit-Point Track



The five combat phases, captain and officer action economy, squad actions, and the path from Disorder to collapse.

Memory line: Force applies pressure; Protection receives it; Morale determines whether a force holds; Mobility gets it to the right place. Disorder can be recovered. Casualties demand replacement, care, and settlement after the battle.

3 - Zone Battlefields

A battlefield normally has five to nine zones. Mark for each zone:

- adjacent zones;
- difficult ground, bottlenecks, high ground, cover, or open ground;
- how many squads on each side can engage effectively;
- benefits of control, such as sight lines, supply, retreat, an altar, or delivery point;
- wagons, civilians, fire, bridges, and other interactive objects.

An ordinary zone lets **each side** engage effectively with up to three squads. A narrow road, gatehouse, or bridge usually allows two per side. A normal zone can therefore contain three friendly and three enemy squads in effective engagement. Squads beyond capacity remain as reserves, but cannot all attack or provide repeated support.

When movement, retreat, rout, or loss of capability opens an effective position, a reserve normally fills it in its next Movement phase. With no enemy in the zone, front and reserve may swap without a check. While engaged, an active swap requires a Mobility redeployment check; that check also uses the incoming squad's action.

If an active squad leaves during Engagement and an enemy is about to attack a reserve in that zone, seize its escorted object, or test whether that side still holds the local position, its controller must choose one reserve for an **emergency fill**. It becomes active at once and may make Protection reactions normally, but its action for the round is spent. If it already acted, it does not act again. Reserves are never an untouchable refuge.

Captains and officers normally follow a squad and do not consume capacity. Wagons, altars, civilians, and other objects are not squads, though a scenario may reduce capacity because of their size. The current rule has no absolute reserve limit: the Groundkeeper rejects concentrations that plainly cannot fit in the fiction.

Control and contest

- **Control:** a side controls a zone when at least one of its battle-capable squads remains and no battle-capable enemy squad is there. Active or reserve status limits participation in exchanges, not physical presence.
- **Contested:** if both sides have battle-capable squads present, neither receives control scoring, delivery, or continuing benefits. High ground and cover still apply to whoever physically occupies them.
- **Cannot control:** a squad at Casualties 2, routed, withdrawing, or surrendered provides no control. Resolve a squad at Disorder 2 first, then test control.
- **Characters and objects:** a lone hero, officer, wagon, or civilian does not normally control a military zone against a squad, but a character action may hold a specific altar, switch, evidence bundle, or chest.
- **Update timing:** immediately update current effects such as passage and lines of fire when movement or rout changes the conditions. Confirm end-of-round scoring, delivery, and faction clocks during Morale and resolution. An empty zone is uncontrolled unless a scenario specifies a garrisoned fortification, blockade, or existing political occupation.

A reserve cannot attack, Support an active squad, escort an objective through a contested zone, or use repair or spice to affect the enemy directly. It must first take an active position. It may Rally itself, repair its own equipment, prepare or consume spice that affects only itself, handle friendly back-line objects, or leave in its next Movement phase. A fire, collapse, or other effect that explicitly covers the whole zone still affects reserves.

An engaged active-reserve swap spends the incoming squad's action. The outgoing squad becomes reserve and can only take the reserve actions above that round. An emergency fill likewise spends the incoming squad's action, but makes it attackable, able to defend, and able to block the local position.

Control example: Narrow zone D contains one active and one reserve mercenary squad, plus a House Hesar spear squad, so D is contested. When the spears retreat to F during resolution, the mercenaries immediately gain D's passage and confirm control at round end; whether their reserve fills the front does not affect control. If the active mercenaries also reach Casualties 2, the capable reserve still controls D, but must enter an active position before attacking pursuers.

Playtest fallback, not a current rule: If play repeatedly produces unreadable piles or slow reserve bookkeeping, a later version may test "at most two reserve squads per side per zone." Do not apply that cap in the first PT1.4 live test; record the largest stack and any delay instead.

Ranged squads normally attack their own or an adjacent zone. Longer range requires a troop Trait, high ground, or spice. A ranged squad engaged by an enemy and without friendly protection normally suffers -1 die.

Zone example: Narrow zone B has capacity 2. Furnace-Scar Heavy Shields and Ember Crossbows can both engage; a third ally is reserve and cannot add another attack or duplicate Support. The crossbows in B can shoot adjacent D. If enemy cavalry engages them in B without the shields' protection, their attack loses 1 die.

4 - Encounter Check and Initiative

Make one Encounter check when battle formally begins. Each side selects one **lead squad** representing scouts, vanguard, or marching order and rolls **2 + Mobility** d6. Ambush preparation, prior reconnaissance, reliable intelligence, familiar ground, or high ground normally grants +1 die. Surprise, poor visibility, or an undeployed formation normally gives -1 die. The final pool remains between two and seven dice.

- The larger Cluster has **initiative** for the entire battle.
- A tie goes to the defender or status quo. If both sides meet in neutral ground, reroll.
- The Encounter check spends neither movement nor action for the lead squad.
- In every Movement and Engagement phase, the initiative side activates one squad first; sides then alternate.
- Initiative changes hands only when a scenario event or ability explicitly says so. Do not recalculate it each round from ordinary advantages such as high ground or intelligence.

Encounter example: Grey Banner Light Horse has Mobility 3 and rolls five dice. House Hesar Cavalry has Mobility 2 and +1 for a prepared ambush, also rolling five. Grey Banner finds a Cluster 3 while House Hesar has only Cluster 2, so the mercenaries hold initiative from round 1 until battle ends unless a six-round event or Trait explicitly changes it.

5 - A Combat Round

Resolve five phases in order.

1. Situation

The Groundkeeper announces weather, ongoing magic, fire, reinforcements, timed events, and actions both sides can plainly see. Update zone control, wagons, clocks, and unresolved Fate signs.

2. Orders

Each captain receives one **Captain Action** and chooses one:

- issue one Key Order;
- act personally, such as duel, rescue, open a chest, sabotage a device, or negotiate;
- make direct spice casting, an independent Manifest Blood miracle, or a Great Rite demanding sustained attention the action itself;
- aid another captain; one check accepts at most one ordinary aid;
- let an officer act independently; officer abilities marked as reactions do not use this action.

A captain cannot issue a Key Order and personally duel in the same round unless Obsession, a troop Trait, a Blessing's grant text, or a scenario effect explicitly grants another action. An ordinary Blessing never grants an action by itself.

Officer actions depend on the mode chosen at setup:

- **Cross-Portrayal:** an officer who independently undertakes a high-risk action rolls their own Thoughts and Expertise and suffers the consequences, but uses their commanding player's Captain Action. Only an ability explicitly marked **Reaction** is exempt.
- **Paired:** each player portrays one character, so the captain and officer each have one character action per round. With authorisation, the officer may use their own action to command one squad; the same squad still receives at most one Key Order per round.
- **Single-Team:** use Paired action counts: captain and officer each have one character action, even if one player portrays both. The two actions do not both become Captain Actions and cannot give the same squad repeated Key Orders.
- **Outside combat:** when there is no round economy, judge by fictional time, position, and risk.

Cross-Portrayal timing: Ambushers appear in Situation. Thun's portrayer uses One Step Ahead [Reaction] to point out Luodi's escape route, so Luodi's commanding player keeps the Captain Action. On another round, Grann orders Seif to perform Cold-Cedar First Aid [Action; once/scene] under fire. Seif's portrayer describes and rolls it, using Grann's player's Captain Action. If Seif merely aids Grann's own rescue check, she adds one Borrowed Heart without creating a separate action; both are exposed if the check Scatters.

Paired timing: Alien portrays only the captain and Bern portrays officer Savi. Alien uses her action to order the heavy infantry to hold the bridge. Bern uses Savi's action to lead the crossbows to the north bank. Each makes one important choice; Savi cannot rewrite company deployment without authority or give the same crossbows a second Key Order.

Single-Team timing: Only Alien and the Groundkeeper are at the table. Alien portrays the captain and rolls Savi's character checks; the Groundkeeper contributes Savi's response only when orders, secrets, or world pressure bear on her. Alien spends the Captain Action ordering the heavy infantry to hold, then Savi's action leading the crossbows north. If the table agreed the Groundkeeper portrays Savi, the Groundkeeper still uses only Savi's knowledge and personality, never enemy plans.

If Manifest Blood adds or fixes a bloodline die before a chosen character action or Key Order, it is part of that action and costs no additional Captain Action. If the bloodline gift is the entire action-awakening an ancestor without another order, turning the body into a furnace-heart to alter a zone fire, or making an altar recognise blood-use the **independent Manifest Blood** Captain Action. Recording a Deed after a qualifying action also costs no action.

3. Movement

Every squad not destroyed or routed may move one zone. Ordinary ground requires no roll. Make a Mobility check to:

- enter or cross difficult ground;
- disengage;
- seize an important zone both sides are contesting;
- pass an enemy blockade, fire, or collapsing route.

A required Mobility check also uses that squad's action for the round. Cluster 2 completes the move; Cluster 3 also protects cargo or a companion; Cluster 4+ also gains an advantageous position. With No Cluster, the squad stays in its original zone and takes the Disorder, exposure, or Casualties announced before the roll.

Movement alternates: the initiative side chooses one squad to move or hold, then the other side chooses one, until both finish. When one side runs out, the other resolves its remaining squads. A resolved move cannot be withdrawn after later enemy choices.

If both sides race for the same important uncontrolled zone, the first arrival becomes the status quo. If the second still contests it, make an immediate opposed Mobility check. The challenger spends its action; the first squad's defence is a reaction and spends no action. The first squad is defender and wins ties. The winner enters or holds; the loser stays in its starting zone and takes the disclosed exposure, Disorder, or displacement.

Order-of-movement example: Luodi has initiative and moves Grey Banner Light Horse into uncontrolled G. House Hesar Cavalry next chooses G, triggering opposed Mobility. Hesar is the challenger and spends its action; Grey Banner only reacts. Grey Banner arrived first, defends, and keeps the ridge on a tie. Hesar may instead choose another adjacent route during its activation, but cannot wait until every ally moves and then rewrite the route.

4. Engagement and actions

Every squad whose action was not spent by difficult movement takes one action: Attack, Support, Rally, Guard/Escort, Repair/Interact, or use spice. Alternate one eligible squad at a time, beginning with initiative. If one side has no unactivated squad, the other completes its remaining actions. A squad never activates twice in one round.

A squad attacks at most once per round. A formation carrying bows, spears, and fire spice still makes one roll, not three.

5. Morale and resolution

Resolve Casualties 2, Disorder 2, retreat, surrender, lost command, isolation, fire, and similar states. Update zone control, objectives, faction clocks, and visible consequences for the next round.

Round example: In Situation, the Groundkeeper says the mountain wind pushes fire into D. In Orders, Luodi uses a Key Order to support a flank. In Movement, skirmishers check to enter D and spend their action. In Engagement, the Heavy Shields can still attack in B. In resolution, the enemy in D retreats to F at Disorder 2 and returns to Disorder 1. A squad acts in Engagement only if difficult movement did not already spend its action.

6 - Character Combat

One roll resolves one complete intent

Character combat uses the ordinary character check. State what you want to change, not merely "I attack" :

- drive a gatekeeper back so allies can pass;
- subdue or kill an assassin;
- seize a weapon, key, banner, or spice;

- protect a wounded person until help arrives;
- occupy an officer so they cannot issue orders;
- escape an encirclement or fire.

Before the roll, the Groundkeeper states Standard, Hard, or Extreme difficulty and the likeliest Injury, displacement, capture, harm to the objective, or lost item on failure. One pool resolves a complete exchange; do not roll separately for every attack, defence, and damage step.

Intent example: Do not say only “I swing my sword.” Say, “I force the officer away from the horn so he cannot give an order this round.” The Groundkeeper calls it Hard; Scatter will give Grann 1 Injury and drive him away from the horn. That one check resolves approach, exchange, and control of the position.

Thoughts and Combat

Combat is the usual Expertise, but the Acting Thought determines the method:

Acting Thought	Common approach
Drive 5	Assault, intimidate, endure pain, protect directly, or force a retreat through presence
Outreach 2	Leverage, grapple, negotiate surrender, surround cooperatively, or take a burden for another
Calculation 4	Read an opening, exploit a device, set an ambush, close a route, or dismantle precisely
Composure 3	Wait, feint, shoot, pursue, disengage, or lure
Wonder 6	Pursue an impossible victory, miracle, or Mirage
Gloom 1	Accept an untransferable price, finish coldly, or make the moral choice

Thought example: Against an assassin holding a wounded hostage, Drive + Combat accepts the blade and forces the assassin back; Outreach + Combat coordinates a grapple with an officer; Calculation + Combat cuts the pulley and frees the hostage; Composure + Combat feigns retreat and waits for the grip to loosen. The Expertise is the same, but the Thought changes both method and Echo.

Results and harm

Result	Character-combat effect
Scatter	The intent is not achieved and the announced consequence occurs; the basic clue or situation may still advance.
Formed	Gain the Formed effect for the difficulty. If that effect can inflict real harm, it normally causes 1 Injury.
Strong	Gain 1 Momentum. Spend it to take the Strong column for the difficulty, or keep the Formed effect and choose one: avoid the counterattack, add 1 Injury, disarm, push, protect an ally, or seize an item.
Obsession	Gain 2 or more Momentum. Raise effect by the difficulty table or spend some or all on Strong additions. Only a Decisive actual effect may immediately subdue, force surrender, or kill under a lethal risk agreed before the roll.

A consequence cannot cancel an established result. After a Strong rescue, the Groundkeeper may injure the hero or take their weapon, but cannot declare that the rescued person was killed after all.

Use the universal allocation rule: take the Formed column at the current difficulty, then allocate Momentum one point at a time. The difficulty table’s Strong and Obsession columns and the additions above are alternate purchases with the same Momentum. Mix them if desired, but never receive a higher column and spend those same points again. Only unused Momentum from five or more matching dice, Transgression Momentum, or another explicit source remains after reaching the listed result.

Result example: Sarei rolls Strong to rescue an officer pinned under a wagon. It is Hard. Before the roll, the Groundkeeper said Limited effect only drags the officer out of the fatal position; the trapped leg needs later work. Remaining in the collapsing pass inflicts a fixed Light Injury either way, and Scatter also shifts the wagon again. Sarei takes Limited effect, then spends her Momentum either to raise it to Full and free the leg as well, or to keep Limited

and buy a safe route. The fixed falling-stone Injury remains. One point cannot both perfect the rescue and buy another benefit.

Ordinary and important opponents

An unnamed sentry, ordinary assassin, or common person already surrounded normally leaves the scene once the hero earns an effect sufficient to repel, subdue, or injure them. They need no separate Injury track.

An important opponent may use three Injury boxes or two to three concrete advantages that must be removed, such as bodyguards, plate armour, and a retreat route. Do not use a long Injury track and a long advantage list together.

Opponent example: A Formed result subdues the unnamed sentry. A House Hesar cavalry commander instead has “two bodyguards,” “plate armour,” and “route to the ridge.” The heroes can lure the guards away, use clove to open the buckles, and close the route; one suitable later Formed result can then force surrender without grinding through another three boxes.

Optional: matched duel

Use a matched duel only when the named opponent’s will and skill are themselves the scene’s focus:

1. Both sides disclose their concrete intent for this exchange.
2. The hero builds the ordinary character pool, Attunes, and chooses a Thought Group.
3. The opponent rolls 2 + threat d6. Threat is 1-3; advantage or disadvantage gives ±1, with a final range of two to seven dice.
4. Compare the hero’s chosen Group size with the opponent’s largest Cluster. Ties go to the defender or status quo.
5. Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, Pending Fate, and track movement use only the hero’s own dice. The opponent’s faces are not the Six Thoughts.

The matched duel still resolves one complete exchange. Never add a second “defence roll” after the comparison.

Duel example: Luodi tries to seize a cavalry commander’s command flag and chooses Composure ×3. The threat-2 commander rolls four dice and also finds Cluster 3. The commander defends the flag and wins the tie. Luodi fails to take it, then resolves Hold Fast or Turn Thought from Luodi’s own pool; no extra dodge cancels the consequence.

7 - Hero Injuries and Death

Mark the three Injury boxes in order:

Injury	Effect
Light	No fixed die penalty, but the wound may become a source of later failure, tracking, or time pressure.
Severe	Actions clearly affected by the wound lose 1 random die, while retaining the minimum two random dice.
Dying	The hero cannot voluntarily take an ordinary high-risk action; withdraw, seek help, receive first aid, or knowingly accept the risk of a final action.

When you take 1 Injury, mark the next unmarked box; 2 Injury marks the next two. Further harm after Dying causes death only if the Groundkeeper disclosed lethal risk beforehand, the player understood and accepted it, and it falls within the table’s content boundaries. Otherwise use a permanent scar, lost bloodline gift, capture, retirement, or an equally major consequence.

Injury example: Grann is Severely Injured. Climbing plainly strains his torn shoulder, so his Travel pool loses one random die but retains at least Two Minds. While Dying he wants to remain and ignite the powder. The Groundkeeper must disclose that failure can kill him and receive the player’s acceptance before applying death; it cannot be introduced after the roll.

First aid and recovery

- **Battlefield first aid:** Formed Investigation, Spicecraft, or another suitable check stabilises a Dying person and makes transport safe; it does not clear the box immediately. Scatter still provides basic stabilisation but consumes medicine or time, or exposes the healer.
- **Light:** clear after the scene with clean treatment, supply, and one safe rest.
- **Severe:** requires a healer, medicine, and a period of ceasefire or travel downtime; then reduce it to Light. Clear that at the next safe rest.
- **Dying:** stabilise first, then long-term care reduces it to Severe. Also record a permanent scar, debt, or lost time.

Repeated checks in place cannot erase Injuries. Without medicine, time, or safety, a successful check only prevents deterioration or buys an evacuation.

Treatment example: Seif uses Spicecraft under arrows to stabilise Dying Grann. Formed lets him move to the wagon; it does not clear Dying. Only safe camp, medicine, and long care reduce it to Severe. Further safe rest follows the same procedure; three repeated battlefield treatment rolls cannot restore him.

8 - Squad Clusters

Squads have Force, Morale, Mobility, and Protection, normally rated 1-3, plus Casualties 0-2 and Disorder 0-2.

Building the pool

1. Choose the rating appropriate to the action.
2. Roll **2 + rating** d6.
3. Advantage or disadvantage normally gives ± 1 die; minimum two, maximum seven.
4. Find the largest same-face Cluster: no pair is 0, a pair is 2, three alike is 3, and so on.
5. In opposition, the larger Cluster wins; ties go to the defender or status quo.

Squad faces never represent hero Thoughts. Squads do not Attune, Hold Fast, or Turn Thought and do not move Wonder or Gloom. To keep the systems distinct, call squad results **No Cluster (0)**, **Cluster 2**, **Cluster 3**, **Cluster 4+**; Formed, Strong, and Obsession are character terms.

Pool example: Grey Banner Light Horse has Mobility 2. Crossing mud, it rolls **2 + 2 = 4** dice: **1, 3, 3, 6**. The two 3s give Cluster 2 and complete the movement. Face 3 does not mean Composure and moves no hero track.

Paper pressure in attack and defence

Because defenders win ties, equal attack and defence favour holding ground. Complete enumeration gives these attacker win rates:

Force vs Protection	Attacker wins
1 vs 1	25.8%
2 vs 2	26.2%
3 vs 3	23.6%
2 vs 1	44.2%
3 vs 2	38.7%

Increasing both equal pools creates more Clusters and more ties, so attacker success does not rise linearly. A direct assault on an intact formation is deliberately slow. Create a one-die edge through Movement, Support, terrain, spice, a Key Order, or concentrated pressure; attack already Disordered targets. Objectives should concern passage, escort, withdrawal, ceasefire, or surrender, not waiting for every foe to reach Casualties 2.

During PT1.4, record equal-pool attacks and attacks with a one-die advantage. Revisit ties or Protection only if equal confrontations repeatedly stall without producing choices of position or resources.

Squad actions

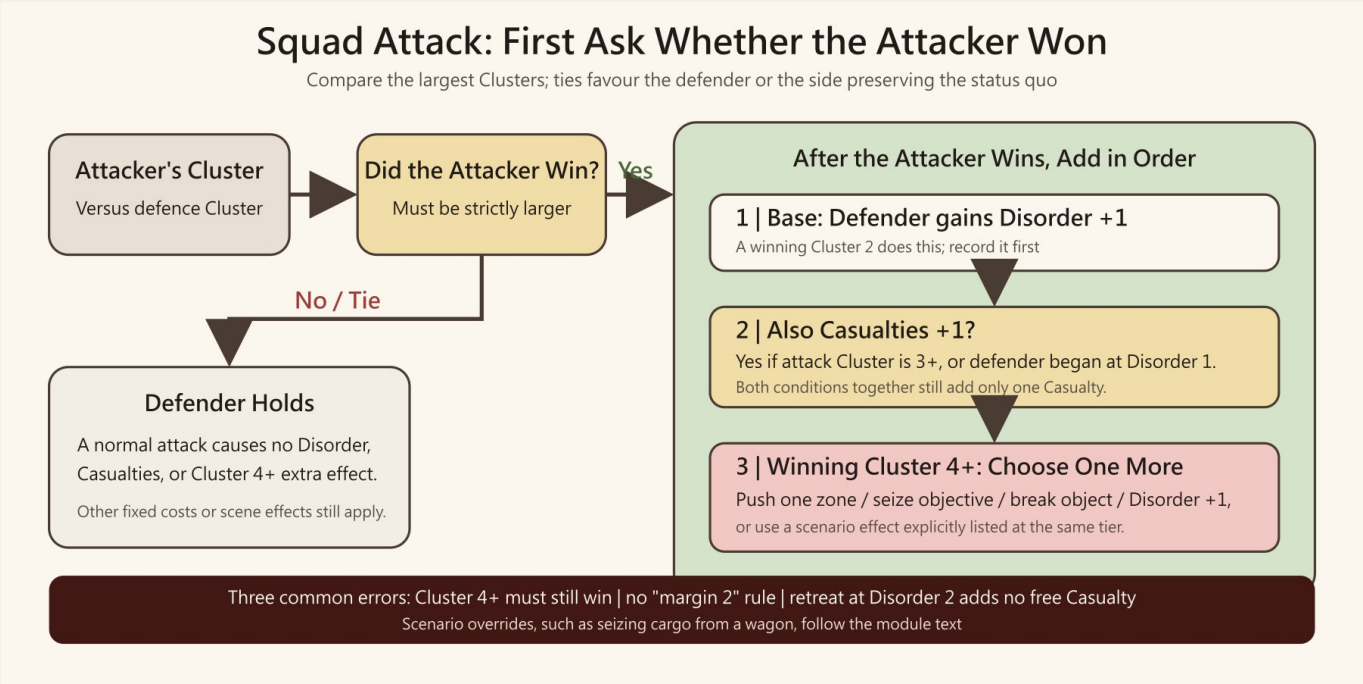
Action	Rating	Basic effect at Cluster 2+
Attack	Force vs Protection	A win gives the target Disorder +1; a powerful result also causes Casualties.
Difficult Movement	Mobility or opposed Mobility	Enter, disengage, seize, flank, or escort through.
Rally	Morale	Cluster 2 clears 1 Disorder; Cluster 3 clears 2; Cluster 4+ also clears 1 from an adjacent ally.
Support	A plausible rating	One ally' s next related pool before round end gains +1; one check accepts at most one Support.
Guard / Escort	Protection or Morale	Take one plausible consequence for a person, wagon, wounded group, or retreat route.
Repair / Interact	Trait or situation	Repair a road, extinguish fire, clear a barrier, load cargo, seize a flag, or manipulate an object.

Action example: Contract Engineers use Protection 3 to repair a barricade. Cluster 2 restores it, and they cannot attack that round. Spring-Trace Guards use Morale to Guard a wagon; when the next arrow storm would hit the driver, the Guards take Disorder 1. Support affects one ally' s next related check, is removed on use, expires at round end, and never benefits three squads at once.

Morale is not another health bar. It prevents or clears Disorder and answers cavalry shock, illusions, fire, a fallen commander, withdrawal, and surrender. Mobility is not raw speed: ordinary one-zone movement needs no check. Roll only for difficult ground, disengagement, flanking, pursuit, racing for position, escort, or redeployment under pressure.

Morale example: Crossbows at Disorder 1 use Morale to Rally next round. Cluster 2 clears it and restores their firing line. **Mobility example:** Light cavalry skirts a spear formation over scree. Cluster 2 reaches the flank; Cluster 3 also protects accompanying cargo or a companion; Cluster 4+ also takes favourable ground. No Cluster leaves them in place with the exposure or Disorder disclosed before rolling.

Attack and defence results



Squad attack matrix: first determine whether the attacker wins, then apply Disorder, Casualties for Cluster 3 or a previously Disordered target, and the extra effect for Cluster 4.

Whenever a squad is attacked, it immediately rolls a **Protection reaction**. This costs no squad action and does not mark it activated. A squad still present can react to every attack separately in the same round. Whether it has already acted or not, it retains or has already spent its ordinary action independently. Skip the reaction only when a rule says “cannot react,” it has lost organised capability, or the fiction makes resistance impossible.

- **Attacker has No Cluster:** the attack loses organisation, causes no harm, and takes the exposure or displacement announced before the roll.
- **Attacker’s Cluster is larger:** defender gains Disorder +1.
- **Attacker wins with Cluster 3+,** or the target had Disorder 1 before the attack: defender also gains Casualties +1.
- **Attacker wins with Cluster 4+:** also choose to push the defender one zone, seize an objective, damage a vehicle or fortification by 1, or give another Disorder +1. No win means no extra effect.

A Cluster 2 beating No Cluster normally breaks formation first. A powerful attack or continued pressure on an already Disordered unit causes true loss. The obsolete “win by at least 2” rule is not used: because there is no Cluster 1, it made every win cause Casualties.

Resolve consequences in order, but reaching Disorder 2 and retreating does not itself deal another free Casualty. Pursuit requires another action, Trait, or Cluster 4+ effect.

Attack example: Cluster 3 attacks Cluster 2 and wins. The defender first gains Disorder +1, then Casualties +1 because the winning Cluster was 3. Cluster 2 beating 0 normally adds only Disorder, unless the defender already had Disorder 1 before this attack.

Repeated defence: Furnace-Scar Heavy Shields have not activated. Light cavalry attacks, so they roll Protection. Later, crossbows fire and they roll a fresh Protection reaction. Neither reaction spends their action; when activated, they may still Attack, Rally, or Support. If they had already acted, they would still react to later attacks.

9 - Disorder, Casualties, Withdrawal, and Surrender

Disorder

- **Disorder 1:** the squad acts normally, but enemies can exploit the exposure. If an action clearly depends on orderly formation, it suffers -1 die.
- **Disorder 2:** the squad immediately retreats one zone, then reduces Disorder to 1. If no legal retreat exists, it surrenders or makes a Last Stand.

No retreat: surrender or Last Stand

At Disorder 2 without a legal route, choose:

- **Surrender:** roll nothing, leave combat immediately, and take no added Casualties. The soldiers become prisoners, lay down weapons, or withdraw under negotiated terms.
- **Refuse:** make a Last Stand check with **2 + Morale - 1** d6, minimum two. Existing orders, spice, and situation modifiers apply.

Last Stand result	Consequence
No Cluster	Rout: Casualties +1 and leave the battlefield. Survivors scatter, hide, or are captured. Casualties 2 means loss of organised capability, not automatic total death.
Cluster 2	Remain in the zone at Disorder 1; gain no extra action.
Cluster 3	Remain in the zone and clear Disorder to 0.
Cluster 4+	Remain, clear Disorder to 0, and gain +1 to the next Protection or Morale check before the end of next round. Remove after use or expiry.

Last Stand example: House Hesar spears rise from Disorder 1 to 2 while F is blocked. They refuse surrender and have Morale 3, rolling $2 + 3 - 1 = 4$ dice. No Cluster gives Casualties +1 and routes them off the field. Cluster 2 leaves them in B at Disorder 1, but does not conjure an extra attack.

Casualties

- **Casualties 1:** the squad can fight, but replacement, medicine, and pay settlement are required afterward.
- **Casualties 2:** it loses organised combat capability. Depending on the situation, withdraw, surrender, rout, or be destroyed. It is not automatically killed to the last person unless escape was already blocked and lethal risk disclosed.

Casualty example: Furnace-Scar Heavy Shields reach Casualties 2 and no longer act as a squad. If route A remains open, survivors can withdraw wounded. Only if the enemy had sealed every route and the Groundkeeper disclosed "remaining means annihilation" can staying destroy the whole formation.

Voluntary withdrawal

An unengaged squad leaves through ordinary movement. An engaged squad needs Mobility Cluster 2+. Friendly Support, smoke, fortification, or an Outreach Key Order may give +1. No Cluster leaves it entangled and applies one announced consequence: Disorder, Casualties, lost cargo, or remaining as a rear guard.

Withdrawal example: Grey Banner Light Horse is engaged by spears and cannot simply leave. Skirmishers first Support it for +1, then it checks Mobility. Cluster 2+ retreats to D. No Cluster leaves it in place with the disclosed Disorder +1.

Surrender and prisoners

Surrender removes the squad from combat and preserves lives. The accepting side must handle guards, food, ransom, exchange, release, or execution as political consequences. Massacring surrendered troops is never free efficiency: at minimum it changes Gloom, reputation, soldier loyalty, or a faction stance.

Surrender example: Twenty House Hesar soldiers lay down weapons and stop attacking. The mercenaries must detach guards and food. Releasing them for east-gate intelligence loses hostages but gains information. Killing them creates a lasting change to loyalty, Gloom, or faction politics.

10 - The Captain's Key Order

A Key Order is a character check. State the battlefield aim and Acting Thought, normally using Command. Only the captain's pool uses Natural Path, Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, Pending Fate, and Fate tracks.

A Key Order is **Standard** when the captain can see the target, contact it by voice, flag, or messenger, and gives one immediate tactical aim. It is normally **Hard** if sight or a reliable messenger is absent, noise or illusion interferes, the squad is Disordered, or orders conflict. It is **Extreme** across a blockade or total loss of contact, when unseen squads in several zones must synchronise, or when the order exceeds current organisational scale. If no means of communication exists, state what must first establish one; do not roll.

Thought Group	Command style	Actions it can support
Drive 5	Direct, inspiring, breaking through	Force, Morale, charge, fire
Outreach 2	Coordination, rescue, inclusion	Support, Rally, escort, shared withdrawal
Calculation 4	Construction, control, preparation	Protection, repair, fortification, countermeasure
Composure 3	Manoeuvre, lure, patience	Mobility, ranged attack, flank, seize
Gloom 1	Accept an untransferable price	Any, with a worldly cost proposed by the Groundkeeper
Wonder 6	Pursue an impossible chance	Any, with a Mirage or taboo attention

At Standard difficulty, the default allocation is:

- **Formed:** one squad gains +1 die.

- **Strong:** two squads each gain +1 die.
- **Obsession:** two squads each gain +1 die, and one immediately moves one zone or clears 1 Disorder.
- **Scatter:** no command bonus, but squads retain their own ordinary actions; resolve Scatter and Echo normally.

For Hard or Extreme orders, begin with the Formed column for that difficulty and spend Strong’ s 1 or Obsession’ s first 2 Momentum step by step. Translate the final actual effect as follows:

Actual effect level	Key Order effect
Create an Opening	A signal, messenger, or common rhythm finally arrives. Remove one specific communication obstacle or reduce the difficulty of the next check continuing this order by one step; grant no squad +1 now.
Limited	One squad’ s next matching check gains +1, but also takes one exposure, delay, separation, or misunderstanding disclosed before the roll. The core bonus still applies.
Full	One squad’ s next matching check gains +1.
Powerful	Two squads’ next matching checks each gain +1.
Decisive	Two squads each gain +1, and one immediately moves one zone or clears 1 Disorder.

Hard-order example: Mountain wind and a Dream Spice illusion cut the flags. Luodi wants skirmishers in two zones to withdraw together, so the Groundkeeper calls it Hard. Formed yields Limited: one squad gains +1 to the shared withdrawal, but the messenger is exposed. Strong reaches Full and gives only one squad +1. Obsession reaches Powerful and gives both squads +1. If neither can hear or see any signal at all, Luodi must first send a messenger or recover the ridge; a roll cannot cross a nonexistent channel.

Immediately name each supported squad and matching action type. Each +1 applies to that squad’ s **next matching check before the end of this round**, then is removed; unused bonuses expire at round end. Resolve an immediate move or cleared Disorder as part of the order, before squad activation.

This is the default complete settlement. The Formed effect comes from the current difficulty; Strong’ s one Momentum or Obsession’ s first two normally raises it to the corresponding column. A player may instead keep the Formed effect and buy universal Momentum benefits point by point. They cannot take the listed higher benefit and spend those same points again. Only leftover Momentum from five or more matching dice, Transgression Momentum, or another explicit source can expand beyond the table.

An order needs a concrete method. “Everyone becomes stronger” is not enough. Name the flag, messenger, prepared route, timing of fire, sequence of withdrawal, or position to be sacrificed.

Table dialogue: order first, squad action second

Groundkeeper:

"Crossbows on Watch Ridge pin zone D. If Canyon-Wind Rangers climb the blind slope into G, they must make difficult Movement. Smoke separates you from them; only a messenger and the third grey flag can synchronise the move."

Luodi' s player:

"I do not tell them to charge now. Thun carries a time down the trench: wait for the third enemy volley, raise the grey flag, then rise from the blind slope. Composure and Command 2."

Thun' s portrayer:

"Thun will carry it, but points to two wounded soldiers coming down. 'I put them inside the trench first. I will not leave them beside the signal as targets. We will be half a beat late. Do you accept?' "

Luodi' s player:

"I accept. Waiting for the moment is the order; it never told him to abandon them."

Groundkeeper:

"That establishes a real method of contact. Smoke and suppression make the order Hard; on Scatter, the grey flag will be exposed early. Luodi has Composure 2, so place fixed 3. Command 2 adds four random dice."

Luodi rolls:

fixed 3; random 3, 3, 2, 5.

Luodi' s player:

"Three 3s: Strong Composure, with no equal group. I follow the original order."

Groundkeeper:

"At Hard, Strong defaults to Full effect. Canyon-Wind Rangers gain +1 to their next Mobility check this round. That was Luodi' s character check, with Thoughts, difficulty, and a degree. Now the squad moves with its own pool."

Skirmisher operator:

"Mobility 3 gives five dice, plus the order makes six. We climb toward G."

Squad roll:

1, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6.

Groundkeeper:

"Squads read only the largest same-face Cluster; face 1 is not Gloom. Two 1s are Cluster 2, so the difficult move succeeds. The skirmishers enter G and spend their squad action. The crossbows must now answer close skirmishers, while Luodi has used the Captain Action."

First resolve one **captain character check** and translate its actual effect into a squad +1. Then the squad uses its own Mobility pool. Captain faces are the Six Thoughts and can Hold Fast, Turn Thought, and move Fate tracks. Squad faces have no Thought meaning. The officer' s condition portrays how the order is carried out; it does not automatically add or cancel an action. A separate high-risk officer task uses the appropriate character action for the chosen officer mode.

11 - Battlefield Spice

Spice changes conditions first; ordinary soldiers then complete the violence.

Waking Spice

Consume one dose to add +1 random die to a captain' s order or squad check aligned with its element, within the seven-die cap. Describe whether it is swallowed, burned, scattered, painted, or compounded and state the area affected.

Waking example: Engineers mix Stillnight Clove into a mud wall and gain +1 on an earth-aligned repair. Remove the clove from inventory. “Everyone becomes stronger” without contact, method, or scope grants no die.

Dream Spice

Consume one dose to extend an effect into memory, omen, smoke, ancestors, desire, or collective illusion. If only a numeric effect is needed, add +1 die. Before rolling, declare Dream Made (+) or Dream Eaten (-); after choosing the final Path but before narrating the result, move Wonder one step toward that endpoint. The Groundkeeper also introduces an immediate dream sign-misidentification, a witness, emotional contagion, or a future echo. This is not a formal Mirage. Only Aether Deflection or another explicit effect makes the player write “I hope to experience / see / know...” as a formal Mirage.

Track ownership follows the caster. A hero using Dream Spice in their own action or Key Order moves that hero’s Wonder. A squad using it under a captain’s command moves that captain’s Wonder. An independent NPC or squad without a commanding hero moves no character track; instead the Groundkeeper creates one **trackable battlefield Mirage or Fate sign** that occupies no character field. Each source keeps at most one; clear it when resolved, the source leaves, or the scene ends, or convert it to a named sign, clock, or condition if it persists.

Dream example: Luodi orders skirmishers to burn Vetiver and follow a horn in the wind. Before the roll he declares Dream Made; their Mobility gains +1. After the final Path is chosen, Luodi’s Wonder rises by 1 and, if it reaches an endpoint, a card is drawn immediately and the track resets. If independent enemy ritualists burn Vetiver, no player track moves; the Groundkeeper writes “the dead scout’s whistle repeats in G” as a battlefield sign.

For character actions and Key Orders, after rolling compare the spice element with the final Thought Group. Same element has no added price. Deflection to another element gives the hero or commanding captain one named Blood Debt; deflection to Gloom or Wonder gives one formal Mirage. Squad faces are not Thoughts: before assembling a pure squad pool, compare the spice element with the action category-Force/Morale, Support/Rally, Protection/Repair, or Mobility/Ranged. Cross-category use declares the Deflection in advance. See [Aligned Casting, Elemental Deflection, and Aether Deflection](#).

Does casting spend a Captain Action?

- Adding a dose to a chosen Key Order, character action, or squad check is part of that action. It costs no extra Captain Action. A squad enhancing its own Attack, Support, Rally, or Movement still takes only that squad action.
- If the spice is the whole action-creating a fire zone, summoning an ancestor, spreading a zone-wide illusion, or changing the scene without another order or squad action to carry it-the captain chooses **direct casting** and spends the Captain Action.
- One dose cannot both add a die to a check and produce a separate scene effect. Strong, Obsession, and Momentum may enlarge the one existing effect.

Action-boundary example: Grann orders the Heavy Shields forward under arrows and includes Red-Crown Saffron in that order: one Captain Action, with a spice die. If instead he scatters saffron in an oil trench to ignite the whole zone, direct casting is the Captain Action and he cannot duel in the same round.

Excess

When a character or squad uses a second or later dose in the same scene, it may add one Transgression Die, at most one per check. If the seven-die cap is already full, instead gain 1 Transgression Momentum on an effective result: Formed for a character or Cluster 2+ for a squad. The extra dose expands effects and creates Blood Debt, Injury, addiction, contamination, loss of control, or Fate consequences. Disclose the chosen consequence before rolling. A Transgression Die cannot be rerolled or turned.

Excess example: Light cavalry already used cinnamon and takes a second dose to pursue. The Groundkeeper offers “the horses lose control: Disorder +1 at resolution” or “a lead horse is injured and cannot charge before treatment.” The captain chooses Disorder and adds the red Transgression Die. The consequence occurs even if that die never joins the largest Cluster. At seven dice, add no eighth die; gain 1 Transgression Momentum only if the squad reaches Cluster 2+.

Scale limits

Character-scale spice can make cover, open a gap, or confuse one officer. Affecting an entire squad directly requires a squad-scale quantity, enough dispersal time, or Strong/Obsession effect. One ordinary dose and the sentence “I set a fire” cannot erase a zone.

Scale example: One Tobacco dose can make a gate officer see the wrong banner and open a crack. Putting a whole spear squad into illusion requires smoke delivered through the zone, a squad-scale dose, or Strong/Obsession expansion. Ordinary Formed cannot make dozens vanish.

12 - Heroes and Squads

- A hero attached to a friendly squad normally receives its protection and moves with it. Enemies cannot ignore the formation to select the hero without a sniper, duel, infiltration, or established position.
- A character action can create +1 advantage for a squad, remove one specific obstacle, rescue an officer, or disable one enemy Trait. One ordinary Combat check cannot directly cause a whole squad Casualties.
- Before a squad attacks an exposed hero, the Groundkeeper states the required cover, escape, or friendly protection. A failed character check normally gives 1 Injury and displacement; an arrow storm, cavalry charge, or encirclement disclosed as lethal may give 2.
- A friendly squad can Guard/Escort to take a hero's consequence. This normally gives the squad Disorder +1, or Casualties +1 under severe fire.

Interaction example: Mirei joins Broken-Scale Wagon Guards and moves with them. An enemy sniper cannot ignore them to select her without first establishing a firing position. Mirei can use Investigation to cut a wagon bomb-cord and give the Guards +1 to their next Escort. If the arrow storm still lands, the Guards may Guard her and take Disorder +1.

13 - Stopping Combat and Recording It

At every round end, remind the table that negotiation, withdrawal, and surrender remain possible. When each side can obtain something it genuinely needs and someone offers cargo, evidence, witnesses, hostages, a blood oath, or an order of withdrawal that constrains betrayal, a ceasefire becomes possible. Interests determine whether it can be accepted; a Negotiation check determines terms and price.

After battle, record at least:

- every squad's Casualties, Disorder, withdrawal, and surrender;
- hero Injuries, Blood Debts, Deeds, Wonder, Gloom, and Pending Fate;
- spice consumed, seized, burned, or contaminated;
- zones, cargo, people, and evidence controlled or lost;
- how soldiers, wounded families, prisoners, and factions understand the battle.

Ceasefire example: Red Spring needs medicinal clove back; House Hesar needs the wagon unburned. The players offer chest five, have the altar witness Hesar's withdrawal, and exchange two prisoners for a retreat route. Once those interests make a pause plausible, Negotiation decides withdrawal order and custody of the seal. Kind words alone do not make an enemy with no stake suddenly surrender.

14 - Playtest Questions

1. With one Captain Action per captain and one action per squad, does an eight-to-twelve-squad battle remain quick?
2. Does difficult Movement spending the action make terrain important without overpunishing it?
3. Is retreating at Disorder 2 and returning to 1 easier to track than remaining at 2?
4. Does the Strong option to add 1 Injury make duels too short?

5. Are the Severe -1 random die and Dying restrictions clear?
6. Can heroes influence squads without replacing dozens of soldiers?
7. Does battlefield spice force a real comparison between tactical advantage and cargo value?
8. Are surrender, withdrawal, and ceasefire more often reasonable than annihilation?

See [Part VII: Taking Watch Ridge](#) for a complete numerical example.

Part IV - Character Creation and Captain Sheet v0.5

Opening Fiction - “What Can Be Sold and What Can Be Saved”



Friendly and enemy wounded lie on the same oilcloth as a surgeon apportions Mist-Silver Cardamom and a paymaster records both lives saved and wages lost.

By morning, the red light above the mine was closer. The wounded lay side by side on oilcloth: eleven from Ashen Ember, seven from the enemy. The surgeon had only common styptic herbs. The skirmisher captain's leg was blackening. A prisoner with lungs full of tobacco smoke clawed at the air and called for his mother. The dead needed no medicine, but still needed shrouds, graves, and money sent home.

The jar of Mist-Silver Cardamom stood thirty paces away. The paymaster set an abacus on the wagon: break the seal and lose four crowns; use half the cargo and the buyer might reject the rest. Money was not another word for greed. It was winter boots, compensation, arrow shafts, fodder-the promise that ninety people might stand beneath the same flag next time.

“Save only ours,” a veteran said. “No one could blame us.” “Save those who can still walk,” said the surgeon. “The badly wounded may not survive even if-” He stopped. The captain was awake and heard him.

“You do not have to make the same merciful decision for everyone,” Lorn told Cenya. “A captain makes decisions for everyone.” “No. A captain decides and then cannot pretend someone else chose the cost.” People watched the wounded, the abacus, or Cenya, waiting for her to turn an impossible choice into an order. If a captain stayed silent, infection, price, and time made the decision instead.

She ordered the accounts recalculated in public. Open the cardamom. Prepare twelve doses. Treat company and prisoners by injury, not flag. Send the remainder to Salt-Mirror Village in return for mine maps, two mule carts, and hands to carry the wounded. If the guild withheld pay, Cenya would surrender her captain's share. The rest became a named Blood Debt held by the company against the Copper Scales, supported by testimony, prisoners, and ledgers.

No one cheered. The paymaster cut the seal and placed the wax-worth four crowns-into an evidence pouch. He recorded each dose twice: one ledger named the life it saved; the other named the pay the company lost. The first kept mercy from becoming legend. The second kept sacrifice from becoming free.

Cardamom filled the air like the first mouthful of winter well water. The wounded did not rise healed, and the red light did not vanish. When magic is truly needed, it often does no more than leave one more step possible.

Reading note: This fiction conveys the part's world, emotion, and choices. It is not a rules precedent; the rules text below governs table rulings.

10 - Character Creation and Three Officer Modes

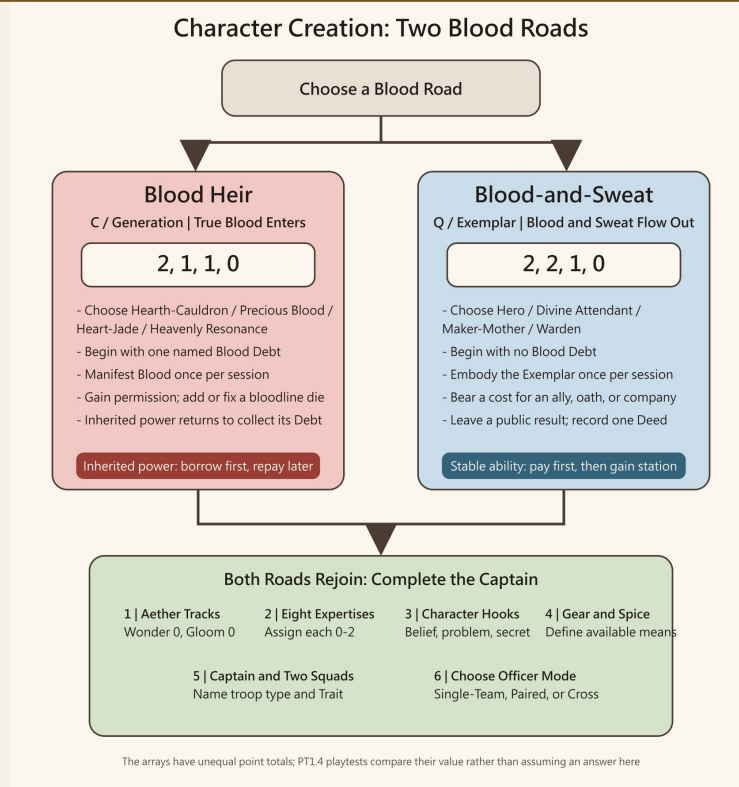
Use with the [core rules](#). Status: PT1.4-rc1 first-round playtest procedure.

1 - Character creation procedure

Step 1: write down the hero

- Hero's name:
- Player:
- Origin / homeland:
- Mercenary company:
- Appearance or identifying feature:
- One-sentence heroic belief:

Creation example: "Mirei Broken-Scale, from a Gray Scale guild station, commands the Broken-Scale Company. Two fingers are missing from her left hand, and she carries a faulty little balance. Belief: Accounts can lie; weight cannot." One sentence only needs to remind the player how the hero acts when uncertain; no complete biography is required.



The two Blood Roads in character creation: Blood Heirs assign 2,1,1,0 and use Manifest Blood and Blood Debts; Blood-and-Sweat heroes assign 2,2,1,0 and earn Deeds by embodying an Exemplar before both roads rejoin the common creation steps.

Step 2: choose a Blood Road

Every hero has both C / Generation and Q / Exemplar. During creation, choose one as the primary Blood Road.

Road	Elemental Thought array	Primary rank	Playtest effect
Blood Heir	2, 1, 1, 0	C / Generation	Gain a bloodline gift and Blood Debt; Manifest Blood once per session
Blood-and-Sweat hero	2, 2, 1, 0	Q / Exemplar	More mature elemental Thoughts; earn Deeds through Exemplar action

Road example: Choose Blood Heir to wake an ancestral covenant at a decisive moment and accept that Blood Debt will come to collect. Choose Blood-and-Sweat for two lasting directions of reliability and titles earned through real sacrifice. Both still have C and Q; the choice determines only which road receives the additional mechanical effect.

What do the two roads exchange?

Comparison	Blood Heir 2, 1, 1, 0	Blood-and-Sweat 2, 2, 1, 0
Daily reliability	One Rooted and two Familiar Thoughts; focused strength	Two Rooted and one Familiar Thought; two reliable directions
Additional power	Once per session, Manifest Blood temporarily adds or fixes one bloodline die	No equivalent burst; the second Rooted Thought is always available when chosen
Primary resource	Blood Debt: take inherited power first, then face collection through body, mind, relationship, the uncanny, or fate	Deed: accept a real price first, then redeem it for station and lasting result
Story pressure	"Whose power is this, and what will it demand from me?"	"How much blood will I spend before I deserve this place?"
Strength	Decisive burst, vivid bloodright claim, easy connection to the central plot	Reliable ability, two Rooted styles, advancement driven by player action
Price	One fewer Rooted Thought; Manifest Blood accumulates named Debts	No free inherited burst; Deeds must be earned through costly action

The unequal point totals are intentional. A Blood Heir exchanges narrower daily ability for inherited force accompanied by Debt. A Blood-and-Sweat hero has more mature elemental Thoughts but must create their own road of achievement. The second rating of 2 adds a Root Die only when chosen as Acting Thought; it does not add a die to every check. First-round play must test whether the roads are equivalent in practice rather than assuming perfect balance.

Blood Heir: Manifest Blood

Once per session, before rolling, call the gift of C / Generation:

- Add one fixed bloodline die showing the C element, still under seven.
- If the pool already has seven dice, instead pre-fix one of the hero's own ordinary random Thought dice to the C element. It cannot replace a Root, Borrowed Heart, Spice Aid, Fate, or Transgression die.
- A bloodline die is not the Acting Thought's Root Die. It may join the Acting Thought or form another Thought Group.
- Gain one named Blood Debt after use.

The Groundkeeper may invoke a Debt so a bodily or mental symptom, a relationship's demand, or an uncanny collector enters a scene. It cannot cancel success already established. Repaying clears it. The hero may instead accept a major long-term consequence, refuse payment, and clear it. Any hero can gain Debt from Elemental Deflection, Transgression, or events; a Blood Heir simply takes another whenever blood manifests.

Manifest Blood example: Before the roll, Sarei calls Precious Blood. With room in the pool, add one fixed Water 2 and write "My grandmother begins borrowing my dreams." If the pool already holds seven, fix one of Sarei's own ordinary random dice to 2 instead. Never add an eighth or cover aid, spice, Fate, or Transgression.

Blood-and-Sweat hero: embody the Exemplar

Once per session, gain one named Deed when all three are true: the hero acts with the element of their Q / Exemplar; accepts a real cost for comrades, oath, or company; and leaves a result that can be witnessed or retold. A Deed never adds dice, rerolls, or cancels a consequence.

In a longer campaign, three Deeds redeemed between contracts produce one result of station: a new title, political claim, reliable contact, quality item, squad improvement, or territorial foothold. Cross out or archive the three and explain why those events justify the station. Exact long-campaign values remain subject to campaign playtests.

Exemplar example: Luodi could withdraw safely, but instead faces the pursuers with Drive, holds the road for civilians, and suffers an Injury. This is public responsibility through his Fire Exemplar and earns one Deed, once this session. A safe routine patrol earns none.

Step 3: assign the four elemental Thoughts

Face	Thought	Element	Rating	Common approach
5	Drive	Fire	—	Courage, decision, charisma, endurance, advance
2	Outreach	Water	—	Affinity, influence, contagion, relationship, adaptation
4	Calculation	Earth	—	Strategy, knowledge, technique, observation, analysis
3	Composure	Air	—	Waiting, grace, enticement, labour, harvest

- A Blood Heir assigns 2, 1, 1, 0.
- A Blood-and-Sweat hero assigns 2, 2, 1, 0.
- Rating 0: no Attunement benefit.
- Rating 1: Attunement may reroll one eligible random die that is not the Acting Thought.
- Rating 2: also add a fixed Root Die showing that Thought.

Assignment example: Blood Heir Sarei sets Outreach 2, Drive 1, Calculation 1, and Composure 0. She is most reliable when adapting and building relationship, can press directly or analyze, and lacks support when waiting, luring, or mastering timing at a distance. This is no class prohibition: she may still act through Composure, but without Root Die or Attunement.

Step 4: assign Expertise

Distribute 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 0, 0 among eight Expertises:

Expertise	Rating	Scope
Combat	—	Duels, shooting, brawling, personal weapons
Command	—	Squad orders, discipline, tactics, morale
Travel	—	March, riding, wilderness, tracking, survival
Investigation	—	Search, identification, deduction, questioning, perception
Negotiation	—	Bargaining, calming, persuasion, relationship-building
Trade	—	Valuation, purchasing, transport, smuggling, markets
Intrigue	—	Lies, threats, factions, secrets, political plans
Spicecraft	—	Identify, process, cast, Mirage, Great Rite

Choose the Expertise that answers “what problem must this action solve first?”

- **Combat:** Grann blocks a lance in a narrow road to buy passage for companions.
- **Command:** Luodi signals two squads to alternate their retreat without abandoning the wounded.
- **Travel:** A scout reads wind, hoofprints, and water traces to discover the caravan’s real route.
- **Investigation:** Mirei compares explosive residue with seals and proves the bridge did not collapse naturally.
- **Negotiation:** Sarei finds a guarantee the gatekeeper can accept so he delays impounding the wagon.
- **Trade:** A quartermaster estimates six cases’ Cargo Value, freight, blockade risk, and bargaining room.
- **Intrigue:** A captain uses black accounts, false orders, and faction rivalry to isolate a guild delegate.
- **Spicecraft:** Seif identifies counterfeit spice, adjusts a dose, or admits Cedar memory safely into a rite.

If two seem possible, select by primary intent. Reading a manifest for forged handwriting is Investigation; reading it to estimate monopoly pricing is Trade; using it to set two factors against one another is Intrigue.

Expertise determines personal random dice: two base “minds” plus Expertise 0-2. Only when Expertise 2 also receives a Borrowed Heart, spice, or clear situational aid does the pool reach five random dice- “three hearts, two minds.” Expertise has no fixed Thought. Combat + Drive for a charge, Combat + Calculation for an opening, and Combat + Composure to lure an enemy are distinct and valid.

Assignment example: Mirei sets Investigation, Negotiation, and Trade to 2; Command, Intrigue, and Spicecraft to 1; Combat and Travel to 0. She rolls four random dice when auditing or bargaining. A duel still has the two base dice; Combat 0 does not make action impossible.

Step 5: create the C / Generation source

Choose or draw one:

Element	C / Generation	Prompts for the blood source
Fire	Hearth-Cauldron	Refining, warfire, dragon blood, sacred flame, artificial creation
Water	Precious Blood	Sacred blood, healing, fusion, ancestral memory
Earth	Heart-Jade	Crystallized heart, ore vein, vessel, undying flesh
Air	Heavenly Resonance	Breath, name, song, prophecy, soul transmission

- **My C / Generation:**
- **Blood mark:** how can others see this blood?
- **Bloodline gift:** what power can it make possible?
- **Bloodright claim:** what does it give me standing to demand?
- **Blood Debt:** who or what will collect what from me?

C example: “Heart-Jade. Mark: a millstone sound inside my chest. Gift: feel structural fractures by touch. Claim: demand entry to a sealed mine from the miners’ lineage. Debt: my left hand is slowly crystallizing.” Every answer can be seen, used, or collected in a scene.

Step 6: create the Q / Exemplar road

Choose or draw one:

Element	Q / Exemplar	Heroic road
Fire	Hero	Establish station through courage, duels, sacrifice, and victory
Water	Divine Attendant	Earn recognition through service, healing, faith, and connection
Earth	Maker-Mother	Become a foundation through building, craft, provision, and creation
Air	Warden	Bind comrades through vigilance, travel, protection, and freedom

- **My Q / Exemplar:**
- **Heroic oath:**
- **Title I hope to earn:**
- **How I earn Deeds:**
- **What I refuse to become:**

Matching C and Q elements mean the hero tends to continue the bloodline. Different elements make birth and achievement conflict.

Q example: A Heart-Jade heir chooses the Air Warden: "I swear anyone can leave the mine of their birth. I desire the title Pathfinder. I want people to call me heroic for escorting the trapped. I will never become a lord who seals people into land." A Blood Heir's Q still says who they want to become and changes reputation and relationships, but does not provide the mechanical Deed resource. Earth birth and Air road create immediate tension.

Step 7: record Wonder and Gloom

Every new hero begins at 0:

Wonder: -3 -2 -1 [0] +1 +2 +3

Gloom: -3 -2 -1 [0] +1 +2 +3

- Wonder +3 is Dream Made; Wonder -3 is Dream Eaten.
- Gloom +3 is Darkness Bound; Gloom -3 is Light Lost.
- At an endpoint, immediately draw one Fate Card face up before the hero and reset that track. It becomes Pending Fate and supplies a fixed Extra Fate Die on the next risky character check: Club 5, Heart 2, Diamond 4, or Spade 3.

Track example: A new hero begins at 0 / 0. First Turn Thought moves Wonder to +1. A later Scatter whose player chooses Wonder -1 returns it to 0, not to a separate negative track. Only continuing from 0 down to -3 triggers Dream Eaten.

Step 8: write character hooks

- **Ambition:** what do I hope to possess or become by the end?
- **Oath:** what have I promised even when it disadvantages me?
- **Unfinished relationship:** whom do I owe, love, hate, or still need to farewell?
- **Attitude to spice:** commodity, weapon, medicine, miracle, or taboo?
- **Private purpose in this contract:**

Hook example: "Ambition: own a spring field. Oath: never suppress a tax-resisting village for House Hesar. Relationship: I owe a Gray Scale factor my life. Spice: medicine, not nobility. Private purpose: find my missing brother's manifest." Each hook gives the Groundkeeper a question to place in the contract, not only an adjective.

Step 9: starting resources

- **Injury:** 0.
- **Blood Debt:** a Blood Heir begins with one named Debt; a Blood-and-Sweat hero begins with none. Any hero may later gain Debt from Deflection, Transgression, or events.
- **Deeds:** a Blood-and-Sweat hero begins at 0. A Blood Heir may acquire reputation and accomplishments but does not use the mechanical Deed resource.
- **Quality equipment:** choose two items.
- **Money, spice, intelligence, and squad resources:** supplied by the scenario.

Resource example: A Blood Heir opens at Injury 0, uses no Deed boxes, and writes one named Blood Debt. They choose a quality spyglass and guild-sealing kit. If the scenario grants no Dream Spice, a background mention of Cedar does not add it to stock.

2 - Captain character sheet

Identity

Field	Entry
Hero's name	
Player	
Origin / homeland	
Mercenary company	
Blood Road	☐ Blood Heir ☐ Blood-and-Sweat
One-sentence heroic belief	

Elemental Thoughts

Thought	Face	Rating	Root Die	Attunement
Drive / Fire	5	—	☐	☐ reroll 1
Outreach / Water	2	—	☐	☐ reroll 1
Calculation / Earth	4	—	☐	☐ reroll 1
Composure / Air	3	—	☐	☐ reroll 1

Fate tracks

Wonder: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 Endpoints: Dream Eaten / Dream Made

Gloom: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 Endpoints: Light Lost / Darkness Bound

Expertise

Combat	Command	Travel	Investigation	Negotiation	Trade	Intrigue	Spicecraft
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

C / Generation and Q / Exemplar

Field	Entry
Primary Road	☐ Blood Heir: C activates Manifest Blood ☐ Blood-and-Sweat: Q activates Embody the Exemplar
C / Generation	☐ Hearth-Cauldron ☐ Precious Blood ☐ Heart-Jade ☐ Heavenly Resonance
Blood mark	
Bloodline gift	
Bloodright claim	
Blood Debt	
Q / Exemplar	☐ Hero ☐ Divine Attendant ☐ Maker-Mother ☐ Warden
Heroic oath	
Desired title	
Method of earning Deeds	

States and resources

Resource	Record
Injury	☐ Light ☐ Severe ☐ Dying
Blood Debt 1	
Blood Debt 2	
Blood Debt 3	
Deeds - Blood-and-Sweat only; begin at 0 and earn in play	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Mirage 1 - fill only when gained: I want to experience / see / know ...	
Mirage 2 - fill only when gained: I want to experience / see / know ...	
Mirage 3 - fill only when gained: I want to experience / see / know ...	

Light, Severe, and Dying Injury, first aid, and recovery use the [general combat core](#).

Relationships and aims

Field	Entry
Ambition	
Unfinished relationship	
Officer	
Attitude to spice	
Private purpose in this contract	

Equipment and the Eight Great Spices

Category	Holdings / doses
Weapons and armour	
Tools and quality equipment	
Red-Crown Saffron / Tobacco	
Mistsilver Cardamom / Cedar	
Stillnight Clove / Mousewort	
Windcry Cinnamon / Vetiver	
Money, intelligence, and leverage	

Squads

Squad	Type	Force	Morale	Mobility	Protection	Casualties	Disorder	Trait / equipment
1						☐ ☐	☐ ☐	
2						☐ ☐	☐ ☐	

3 - Three ways to play officers

Choose one mode together before play. With one player and one Groundkeeper, use **Single-Team Play**. For a first multiplayer session or a group that does not want to switch among characters, use **Paired Play**. To let every player experience both commanding and officer perspectives and build an ensemble of relationships, use **Cross-Portrayal**. Do not switch modes during a battle; portrayal authority and action counts differ.

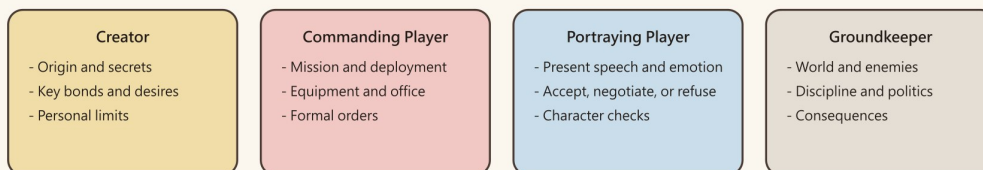
Mode	What each player portrays	Independent officer action	Best fit
Single-Team Play	One player portrays the captain; the player or Groundkeeper portrays the officer by opening agreement	As in Paired Play, captain and officer each have one character action per round	One player + one Groundkeeper; short teaching session
Paired Play	Each player portrays only one captain or one officer	Every officer player has one character action per round; delegated command uses it	First session; two- to four-player table; reduced character switching
Cross-Portrayal	Each player portrays their captain and another captain's officer	Uses that officer's Commanding Player's Captain Action; reactions are exempt	Three or four players comfortable with ensemble play and the full relationship structure

How Does an Officer Enter the Story? Choose a Mode First

All modes preserve character rights; only portrayal and battle action sources change



Four Roles | An Order Creates Duty and Pressure, Not Mind Control



Creator gives the past; commander gives the mission; portrayer decides the present; Groundkeeper answers with the world.

Single-Team Play lets the commander or Groundkeeper also portray; other modes preserve character-control boundaries

Secrets cannot reclaim control; refusal may happen, but creates story consequences rather than player sabotage

Single-Team, Paired, and Cross-Portrayal officer modes, with the responsibilities of Creator, Commanding Player, Portraying Player, and Groundkeeper.

Single-Team Play

One player portrays the captain. The player or Groundkeeper portrays the officer, as agreed before play. They remain two characters with separate sheets, Thoughts, Expertise, and Injury, and each receives one character action during a battle round. A player portraying both states which character speaks before each contribution. A Groundkeeper portraying the officer answers only from the officer's knowledge and personality and cannot use enemy secrets to optimize the captain's decisions.

Single-Team Play is the player-count exception: the officer's Portraying Player may be their Commanding Player or the Groundkeeper. The player, Groundkeeper, or both may be the Creator, but the agreed portrayer still decides the officer's current speech, emotion, and choice after play begins. Let the Groundkeeper portray the officer to preserve uncertainty between officer and captain; let the player do so to reduce the Groundkeeper's load.

Opening discussion example

Player: "I want to concentrate on the captain's decisions, but I want the officer to oppose me sometimes."

Groundkeeper: "Then I will portray her, using only what she knows. She still has her own battle action, but will not decide the whole company for you."

Player: "If she refuses an order, explain her reason and the price before making the plan fail."

Groundkeeper: "Agreed. An order creates pressure, not mind control. Consequences follow after you choose."

Paired Play

One player portrays the captain and another that captain's officer. Each keeps their own sheet, declares their own actions, and rolls for their own character. The captain determines military direction and formal orders. The officer decides how to understand, answer, and carry them out. With delegated authority, the officer may use their action to command one squad; that never lets the squad act twice.

- **Two players:** one captain and one officer, suitable for rules teaching or a small contract.
- **Three players:** one captain and two officers with distinct portfolios. Both officers answer the three Bond questions, keep their own sheets, and receive one character action. Before battle, assign the available squads for the three players to oversee and give each officer one delegated portfolio-such as scouting / routes or supply / wounded-within which they may make routine decisions. Use Cross-Portrayal instead if the table wants to test multiple captains. Friendly and enemy squad counts still follow scenario scaling.
- **Four players:** two captain-officer pairs are recommended. Each pair answers how trust first formed, what remains unpaid, and what the captain cannot command.

Player discussion example

Captain player: "We must hold the stone bridge. I order you to take the crossbows to the north bank."

Officer player: "Savi looks at the retreating wounded. 'I will, but I am leaving two soldiers to receive them.' "

Captain player: "Agreed. I delegate deployment to you."

Groundkeeper: "The captain uses their action to order the heavy infantry to hold. Savi uses her own action to move the crossbows. Each makes one important choice this round."

Cross-Portrayal

In addition to their own captain, each player helps create or portray another captain's officer. Creator, Commanding Player, and Portraying Player may be three different people. The portrayer may also be the Creator, but should not normally be that officer's commander or the Groundkeeper. Write all three roles on the officer sheet rather than hiding them inside an ambiguous "owner."

Create someone worthy of another player's trust.

Role	Authority
Creator	Origin, secrets, important relationships, wishes, and personal limits
Commanding Player	Mission, deployment, equipment, post, and formal orders
Portraying Player	The officer's present speech, emotion, choices, and character checks
Groundkeeper	World reactions, discipline, political pressure, and consequences

A commander's order creates duty, discipline, and relationship pressure, not mind control. The Portraying Player may make an officer ask, negotiate, question, or refuse an order that crosses their limits; the Groundkeeper then states consequences for insubordination, delay, trust, or politics. The Creator may reveal past events at an appropriate moment but cannot use a secret to seize the officer's present control. Do not use sudden betrayal or malicious sabotage as secret revelation without the relevant players' consent.

Order-conflict example

Grann' s player, the Commanding Player: "Seif, pour the Cedar into the enemy well so they see the dead."

Seif' s Portraying Player: "Seif does not take the vial. 'I can make the garrison withdraw. I will not poison water everyone must drink. Give me another target.' "

Seif' s Creator: "She once tested medicine for the guild. This is the limit she will not cross again."

Groundkeeper: "Refusal does not return Seif to Grann' s control, but every officer witnessed the conflict. Revise the order, or accept consequences to discipline and trust."

If the Portraying Player is absent, first ask another player who is not the officer' s commander to substitute. Only with the table' s agreement may the commander or Groundkeeper temporarily portray them. A substitute preserves known personality and does not exploit the absence to reveal unrevealed secrets.

Quick officer setup

- Assign 2, 1, 1, 0 among the four elemental Thoughts.
- Begin Wonder and Gloom at 0.
- Assign 2, 2, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0 among the eight Expertises.
- Choose one C / Generation as origin and one Q / Exemplar as ideal. An officer does not receive a captain Blood Road' s additional effect.

Field	Entry
Officer' s name	
Creator	
Commanding Player	
Portraying Player	
Play mode	☐ Single-Team ☐ Paired ☐ Cross-Portrayal
Appearance and habits	
C / Generation	
Q / Exemplar	
What they do best	
What they fear most	
Hidden past	
Why they are trustworthy	
Boundary at which they may break away	

Officer example: Player A creates Seif: "Spicecraft 2, Investigation 2; best at battlefield medicine; conceals that she once tested drugs for the guild; trustworthy because she never abandons a patient; refuses to poison a water source." Player B' s captain is her Commanding Player; Player C is her Portraying Player. B may assign treatment or spice work. C decides how Seif responds and acts now. A supplies her past and limits at suitable moments. If B orders poison, C may make her refuse and the Groundkeeper states consequences for discipline and relationship.

4 - First-round character-creation test questions

- Does Manifest Blood compensate a Blood Heir for one fewer elemental Thought point?
- Does one named starting Blood Debt create real pressure in a one-shot?
- Is a Blood-and-Sweat hero' s second Thought at 2 too reliable?

- Are the conditions for gaining a Q / Exemplar Deed clear?
 - Do C and Q naturally create character tension rather than only background prose?
 - Can a player complete a captain' s numbers and core hooks within fifteen minutes?
-

Part V - One-Page Character Check Card v0.5

Opening Fiction - "The Ancestral Spring Does Not Decide Ownership"



Fur awakens boundary marks beneath the ancestral spring with blood while villagers, riders, merchants, soldiers, and mercenaries hold five competing positions.

At noon the wagons reached the ancestral spring. Springward riders, villagers, and guild clerks waited west of the altar. The northern commander's crossbows held the eastern bridge. No one drew first. Every side believed its paper, blood, cargo, or bows should make the others withdraw.

Fur poured ancestral blood onto black stone. Old boundary marks lit beneath it. The dry spring sighed underground and the cauldron trembled. "Under the cauldron covenant, the Springwards must oversee it for the valley." The commander raised a requisition writ: "Under wartime law, anything that can brew war spice belongs in the arsenal." A Copper Scales clerk opened a ledger: "The guild paid to excavate, repair, and transport it. Investors possess the right of sale."

Each claim held part of the truth. Blood remembered the oldest oath. The army had defended the north bank. The guild had rescued the cauldron. Yet every account turned miners, carters, spice growers, and the dead into scenery, as though only those who applied seals had ever touched it.

Fur asked Cenya to witness the covenant with Sky-Chime blood and offered the Ashen Ember Company land, pay, and permanent place as its guard. It was good enough to be frightening. Lorn did not answer for her; an officer is not a captain's conscience speaking by proxy. He asked, "If we accept, do we guard one bloodline or everyone who needs the cauldron?"

The wind reported more names, including people not yet dead but who might be written into it by a season of war spice. Cenya laid the delivery contract, cauldron covenant, opened medicine jar, and arson testimony upon the altar. "My blood can witness the old covenant. My flag can deliver the cauldron to the army. The prisoners can prove the guild broke faith. Each lets me choose a master. None gives mercenaries under drawn bows the right to decide generations of ownership forever."

She proposed a Winter Inquest Deposit. Cardamom and clove would treat the wounded and seal the mine heat. A neutral Stone-Bell temple would hold the cauldron until a public winter hearing. Blood evidence, requisition, repair accounts, miner testimony, and the Ashen Ember casualty roll would all be copied openly. Saffron and cassia would remain sealed; any faction seizing them first would lose its right to speak at the hearing.

It was not eternal peace. It narrowed what swords could decide today and preserved what testimony might change in winter. The temple could be bribed. Witnesses could disappear. Ashen Ember still had to survive long enough to deliver the copies.

"By what right do you withhold what is not yours?" the commander asked. "By standing between the cauldron and your bows," said Cenya. "That is not ownership. It only keeps today from sentencing forever. Refuse, if you like, and see who can first afford the battle." The crossbows did not move. The mercenaries held no unbeatable formation, but no one could wipe last night's blood from the negotiating table.

Reading note: This story establishes the world, mood, and kinds of choice found in this part. It is not a rules precedent. The rules text below governs play.

One-Page Character Check Card

This is a table reference, not a replacement for the full rules above.

The pool determines possibility; faces determine direction; Groups determine force; collisions determine cost.

Do these five things

1. **State the aim.** What should change on success? The Groundkeeper first decides whether a roll is needed.
2. **State the method.** Choose Acting Thought and Expertise. The Groundkeeper announces difficulty, Formed effect, Scatter consequence, and fixed costs.
3. **Build the pool.** Start with 2 + Expertise random dice. Acting Thought 2 adds a fixed Root Die. Then add Pending Fate, chosen aid, and Transgression, never exceeding seven.
4. **Roll and Attune.** Acting Thought 1+ may reroll one eligible random die not showing it. Never reroll Root, bloodline, Extra Fate, or Transgression dice.
5. **Choose a Path.** Gather matching faces, choose one group, move Fate tracks, calculate effect, and resolve the core result before secondary costs.

Dice and result

Face	1	2	3	4	5	6
Thought	Gloom	Outreach	Composure	Calculation	Drive	Wonder

Acting Thought means only the Thought declared for this check; **Drive** is the name of face 5. Rating 0 gives no special die. Rating 1 permits the Attunement reroll. Rating 2 also adds one fixed Root Die before rolling. For Wonder or Gloom, use the track's absolute value.

Matching dice	Result	Immediate rule
None	Scatter	Fail; choose Gloom -1 or Wonder -1.
2	Formed Thought	Take the Formed effect for difficulty.
3	Strong Thought	Gain 1 Momentum.
4+	Obsession	Momentum equals group size -2.

Path	Fate movement
Natural Path	None
Hold Fast / Hold Fast Against the Tide	Gloom +1
Turn Thought	Wonder +1
Scatter / Self-Scatter	Choose Gloom -1 or Wonder -1

Difficulty in one line: Standard Formed gives Full effect; Hard Formed gives Limited effect; Extreme Formed produces only **Create an Opening**. Strong and Obsession add Momentum that may raise effect or buy scope, speed, information, or protection.

Fate endpoints

Endpoint	Name	Interpretive direction
Wonder +3	Dream Made	New possibility, creation, or an omen fulfilled
Wonder -3	Dream Eaten	Hopelessness, illusion, mistaken identity, or reality collapsing
Gloom +3	Darkness Bound	Truth, oath, responsibility, and cost crystallise
Gloom -3	Light Lost	Detachment, isolation, identity, or worldly connection fades

On reaching an endpoint, draw immediately, place the card face up, reset that track to 0, and then finish the current result. It becomes Pending Fate until the hero's next risky character check. Consult the expanded reference for suit and special-row handling.

Resolve in this order

1. Move tracks and draw at endpoints.
2. Read the difficulty's Formed effect.
3. Allocate Momentum once.
4. Establish success or failure.
5. Apply fixed cost, Scatter consequence if applicable, Echoes, Transgression, Blood Debt, Mirage, and consumption.

Part V Appendix - Expanded Character Check Reference v0.5

Six faces are Six Thoughts

Face	Thought	Correspondence	Face	Thought	Correspondence
1	Gloom	Ethics, responsibility, transcendence	4	Calculation	Earth, strategy, knowledge
2	Outreach	Water, affinity, influence	5	Drive	Fire, courage, will
3	Composure	Air, patience, inducement	6	Wonder	Miracle, hope, illusion

Three Hearts, Two Minds

Random pool = fixed Two Minds + relevant Expertise 0-2. One outside Third Heart can create Three Hearts, Two Minds.

The pool determines possibility; faces determine direction; Groups determine force; collisions determine cost.

Expertise	Random dice	Name
0	2	Two Minds
1	3	One Heart, Two Minds
2	4	Two Hearts, Two Minds

Expertise 2 plus a Borrowed Heart, spice, or another explicit Third Heart makes a five-die **Three Hearts, Two Minds** pool. All sources together have a hard maximum of seven dice.

Do not confuse the terms: **Drive** is the fire Thought. **Acting Thought** is the Thought declared for this check. "Drive as the Acting Thought" simply means using the fire approach now.

A **Transgression Die** is one additional red random die supplied by a Blessing, forbidden art, excessive spice, or major rite. It cannot be rerolled or changed. The Groundkeeper proposes two source-appropriate prices; choose one involving Blood Debt, track movement, harm to body or property, harm to others, or a major Echo. The price occurs whether or not

the red die helps. Pending Fate supplies a fixed Extra Fate Die, not a Transgression Die. All sources share the seven-die cap. At seven dice, Transgression instead grants 1 Transgression Momentum when the result is Formed; its price still occurs.

When seven slots are full, never place an eighth die. Resolve the excess source:

Excess source	Handling at seven dice
Pending Fate	Cards have draw-order priority; a card that cannot fit becomes a Fate Echo.
Manifest Blood	Fix one of the hero's own ordinary random dice to the C element instead; gain Blood Debt normally.
Aid	Improve a side effect, reveal information, take one lighter non-fixed accompanying consequence, or reduce an Echo. It cannot transfer a fixed cost.
Spice	The user may refrain and consume nothing. If used, add no die, but keep its scene effect, Dream Spice movement, dream sign, and Deflection price.
Transgression	On Formed, gain 1 Transgression Momentum; the announced price still occurs.

Borrowed Heart

Before rolling, another hero or officer who can materially help and accepts the same risk may add one random aid die; at most one per check. At seven dice, instead choose one: improve a side effect, reveal information, bear one lighter non-fixed accompanying consequence, or reduce an Echo. A fixed cost remains with its original target. On Scatter or Self-Scatter, the helper is also drawn into the original consequence as fiction permits.

Thought rating

Rating	Effect
0	No Root Die; cannot Attune.
1	After rolling, reroll one eligible random die that is not showing the Acting Thought.
2	Before rolling, add one Root Die fixed to the Acting Thought; afterward, the same Attunement reroll remains available.

When Wonder or Gloom is the Acting Thought, use the absolute value of its track. Reaching ± 3 triggers Fate and resets to 0; ± 3 is not a persistent rating.

One complete check

1. Disclose the **goal, difficulty, Formed effect, built-in compromise of Limited effect, Scatter consequence, and any separate fixed cost.**
2. Declare **Acting Thought and Expertise**; take **2 + Expertise** ordinary random dice.
3. At Thought rating 2, add the fixed Root Die.
4. Add sources in order: **Pending Fate → bloodline / Borrowed Heart / Spice Aid / circumstance → Transgression**, never beyond seven dice.
5. Roll random dice. At rating 1+, Attune by rerolling one eligible random die not showing the Acting Thought.
6. Group every equal face.
7. Choose Natural Path, Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, or Self-Scatter and mark Echoes.
8. Move Wonder or Gloom first. On an endpoint, draw immediately and reset; the new card does not enter this pool.
9. Read the Formed column for the current difficulty, then allocate Momentum. Listed Strong and Obsession results already assume spending 1 and the first 2 Momentum.
10. Establish the principal result, then narrate Echoes, consequences, costs, and resource consumption.

Thought Groups and degree

Matching dice	Name	Effect
1	Scatter	Not enough to succeed
2	Formed Thought	Standard success
3	Strong Thought	Gain 1 Momentum; the listed Strong effect is its default use
4+	Obsession	Momentum = Group size -2; the listed Obsession effect spends the first 2 by default

Momentum = dice in the chosen Group -2 and must be spent before the check ends. Begin with the Formed column for the difficulty. Each point normally raises effect one level, affects one additional similar target, works faster or longer, obtains one extra piece of information or follow-up advantage, or prevents one lighter accompanying consequence. The Strong and Obsession columns are the default allocation of 1 or the first 2 points. If Momentum buys another use, do not also take those higher columns. Momentum cannot be saved and cannot cancel a fixed cost disclosed before the roll.

Final choice

Final pool and choice	Result	Track
Acting Thought is Formed, is the sole largest Group, and is chosen	Natural Path	No movement
Acting Thought ties for largest and is chosen	Hold Fast	Gloom +1
Acting Thought is a smaller Formed Group and is chosen	Hold Fast Against the Tide	Gloom +1; larger unchosen Groups become Echoes
Choose any other Formed Group	Turn Thought; method must change	Wonder +1
No Formed Group exists	Scatter and fail	Choose Gloom -1 or Wonder -1
Reject every Formed Path	Self-Scatter and fail	Choose Gloom -1 or Wonder -1

"Largest" means number of dice in a Group, never face value. Natural Path, Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, or Self-Scatter moves at most one track by one step. Dream Spice, rites, Fate Cards, or another explicit effect may move a track afterward.

Echoes

- An unchosen Group tied with the chosen largest Group creates a **Minor Echo**.
- An unchosen Group one die larger than the chosen Group creates a **Significant Echo**.
- An unchosen Group two or more dice larger creates a **Major Echo**.
- Echoes may create a secondary result, lost benefit, NPC response, Mirage, Blood Debt, relationship change, or battlefield consequence.

Difficulty and effect

- **Standard:** character-scale opposition; suitable tools, time, or position; one ordinary obstacle.
- **Hard:** prepared enemy or existing advantage; one of tools, intelligence, time, or position is lacking; success first resolves only the principal portion.
- **Extreme:** an evident difference in scale; a crucial qualification, resource, or opening is absent; one action should not solve the whole problem.

A major disadvantage normally raises difficulty one step. A genuinely effective lever, tool, intelligence, or ally lowers it one step. Do not roll for the impossible or the risk-free.

Difficulty	Formed	Strong	Obsession
Standard	Full effect	Powerful effect	Decisive effect
Hard	Limited effect	Full effect	Powerful effect
Extreme	Create an Opening	Limited effect	Full effect

The Strong column spends 1 Momentum by default; Obsession spends the first 2. A player may keep the Formed column and buy range, speed, information, or protection instead. Only a Group of five or more has points left to purchase further benefits after reaching the listed top result.

- **Create an Opening:** obtain a real entry, qualification, or foothold; the original intent is not yet complete.
- **Limited:** complete the principal portion, constrained in scope, duration, quality, or safety.
- **Full:** achieve the stated goal within its scope, without Limited effect's built-in compromise.
- **Powerful:** Full plus an important gain in speed, scope, duration, information, or position.
- **Decisive:** resolve a larger conflict within reasonable scope so the same obstacle cannot return during this scene.

Raising effect removes the lower effect's own limitation. It does not cancel a separately disclosed fixed cost. Fixed costs occur regardless of success. A Scatter consequence occurs only on Scatter or Self-Scatter. Echo, Transgression, Blood Debt, and Mirage resolve after the principal result.

Wonder, Gloom, and Fate

Wonder: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Gloom: -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Endpoint	Trigger	Direction
Wonder +3	Dream Made	New possibility, creation, or an omen fulfilled
Wonder -3	Dream Eaten	Hopelessness, illusion, mistaken identity, or reality collapsing
Gloom +3	Darkness Bound	Truth, oath, responsibility, and cost crystallise
Gloom -3	Light Lost	Detachment, isolation, identity, or worldly connection fades

At an endpoint, immediately draw a Fate Card face up and reset that track to 0. Then finish the present action. The card does not join dice already rolled and does not overturn their result.

The card becomes **Pending Fate**. The hero's next risky character check adds one fixed Extra Fate Die: Clubs = Drive 5, Hearts = Outreach 2, Diamonds = Calculation 4, Spades = Composure 3. It counts toward seven dice and cannot be rerolled or changed. Choosing a Group containing it is Following Fate; choosing another Path turns the card into a Fate Echo. Pending Fate persists across scenes, rests, sessions, and interrupted contracts until that next risky character check. Remove the die after that check, but keep all world changes.

Special Fate ranks

Rank	Fire / Clubs	Water / Hearts	Earth / Diamonds	Air / Spades	System position
T / Completion	Presentation	Revel	Great Sacrifice	Burnt Offering	Four Great Rites
J / Dream	Tobacco	Cedar	Mousewort	Vetiver	Four Dream Spices
C / Generation	Hearth-Cauldron	Precious Blood	Heart-Jade	Heavenly Resonance	Sources of essence and bloodline
Q / Exemplar	Hero	Divine Attendant	Maker-Mother	Warden	Blood-and-Sweat roads
K / Symbol	Red Dragon	Arcana	Dawn Elephant	Azure Folk	Four elemental world archetypes
O / Lightless	-	-	-	-	Suitless Joker; supplies Gloom 1 or Wonder 6 according to the triggering track

Mark the two Jokers C and O. On C, turn one ordinary card for its suit and use that suit for Hearth-Cauldron, Precious Blood, Heart-Jade, or Heavenly Resonance. O takes no suit: a Gloom endpoint gives fixed Gloom 1, a Wonder endpoint fixed Wonder 6. With one Joker, use it as C.

Eight Great Spices

Element	Waking Spice	Dream Spice
Fire	Red-Crown Saffron	Tobacco
Water	Mistsilver Cardamom	Cedar
Earth	Stillnight Clove	Mousewort
Air	Windcry Cinnamon	Vetiver

After casting, compare the final chosen Group with the spice element. The same element is aligned. Another elemental Thought is **Elemental Deflection**: in addition to normal Hold Fast or Turn Thought movement, gain one named Blood Debt. Gloom or Wonder is **Aether Deflection**: also gain one formal Mirage. Scatter is not Deflection, but the spice is still consumed. The player writes a Mirage as “I hope to experience / see / know...” ; the Groundkeeper later makes that invitation appear with real opportunity and cost.

Table dialogue: Turn Thought when the original route does not hold

Groundkeeper:

"The seal on chest five was changed, but the warehouse shift changes in three minutes. Formed identifies one handler. Scatter lets the true culprit learn that you are investigating."

Mirei's player:

"I do not arrest anyone yet. I compare seal wax, duty records, and carrying marks to learn who changed it. Calculation and Investigation 2."

Groundkeeper:

"Calculation is 2. Place a Root Die fixed at 4; Investigation 2 adds four random dice."

Roll:

fixed 4; random 2, 4, 5, 5.

Player:

"Calculation has two 4s, Drive has two 5s, and Outreach one 2. May I reroll?"

Groundkeeper:

"Calculation is at least 1, so you may Attune one rerollable random die that is not 4. You can reroll the 2 or one 5, but picking up a 5 breaks the ready Drive Path first."

Player:

"I do not reroll. Both Calculation and Drive can succeed?"

Groundkeeper:

"Yes. Choose Calculation to Hold Fast and raise Gloom by 1. Choose Drive to Turn Thought and raise Wonder by 1, but you must truly change method."

Player:

"Drive. Mirei stops looking down at the wax, calls the three porters under the lamp, and says aloud: 'I already know it was one of you. Confess now and I leave you a way out.' "

Groundkeeper:

"That is Turn Thought. Wonder +1. The youngest porter breaks and names the night foreman; you get the Formed effect and identify one handler. The unchosen Calculation pair is a Minor Echo: marks in the wax show someone behind the foreman knows guild seals better. You catch the immediate hand, but the case continues."

The final Groups are Calculation 4×2 , Drive 5×2 , and Outreach 2×1 . Turn Thought is not merely a track operation: the method changes from documentary proof to public pressure. Drive completes the immediate goal; Calculation leaves a clue as an Echo. Had the player chosen Calculation, it would be Hold Fast, Gloom +1, with a Drive Echo such as the suspects feeling cornered.

Memory line

Acting Thought Formed and sole largest: Natural Path. Acting Thought Formed but tied or smaller and still chosen: Hold Fast. Accept another Formed Path: Turn Thought. After Attunement, no Path: Scatter.

Table layout

Place Pending Fate face up above the character sheet. Keep the red Transgression Die physically separate. Use markers for each Captain Action and squad action; place Support +1, Disorder, and Casualties on the squad card. Remove Support after use or at round end.

Part VI - Probability, Thought Groups, and Pending Fate Analysis v0.5

Opening Fiction - "A Deposit Covenant Must Use Old Ash"



Each faction marks the deposit covenant differently; Fur burns one line of the old covenant and clear water runs when its ash enters blood.

The deadlock lasted until the sun crossed the altar. The Copper Scales clerk yielded first—not from conscience, but after calculating what the arson testimony would cost three northern trade roads. He offered compensation if the record said a local factor exceeded his authority rather than the guild hired killers. The village accepted this incomplete truth in return for water carts, miners' compensation, and three years of public repair accounts. No one mistook compromise for innocence.

The northern commander withdrew the bridge crossbows and sealed his requisition at the Stone-Bell temple until the inquest. He had not surrendered the cauldron. He had only made the army tear its own royal seal in public if it chose to seize it.

Fur spoke last. "If I accept the deposit, the covenant acknowledged by my blood must stand trial beside merchant accounts and military writs." "The cauldron has already been touched by army walls, guild roads, miners' graves, and spice growers' hands," Cenya said. "Keep the covenant. Admit that blood must answer other testimony."

Root-shadows still glowed beneath Fur's feet. One refusal would draw every white-scaled sword, yet none of the miners' families behind her asked for war merely to possess the cauldron now. Fur put one corner of the covenant into the altar's cold flame and burned only the line that said no outsider might question its witness. Ash sank into blood. Clear water rose from the dry spring and ran around their boots toward the village. The altar named no righteous owner. It accepted a real sacrifice.

They wrote until dusk. Lorn converted elegant promises into clauses that could be pursued: which road the cauldron would take, how the four jars would be sealed, who could copy testimony, which soldiers must stay away before winter. Villagers used fingerprints, soldiers sword rings, Fur ancestral blood, the commander his royal seal, and the guild clerk a lead mark signifying credit rather than innocence.

Every mark left a crack through which responsibility might escape. Lorn did not pretend parchment could abolish betrayal; he made betrayal something that might later be named with a person, date, and price.

The commander asked under which title Cenya would sign: Sky-Chime heir, Ashen Ember captain, contracted carrier, or witness of the Winter Inquest? Each title offered one future and told others how to pursue her. She wrote only Cenya, for the ninety-four names still alive in the pay ledger, and required every identifiable dead soldier from both sides in an appendix.

"One is missing," said the paymaster. "The prisoner who could still speak this morning. No one knew his name." The wind supplied it. The cardamom had not saved him in time. Cenya wrote the name into the appendix.

Reading note: This story establishes the world, mood, and kinds of choice found in this part. It is not a rules precedent. The rules text below governs play.

This chapter lets players understand their choices and helps the Groundkeeper interpret difficulty and playtest results. Use it with the [core rules](#) and [Fate and Pending Fate module](#). All d6 values come from complete enumeration and are rounded to one decimal place.

1 - Assumptions

- “Formed or better” means at least two equal faces; “Strong or better” at least three; “Obsession or better” at least four.
- An Extra Fate Die is fixed to its suit’s Thought, is neither rolled nor rerolled, and counts toward the seven-die cap.
- “Formed after Attunement” assumes rating 1+ and rerolls one legal non-Acting random die only when the original pool has no Formed Group. It never risks an existing Group.
- Strong, Obsession, and multiple-Group columns use the original pool. This one Scatter reroll can at most establish a new Formed Group, not directly a Strong one.
- Blessings, bloodline dice, other aid, and special spice effects are excluded unless stated.

2 - Three Different Probability Questions

Question	What the probability measures	Meaning in play
Any Path Formed	At least one equal pair in the final pool	The hero finds some workable method, not necessarily the declared one.
Acting Thought Formed	At least two dice show the declared face	The hero can proceed by the original motive and method; otherwise they may Turn Thought, accept another Path, or Scatter.
Strong / Obsession	Largest Group has at least three / four dice	The result carries Momentum and enough force; difficulty then translates that force into Limited, Full, or Powerful effect.

Thus the probability reading of the memory line is: the pool first opens **some** Path; faces determine its **direction**; matching count determines **force**; collisions create **price**. A larger pool chiefly finds some route. A fixed Root Die markedly improves the declared route. Three and four equal faces remain much rarer than an ordinary pair.

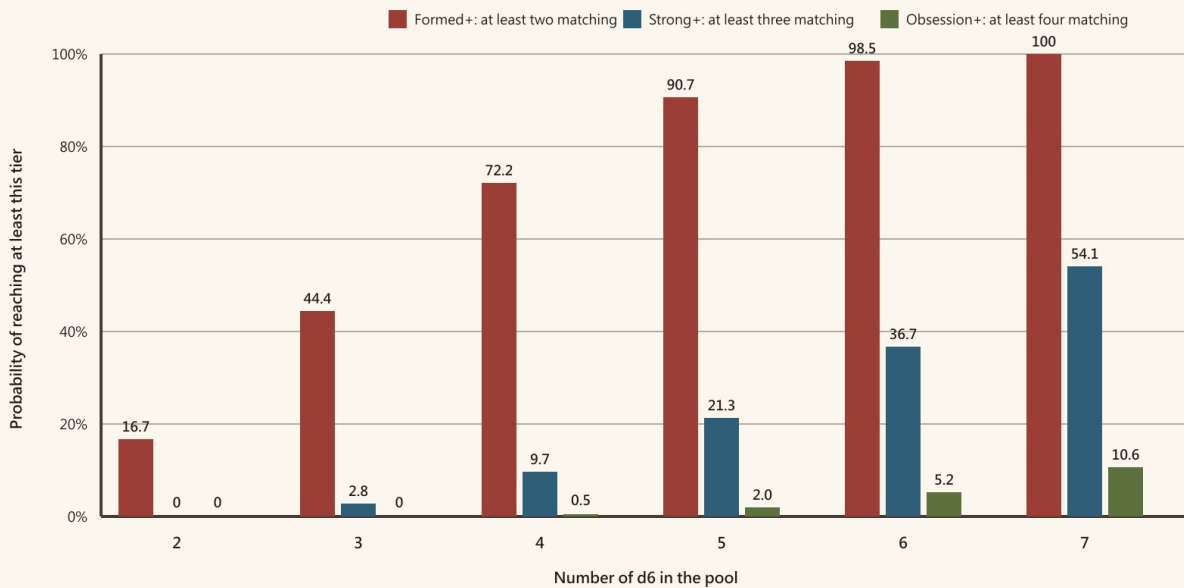
3 - Pure Random Pools: A Path Is Not Yet Enough Force

These pools contain only random d6, with no Attunement, Root Die, bloodline, Spice Aid, or Fate.

Random dice	Formed+	Strong+	Obsession+	Multiple Formed Groups
2	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3	44.4%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%
4	72.2%	9.7%	0.5%	6.9%
5	90.7%	21.3%	2.0%	27.0%
6	98.5%	36.7%	5.2%	55.6%
7	100.0%	54.1%	10.6%	80.1%

Larger Pools Add Paths Before They Add Power

Random d6 only; no Attunement or fixed dice. Each bar shows the chance of reaching at least that tier



Seven dice across six faces guarantee a Formed Path; only 54.1% are Strong and 10.6% reach Obsession. The limit guarantees a Path, not the Acting Thought, full effect, or freedom from Echoes and costs.

Probability that two to seven random d6 make Formed, Strong, and Obsession results; seven dice guarantee a pair but only 10.6 percent produce an Obsession.

Seven dice must contain a pair because seven dice occupy only six faces. The pigeonhole principle does **not** guarantee success by the Acting Thought. At seven dice, multiple Formed Groups appear 80.1% of the time: a full pool primarily creates Path collision, choice, and Echoes rather than automatic decisive success.

4 - Expertise and Thought: Workable Path and Declared Direction

The ordinary creation range gives two to four random dice from Expertise 0-2. Thought 0 has no Attunement; Thought 1 rerolls; Thought 2 also adds one fixed Root Die. Each cell is written **any Path / Acting Thought**, answering two different questions:

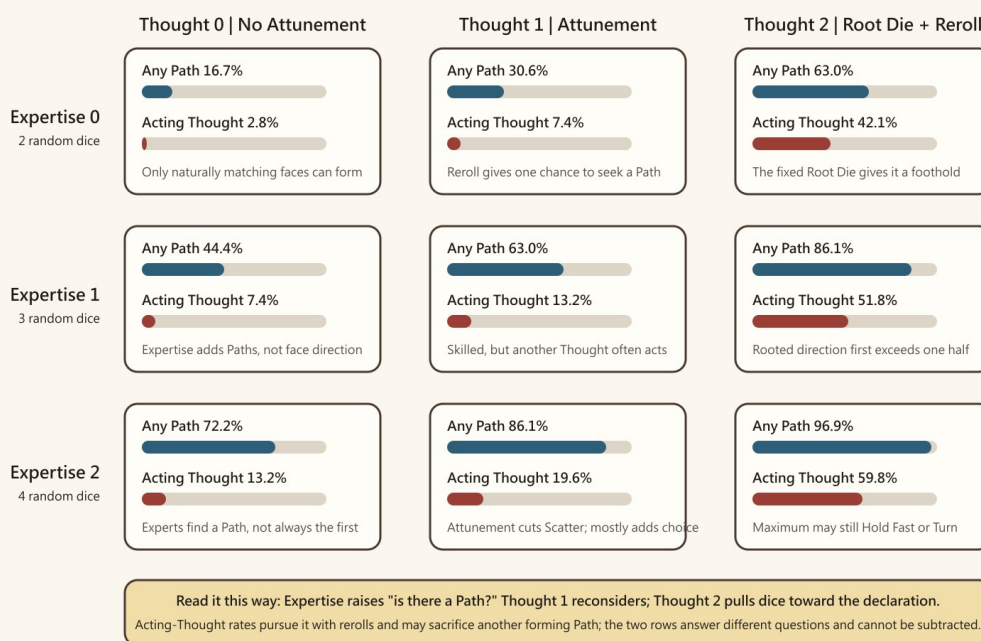
- **Any Path Formed** uses the safe strategy: keep any existing Group and reroll only on complete Scatter.
- **Acting Thought Formed** pursues direction: if that face is not Formed and a reroll can form it, reroll a non-Acting die even if this risks another Path. Do not subtract these two figures to infer failure.

Expertise and random dice	Thought 0: no Attunement	Thought 1: Attunement reroll	Thought 2: Root + reroll
Expertise 0 / 2 dice	16.7% / 2.8%	30.6% / 7.4%	63.0% / 42.1%
Expertise 1 / 3 dice	44.4% / 7.4%	63.0% / 13.2%	86.1% / 51.8%
Expertise 2 / 4 dice	72.2% / 13.2%	86.1% / 19.6%	96.9% / 59.8%

Expertise Opens Paths; a Root Die Steadies Direction

Each cell compares any Formed Path with the Acting Thought becoming Formed; excludes aid, Fate, bloodline, and spice

■ Any Formed Path: reroll only to avoid Scatter ■ Acting Thought Formed: reroll to pursue it



Nine combinations of Expertise zero to two and Thought zero to two, comparing the chance of any Formed Path with the chance that the declared Acting Thought forms.

Expertise enlarges the pool, making some route and collisions more common. Thought supplies Attunement and a Root, making the declared direction more reliable. Expertise 2 / Thought 1 finds some Path 86.1% of the time but forms the Acting Thought only 19.6% of the time; Turn Thought and Hold Fast therefore matter often. Expertise 2 / Thought 2 raises the declared Path to 59.8%, still leaving roughly four checks in ten to accept another route, pay a price, or Scatter.

Paper baseline: safe Attunement

The preceding matrix uses distinct reroll strategies and is not a partition of one roll. The following **safe Attunement strategy** is only a paper baseline for version comparison, never a required player procedure: preserve any existing Formed Group and reroll only on complete Scatter.

- **Natural Path:** Acting Thought is Formed and the sole largest Group.
- **Can Hold Fast:** Acting Thought is Formed but tied with or smaller than another Group. The player may Hold Fast for Gloom +1 or choose another Path.
- **Must Turn Thought to succeed:** Acting Thought is not Formed, but another Group is. The player may Turn Thought for Wonder +1 or reject it and Self-Scatter.
- **Scatter:** no Group remains after safe Attunement.

Common configuration	Natural Path	Can Hold Fast	Must Turn Thought to succeed	Scatter
Expertise 0, Thought 0	2.8%	0.0%	13.9%	83.3%
Expertise 1, Thought 2	39.8%	6.9%	39.4%	13.9%
Expertise 2, Thought 1	14.0%	2.3%	69.8%	13.9%
Expertise 2, Thought 2	33.3%	20.1%	43.6%	3.1%
Three Hearts, Two Minds; Thought 2: 5 random + Root	27.0%	33.1%	39.7%	0.3%

Rows may differ from 100% by 0.1 percentage point from rounding.

Expertise 2 / Thought 2 best displays the intended core: about one third follows the declared method naturally, one fifth can insist at Gloom’s price, four tenths need another Thought to succeed, and complete Scatter is rare. Three Hearts, Two Minds pushes Scatter near zero chiefly by increasing Hold Fast, Turn Thought, and collision-not by making consequence-free success.

Thought 1 means the hero **knows how to reconsider but is not rooted in this direction**. At Expertise 2, nearly seven in ten successful checks under the safe baseline require Turn Thought. If players expect rating 1 to obey the declared method reliably, it may feel like lost control; understood as a Thought easily pulled by others, it makes contradiction vivid.

Expertise 0 / Thought 0’s 83.3% Scatter belongs only to a risky attempt that is truly unfamiliar and contrary to the hero’s style. Ordinary work without risk simply happens; the Groundkeeper must not demand repeated checks for daily acts.

Overall, Turn Thought is more common than Hold Fast, so Wonder +1 will normally arise more often than Gloom +1. Thought 2 and large pools increase Hold Fast. Playtest that asymmetry and its effect on endpoint frequency, not only aggregate success.

Paper range for safe Attunement, not a target or rule threshold: on important checks using a principal Expertise and rooted Thought, expect roughly Natural Path 25-45%, opportunities to Hold Fast 10-30%, need to Turn Thought 25-45%, and Scatter 5-15%. Expertise 2 / Thought 2 broadly matches the first three and has less Scatter. Real players may reroll to pursue the Acting Thought. Deviation is not imbalance unless choices of price and direction repeatedly lose tension.

5 - Difficulty Does Not Change Probability; It Translates Effect

Standard, Hard, and Extreme do not change the chance of Formed, Strong, or Obsession. They change what the same Group accomplishes. Four random dice are Formed+ 72.2% of the time; Formed means Full at Standard, Limited at Hard, and only a **Create an Opening** result at Extreme.

Do not secretly demand three matching dice to make an expert “more likely to fail.” For greater force, use the difficulty table, staged objectives, qualifications, or clocks. When pressure comes from politics or war, locate it in Echoes, time, resources, Blood Debt, and who bears the consequence.

Groundkeeper example: Mirei has Calculation 2 and Investigation 2. Reading an ordinary ledger needs no roll. Saving a falsified military account from a fire is Hard: Formed preserves the key pages, while Strong preserves the full evidence. The probability was not secretly reduced; effect creates the tension.

6 - One Extra Fate Die

Here the hero has no Root Die, rolls two to four ordinary random dice, then adds one fixed Extra Fate Die. Five random dice occurs only when a Borrowed Heart, spice, or another Third Heart is also present.

Random dice	Total with Fate	Raw Formed+	Formed after Attunement	Strong +	Obsession+	Fate suit forms itself
2	3	44.4%	63.0%	2.8%	0.0%	30.6%
3	4	72.2%	86.1%	9.7%	0.5%	42.1%
4	5	90.7%	96.9%	21.3%	2.0%	51.8%
5	6	98.5%	99.7%	36.7%	5.2%	59.8%

For “does any duplicate appear,” a fixed Fate die behaves like one added die. The difference is that the player knows one direction before rolling. More random dice more often give the suit a partner, but never compel Following Fate.

7 - Extra Fate Die and a Root Die of Another Suit

The declared Thought is rated 2, but the Pending Fate suit differs. The pool has two fixed dice of unlike faces plus random dice.

Random dice	Total	Raw Formed +	Formed after Attunement	Strong +	Obsession +	Multiple Formed Groups
2	4	66.7%	83.3%	5.6%	0.0%	5.6%
3	5	88.9%	96.3%	16.7%	0.9%	25.0%
4	6	98.1%	99.7%	32.4%	3.5%	54.5%
5	7	100.0%	100.0%	50.6%	8.4%	80.1%

Unlike fixed faces do not guarantee success, but sharply increase two simultaneous Paths. With four random dice, multiple Groups reach 54.5%; five random dice, possible only with an outside Third Heart as well, reaches 80.1%. The pressure of unlike Pending Fate is therefore not merely “can I succeed?” It is whether to choose the Acting Thought, Follow Fate, or leave the other route as an Echo.

8 - Extra Fate Die and a Root Die of the Same Suit

Matching fixed Root and Fate dice automatically form a pair. The remaining probabilities measure stronger Groups and multiple Paths.

Random dice	Total	Formed +	Strong +	Obsession +	Multiple Formed Groups
2	4	100.0%	30.6%	2.8%	13.9%
3	5	100.0%	44.4%	7.4%	37.0%
4	6	100.0%	58.3%	13.6%	61.3%
5	7	100.0%	71.5%	21.3%	80.1%

Automatic Formed is powerful but guarantees only a workable Path, never Full effect. Hard or Extreme still lowers Formed to Limited or an opening, and the card rank still demands world change and price. Because this affects only the next risky character check, retain it for PT1.4 rather than weakening it in advance.

9 - Two Pending Cards and Consecutive Triggers

- If Wonder and Gloom reach endpoints together, hang two cards. With an ordinary pool of five or fewer, both dice fit under seven. Same suits automatically Form; different suits resemble the unlike fixed-dice case above. If the ordinary pool already has six dice, only the earlier-drawn card supplies a die; the later one becomes a Fate Echo.
- **Conditioned on both draws being ordinary suited cards**, two consecutive cards share a suit with probability 12/51, about 23.5%; treating independent suits gives the familiar 25% approximation. The actual Fate deck also contains two unsuited Jokers, so before seeing either card the chance of drawing two ordinary cards of the same suit is $(52/54) \times (12/53)$, about 21.8%.
- An Extra Fate Die never moves Wonder or Gloom directly. Only the final Natural Path, Hold Fast, Turn Thought, Scatter, or Self-Scatter moves tracks normally.
- A triggered track resets, so it requires at least three later moves in one direction to draw again. The other track may already be at +2 or -2 and can trigger during the check consuming Pending Fate.
- Consecutive Pending Fate can therefore occur, but the Fate die itself creates no infinite draw loop.

10 - Design Conclusions and Playtest Measures

The shared seven-die cap is sufficient; the Extra Fate Die needs no lower private cap:

1. Without a matching Root, it raises the chance of a Path but guarantees none.
2. With a matching Root, it guarantees Formed, not Strong, Obsession, or consequence-free success.
3. Fate intervenes in the **next** risky character check and cannot be hoarded for an ideal moment.
4. Defying Fate makes the card a Fate Echo, so the player chooses direction rather than receiving only a free bonus.

For the first playtest, record:

- Expertise, Thought rating, random dice, and fixed dice before each check;
- whether the final category was Natural Path, could Hold Fast, required Turn Thought, or Scatter, and what the player chose;
- whether the player enjoyed the alternate route and how long resolution took;
- each Wonder +1 and Gloom +1 and whether Turn Thought or Hold Fast dominates;
- whether Fate and Root shared a suit, whether the hero Followed Fate, whether it automatically Formed, actual effect, and the card's lasting change.

If Scatter with a principal Expertise and rooted Thought repeatedly exceeds about 15%, first check whether the Groundkeeper is calling for needless rolls. If needing Turn Thought repeatedly exceeds about 50% **and players feel their hero is being taken away**, revisit Thought 1 or Attunement. If opportunities to Hold Fast remain below about 10% and positive Gloom endpoints almost disappear, revisit its entry. If same-suit Roots repeatedly drain tension from Hard scenes, adjust effect, Echo, or card price before removing automatic Formed.

11 - PT1.4-rc1 Preflight Review

The candidate was checked with the repeatable enumeration and simulation script [simulate_pt14_core.py](#), covering two to seven dice, safe Attunement, fixed Fate dice, squad opposition, and Fate tracks. Pure-pool, Expertise/Thought, and Fate values match the tables above. No probability error requires emergency change before live play.

Seven dice and fixed Fate

- Seven random dice always Form; multiple Groups occur about 80.1%, Strong+ about 54.1%, and Obsession+ only about 10.6%. A full pool chiefly creates collision, not decisive success.
- With four random dice and one Fate die, its suit forms itself about 51.8%. Add a different Root and multiple Paths are about 54.5%. A matching Root automatically Forms, but Strong+ is about 58.3% and Obsession+ 13.6%. One Pending Fate does not cancel difficulty, Echoes, or card consequences.

Fate-trigger frequency baseline

Each configuration below simulates 200,000 important checks. After safe Attunement, **keep the route** means Hold Fast when available, Turn Thought when necessary, and choose either negative track equally on Scatter. **Avoid endpoints** instead keeps both tracks away from ± 3 whenever a choice permits. These are comparison models, not predictions of human play.

Common configuration	Keep route: draws per 100 checks	Avoid endpoints: draws per 100	Primary signal
Expertise 1, Thought 2	12.5	10.8	Turn Thought and Scatter are comparable; endpoints slower
Expertise 2, Thought 1	22.7	19.4	About seven in ten successful results need Turn Thought; Wonder dominates
Expertise 2, Thought 2	20.1	20.1	Scatter is rare, but Hold Fast and Turn Thought both push positive endpoints

A hero making only four to eight important checks in a short scenario normally corresponds on paper to roughly zero to two Fate Cards. Dream Spice, scenario events, deliberate Self-Scatter, and nonzero starting tracks raise it. A player who always Self-Scatters toward the same negative endpoint can draw theoretically once every three checks, 33.3 cards per 100. PT1.4 explicitly permits that choice because it also abandons the immediate Path and accepts the Scatter consequence. Record whether this becomes meaningful tragedy; restrict it only if it becomes consequence-free farming.

Squad-pressure baseline

- With equal ratings, the attacker wins only about one quarter of attacks; a one-die advantage raises it to about 38.7-44.2%. This supports “create advantage, then attack,” though direct attrition may be slow.
- Against a fresh target, Force 2 vs Protection 2 causes Casualties directly on about 8.8% of attacks; Force 3 vs Protection 2 about 19.4%. A six-round battle should close through Disorder, position, escort, retreat, and objective-not extermination.
- On Last Stand, Morale 1, 2, and 3 have No Cluster rates of about 83.3%, 55.6%, and 27.8%. Blocking every route is dangerous. Disclose that danger and preserve surrender.

PT1.4-rc1 therefore retains the current pools, endpoints, and attack procedure. Live-play priorities are whether Thought 1 often feels forced to Turn Thought, whether Wonder triggers much more than Gloom, whether equal squads stall under defender ties, and whether players end battles with Mobility and objectives.

Part VII - Complete Battle Example v0.5: Taking Watch Ridge

Opening Fiction - "The Wind Still Keeps Accounts"



The ancient cauldron and two sealed jars enter the Stone-Bell temple while wind draws a grey company banner toward the next contract.

When the rain bell rang, the ancient cauldron and two sealed jars entered the Stone-Bell temple. The cardamom and clove had been opened for the wounded and the mine.

Under the first contract, Ashen Ember had defaulted. Under the deposit covenant, the army did not immediately receive war spice; the Copper Scales preserved a claim at the inquest; the Springwards placed their covenant into public evidence; Salt-Mirror Village received medicine and water carts. Ashen Ember won compensation, winter boots, and a new escort clause that no longer wrote deaths as no responsibility accepted.

No faction received everything it first demanded, so each declared itself wronged. The commander called the temple an obstacle to war. The guild said public repair accounts injured business. Fur said an ancient covenant had been forced to sit beside bills of sale. Lorn said that usually meant the deposit had survived its first day.

As the company left, the child who had begged beside the road brought a sack of dried cardamom husks. They were worth nothing and retained only the faintest cool sweetness. "The well is drinkable," the child said. "The mine still burns, but Fur and the miners are preparing to seal it. At the winter hearing, they will ask who first fed the cauldron's fire."

Cenya tied the husks to her saddle. The Wind-Weeping Cassia was now evidence locked in the temple, commodity and restraint at once. The inquest might award the cauldron to Springwards, army, guild, or the workers who maintained it. The deposit promised no victorious ending.

She did not even know whether she would return to testify. Blood required her to remember names. Contracts required her to leave one. A mercenary life kept urging her toward the next person able to pay. The wind continued to report names—real dead, unborn possibilities, or a tormenting voice in her blood. Lorn gave her a small book: find families for names that could be verified; leave blank pages for those that could not. Do not call uncertainty a prophecy, and do not pretend an uncertain voice was never heard.

"This account will never balance," Cenya said. "A Blood Debt is not meant to balance," Lorn replied. "It makes power unable to pretend it was free."

The wagons crossed the last salt rise. Behind them, the Stone-Bell temple closed the cauldron vault. Ahead, another messenger waited with another contract. Soldiers guessed at pay, camp, and battle; complained that their new boots were stiff; stitched fallen companions' badges to the flag; and calculated how much wine the spent cardamom might have bought. Cenya let them.

Blood enters the body and carries names no one chooses. Blood leaves the body and writes into the world what people have earned together. Between them, spice is weighed, sealed, burned, used to heal, used to kill—and valued by whoever holds it.

Wind caught the Ashen Ember flag. This time it neither rose nor fell. It stretched toward a road not yet travelled, and everyone still alive had to follow.

Reading note: This story establishes the world, mood, and kinds of choice found in this part. It is not a rules precedent. The rules text below governs play.

This example demonstrates a character Key Order, Hold Fast, battlefield spice, squad Clusters, a troop Trait, and enemy counterattack. Captains use the full Six Thoughts. Squads compare only their largest same-face Cluster and never use Hold Fast, Turn Thought, or Fate tracks.

1 - Battlefield State and Victory Condition

At battle start, the players chose Grey Banner Light Horse as lead squad and won the Encounter check, so they hold initiative throughout. During round 2, Canyon-Wind Rangers made the Hard Mobility check to climb from D along the blind slope into G; that difficult movement spent their squad action, so they did not attack that round. At the start of round 3, the Rangers and House Hesar Crossbows are both capable in G, so Watch Ridge is contested. The crossbows still occupy their firing position and choose **Fire Lane** during Situation: their first ranged attack from G this round gains +1 die. Had they chosen **Command**, a captain in G would instead apply +1 to the next Key Order this round.

The wagon will be exposed to the firing line as soon as it leaves the narrow road. Luodi therefore decides that the Rangers, already in G from the previous round, will break the crossbows and take uncontested control of the ridge. They do not move this round, so their squad action remains available for the attack; initiative is not rerolled each round.

Local victory condition: at round end, the players control G. That requires at least one capable friendly squad in G and no capable enemy squad there. Merely giving the enemy Injury, Disorder, or Casualties does not take the ridge.

Luodi says:

"They already paid for the climb. I will not order them to charge into the arrows. They wait on the blind slope for the wind to change, then loose together."

This is a Key Order using **Composure** as Acting Thought and **Command 2** as Expertise.

2 - The Captain's Key Order

Command 2 gives Luodi $2 + 2 = 4$ random dice. His Composure is 2, so he also places a Root Die fixed at 3.

Random roll:

3, 5, 2, 2

With the fixed 3, his Groups are:

Thought	Faces and Group
Composure	3×2
Outreach	2×2
Drive	5×1

Composure and Outreach tie for largest. Luodi still chooses the declared Composure, so he **Holds Fast**. The order is Formed, Gloom rises by 1, and one squad's next matching check before round end gains +1 die.

The unchosen Outreach pair creates a Minor Echo. The Groundkeeper reveals a wounded House Hesar messenger named Soran on the slope; whether to rescue an old associate becomes a problem between Luodi's soldiers and mission.

3 - Squad Pool and Spice

Canyon-Wind Rangers loose a ranged flanking volley from the blind slope, so this attack is an **Air-aligned ranged action** even though its squad pool uses Force. They attack with Force 2:

$2 + \text{Force } 2 = 4d6$

Luodi's order adds +1. He also consumes one dose of **Windcry Cinnamon**, whose powder reveals turbulence along the blind slope, for another +1:

$\text{base } 4 + \text{order } 1 + \text{Windcry Cinnamon } 1 = 6d6$

Six dice remains below the hard seven-die cap. The dose is removed from cargo or supply and cannot later be sold, delivered, or reused.

4 - Opposed Squad Check

Canyon-Wind Rangers roll:

3, 3, 3, 5, 2, 1

Their largest Cluster is three 3s: Cluster 3.

House Hesar Crossbows defend with Protection 2, four base dice, and +1 for high-ground cover:

4, 4, 6, 2, 1

Their largest Cluster is two 4s: Cluster 2. Squad opposition compares number of equal dice, never face value. Cluster 3 beats Cluster 2.

Results

- Attacker wins: House Hesar Crossbows gain Disorder +1.
- Winning attacker has Cluster 3: House Hesar Crossbows also gain Casualties +1.
- Attacker lacks Cluster 4, so it cannot also push, seize the objective, damage a fortification, or add another Disorder.

The crossbows have not lost organised capability and were not immediately driven off the ridge. G remains contested.

5 - Enemy Counterattack

When the enemy activates, the damaged crossbows fire at the skirmishers:

- Force 2 gives four base dice.
- G selected Fire Lane, and this is the first ranged attack from G this round: +1, then remove the bonus.
- Final attack pool: five dice.

Canyon-Wind Rangers defend with Protection 1 for three base dice. Their **Disperse** Trait grants +1 Protection die against ranged attacks, for four dice.

Both sides' largest Cluster is 2. The defender wins a tie, so the arrow storm gives the skirmishers neither Disorder nor Casualties.

6 - Round End and Whether Anyone Has Won

Luodi has not destroyed the crossbows, but has spent scarce spice to open the ridge. House Hesar Crossbows remain capable and remain in G, so the zone is still contested. The players **have not met the local victory condition**. Battle must continue, or later negotiation, withdrawal, and Morale results must change control.

Track four consequences:

1. House Hesar Crossbows: Casualties 1, Disorder 1.
2. Canyon-Wind Rangers remain intact but are now contesting the ridge.
3. The convoy has one fewer dose of Windcry Cinnamon.
4. Luodi's Hold Fast raises Gloom by 1, and he must decide what to do with wounded Hesar.

Thus one round changes force, terrain, inventory, and relationship rather than reducing only abstract health.

7 - Rules Used

Rule	Function in the example
Encounter and initiative	One check at battle start sets the first alternating activation; round 3 does not reroll it.
Captain' s Key Order	A character Thought check determines how many squads receive support.
Hold Fast	The Acting Thought ties for largest and is chosen; Gloom +1.
Echo	Unchosen Outreach brings wounded Hesar into the scene.
Battlefield spice	Consumed Windcry Cinnamon adds +1 to a squad check.
Squad Cluster	Compare the largest count of equal faces; ties favour the defender.
Powerful attack	A winning attacker with Cluster 3+ adds Casualties after Disorder.
Troop Trait	Disperse improves the rangers' ranged defence.

Advantage, high ground, and spice dice were all disclosed before rolling. If the table disagrees about whether this ridge provides cover, decide while building the pool, never after seeing the dice.

Appendix - Version and Playtest Notes

This book was consolidated as tabletop baseline **v0.5-PT1.3** on 2026-08-20. On 2026-08-23, **v0.5-PT1.3r1** synchronised Single-Team mode, all three officer-mode authorities, the latest Red Canyon scaling, the interpretation of Wonder/Gloom Thought ratings, and player-safe errata across table-facing outputs.

The same day, **v0.5-PT1.4-rc1** retained the core dice pool and added the probability preflight, Fate frequency, squad attack pressure, reading order, and release gate, then rebuilt all three PDFs at the same version.

Character checks, the seven-die cap, Fate tracks, Blood Debt, Mirage, spice, character combat, and squad combat are governed by this rulebook body. The Last Wagon through Red Canyon packet adds only its own characters, enemies, deployment, and Groundkeeper procedure. PT1.3 and PT1.3r1 PDFs remain as version history and are no longer the current candidate. The pre-consolidation Markdown survives locally as [blood_and_spice_md_before_consolidation_20260815.zip](#) for design traceability, not as a current rules source; it is intentionally omitted from the English release.

The first playtest should use these values unchanged. Do not alter pools, the seven-die cap, or Fate tracks in response to one roll. The Groundkeeper makes a one-use ruling, records it on the playtest sheet, and the table revises after the session. If a quick reference or character page conflicts with the body, the body governs.

Candidate modules, alternate values, and old “roll 5 or 6 for success” workbook charts are inactive. **Divine Ointment** remains a prototype special ability; unless the whole table explicitly elects to test it before play, PT1.4-rc1 uses only the Blessings and Transgression rules in this body. The Gann-style price matrix also remains a separate prototype and does not enter the first core playtest.