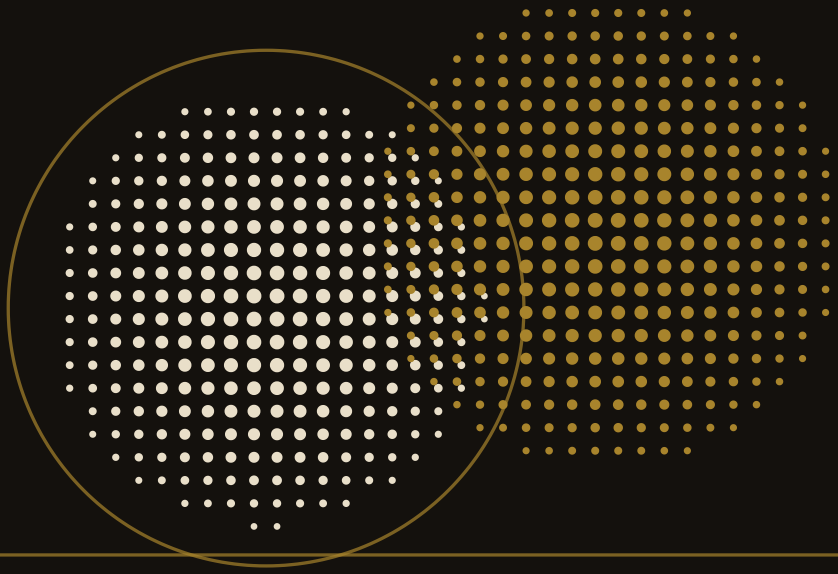


BINARY RPG

ADVENTURE BOOK

Exploration, discovery and danger across two worlds

BINARY 0.2 · WORKING EDITION

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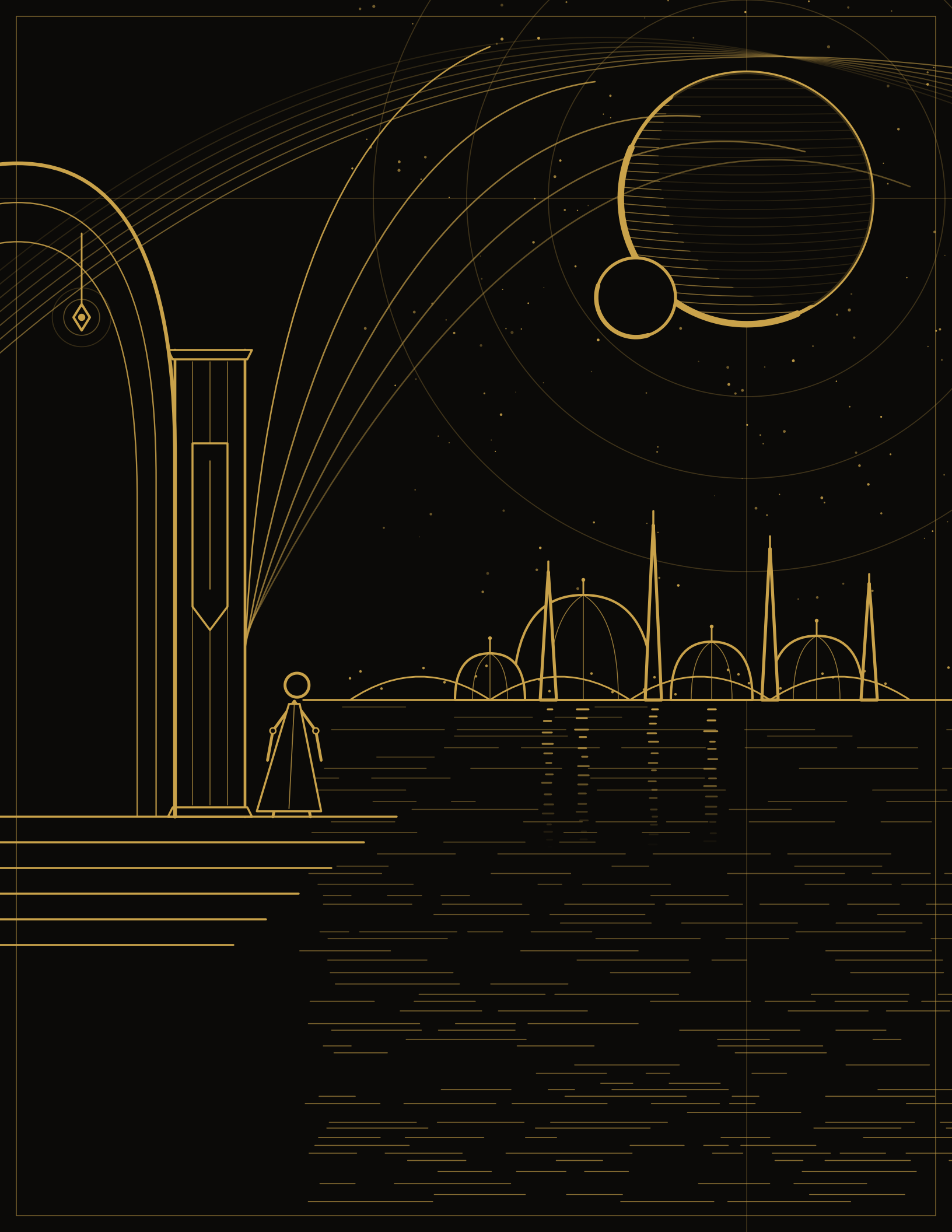
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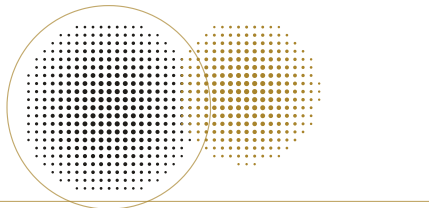
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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO BINARY

Look up.

Hanging in the sky is another world. Some nights she is a pale coin you could cover with your thumb. Some nights she fills half the heavens, close enough that you'd swear you could see her cities. And when she comes near, the sea rises to meet her. Whole coastlines drown in warm green water, then give it back again, laying bare reefs, caves and doors that no one alive has ever opened.

This is the Binary: two worlds, Tareth and Veyr, turning around each other as they always have. You live on Tareth. Your world is old, beautiful and crowded with things your people didn't build. Your neighbours are getting on with their lives. You are about to go and find out what's out there.

BINARY is a science-fantasy roleplaying game of exploration, discovery and danger. It draws on the old-school roleplaying tradition (OSR): the world is dangerous, the map is open, and nobody has written your ending. It pairs that with hex-grid tactical combat and the open, collaborative storytelling of modern tabletop games. You decide where to go, what to risk, and what to do when it all goes sideways.

THE BINARY EXPERIENCE

GO AND SEE

Routes, terrain, distance, supplies and the turning of the Great Cycle all matter once you step off the beaten path. A ruin uncovered by the retreating sea might hold the find of a lifetime, or something that was sealed in for a reason. The same cave is a different place at Far than it is at Near. Knowing when to go is half the trick.

The world doesn't wait for you. Its people have their own plans and quarrels, and they carry on whether you're watching or not. A chance meeting on a stilt-bridge can turn an afternoon errand into the adventure of the season.

TALK FIRST, ROLL LATER

At the heart of BINARY is a conversation. You describe what your character does and how they go about it. The Game Master (GM) describes the world, plays everyone in it, and tells you what happens.

Clever plans, fast talk, sharp eyes and bold improvisation all have their place. Not every problem needs a dice roll, and not every problem has one right answer. The dice come out when the outcome is uncertain and something is at stake. The rest of the time, the conversation carries the game.

DANGER HAS TEETH

When talk turns to violence, combat moves onto a hex grid where position, movement, terrain and teamwork decide who walks away. Fights aren't balanced in your favour. Knowing when to plan an ambush, when to bargain and when to run is part of staying alive.

And what you do lasts. An enemy spared may become a friend. A careless act may cost a village dearly. The world remembers.

THE WORLDS OF TARETH AND VEYR

Tareth is a world that has had thousands of years to become comfortable with itself. People aren't waiting for revolution. They're raising families, tending vineyards, sailing to distant shores, making music, falling in love, getting drunk, and arguing over the price of fish in markets that have stood for a thousand years. The world has history without constantly looking backward. The Great Cycle is ordinary. Extraordinary things exist without being treated as miracles. It is a beautiful, slightly eccentric place where people genuinely enjoy being alive. And that gives adventurers something worth exploring and, someday, perhaps something worth protecting.

Veyr is smaller and stranger, hanging in Tareth's sky like a second moon. It's older too, and far more advanced,

though few Tarethians could say exactly how.

Between the two worlds runs a force the Tarethians call **Aevum**. It rises from the Binary itself, swelling and ebbing as Tareth and Veyr draw near and far, in three humours: Earth, Water and Aether. Ordinary folk use it without a second thought, in lanterns, lifts and trams. Aevists study it and shape it into Forms. The Nymari seem simply to feel it. But no one today understands it as well as the people who first learned to harness it.

They were the **Vael**, and they built on a scale no one does now: towers no living mason could match, trams that glide by themselves, machines that have worked for centuries without repair. People ride these works and rely on them every day, but nobody builds them any more, and much of what the Vael left behind is still a mystery. Long ago, the Vael withdrew to Veyr. Everyone knows their name. Nobody alive has seen one.

At the height of Near, when the worlds are closest, a thread of light leaps between them like a spark. This is **the Conduit**, and it can be travelled. Its base on Tareth lies within the Fortress, far inland. Getting there is distant, guarded and costly. Few go. Fewer come back to talk about it.

THE GREAT CYCLE

On Tareth, the Great Cycle remakes the coast. At **Far**, Veyr is distant and the sea draws back from the Shallows, exposing miles of seabed, caves and ruins. Through the **half-water** the tide returns. At **Near**, Veyr fills the sky, the water comes home, and drowned routes, high doors and moorings open up, until the sea begins to pull away again.

A road you walk at Far may need a boat at Near. A door underwater today may be dry next month. Knowing the land, and knowing when it will change, can be worth more than any blade.

LIFE IN THE BINARY

Most people are not adventurers. They farm, fish, build, trade, navigate, study and raise families. Their worries are familiar even when the world around them is not.

Along Tareth's coast, whole towns stand on stilts, pontoons and rock, linked by bridges and long raised roads that run out over the Shallows. The Cycle shapes every livelihood and every journey, and the people who live by it can read the water like a calendar.

WHAT IS AN ADVENTURER?

An adventurer is someone who steps beyond the familiar, out of ambition, duty, necessity or plain curiosity. You might be a **Vanguard**, trained to stand in front when trouble comes; a resourceful **Scoundrel** who always knows another way in; an **Aevist** shaping Aevum into Forms; or one of the rare and strange **Nymari**.

Your character begins with skills, history and ambitions, but no guaranteed destiny. They grow through what they discover, the risks they take and the consequences they live with.

Some seek fortune. Others seek knowledge, purpose, or the next horizon for its own sake. Not everyone will make it home. But those who do will have stories worth telling.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book has two parts.

Part One: Playing the Game is for everyone. Start with The Basics and Actions to learn how the game works. Then meet the Playbooks, build your character, kit them out and see how they grow. Exploration and Combat cover what happens out in the world, and At the Table brings it all together. Examples of Play and the Reference pages help during a session.

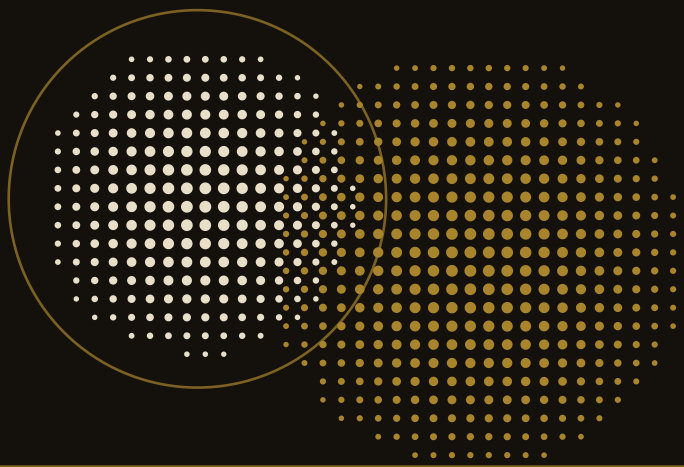
Part Two: Running the Game is for the Game Master: how to run the rules, the water, the fights and the adventures. It's spoiler-free, so players are welcome to read it too.

At the back is a short first adventure to get you started.

You don't need to learn every rule before your first session. Bring curiosity, ask questions, and say what you want to try. The GM will help you find out what happens next.

The Adventure Book holds everything you need to play and to run the game. The **World Book** explores the setting in depth, including its secrets, which are for the GM's eyes. The **Creature Book** holds the things that live out there.

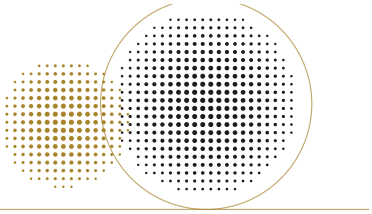
So. Look up. Then go and see.



PART ONE

PLAYING THE GAME

For everyone at the table.



CHAPTER ONE

THE BASICS

BINARY is a conversation. The GM describes the world. You say what your character does and how. Most of the time the answer is obvious and the GM tells you what happens. The rules step in only when the outcome is uncertain and it matters.

That is the whole game. Everything else in this book helps that conversation along.

WHAT YOU NEED

A Game Master (GM), a few players, a character sheet each, pencils, one twelve-sided die (**d12**), a handful of six-sided dice (**d6**) and a hex grid for fights, on the table or on a screen.

THE CORE ROLL

When the GM calls for a roll, roll the d12 and add a d6 for each level of training you have in the action.

1d12 + proficiency dice + any modifiers

Meet or beat the **difficulty** to succeed. If you miss, things don't stop; they change. The GM tells you what it costs you.

You'll usually know the difficulty and the risk before you roll. If you don't like them, try another approach.

DIFFICULTY	TARGET
Easy	6
Standard	8
Hard	12
Very Hard	16
Exceptional	20
Extreme	25

Crossing an exposed Shallows shelf is Hard (12). Maren is proficient in Traverse, so she rolls 1d12 + 1d6. An 8 and a 4 make 12. She's across.

WHO YOU ARE

Actions are what you've learned to do: twelve of them, from Melee to Persuade. Your training in an action gives you extra dice.

TRAINING	DICE
Untrained	d12 only
Proficient	+1d6
Expert	+2d6
Master	+3d6

Attributes are what you were born with: **Might**, **Agility**, **Wits** and **Spirit**. When one clearly helps outside a fight, the GM may let you add it to the roll. Attribute modifiers usually don't apply to attacks.

Your **playbook** is the kind of adventurer you are. You'll pick one of four.

WHAT ELSE TO EXPECT

- **Sixes count.** When a proficiency die shows a 6, you roll one extra die. If that extra die also shows a 6, it's an **Epic Success**.
- **Two modes of play.** Most of the time you **explore**: talking, travelling, searching, resting. When violence breaks out, play switches to **combat**: rounds, two actions a turn and a hex grid where position matters as much as dice.
- **The world moves.** The **Great Cycle** raises and lowers the seas. The same place can be dry ground one month and a flooded channel the next.
- **You grow by taking risks.** Characters improve by pushing their luck and surviving it, and by bringing back what they find.
- **Danger is real.** Fights can go badly. Planning, bargaining and running away are all good ideas.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANISED

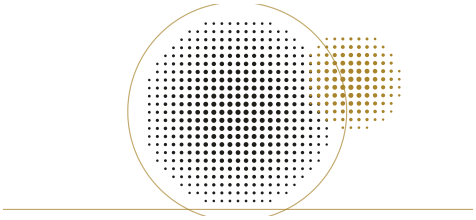
Part One: Playing the Game is for everyone at the table.

SECTION	CHAPTER	WHAT'S IN IT
How to Play	1 The Basics	The ideas and the core roll.
	2 Actions	The twelve actions and what they cover.
Your Character	3 Playbooks	The four kinds of adventurer.
	4 Building Your Character	Making a character, step by step.
	5 Equipment	Weapons, armour, Aevic gear and money.
	6 Advancement	How your character grows.
Out There	7 Exploration	Time, consequences, resting, Fatigue and the Great Cycle.
	8 Combat	Fighting on the hex grid.
In Play	9 At the Table	Putting it all together.
	10 Examples of Play	Watch a session unfold.
	11 Reference	Tables at a glance.

Part Two: Running the Game is for the Game Master. Players are welcome to read it; nothing in it spoils the world.

CHAPTER	WHAT'S IN IT
12 The GM's Job	The conversation, when to roll, difficulty, consequences.
13 Running Exploration	Time, rest, Fatigue, sneaking and searching, travel.
14 Running the Great Cycle	Phases, the half-water, revisiting places.
15 Running Combat	The map, turn order, conditions, rulings, falling down.
16 Clocks	Countdowns for anything that's coming.
17 Aevum and the Old Works	Devices, Aevists, old works.
18 Rewards and Advancement	XP, Advancement Rolls, treasure.
19 Building Adventures	Places and pressures, seeds, campaigns.
GM Reference	Tables at a glance.

At the back: a short introductory adventure (to be written). The S series, S1 to S3, is released separately as a three-module adventure.



CHAPTER TWO

ACTIONS

Actions are the twelve things any adventurer can attempt: fighting, climbing, lying, reading an old inscription and everything in between. Each one covers a whole area of skill, not a single move. **Traverse** is scaling a cliff, swimming a flooded tunnel and edging along a ledge. **Persuade** is haggling in a market, talking down a guard and winning over a council.

Your sheet shows how well trained you are in each action. The better trained you are, the more dice you roll.

Start with the story, not the sheet. Say what you're trying to do and how you're going about it. Then suggest the action you think fits, and why. The GM makes the final call, and may choose a different action if your approach points that way. How you do something decides which action you roll.

Maren needs to cross the mudflats before the tide turns. "I wade out slowly, feeling for the old causeway stones with my feet." The GM says, "Sounds like Traverse." Maren's player asks, "Could it be Survive? She grew up on these flats and knows how they shift." The GM agrees: Survive it is.

The twelve actions sit in four groups of three.

KNOWLEDGE	EXPLORATION	SOCIAL	COMBAT
Lore	Navigate	Persuade	Melee
Investigate	Traverse	Deceive	Ranged
Aevum	Survive	Command	Finesse

USING ACTIONS

When the outcome is uncertain and failure matters, roll **1d12 + your proficiency dice** for the action (see The Basics). You can try any action untrained; you just roll the d12 alone.

The same problem can use different actions. Studying a locked door is Investigate. Picking it is Finesse. Talking the guard into opening it is Persuade. A clever enough idea may need no roll at all.

The **verbs** under each action are printed on your sheet. Outside a fight they're prompts, not limits. In a fight, the combat verbs are specific manoeuvres with set rules.

KNOWLEDGE

Lore · *recall, interpret, decipher, survey* History, cultures, old maps, inscriptions and learning. Survey a place to spot what matters: sightlines, landmarks, known dangers.

Investigate · *search, examine, inspect, deduce* Search for clues, examine evidence, inspect a mechanism and work out what happened or how something works.

Aevum · *sense, study, activate, manipulate* Sense, study and work Aevic forces and devices, including an Aevist's Forms. Anyone can use an everyday Aevic device. That doesn't make them an Aevist.

EXPLORATION

Navigate · *route, chart, orient, plan travel* Find and follow a route, read a chart, keep your bearings and plan a journey through strange country or shifting water.

Traverse · *climb, leap, swim, balance, squeeze* Get past physical obstacles: climb, jump, swim, keep your footing, squeeze through.

Survive · *track, forage, shelter, endure* Track creatures, find food and shelter, spot natural dangers and hold up in hard conditions far from town.

SOCIAL

Persuade · *reason, bargain, appeal, win over* Reason, bargain or appeal to someone's interests. A good argument still needs to offer something they could accept.

Deceive · *lie, bluff, disguise, misdirect* Lie, bluff, hide what you're after, draw attention elsewhere or keep up a false identity.

Command · *lead, rally, order, intimidate* Take charge, rally a group, give orders or frighten someone with sheer presence.

COMBAT

Melee · *strike, grapple, shove, trip, disarm, smash* Fight up close with a weapon or your body.

Ranged · *shoot, throw, aim, suppress, pin* Attack from a distance with a bow, a thrown weapon or anything else that flies.

Finesse · *dodge, parry, pass through, escape, pick, disarm traps* Precision and control: locks, traps, sleight of hand, slipping past an enemy or out of a hold. Finesse is split-second, round-to-round work, even when you're not fighting. That's why it sits with the combat actions.

Just as you can fire an arrow or throw a punch outside a fight, you can use Finesse without an enemy in sight. All three are still combat actions, and they improve the same way (see Advancement).

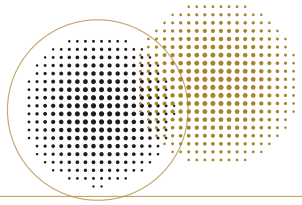
Attacks roll against the target's **AC**, and attributes usually don't add to them. Every combat verb (Attack, Defend, Pass Through, Grapple, Shove, Trip, Disarm, Escape Restraint and the rest) is set out in **Combat**.

To develop: Aim and Suppress (Ranged) and Dodge, Parry, Block, Reposition and Disengage (Finesse). Keep Finesse distinct from Traverse. The Scoundrel's Pinning Shot is a playbook ability, not a basic verb.



CHAPTER THREE

PLAYBOOKS



Your playbook is the kind of adventurer you are. It sets your armour, your health, your starting attributes, the actions you are best at and the abilities you can learn. There are four: the **Vanguard**, the **Scoundrel**, the **Aevist** and the **Nymari**.

A playbook is a starting point, not a cage. Your backgrounds, your choices and what happens to you in play make your character who they are.

READING A PLAYBOOK

Every playbook gives you the same things.

Your armour type sets your **AC** and your **Armour** track. Damage comes off Armour first, then **Health**.

Attributes. A recommended spread of Might, Agility, Wits and Spirit. You may swap any two once when you create your character. The Nymari assign theirs freely.

Signature actions. Marked as signature actions on your sheet. Each starts at Proficient (+1d6) and is the only kind of action that can ever reach **Master** (+3d6). Every other action stops at Expert (+2d6).

Abilities. Arranged in three tiers. You choose **two Tier I abilities** when you create your character. Tier II and Tier III open up later through XP (see Advancement).

Multidisciplined. Every playbook has this Tier II pick. Take it to learn one Tier I ability from another playbook. It uses up a Tier II choice; it isn't a free extra.

Abilities marked draft or to develop are still being playtested. Expect them to change.

VANGUARD

Warrior. Protector. Veteran.

You are trained for danger. You fight in heavy armour, take punishment that would drop anyone else, and stand between your friends and whatever wants them dead. You might have been a soldier, a caravan guard, a mercenary or the last survivor of someone else's war.

Strengths: combat, durability, battlefield control.

ARMOUR	AC	ARMOUR PIPS	HEALTH
Heavy	14	5	5

MIGHT	AGILITY	WITS	SPIRIT
+2	0	−1	+1

Signature actions: Melee, Survive, Command.

Tier I

- **Cleave.** One Melee action attacks two adjacent enemies within reach. Roll separately; each takes full damage.
- **Draw Ire.** One action, no roll. The target must spend its next turn moving toward you or attacking you, as it is able.
- **Field Hardened.** Ignore your first Fatigue.
- **Hold the Line.** An enemy moving between your threatened hexes, or leaving them, must pass Finesse against your AC. If it fails, that movement action is wasted.
- **Field Repairs.** During a Breather, restore 1 Armour on top of the activity you chose.
- **Protector.** Once per round, when an adjacent ally is targeted by an attack, swap hexes with them. The attack is made against your AC and you take any damage. Costs no action.
- **Brutal.** When you genuinely intimidate by force, lower the agreed difficulty of your Command roll (or other fitting action) by one step.

Tier II

- **Berserker.** Make two separate Melee attacks for one action. While you keep it up, take 1d3 damage each round. You can stop at any time.
- **Multidisciplined.**

Tier III

To develop.

SCOUNDREL

Opportunist. Infiltrator. Survivor.

You survive on speed, nerve and a willingness to take every advantage going. You strike from range, slip past what you can't fight and hit hardest when your target isn't ready. You might be a thief, a scout, a smuggler or simply someone who learned to live by their wits.

Strengths: mobility, deception, precision, exploiting weakness.

ARMOUR	AC	ARMOUR PIPS	HEALTH
Medium	12	4	4

MIGHT	AGILITY	WITS	SPIRIT
–1	+2	+1	0

Signature actions: Ranged, Traverse, Deceive.

Tier I

- **Pinning Shot.** Declare before rolling. Ranged against AC: on a hit, deal no damage, but the target can't move for one round. It can still act.
- **First Blood.** Your first successful Melee or Ranged hit against each foe deals +1d6 damage, unless that foe has already damaged you.
- **Slippery Customer.** Once per exploration, reroll a failed Deceive or Traverse roll and keep the better result.
- **Nimble Fingers.** +1d6 on Finesse rolls for locks, traps, pickpocketing and delicate mechanisms. This die can take you past your normal limit.
- **Hit and Run.** Once per combat, spend both actions to move up to 6 hexes and make one Melee attack anywhere along the way.
- **Cheap Shot.** Once per turn, make a Melee attack. On a hit, deal normal damage and put the target on the Back Foot through its next turn.
- **Sneak Attack.** +1d6 damage on a successful Melee or Ranged hit against a vulnerable target: on the Back Foot, flanked, grabbed, prone or stunned.

Tier II

- **Sniper** (*draft*). Spend both actions taking a firing stance. After that, each attack action makes two separate Ranged attacks. Moving, taking damage or being flanked breaks the stance.
- **Hide in Plain Sight** (*draft*). Spend one action to focus on one enemy. It counts as on the Back Foot against your Melee attacks. You can focus on only one enemy at a time.
- **Multidisciplined.**

Tier III

To develop.

AEVIST

Practitioner. Investigator. Manipulator of Aevum.

You study the force that runs through the binary worlds and the old machines built to use it. You shape Aevum into **Forms**, wake ancient devices and get answers out of things that stopped talking a thousand years ago. You wear little armour. You don't need to be in the front line to change a fight.

Strengths: Aevic knowledge, Forms, technological manipulation.

ARMOUR	AC	ARMOUR PIPS	HEALTH
Light	10	3	3

MIGHT	AGILITY	WITS	SPIRIT
–1	0	+2	+1

Signature actions: Aevum, Lore, Persuade.

The Aevum reservoir

You carry a reservoir of **five slots**. Each holds one charge of a humour: **Earth**, **Water** or **Aether**. Set your mix each morning after a successful Camp. Casting a Form spends the charges it costs. A Breather can refill the reservoir, but only to that day's mix.

The Great Cycle helps: during **Far**, Earth Forms gain +1; during **Near**, Water Forms gain +1.

Forms

A Form used to attack is a Melee or Ranged attack. You may roll Aevum instead of Melee or Ranged. Forms reach anything you can see. Costs: **E** Earth, **W** Water, **A** Aether, **X** any humour, **XX** a variable amount, judged by the GM.

FORM	COST	EFFECT
Heal	1W	Restore 2d3 Health to a living target, even one at 0 Health.
Ward	?	A barrier gives +1 AC for 3 rounds.
Fortify	1E	1d3 temporary Health. Stacks.
Repulsion Field	XX	Push a creature or object 1 hex per charge spent.
Aevum Blast	1X	Attack against AC; on a hit, 1d6 damage.
Grasp	1X	Move or fetch an unattended object at a distance.
Bind	1X	Hold a creature in place for a round. It can still act.
Pulse	1X	A burst of force pushes a nearby creature or object.
Light Pearl	1A	A hovering pearl of torchlight. Lasts one exploration.
Veil	1A	Briefly hide a person or small area.
Whisper	1A	Send a short silent message to someone you can see.
Shape	XX	Spend charges in any mix and describe the effect. The GM decides what is possible.

Costs marked ? are not set yet. The full Forms reference is on the back of the Aevist sheet.

Tier I

- **Aevic Sense.** Ask whether there is Aevic activity nearby and receive an impression. No roll, no cost.
- **Circuit Breaker.** One action: touch a device or an active Form and make an Aevum roll to interrupt it for one round.
- **Rapid Recharge.** Once per exploration, spend one action to recover 1d3 charges, up to your capacity.
- **Applied Knowledge.** Once per exploration, use your Lore dice for another fitting action.
- **Battle Attunement.** During a ten-minute Breather, attune the party: each member gains +1 on one roll in the fight you expect.

Tier II

- **Tinkerer / Artificer** (*to develop*). Create or repair simple Aevic devices.
- **Heightened Reservoir** (*to develop*). Increase your reservoir's capacity.
- **Multidisciplined.**

Tier III

- **Adaptable.** Once per Form, spend 1 Aether in place of 1 Earth or 1 Water.

NYMARI

Adaptable. Outsider. Enigmatic.

You are one of the Nymari, a rare people native to Tareth: slender, four-armed and feline-eyed. Unlike the other playbooks, you aren't defined by a trade. You are defined by what you are, and by what you choose to become.

Strengths: Aevic attunement, flexibility, survival.

ARMOUR	AC	HEALTH
Natural	12	8 (natural armour, one track)

Attributes. Assign +2, +1, 0 and −1 however you like. Rearrange them as often as you want during character creation.

Signature action: Finesse. Then choose **three more proficiencies** from any other actions, combat included. Those start at +1d6 and stop at Expert.

Innate: all Nymari

Four arms. Four working arms, feline eyes and a sensitivity to Aevum. The extra arms do **not** give you extra actions or attacks, but use them in how you describe what you do. They are a good reason for the GM to let an attribute count.

"I hold the bomb steady with two hands and work the wires with the other two. Can I add my Agility, GM?"

Minor Forms. You know all four. Use them freely, with no roll and no cost.

- **Minor Light.** A faint cool light fills your hex and stays close until you dismiss it.
- **Nudge.** Move a small unattended object up to 1 hex. No attacks, no force.
- **Whisper.** Send quiet words to a nearby character without speaking.
- **Echo.** Make a brief, simple or distracting sound nearby.

Tier I

- **Hardy.** +2 AC, permanently. Describe the adaptation that gives it to you.
- **Resilient.** During a Breather, recover to full Health without using your Breather activity.

- **Ancient Affinity.** Lower the difficulty one step when your Nymari body or sight helps you work ancient Aevic technology.
- **Well Learned.** +1d6 proficiency in one Knowledge action: Lore, Investigate or Aevum.
- **Aware of Your Surroundings.** +1d6 proficiency in one Exploration action: Navigate, Traverse or Survive.
- **Battle Hardened.** +1d6 proficiency in one Combat action: Melee, Ranged or Finesse.

Tier II

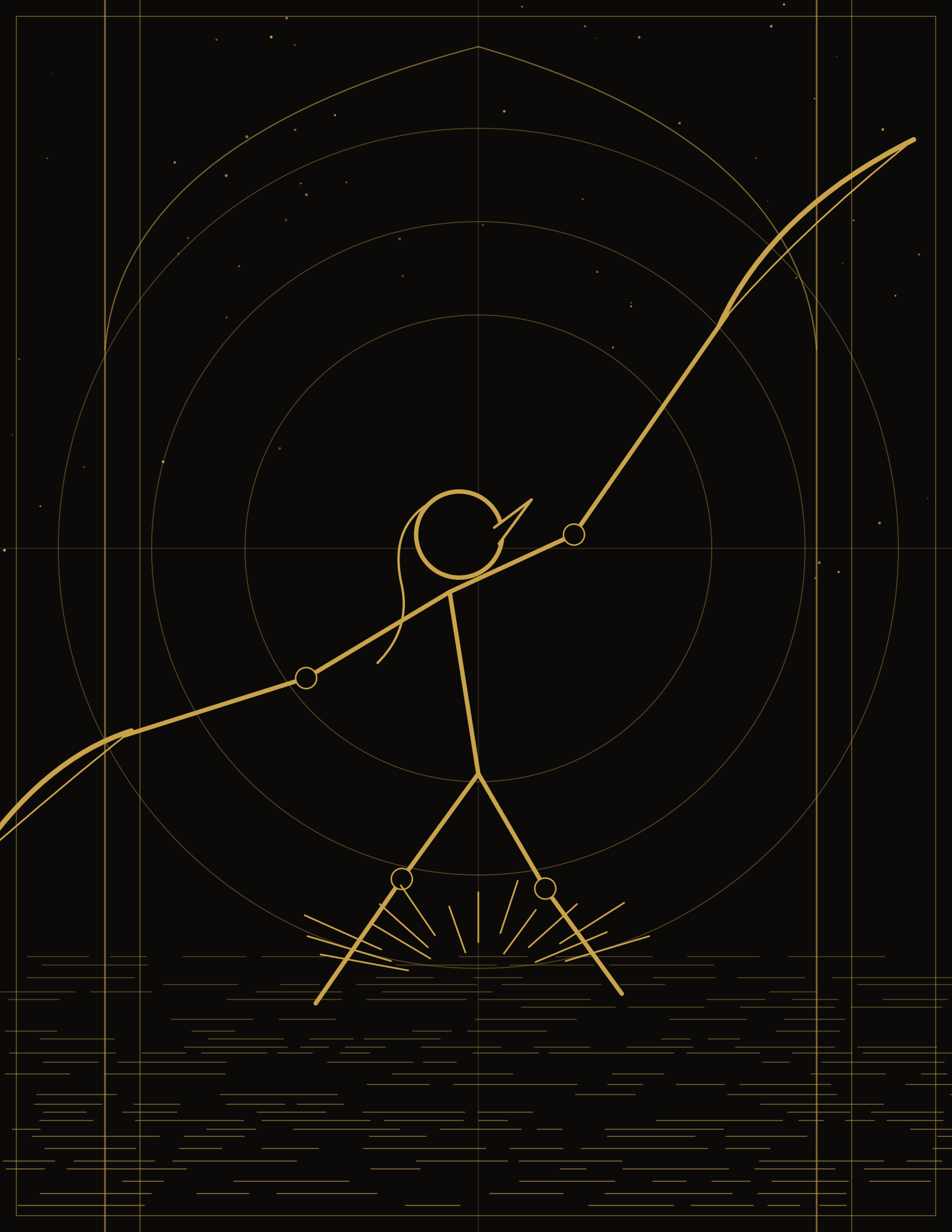
- **Multidisciplined.**
- *Nymari biological and Aevic abilities: to develop.*

Tier III

To develop.

PLAYBOOK SUMMARY

	VANGUARD	SCOUNDREL	AEVIST	NYMARI
Armour	Heavy, AC 14	Medium, AC 12	Light, AC 10	Natural, AC 12
Armour / Health	5 / 5	4 / 4	3 / 3	Health 8 (natural armour)
Signature actions	Melee, Survive, Command	Ranged, Traverse, Deceive	Aevum, Lore, Persuade	Finesse + three free picks
Best at	Holding the line	Striking first, slipping away	Forms and old machines	Adapting



CHAPTER FOUR

BUILDING YOUR CHARACTER



Making a character takes seven steps and about twenty minutes. You don't need to plan their whole future. BINARY characters are made by what happens to them.

1. Choose a playbook.
2. Choose two backgrounds.
3. Set your attributes.
4. Mark your proficiencies.
5. Choose two abilities.
6. Take your equipment.
7. Decide who you are.

STEP 1: CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK

Your playbook is the kind of adventurer you are. The **Playbooks** chapter has each one in full.

PLAYBOOK	IN SHORT	BEST AT
Vanguard	Warrior. Protector. Veteran.	Fighting, taking punishment, holding the line.
Scoundrel	Opportunist. Infiltrator. Survivor.	Speed, deception, striking where it hurts.
Aevist	Practitioner. Investigator. Manipulator of Aevum.	Forms, Aevic knowledge, old machines.
Nymari	Adaptable. Outsider. Enigmatic.	Whatever you make of them.

STEP 2: CHOOSE TWO BACKGROUNDS

Your playbook is what you are now. Your backgrounds are the life that got you here. A Vanguard who grew up on a farm; an Aevist raised on a trading ship; a Scoundrel with a university education and no respectable use for it.

Each background gives **+1d6 in two actions**. Pick two different backgrounds for a varied life, or the same one twice to specialise.

BACKGROUND	ACTIONS
Academic	Lore, Investigate
Aevic Mechanic	Aevum, Investigate
Artisan	Aevum, Lore
Criminal	Deceive, Traverse
Entertainer	Persuade, Deceive
Farmer	Survive, Traverse
Guard	Lore, Command
Healer	Investigate, Persuade
Hunter	Survive, Navigate
Labourer	Traverse, Survive
Merchant	Persuade, Investigate
Seafarer	Navigate, Survive

A Scoundrel takes Criminal and Seafarer: +1d6 in Deceive, Traverse, Navigate and Survive. Years of smuggling between ports.

A Vanguard takes Guard twice: +2d6 in Lore and Command. A career soldier.

A background also tells the GM what you'd reasonably know. A Seafarer knows ships; a Healer knows wounds. That's not an ability, just part of who you are.

To develop: more backgrounds.

STEP 3: SET YOUR ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTE	COVERS
Might	Strength, endurance, force.
Agility	Coordination, reflexes, balance.
Wits	Perception, reasoning, memory.
Spirit	Willpower, presence, intuition.

PLAYBOOK	MIGHT	AGILITY	WITS	SPIRIT
Vanguard	+2	0	−1	+1
Scoundrel	−1	+2	+1	0
Aevist	−1	0	+2	+1
Nymari	Assign +2, +1, 0 and −1 freely.			

Vanguard, Scoundrel and Aevist may swap any two attributes **once**. Nymari can rearrange theirs as often as they like until play begins.

Outside a fight, when an attribute clearly helps, the GM may let you add it to the roll. Attributes usually don't add to attacks, and they don't normally improve.

STEP 4: MARK YOUR PROFICIENCIES

Mark the dice your playbook and backgrounds give you. Where they overlap, they add up.

Signature actions. Your playbook's signature actions start at Proficient (+1d6) and are marked as signature actions on your sheet. Only signature actions can reach **Master** (+3d6). Every other action stops at **Expert** (+2d6).

PLAYBOOK	SIGNATURE ACTIONS
Vanguard	Melee, Survive, Command
Scoundrel	Ranged, Traverse, Deceive
Aevist	Aevum, Lore, Persuade
Nymari	Finesse, plus **three free picks**

Nymari. Your three free picks can be any actions other than Finesse, combat included. Each starts at +1d6 and stops at Expert.

STEP 5: CHOOSE TWO ABILITIES

Abilities come in three tiers. Choose **two Tier I abilities** from your playbook now. Tier II and Tier III open up as you advance.

Multidisciplined is a Tier II pick on every playbook. It lets you learn one Tier I ability from another playbook. That's the only way to borrow; there are no free extra slots.

STEP 6: TAKE YOUR EQUIPMENT

Take your playbook's armour and the tools your backgrounds suggest. Name and describe your weapons. The **Equipment** chapter has the weapon and armour tables and the Aevic gear.

To develop: starting packages for each playbook.

STEP 7: DECIDE WHO YOU ARE

A few lines is enough. The rest comes out in play.

- **Name.** What are you called, and by whom?
- **Look.** What do people notice first?
- **Origins.** Where did you grow up? How did your backgrounds shape you?
- **Drive.** Fortune, knowledge, lost technology, revenge, a fresh start?
- **Ties.** Do you know anyone else at the table? Served together, shared a ship, survived something?

And one question worth answering: **what do you want badly enough to risk your life for it?**

READY

You're done. You'll grow through what you find, the risks you take and what you survive (see **Advancement**). There are no builds to follow. Your story starts when you step into the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

EQUIPMENT

Gear in BINARY is kept simple. You don't count arrows, track rations or weigh your pack. What you carry matters when it changes what you can do: the right tool opens a door, the right armour keeps you standing, the right pearl in the right weapon turns a fight.

WEAPONS

Every weapon falls into a **category**. The category sets its damage die. That's the only rule a weapon has.

What you call it is up to you. The name and look of your weapon are flavour. Pick the category that fits, then make it yours: a whale-bone harpoon, your grandmother's gutting knife, a spear made from a broken oar. Agree the category with the GM. If it's big and swung with both hands, it's probably Heavy; if it fits in a boot, it's Small. The examples below are only there to help you decide.

CATEGORY	DAMAGE	EXAMPLES
Unarmed	d2	Fists, kicks
Improvised	d3	Thrown stone, lamp, a chair
Small	d4	Dagger, club, sling stone
Standard	d6	Shortsword, mace, spear, bow
Heavy	d8	Longsword, warhammer, halberd, crossbow

Melee and Ranged weapons use the same table.

Damage. On a hit, roll the weapon's die and add **+1 for each d6 you rolled** on the attack, including the exploded die. An Epic Success doubles the weapon dice, not that bonus (see Combat).

Reach. Some weapons, such as a spear or halberd, have **Reach**: they attack from two hexes away. An attacker using Reach doesn't count for flanking.

No bookkeeping.

- Drawing or switching weapons is part of the action that uses them.
- There's no ammunition to count and no reload action.
- Ranged attacks need a clear line of sight, not a range table. The GM rules out impossible shots.

ARMOUR

Your armour sets your **AC** and gives you an **Armour** track. Damage comes off Armour first, then Health. Mark pips from right to left.

ARMOUR	AC	ARMOUR	HEALTH	WORN BY
Light	10	3	3	Aevist
Medium	12	4	4	Scoundrel
Heavy	14	5	5	Vanguard
Natural	12	—	8	Nymari

Restoring Armour. Restoring Armour is one of the activities you can choose during a Breather (see Exploration). The Vanguard's Field Repairs adds 1 more.

Wearing other armour. *To develop: whether characters can change armour type, and what that costs.*

AEVIC GEAR

Aevic devices do reliable, understandable things, even when no one can explain how they work. The Vael knew how to make them. Most people in the binary worlds don't. **Anyone can use a finished, fixed-function device**: light a Glow Pearl, wind in a Returning Hook. Studying a device, repairing it or bending it to a new purpose is Aevum work, and that is what Aevists do.

Aevic gear comes in two kinds. The great works of the Vael, such as the rail lines and the Conduit, aren't gear; the Introduction describes them.

Common devices

Small relics with one modest, specific use. You can buy them, trade for them or find them.

DEVICE	WHAT IT DOES
Glow Pearl	Gives light.
Ember Stone	Gives warmth and light.
Whisper Shard	Silently sends a short verbal message to another creature or PC.
Echo Shell	Records a short message and plays it back.
Drift Ring	Lets you float briefly.
Tidemark Pearl	Underwater, shows the nearest pocket of breathable air.
Stillwater Lens	Briefly clears turbulent water.
Anchor Nail	Holds a rope fast against stone.
Returning Hook	Returns along its attached line.

Working concepts. Exact effects, durations and prices to develop.

Rare relics

Harder to find, worth more and sometimes beautiful.

Aevic Conductor. Attaches to a weapon or a suit of armour. It has three sockets. Fill all three with pearls of the **same** humour and it gives a +1 bonus of that humour. Mixed humours or an empty socket give nothing.

Breath Pearl. One wearer can breathe underwater.

Sea Captain's Doppler. A seashell that unfolds around a glowing Aevic heart and projects a dome of weather patterns. *Mechanics to develop.*

TREASURE AND MONEY

The binary worlds trade in **Aevic Pearls** (AP). Bits are common currency and are used for day to day shopping, 100 Bits = 1AP (Aevic Pearl).

Pearls also have Humours; Water (WAP), Earth (EAP) and Aether (AAP). These Humoured Pearls are primarily used to power Aevic devices. 10AP = 1(EAP, WAP or AAP) of your choice. No roll.

Record all five on the Treasure line of your sheet as defined by the GM.

To develop: prices for gear, services and travel.

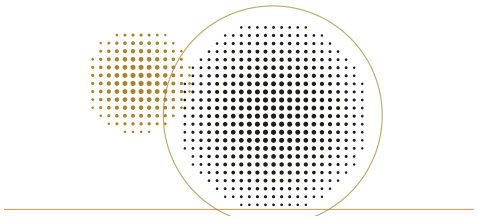
STARTING EQUIPMENT

Every character starts with their playbook's armour and the tools their backgrounds suggest. A Seafarer has rope and a knife; an Academic has notes and a lamp.

To develop: a starting package for each playbook, and starting pearls.

EQUIPMENT SUMMARY

1. **Weapons** have a category and a damage die. You name and describe them. Damage is the weapon die +1 per d6 rolled.
2. **Reach** attacks from two hexes away, but doesn't count for flanking.
3. **No** ammunition, reloads or range bands.
4. **Armour** sets AC and your Armour track. Damage hits Armour first, then Health.
5. **Anyone** can use a finished Aevic device, common or rare.
6. **AP** are money and material. 10 AP make one humoured pearl. 100 Bits make 1 AP.



CHAPTER SIX

ADVANCEMENT

Your character gets better in two ways:

1. **Advancement Rolls** improve your non-combat actions. Take a risk, fail, learn from it.
2. **Experience (XP)** brings new abilities, and can improve your combat actions: Melee, Ranged and Finesse. The GM awards it as you play.

1. ADVANCEMENT ROLLS

Advancement Rolls are only for **non-combat actions**. Melee, Ranged and Finesse never take them, even outside a fight: picking a lock with Finesse can't earn a pip. Those three improve through **XP** instead (see Combat Actions, below).

When an action could achieve something more than usual, the GM may offer an **Advancement Roll**. Before you roll, agree with the GM what extra you get if you succeed and what worse thing happens if you fail. You can take the risk or make an ordinary roll instead.

Use the same dice and difficulty as normal.

- **Success:** you get the bigger result.
- **Failure:** you suffer the agreed consequence and mark one **advancement pip** on that action.

Joss is crossing a flooded channel. The GM offers an Advancement Roll: succeed and he finds a valuable shortcut; fail and he loses supplies but marks a Navigate pip. Joss takes it.

Only failed Advancement Rolls earn pips. Ordinary failures don't, and neither do safe, repeated attempts.

Improving an action

When a non-combat action has **five pips**, clear them and fill in one more proficiency die for that action.

2. EXPERIENCE (XP)

The GM hands out **XP** when they think you've earned it. There's no fixed formula. Exploring somewhere new, bringing back something valuable, surviving real danger, doing something epic and or cool, and making choices that change the world are all good reasons. Mark each XP as a pip on your **XP track**.

How much XP to give, and when, is covered in Chapter Eighteen, Rewards and Advancement.

Spending XP

Your XP track has **five pips**. When it's full, clear it and take one **advance**. An advance buys one of these:

- **A new ability** from your playbook, from any tier you've unlocked (Tier I to start).
- **One pip on a tier unlock track of the next locked Tier.**
- **One pip on a combat action:** Melee, Ranged or Finesse.

Unlocking tiers

You start with two Tier I abilities. Higher tiers are unlocked as you gain experience.

Tier II and Tier III both have an unlock track of **two pips**. Fill Tier II's track and it's open for good. Once it is, **Tier III**'s two-pip unlock track opens.

Unlocking a tier doesn't give you an ability. It lets you spend later advances on that tier's abilities.

Multidisciplined is a Tier II ability: once Tier II is open, an advance can buy it to learn one Tier I ability from another playbook, once.

Joss fills his XP track and spends the advance on a Tier II unlock pip. Two sessions later he fills it again, takes the second pip, and Tier II is open. His next advance buys Sniper.

Playtest: if tiers open too quickly, the unlock tracks go up to three pips.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Melee, Ranged and Finesse each have a **combat track of three pips**. They never improve through Advancement Rolls, in a fight or out of one. Finesse counts as a combat action because it's round-to-round precision work, whether you're parrying a blade or easing a lock. Spend an advance to mark one pip; when the track is full, clear it and fill in one more proficiency die.

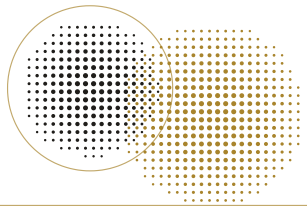
That's three advances for one more die. Getting better at fighting is the brute-force road: it works, but it's the most expensive thing XP can buy. Abilities are where most characters should spend their XP.

Maren fills her XP track. She could take Cleave, but she wants to hit harder, so she marks a Melee pip instead. Two more advances like that and her Melee goes up to Expert. With the same three advances, Joss opened Tier II and learned Sniper.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes don't normally improve through experience. Rare Aevic means might change them.





CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPLORATION

Most of the game happens here: travelling, searching, talking, resting and deciding where to go next. Exploration is the default way BINARY is played. A fight is what happens when exploration goes wrong.

TIME OUTSIDE A FIGHT

There are no turns in exploration. Time moves as fast as the story needs: a tense minute picking a lock, an afternoon searching a ruin, three days on the High Road. The GM tells you how much time passes, and if it matters. Light runs out, the water rises and someone else gets there first may be important to the story or environment.

When violence breaks out, switch to Combat. When the fight ends, you're back here.

EXPLORATION AND CONSEQUENCES

Distance, terrain, supplies, people and time all matter. A failed roll rarely ends the adventure. It costs time, draws attention or forces a new choice. Look for information, make plans and watch what changes.

RESTING

There are two kinds of rest.

Breather

A **Breather** is a short rest of about ten minutes, outside combat. Choose **one** activity:

- **repair your Armour:** restore 1 Armour pip;
- **heal yourself:** restore all your Health;
- **heal an ally:** restore all their Health;
- (Aevist) refill your reservoir, to the day's mix.

Abilities add to the activity you choose. The Vanguard's Field Repairs restores 1 extra Armour; the Nymari's Resilient heals to full for free.

Pushing your luck. The first ten minutes of a Breather are safe (in especially dangerous places, the GM rolls a 1 in 6 for an interruption). If you want another activity, stay put and rest another ten minutes, but each one is riskier: 2 in 6 at twenty minutes, 3 in 6 at thirty, and so on. An interruption can be hostile, neutral or even helpful.

If it turns into a fight, the Breather is over: switch to Combat, and the activity you were doing is lost. **If it doesn't**, deal with it and carry on. Your activity still counts, and you can keep resting, but the count keeps climbing. An interruption doesn't reset it.

The count starts again with each new Breather. Only staying longer makes it go up.

The party stops in a dry cave. In the first ten minutes Maren repairs her Armour, safely. They stay another ten so Joss can heal: 2 in 6, and the dice say they're fine. They push for a third, at 3 in 6: a lost fisher wanders in, asking the way. Maren finishes her activity. If they stay a fourth ten minutes, it's 4 in 6.

Camp

A **Camp** is a "night's" rest with adequate food and shelter. Making a proper Camp in the wild usually takes a roll, often Survive. You don't track torches, meals or rations.

- **A successful Camp** restores all your Health and Armour, and removes 1 Fatigue.
- **A failed Camp** restores nothing, and gives you 1 Fatigue.
- Aevists set their reservoir's humour mix each morning after a successful Camp.

The party limps out of the cave with Maren on 1 Health and no Armour. Joss makes the Survive roll: a dry ledge above the tideline, a fire, fish. Maren wakes with full Health and Armour, and her Fatigue drops from 2 to 1. She's still Tired, so she starts the day on the Back Foot.

FATIGUE

Fatigue is physical exhaustion, injury and being worn down. You gain 1 Fatigue when you:

- fail to make a proper Camp, or
- are revived after falling unconscious in a fight.

FATIGUE	EFFECT
0 — Rested	No penalties.
1 — Tired	You gain the Back Foot condition (−1 AC).
2 — Exhausted	Back Foot; −1 Move.
3 — Depleted	All previous penalties. Lose the extra proficiency dice gained through advancement; keep your playbook's own dice.
4 — Incapacitated	You can't act. You must rest.

Penalties are cumulative. Each successful Camp removes 1 Fatigue.

THE GREAT CYCLE

The worlds turn, and the water follows. Across the Shallows the sea rises and falls in a long, predictable rhythm. Markets change their hours, paths appear, boats return to old channels and creatures come and go. A place you visited last month may be a different place now.

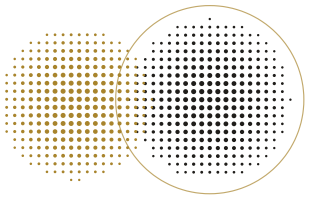
FAR → RISING → NEAR → FALLING → FAR

- **Far.** The water retreats. Paths, caves, ruins and lower buildings open up. Exposed ground can be hard going or dangerous. Earth Aevum is stronger: **+1 Earth**.
- **Rising.** The water returns. Routes close and reopen in new shapes. Boats and sea life move into newly flooded places.
- **Near.** The Shallows flood. Sea lanes and low moorings come into use; some doors and walkways vanish underwater. Water Aevum is stronger: **+1 Water**.
- **Falling.** The water withdraws. Travel, work and exploring begin to shift back toward Far.

The +1 Earth and +1 Water are the only Great Cycle bonuses.

Using the Cycle. Ask what phase it is, what the locals expect next and what might open up later. Plan around the water: wait, hire a guide, find another route, come back with the right gear, or decide a crossing isn't worth it. The Cycle is something to understand and use, not a punishment.

During Far, the party finds a dry service passage under a causeway. It ends at a locked storehouse. They can't get in today, but they mark the route. When they come back during Near, the passage is flooded, but a small boat can reach the storehouse's lower mooring.



CHAPTER EIGHT

COMBAT

A fight is the same conversation as the rest of the game, with a hex map to make position matter. On your turn you choose two actions.

STARTING A FIGHT

A fight starts when someone attacks, or when one side ambushes the other. Exploration stops and time moves in rounds.

The GM places the creatures on the hex map and says who can see whom. Some may be hidden. Ask questions before you commit to an action.

There is no initiative roll. The players act first, in any order they choose. Then the GM acts for the creatures, in any order that makes sense. Then a new round begins with the players.

Ambush. A side that ambushes the other gets one free round before the normal order begins. If creatures ambush you, they take their round and then you start the normal round. If you ambush them, you take your free round and then act again at the start of the normal round. Noticing a creature is not the same as catching it unaware. A Mirehopper in its familiar mud may already know you are coming.

YOUR TURN

You have **two actions**. Use them in any order and any combination: move and attack, attack and defend, move twice, attack twice. An action is spent whether or not the roll succeeds. A few techniques take both actions and say so.

Maren spends one action to move three hexes toward an enemy. With the second, she makes a Melee attack.

ATTACKING

Choose Melee or Ranged and roll **1d12 + your proficiency d6s** against the target's **Armour Class (AC)**. Meet or exceed it to hit. Attributes usually don't add to combat attacks.

Each action is one move or one roll. That is most of the chapter.

On a hit, roll the weapon's damage die and add **+1 for each d6 you rolled** on the attack, including any extra d6 from a six. Only Attack deals weapon damage.

WEAPON	DAMAGE	EXAMPLES
Unarmed	d2	Fists, kicks
Improvised	d3	Thrown stone, lamp
Small	d4	Dagger, club, sling stone
Standard	d6	Shortsword, mace, spear, bow
Heavy	d8	Longsword, warhammer, halberd, crossbow

Weapon damage is a playtest table. The full list is in the Equipment chapter.

ROLLING A SIX

If any proficiency d6 on your roll shows a 6, roll **one extra d6** and add it to the total. Several sixes still give only one extra die, and it never explodes again. The extra d6 also counts for damage (+1, like any other d6 you rolled).

Epic Success. If that extra d6 also shows a 6, it's an **Epic Success**. In combat, **double the weapon damage dice** and keep the +1 per proficiency d6 rolled. *A Master with a d8 weapon deals 2d8 + 4.* Outside combat, you and the GM discuss and agree on an extraordinary benefit.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Each costs one action unless it says otherwise.

Move. Move up to 3 hexes. You may move twice in a turn. You can pass through an ally's hex but not end there. You cannot pass through an enemy's hex without Pass Through or an ability.

Attack. Melee or Ranged against AC, as above. Drawing or switching weapons is part of the action. A sword attack followed by a bow attack still costs two actions.

Defend. Gain +1 AC until you take another action. It does not stack, and being hit does not end it. You can attack and then defend.

Pass Through. Roll Finesse against an adjacent enemy's AC. On a success, move through its hex to an empty hex on the other side, using all the movement for that action. No damage. On a failure, you stay where you are.

Grapple. Roll Melee against the target's AC. On a success, you and the target are both restrained and on the Back Foot. The target cannot move or attack. To break free, the target spends **both actions** and rolls Melee or Finesse against your AC. You may release the hold at any time for free, spend an action to drag both of you one hex, or attack any valid target with one fewer proficiency die (attack and damage).

Disarm. Roll Melee against the target's AC. No damage. On a success, the target drops its weapon in its own hex. Picking it up costs one action and needs no roll.

Smash. Roll Melee against an object's AC and deal normal weapon damage to it.

Shove. Roll Melee against the target's AC. No damage. On a success, move the target 2 hexes away from you, in any direction. If something blocks it (a wall, a creature, an edge), it stops there and takes 1 damage. Pushed off a ledge, it takes falling damage instead.

Trip. Roll Melee against the target's AC. No damage, and the target doesn't move. On a success, it is **prone**: it is on the Back Foot until it stands, and standing costs one action.

Aevic Forms. A Form used to attack is a Melee or Ranged attack. The Aevist may roll Aevum instead of Melee or Ranged proficiency. Roll against AC, then apply the Form's effect. Forms can target anything the Aevist can see. Spend the Aevum shown on the playbook. *To develop: activation cost for Forms that do not attack.*

Playbook abilities can change any of this. There are no free attacks when a creature moves away unless an ability says so.

POSITION

The Hex Map

Each character fills one hex. A hex has no fixed size. Picture about five feet, but do not measure. Ranged attacks need only a clear line of sight: no range bands, no ammunition counts, no reload actions, and no penalty for shooting into melee. The GM rules out impossible shots.

Reach and Flanking

Melee reaches an adjacent hex. A weapon with Reach attacks from two hexes away, but that attacker does not count for flanking.

Two allies **flank** an enemy when both threaten it with at least one hex between them, and all three are at the same height. A swarm counts as one creature. It cannot flank alone, but it can flank with a different creature.

Back Foot

Back Foot means −1 AC. It never stacks and lasts only as long as its cause. Flanking, restraint and being prone cause it automatically. A disarm or another disadvantage causes it when the GM says it fits.

Height and Falling

A step up or down of about five feet is free. A bigger climb or jump needs an action and a Finesse roll. Might or Agility can apply, because this is movement, not an attack. A fall of five feet does no damage. Ten feet deals 1, fifteen deals 2, and each further five feet adds 1.

STANDING UP AND BREAKING FREE

Standing up costs one action and needs no roll. A minor tangle costs one action.

Escape Restraint. Spend one action and roll Finesse to break out of manacles, a trap or another restraint. Add Might or Agility, depending on how you describe the escape. Another attribute can apply if the GM agrees. The GM sets the difficulty to fit the situation. On a success you are free.

The two-action escape applies to a Grapple only.

AT ZERO HEALTH

At 0 Health you fall unconscious. Put a d3 in an opaque cup, shake it, and set it upside down beside your character without looking. The number is how many rounds you have. The round you fall is round 0; the next full round is round 1. An ally who reaches you can spend an action to revive you, and only then is the die revealed. If help comes in time, you return with 1 Health and gain 1 Fatigue (see Exploration). If it came too late, you are dead.

WHEN THE FIGHT ENDS

A fight ends when one side is down, flees or surrenders. Put the hex map away; you're back in exploration. Now is the time to tend the wounded, take a Breather and work out what it cost you.

OPTIONAL RULINGS

The GM may add a quick ruling when it makes a fight more interesting. Keep the map readable.

- Partial cover might give +1 AC. Full cover might block an attack.
- Mud, rubble or water might slow movement.
- Anything else: describe the situation and let the GM decide whether it costs time, needs a roll or changes AC.

AN EXAMPLE ROUND

Maren (a Vanguard, proficient in Melee, with a shortsword) and Joss (a Scoundrel) meet a Mirehopper with AC 11. Neither side surprised the other, so the players go first.

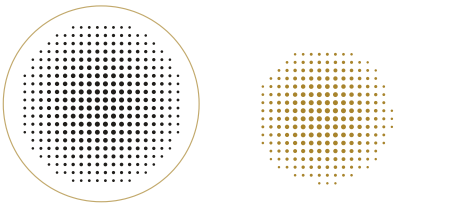
Joss moves three hexes to the far side of the Mirehopper. Maren moves next to it. The two have a hex between them, so the Mirehopper is flanked and on the Back Foot: its AC is now 10.

Maren attacks. The d12 shows 4 and her proficiency d6 shows 6, so she rolls an extra d6 and gets 3. The total is 13, which beats AC 10. The extra die isn't a 6, so there's no Epic Success. The shortsword's d6 shows 4, and she rolled two d6s on the attack, so she adds 2. Maren deals 6 damage.

Joss uses his second action to Defend. The GM now plays the Mirehopper's turn, and the next round begins with the players again.

COMBAT SUMMARY

1. **Players act first,** in any order. Then the GM. No initiative rolls.
2. **Two actions each turn:** move, attack, defend, or a playbook ability.
3. **Attack:** d12 + proficiency d6s against AC. Damage is the weapon die +1 per d6 rolled.
4. **A six** adds one extra d6 (once). A six on that extra die is an **Epic Success**: double the weapon dice.
5. **Flanking** needs two attackers with a hex between them. It puts the target on the Back Foot.
6. **Back Foot** is −1 AC, never stacking.
7. **Defend** is +1 AC until your next action.
8. **No ammunition, reloads or range penalties.** The GM rules on the unusual.



CHAPTER NINE

AT THE TABLE

You've met every piece: the roll, your character, exploring and fighting. This chapter puts them together into what actually happens around the table.

TWO MODES OF PLAY

	EXPLORATION	COMBAT
Time	Scenes, hours, days	Rounds
Turns	None; the conversation flows	Players, then GM; two actions each
Map	Region map, Hexploration map	Hex grid
Rest	Breathers and Camp	None until it's over
Ends when	Someone attacks or is ambushed	One side is down, flees or surrenders

Most sessions move between the two several times. A good plan in exploration can win a fight before it starts, or avoid it altogether.

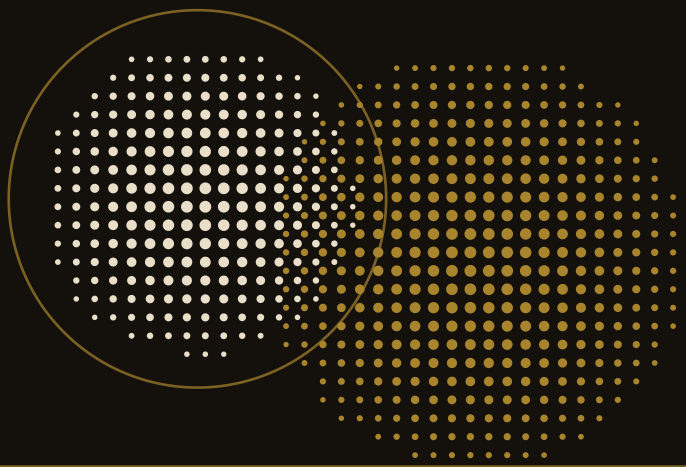
CHOOSING AN APPROACH

A locked door can be forced, picked, talked open or avoided entirely. Each approach asks something different of you and of the world. Say what you do first; find the rule after.

- **Ask questions.** The GM tells you what you can see, hear and know. Ask more.
- **Hear the risk.** The GM usually tells you the difficulty and what could go wrong before you commit. You can change your mind.
- **Not everything needs a roll.** If it's simple, you just do it.

Working together. A companion's knowledge, gear or position can change what's possible. Teaming up doesn't always need an extra roll. *A formal teamwork rule: to develop after playtesting.*





PART TWO

RUNNING THE GAME

For the Game Master.

Part One is for everyone at the table. This part is for the Game Master. It covers the same rules from the GM's side: when to call for a roll, how hard to make it, what a failure costs, how to run the water, combat and the old works, and how to build adventures that last. It doesn't add a second rulebook. Where Part One already says it, this part points there and talks about judgement instead.

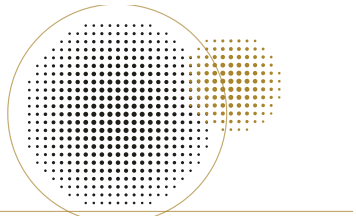
Players are welcome to read it. Nothing in it spoils the world. The setting's secrets are in the World Book.

Two lines sum up the whole thing:

- **The rules should be precise, but the world should be generous.**
- **Tareth is a world worth loving before it's a world that needs saving.**

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE GAME MASTER'S JOB



BINARY is a conversation. You describe the world, the players say what they do, and you tell them what happens. The dice come out only when the outcome is uncertain and it matters.

SAY WHAT'S THERE

Start every scene with what the characters can see, hear and know. Then ask what they do.

Be generous with information. The characters live here. They know what a Spine tram sounds like, what the water does at Rising, and which tower doors are guarded. If a local would know it, tell the players. Mystery comes from what nobody knows, not from what you forgot to mention.

When players ask questions, answer them. When they don't, prompt them: *"There's a fisher mending nets on the pontoon. She's watching you."*

INTENT AND APPROACH

When a player says what they do, find out two things:

- **What do they want?** The goal, not the method.
- **How are they doing it?** The approach, in the fiction.

Then decide:

- **It just works.** It's simple, safe or obviously within the character's skill. Say yes and move on.
- **It can't work.** No roll can make it happen. Say so, and say why, so they can try something else.
- **It might work, and it matters.** Call for a roll.

If a player is stuck, ask *"What would you like to happen?"* Often the answer is a good plan in disguise.

CALLING FOR A ROLL

The roll is **1d12 + proficiency d6s + any modifiers** against a difficulty. Pick the action that fits the approach, not the goal. Getting past a guard might be Deceive, Persuade, Command, Finesse or Traverse, depending on how they do it.

Let the player propose the action. Ask which action they think fits and why. You make the final call, but their reasoning is usually good, and it keeps them thinking about the fiction. There are twelve actions and no others. Don't invent a thirteenth because a situation is unusual.

Attributes. Outside a fight, add an attribute when it clearly helps the approach: Might to force a stuck hatch, Wits to spot the lie in a ledger. Attributes usually don't add to attacks or combat manoeuvres. Movement in a fight (a climb, a jump, an escape from restraint) is the exception Chapter Eight already names.

SETTING THE DIFFICULTY

DIFFICULTY	TARGET	USE IT WHEN…
Easy	6	A trained character rarely fails. Roll only if failure is interesting.
Standard	8	Ordinary skilled work under some pressure.
Hard	12	Real danger, real expertise, or bad conditions.
Very Hard	16	Experts struggle. Most people shouldn't try.
Exceptional	20	The stuff of stories.
Extreme	25	Barely possible, even for a master with luck.

Set difficulty by the situation, not the character. A Master and an untrained character face the same Hard wall; the Master just has more dice.

Tell them before they roll. Normally, say the difficulty and what's at risk before the player commits. They may change their plan. That's the point: a good table spends more time choosing than rolling.

HIDDEN ROLLS

Hide things only when hiding them is the fun.

- **Hidden difficulty, open roll.** When the characters search, scout or listen for danger, you set the difficulty in secret. The player rolls openly. You tell them what they perceive, not whether they succeeded. *"You don't see anything"* might mean there's nothing there.
- **Hidden roll.** Rare. Use it only when even the result would give the game away.

Don't hide difficulty to punish. If the players feel tricked, it wasn't suspense.

CONSEQUENCES

A failed roll rarely stops play. It changes it. Pick a consequence that follows from the action and the place:

- **Time.** It works, but it takes all afternoon, and the water is coming.
- **Cost.** A tool breaks, a bribe doubles, a supply is lost.
- **Attention.** A guard looks over. One of the Powers hears about it.
- **Position.** You're through, but on the wrong side of the canal.
- **Harm.** Damage, Fatigue or a condition, when the danger was physical.
- **A new problem.** The door opens. Something behind it was waiting.

Say what's at risk before the roll and you'll rarely need to invent a consequence after it.

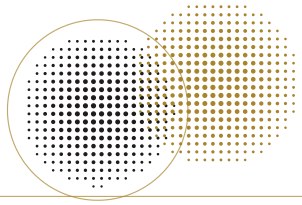
Epic Success outside combat. When the extra d6 also shows a 6, the player gets something extraordinary. Let them suggest it, and agree it together. Good Epic Successes open doors: a contact for life, a secret learned, a route nobody else knows.

PLAYING FAIR

- **Be a fan of the characters.** You're not their enemy. The world is dangerous enough without you.
- **Let plans work.** Preparation, local help, the right gear and a good idea should beat raw dice.
- **Retreat is always an option.** Make it possible. Running away from a bad fight is good play.
- **Remember.** People, Powers and places remember what the party did. So should you.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RUNNING EXPLORATION



Exploration is the default way BINARY is played. A fight is what happens when exploration goes wrong.

TIME

There are no turns in exploration. Time moves as fast as the story needs. Say how much passes when it matters: when the light is going, when the water is turning, when someone else is racing for the same door.

A useful habit: whenever the party does something slow (searching a ruin, waiting out a guard, crossing the flats), mention what time it now is and what has changed.

BREATHERS

A Breather is about ten minutes' rest. The player chooses one activity (see Chapter Seven). Your job is the risk.

Pushing their luck. The first ten minutes of a Breather are safe. In especially dangerous places, even those roll 1 in 6.

Each extra ten minutes the party stays, for another activity, raises the chance of interruption: 2 in 6 at twenty minutes, 3 in 6 at thirty, and so on. The risk only climbs while they stay put. Each new Breather starts the count again. An interruption doesn't: if the party keeps resting after one, the count carries on climbing.

That's the choice to watch for: one more activity, or get moving? Say the odds out loud before they decide.

Interruptions. Roll on the table for the region and situation. Each region in the World Book has its own d20 tables (for the Shallows, see World Book Chapter Twelve: In Town, On the Flats, On the Water, In Caves and Old Works). Entries are hostile, neutral or helpful. In the half-water, roll both Flats and Water and use the worse. **Only a fight ends a Breather.** If the interruption turns into combat, the Breather is over and its activity is lost. If it doesn't (a stranger, a choice, a stroke of luck, a threat that can be talked down or avoided), the party deals with it, the activity still counts, and they can keep resting at the next step up.

CAMP

A Camp is a night's rest with food and shelter. In a town, with money, it just happens. In the wild, it usually takes a roll, most often Survive.

Setting the difficulty. A sheltered beach in good weather is Easy. Exposed flats at Far with the wind up is Hard. A cave the water will reach by morning is Very Hard, or impossible.

- **Success** restores all Health and Armour, removes 1 Fatigue, and lets Aevists set their reservoir mix.
- **Failure** restores nothing and gives 1 Fatigue.

There's no ration tracking. If the party is somewhere with no food or water at all, make that a reason Camp is hard, not a separate system.

FATIGUE

Fatigue comes from failing to Camp and from being revived after falling unconscious. Use it as the long-term cost of a hard journey.

FATIGUE	EFFECT
1 Tired	Back Foot (−1 AC)
2 Exhausted	Back Foot, −1 Move
3 Depleted	Also lose advancement proficiency dice; keep playbook dice
4 Incapacitated	Can't act. Must rest.

Fatigue makes going home a real choice. Watch for the moment a party at 2 Fatigue decides whether to push on. That's a good moment. Don't take it away from them.

SNEAKING, SEARCHING AND SURPRISE

There's no Stealth action and no Perception stat.

Sneaking. Ask how the character is sneaking and which action fits. Finesse to slip past a sentry. Traverse to move

quietly through hard ground. Survive to stalk an animal. You decide whether it needs a roll and how hard it is.

Searching. Same idea. Investigate for clues, Lore for reading sightlines and old construction, Survive for tracks and natural dangers. Use hidden difficulty, open roll (Chapter Twelve).

Seeing isn't surprising. Spotting a Mirehopper in its mud doesn't mean the party can ambush it. If it already knows they're there, nobody is surprised. An ambush needs real unawareness, judged from the creature's senses and the fiction. A successful ambush gives a free round (see Chapter Fifteen).

TRAVEL

Regional maps use hexes, and so can travel. A hex has no fixed distance. Pick a scale that suits the map, or ignore the hexes and say how long the journey takes.

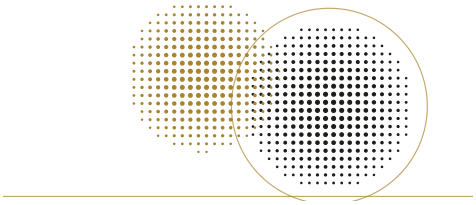
Make the journey about choices, not bookkeeping. A trip worth playing has at least one of these:

- **A route choice.** The High Road is slow and watched. The Dim Road is quick and isn't.
- **A timing choice.** Go now, or wait for the water.
- **A danger.** A crossing, a creature, a toll tower.
- **A place.** Somewhere worth stopping, for good or ill.

If a trip has none of these, skip it. *"Three days later, you reach the Spine-end."*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RUNNING THE GREAT CYCLE



The Great Cycle is mostly an environmental fact. It changes the coastline, the routes, the moorings, the creatures, the markets and people's moods. It is rarely a mechanic.

THE PHASES

FAR → RISING → NEAR → FALLING → FAR

PHASE	LENGTH (ROUGH)	WHAT IT MEANS AT THE TABLE
Far	~40 days	The water is out. Walk the flats, reach the caves, the reef doors, the lower floors. Harvest crews and salvagers are out. **+1 Earth.**
Rising	~5 days	The half-water. Too wet to walk, too shallow to sail. Routes close. People hurry.
Near	~40 days	The water is home. Boats, sea lanes, high doors and the highwater districts. Low doors and walkways go under. **+1 Water.**
Falling	~5 days	The half-water again. Boats head for the cradles. Things the water held come to light.

About ninety days in all. Don't track it to the day. Say roughly where in the Cycle you are, and move it on when the story moves on.

The bonuses. Far gives +1 to Earth Aevum and Near gives +1 to Water Aevum. These are the only Great Cycle bonuses. Don't add penalties, half-water bonuses or Aether bonuses. How the +1 applies to a Form follows the Aevist's playbook.

RUNNING A PHASE

At the start of a session, say what phase it is and what that looks like here. Then let it show up in everything: which piers are busy, what's for sale, who's in town, what people are worried about.

When the phase changes, think about the world first:

- Does a route open or close?
- Can a boat reach a door that was out of reach?
- Have creatures moved in or out?
- Are people packing up, coming home, or celebrating?

Only after that, ask whether anyone needs to roll.

THE SAME PLACE, TWICE

The Cycle's best trick is that you don't need new locations. You need the same ones, changed.

At Far, the canal behind a warehouse is dry enough to walk. It's muddy, and there's a burrow under the back wall. At Near, the canal is full and busy, the back door is underwater, and a boat can reach the loading door on the second floor.

Neither version needs a special rule. The opportunities and the risks have moved. When you build a location, write one line for how it looks at Far and one for Near. That's usually enough.

Let planning pay off. If the players mark a route at Far so they can come back at Near, make sure coming back is worth it.

THE HALF-WATER

The half-water is short, awkward and dangerous. It's a good time for a deadline. *"The ship's on the sand now. By the end of Rising, the water lifts it and it's gone, with whatever's aboard."*

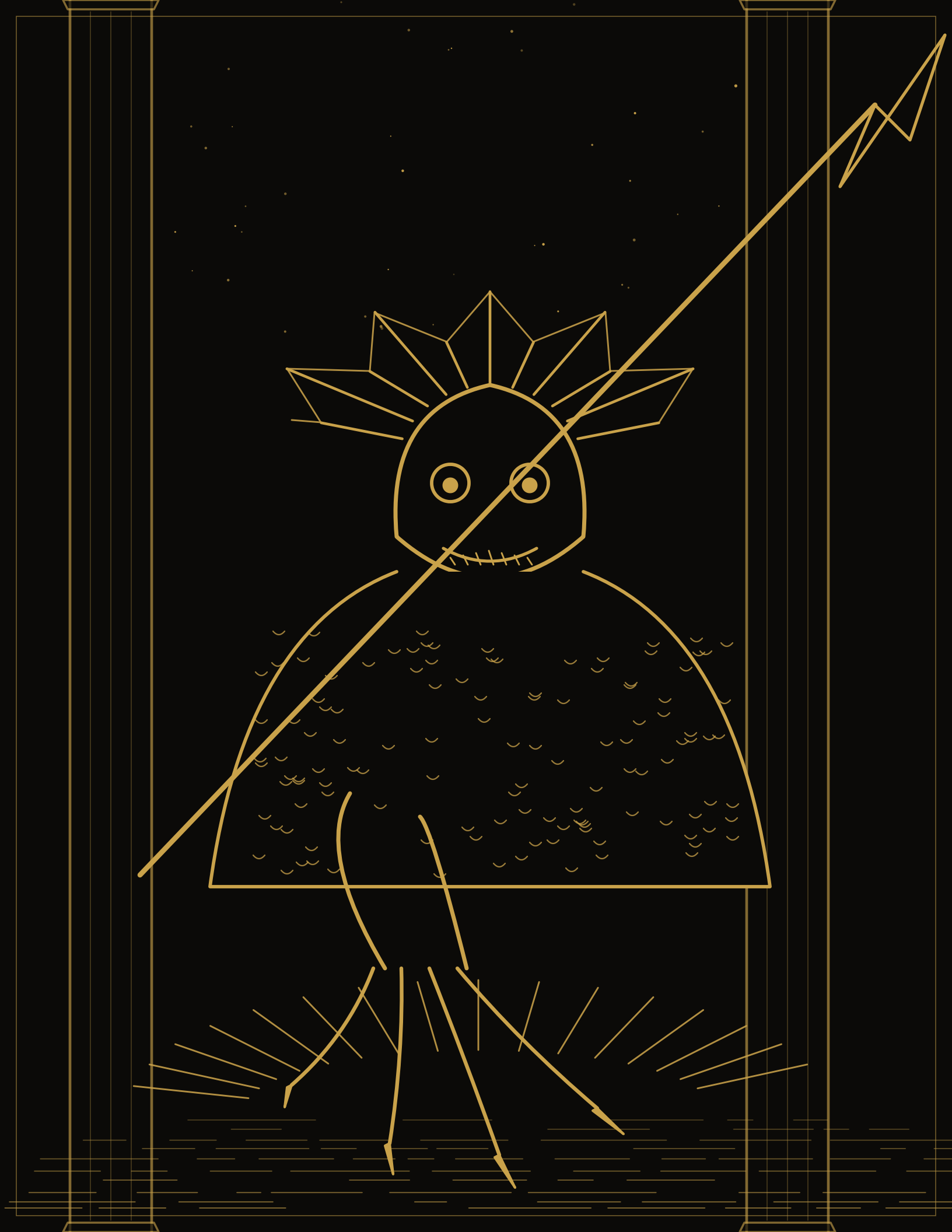
FEASTS AND SEASONS

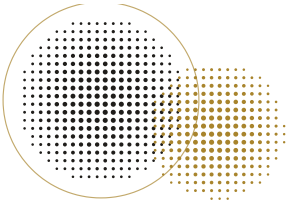
Every Cycle has two feasts: **Homewater** at Near (seafarers) and **Open Ground** at Far (farmers and land folk). Merchants, barkeeps and criminals celebrate both. Feasts are crowds, money, noise and distraction: perfect cover, perfect trouble.

GM CHECK

The Cycle should make the players watch, prepare and come back. If a Cycle mechanic would need more

bookkeeping than the decision it creates, keep it in the fiction instead.





CHAPTER FIFTEEN

RUNNING COMBAT

The players' rules are in Chapter Eight. This chapter is about running it.

SETTING UP

Do you need a fight? A dangerous creature isn't automatically a battle. It might be avoided, bargained with, scared off or lured away. Fights start when someone attacks, or when one side ambushes the other.

The map. Combat always uses a hex grid. Each PC fills one hex. Creatures fill the hexes their Creature Book entry says. A hex has no fixed size. Picture about five feet if it helps, but don't measure. The grid is for position, not tape measures.

Keep maps readable. Mark what matters (water, a ledge, a doorway, a pillar) and leave the rest to description.

Who can see whom. When you lay out the map, say what the characters can see. Hidden creatures don't go on the map until they're found or they act.

TURN ORDER

No initiative. The players act first, in any order. Then you act for the creatures, in any order that makes sense. Then a new round.

Ambush. The ambushing side gets a free round before the normal order begins. If creatures ambush, they act once, then the players begin the normal round. If the players ambush, they take the free round and then act again at the start of the normal round. That's deliberate: preparation and stealth should pay.

PLAYING THE CREATURES

- **They want things.** Food, territory, escape, their young, their treasure. Most creatures fight for a reason, and stop when the reason goes.
- **They use the map.** Pack hunters flank. Ambushers hide. Clever things retreat to better ground.
- **They run.** A creature that's losing usually flees, surrenders or bargains. A fight to the last is rare, and

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should feel like it.

A fight ends when one side is down, flees or surrenders. Then you're back to exploration.

CONDITIONS AND BACK FOOT

There is one condition: **Back Foot, −1 AC.** It doesn't stack. It lasts as long as its cause.

- **Automatic:** flanked, restrained (including a grapple, both sides), prone, Tired or worse.
- **Your call:** disarmed, dazed, blinded by spray, footing gone on wet rock. When a disadvantage would reasonably make someone easier to hit, use Back Foot.

Don't invent new conditions. If something is worse than Back Foot, it's probably a consequence (lost actions, forced movement, damage) or it's just the fiction.

RECOVERING

Recovery is a ruling, not a subsystem.

- **Standing up:** one action, no roll.
- **A minor tangle:** one action, no roll.
- **Manacles, nets, a trap:** Escape Restraint. Finesse, plus Might or Agility depending on how they describe it. You set the difficulty.
- **A grapple:** the specific rule. Both actions, Melee or Finesse against the grappler's AC.

OPTIONAL TACTICS

Combat is light by default. Add tactical detail when it makes a particular fight better, and leave it out otherwise.

- **Cover.** Partial cover might give +1 AC. Full cover might block an attack.
- **Difficult ground.** Mud, rubble or water might slow movement. Say how before anyone moves.

- **Height.** A step of about five feet is free. More needs an action and a Finesse roll.
- **Ranged.** Line of sight is enough. No range bands, no ammunition, no reloads. Rule out the impossible shot.

Say any ruling before the players commit, and keep it for the rest of the fight.

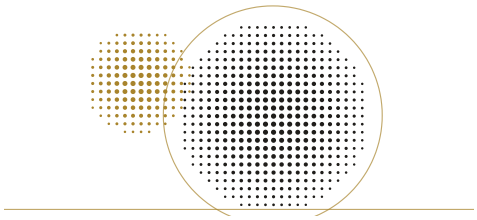
AT ZERO HEALTH

A PC at 0 Health is unconscious, with a d3 under a cup. The player sets it; nobody looks, including you. The cup stays on the table as a reminder.

When an ally reaches them and spends an action, lift the cup. If the number of rounds that have passed is less than or equal to the die, they come back with 1 Health and 1 Fatigue. If not, they're dead.

Counting rounds. The round a character falls is **round 0**. The next full round is round 1, and so on. *Joss falls and his die shows 1. If Maren reaches him in round 1, he lives. If she gets there in round 2, he's dead.*

Death is real in BINARY, but it should never be a surprise. The players saw the danger and chose the fight.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CLOCKS

Some things don't happen all at once. They build. A creature slowly notices you. A flood rises. A deal comes together. A snowfield groans, and groans, and lets go. A **clock** is how you show that building up, so everyone at the table can see it coming.

WHAT A CLOCK IS

A **clock** is the simplest tool in this book, and one of the most useful. It's a circle split into equal segments, like a pie, that you fill in one segment at a time. When the last segment is filled, the thing the clock is named for happens.

Clocks are for anything that builds up and you want everyone at the table to see coming: a danger getting closer, a creature getting suspicious, a plan coming together, a friendship being earned, a deadline running out, a door being forced, a fire spreading, a rumour reaching the wrong ears. A clock can count towards something bad or something good.

Making a Clock

Name it. Give it a short, plain name that says what happens when it fills, or what the party is working towards: *"The mirehopper sees you." "The smugglers trust you." "Avalanche." "The ship floats free." "The Customs House finds the forged seal."* If you can't name what happens when it fills, you don't need a clock.

Size it. Pick how many segments it has:

- **4 segments:** something simple, close or fragile. A mirehopper getting curious. A rope fraying. The snow above starting to slide.
- **6 segments:** a real project. Winning over a new smuggling gang. A flood rising through a cave.
- **8 segments:** something big, slow or well-defended. A merchant house's takeover. A sealed door giving way.

Draw it. A circle on a card or a scrap of paper, split into segments, in front of everyone.

Clocks are a general tool. Use one for anything, big or small, that's counting down:

- *"Does the mirehopper see you?"*
- *"Make friends with the new smuggling gang."*
- *"Avalanche!"*

Filling a Clock

Fill (or *tick*) one segment at a time. Usually one, sometimes two when something goes badly wrong or a lot of time passes. A clock fills from three things:

- **Time.** A day, a week, a phase of the Cycle, or every Breather the party takes somewhere dangerous.
- **Choices.** What the party does: a loud noise ticks *"Avalanche!"*, a shared drink ticks *"Make friends with the smugglers"*. Or what someone else in the world does.
- **Rolls.** A failed roll can tick a danger clock: *"You slip past, but you splash. Tick the mirehopper."* A good roll can tick a clock the party wants filled: *"They laugh at your joke. Tick the smugglers."*

When the last segment fills, the thing happens. The mirehopper sees you. The smugglers take you in. The snow comes down. No roll, no argument. That's the deal the clock made with the table.

Stopping a Clock

A clock isn't fate. The party can work against it:

- **Slow it.** Good actions can stop a clock filling, or even empty a segment. Bribe the clerk; the Customs House investigation loses a tick.
- **End it.** Deal with the cause and the clock goes away. Sink the forged seals in the bay, and *"The Customs House finds the forged seal"* can't fill any more.
- **Go round it.** A clever plan can make a clock irrelevant. If the party leaves before the guards arrive, it doesn't matter when the guards arrive. Let them.

Racing Clocks

Two clocks against each other make a race. *"The party gets the cargo off the ship"* (4) against *"The ship floats free"* (6).

Every action the party takes ticks theirs. Every round, or every failure, ticks the ship's. Everyone can see who's winning.

Show Them

Clocks are public by default. Put them where the table can see them. Knowing that danger is coming, and roughly when, is what makes the party's choices matter. Hide a clock only when its very existence is the secret, and reveal it when the secret comes out.

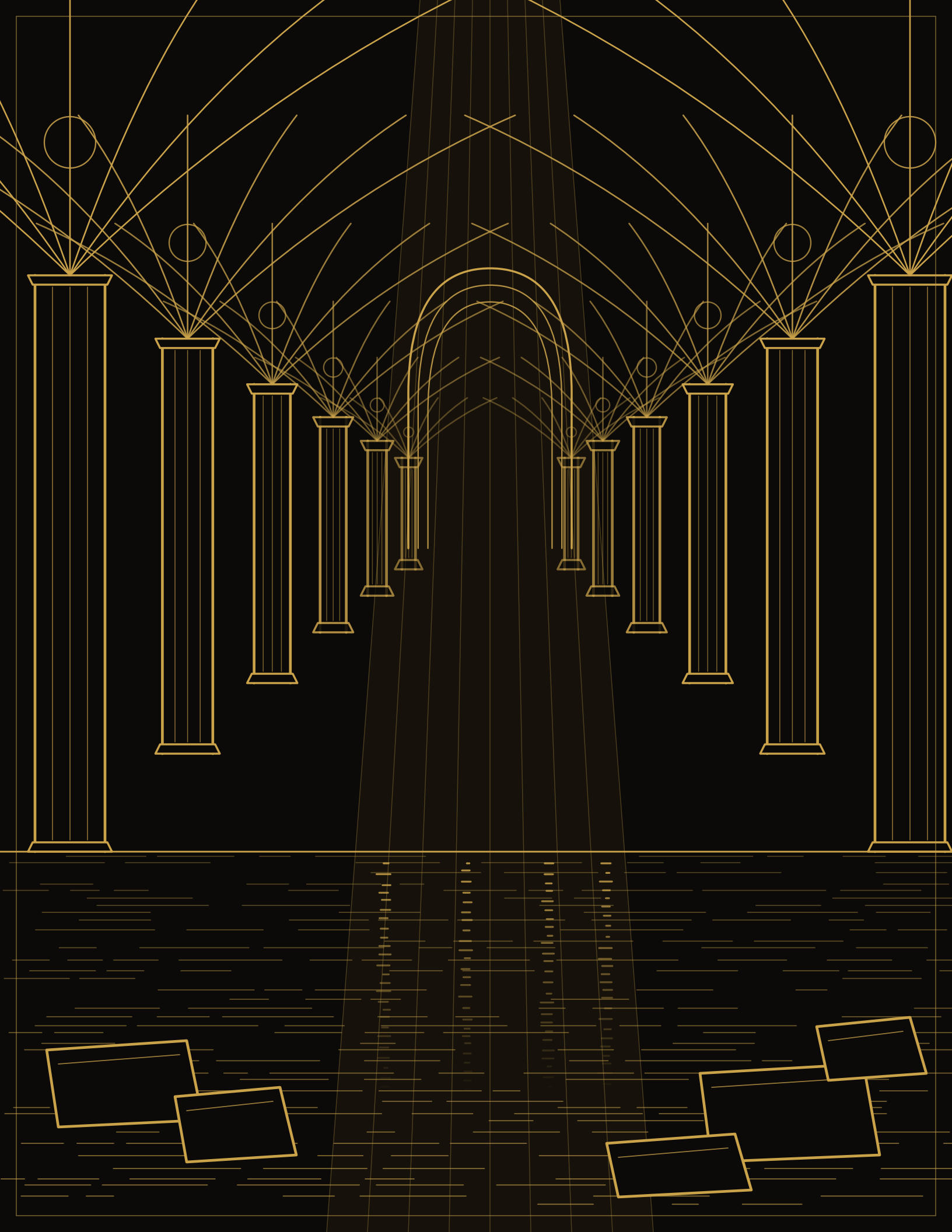
The World Moving On

Clocks are also a handy way to show the world getting on with things while the party is busy elsewhere. If something is going to happen whether or not the party is involved, give it a clock and tick it as time passes: between sessions, or at each phase change of the Cycle.

"Hold the tower until Near" (6) is at 4. The party has been hired to break the siege. If they do nothing for a few days, it fills, the water comes in, and the tower can't be starved out until next Far.

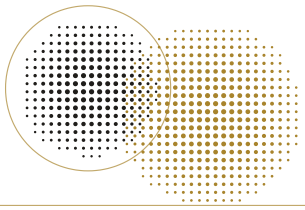
CONSEQUENCES THAT LAST

People remember, and so do places. A burned warehouse stays burned. A bribed clerk expects to be bribed again. A neighbourhood that was saved buys drinks. Write it down between sessions and bring it back.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AEVUM AND THE OLD WORKS



evum is ordinary and astonishing at the same time. Run it as both.

EVERYDAY AEVUM

Ordinary people know what Aevum is. Trams glide over the Spines, lanterns glow, lifts rise in the towers, a guard walker stamps along the Sea Gates. Nobody gasps. Most people couldn't tell you how any of it works, and don't care.

Anyone can use a finished device. Lighting a lantern or calling a lift needs no roll. A strange device, or a broken one, might take Aevum, Lore or Investigate to work out, and an Aevist is better at it.

Making or changing devices is Aevist work. It takes skill, time and often parts that are hard to find.

AEVISTS AND FORMS

The Aevist's playbook holds the Forms and their costs. Your job is the world around them:

- **The reservoir** holds 5 Aevum in any mix of Earth, Water and Aether. The mix is set each morning after a successful Camp. A Breather can refill it to that mix.
- **The Cycle helps.** +1 Earth at Far, +1 Water at Near.
- **Forms can do things in the fiction**, not just in fights. Shaping rock to bridge a gap or calling water into a dry channel are good uses. Let them work, and set a difficulty if it's ambitious.

Many Form costs and non-attack activation rules are still open in the playbook. Rule on the spot, write down what you decided, and keep it consistent.

THE NYMARI AND AEVUM

The Nymari have a particular attunement to Aevum. Nobody knows exactly what that means, including most Nymari. It's a good excuse to let a Nymari character feel something an Aevist can't, or wake an old work that won't answer anyone else. Don't explain it. Let it be strange.

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OLD WORKS

The Vael's works are everywhere: towers, the Spines, sealed doors in the reefs, the Conduit, Temple Island's Gate. They're beyond anyone living to build.

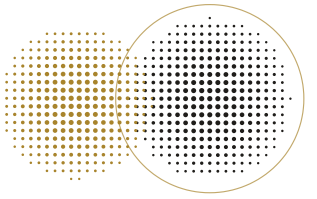
- **Make them inviting.** A humming pillar, a spiral mark on a door, a warm patch of stone at Far. Give the players something to touch.
- **Don't explain everything.** An old work can do something without anyone knowing why. That's fine.
- **Give partial answers.** Each investigation should reveal something, never the whole thing.
- **Mysteries are invitations.** The World Book leaves the deep answers open on purpose. Decide what's at the bottom when your table gets there, or let the players' theories become true.

THE VAEL AT THE TABLE

The Vael don't appear in play. They live on Veyr, and nobody alive has seen one. What the table can see is their works, and the stories people tell about them. The World Book has the rest.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

REWARDS AND ADVANCEMENT



Characters improve in two ways: Advancement Rolls for non-combat actions, and XP for everything else. The players' rules are in Chapter Six. This chapter is about pace.

ADVANCEMENT ROLLS

You offer them. A good Advancement Roll comes when an action could achieve something more than usual, and failing would really hurt.

- **Agree both sides first.** What's the bigger success? What's the agreed failure? Both should be worth remembering.
- **Only failure marks a pip.** So the failure has to sting. If it doesn't, it's just a free pip.
- **Not every roll.** Once or twice a session, per player, at most. Look for moments when the character is reaching beyond themselves.
- **Not for combat actions.** Melee, Ranged and Finesse improve only through XP, even outside a fight.

AWARDING XP

There's no formula, but here's a working pace: **about 2 to 4 XP per character per session**. That fills a track (5 XP) and gives an advance roughly every other session.

That's deliberately quick. Getting everyone around a table is hard, and a group that only meets now and then should still see their characters grow every time or two they play. If your group plays often and you want a slower climb, give less.

Give XP for:

- **Going somewhere new.** A place nobody in the party has been.
- **Bringing something back.** Treasure, knowledge, a rescued person, proof.
- **Real danger survived.** A fight they could have lost, a crossing that nearly killed them.
- **Changing the world.** A choice that moved one of the Powers, saved a district, opened a door.
- **Doing something epic.** The moment everyone at the table will talk about.

Award it at the end of a session, out loud, and say what it was for. That tells the players what the game rewards.

Keep it even. Usually everyone gets the same XP. A character who sat out a scene still went through the session.

WHERE XP GOES

Every time a character's XP track fills (5 XP), they clear it and take one **advance**. An advance buys exactly one of three things:

AN ADVANCE BUYS…	WHAT IT GIVES	COST
A new ability	One ability from the character's playbook, from any tier they've unlocked	1 advance
A tier unlock pip	One pip toward opening the next tier of abilities	2 advances per tier
A combat pip	One pip on Melee, Ranged or Finesse	3 advances per die

Abilities are the main road

Abilities are what make a character feel different from everyone else at the table. Each one gives the character something new to *do*: a new option in a fight, a new trick on the road, a new way to break the rules a little. A Vanguard's Cleave, a Scoundrel's Pinning Shot or an Aevist's Rapid Recharge changes how that player plays. A combat pip only nudges a number.

That's why the costs are set the way they are. One advance buys a whole ability. Three advances buy one combat die. The game is telling players where it wants XP to go, and you should too.

How the tiers work

Each playbook's abilities are split into three tiers.

- **Tier I** is open from the start. Every character begins with **two** Tier I abilities, and can buy more Tier I

abilities with later advances.

- **Tier II** is locked. Its unlock track has **two pips**. Spend two advances on it and Tier II is open for good.
- **Tier III** has its own two-pip track, which only opens once Tier II is unlocked.

Unlocking a tier doesn't give an ability. It only lets later advances buy that tier's abilities. Make sure players understand this, or the first unlock will feel like a wasted advance.

Multidisciplined is a Tier II ability every playbook has. It lets a character learn one Tier I ability from another playbook. It's the only way to borrow another playbook's abilities.

A typical road

Joss, a Scoundrel, starts with two Tier I abilities.

ADVANCE	JOSS SPENDS IT ON…	RESULT
1	A third Tier I ability	New option right away
2	Tier II unlock pip	1 of 2
3	Tier II unlock pip	Tier II open
4	Sniper (Tier II)	First Tier II ability
5	Tier III unlock pip	1 of 2
6	Tier III unlock pip	Tier III open

At about one advance every other session, that's around a dozen sessions to reach Tier III. In the same six advances, Maren could have bought two Melee dice and nothing else.

Helping players choose

- **Talk about it before the track fills.** Players should know what they're saving for. A quick word at the end of a session saves a long pause at the start of the next.
- **Point them at the playbook.** Every ability a character can ever buy is printed there. Encourage players to read ahead to Tier II and III, so they know what they're working toward.
- **Let combat pips happen.** If a player really wants to hit harder, that's their call. If the whole party keeps buying combat pips, you might be running too many fights, or abilities might not feel useful enough.
- **Abilities should come up.** If a player buys an ability and never gets to use it, give them a chance. Build a scene where it matters.

OPTIONAL: MASTER NEEDS A TEACHER

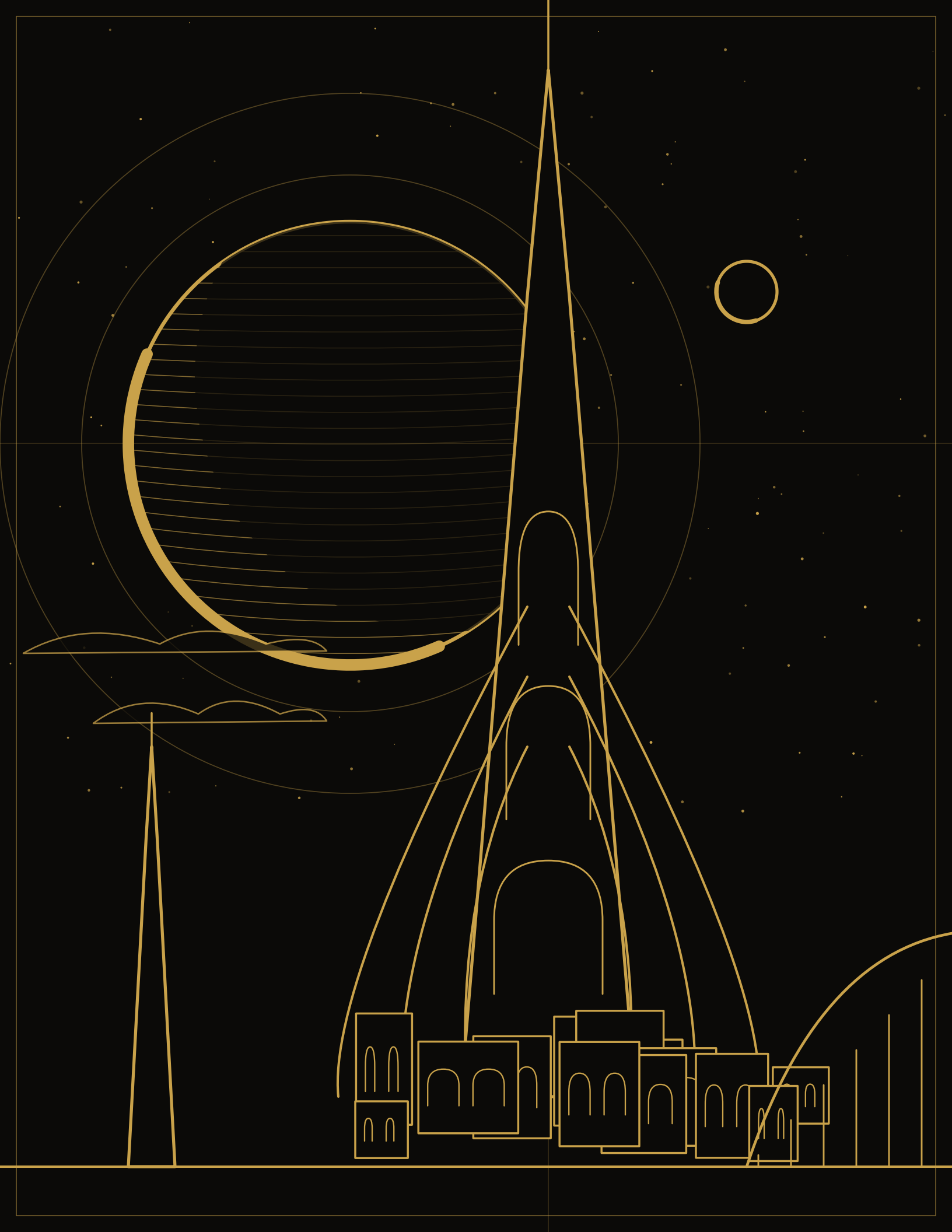
An idea, not a rule. For the step to Master, you may require the character to have trained with someone who has mastered that action. It costs nothing mechanically. It's a story gate and an adventure hook.

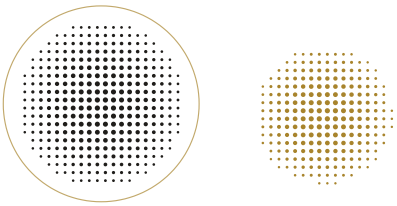
Maren's Melee track is full, but she can't fill in the third die until she finds the old duellist on the Dim Road.

TREASURE

Treasure is anything worth bringing home: Bits (coin), Aevum stores, devices, cargo, proof, favours. The playbook tracks AP, EAP, WAP, AAP and Bits.

Make treasure a choice. The best haul is heavy, watched, or wanted by someone else. *Do you take the crate, or the ledger?*





CHAPTER NINETEEN

BUILDING ADVENTURES

BINARY is meant to serve many adventure paths, not one. Nothing in it assumes a particular campaign. Build your own, borrow from the modules, or mix both.

PLACES AND PRESSURES

Prepare situations, not scripts.

- **A place.** Somewhere specific, with how it looks at Far and at Near.
- **People.** Two or three who want something here. One of them wants it badly.
- **A pressure.** Something that will happen if nobody intervenes. Make it a clock.
- **A danger.** A creature, a hazard, a rival.
- **A reward.** Something worth the risk.
- **A secret.** Something the players can find, that changes what they thought was going on.

Don't prepare a solution. The players will find one you didn't think of. Your job is to know what the world does in response.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

A seed is a few lines that grow into a session or three. World Book Chapter Twelve has eight for the Shallows. Write new ones the same way:

- **The hook.** How the party hears about it.
- **What's really going on.** One or two sentences.
- **Who's involved.** The Powers and other people, and what they want.
- **The Cycle.** What changes at Far, Near or the half-water.
- **The twist.** What the party doesn't expect.

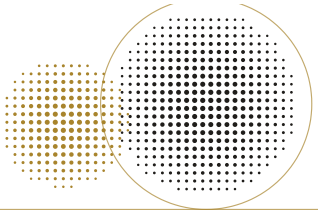
CAMPAIGNS

A campaign is a string of adventures with something running underneath. Pick one or two of the deeper secrets from the World Book, and let them surface slowly through seeds that look unrelated.

Big threads and introductory campaigns. The World Book's closing part, *Secrets for the GM*, has the long threads that run under BINARY, and World Book Chapter Twelve has advice on running an introductory campaign on the coast.

LET THE PLAYERS BUILD IT TOO

Ask the players what they want to find out. Ask what rumours their characters have heard. Use their theories. A table that writes part of the world cares about all of it.



REFERENCE

GM REFERENCE

DIFFICULTY

EASY	STANDARD	HARD	VERY HARD	EXCEPTIONAL	EXTREME
6	8	12	16	20	25

THE ROLL

- **1d12 + proficiency d6s + modifiers** vs difficulty or AC. Meet or beat.
- **A six** on any proficiency d6: roll one extra d6 (once). A six on that is an **Epic Success**.
- **Attributes** add outside a fight when they clearly help. Usually not to attacks.

THE GREAT CYCLE

FAR ~40	RISING ~5	NEAR ~40	FALLING ~5
Water out. Flats, caves, low doors. **+1 Earth.** Open Ground feast.	Half-water. Too wet to walk, too shallow to sail.	Water home. Boats, high doors, highwater districts. **+1 Water.** Homewater feast.	Half-water. Boats to the cradles.

REST

- **Breather:** ~10 minutes, one activity. First 10 minutes safe; each extra 10 minutes (another activity) is 2 in 6, 3 in 6... Roll on the area table (Encounters, below). Only a fight ends it. Each new Breather starts the count again; an interruption doesn't.
- **Camp:** a night. Success: all Health and Armour, −1 Fatigue. Failure: nothing, +1 Fatigue.

FATIGUE

1 Tired (Back Foot) · 2 Exhausted (−1 Move) · 3 Depleted (lose advancement dice) · 4 Incapacitated.

COMBAT

- Players first, then GM. Two actions each. Ambush: free round.
- Back Foot: −1 AC, no stacking, lasts as long as its cause.
- At 0 Health: d3 under a cup. The round they fall is round 0. Revive in time: 1 Health, +1 Fatigue.

CLOCKS

Name it for what happens when it fills. 4 simple · 6 a project · 8 something big. Public by default. Fill by time, choices, failures (usually one tick). Slow it, end it or go round it. When it fills, it happens.

XP

About 2–4 per session. 5 XP = one advance, roughly every other session. Award out loud, keep it even.

ENCOUNTERS

If you already know what happens, it happens. If you don't, roll.

The tables are an aid, not a rule. Roll a d12 on the table for where the party is. → **Biome:** roll the creature on the current biome's table in the Creature Book. → **Region:** roll the local on the current region's table in the World Book. × hostile · – neutral · ✓ helpful.

In Town

D12		RESULT
1	✗	A fight spills into the street, and you're in it
2	✗	Pickpocket or thief
3	✗	Creature loose → Biome
4	–	The watch has questions
5–6	–	Encounter with a local → Region
7	–	Crowd, procession or market rush blocks the way
8	–	Someone needs help
9	–	Something of yours goes missing
10	✓	Overheard rumour
11	✓	Offer of work
12	✓	A kindness: a free meal, a shortcut, a bed

Underground

D12		RESULT
1–3	✗	Creature attacks → Biome
4	✗	Rockfall or collapse
5	✗	Water rises or the air turns bad
6	–	Tracks or droppings: something lives here → Biome
7	–	Lights gutter or go out
8	–	Another party: scavengers, prospectors → Region
9	–	A sound from deeper in
10	–	Old remains: a pack, a body
11	✓	A draught: a hidden way on
12	✓	Shelter: a dry ledge, a safe hollow

In the Wilds

D12		RESULT
1–2	✗	Creature attacks → Biome
3	✗	Something is stalking you → Biome
4	✗	Weather turns
5	✗	Ground gives way, or you lose the path
6	–	Encounter with a local → Region
7	–	Travellers on the same road → Region
8	–	Signs of passage: a cold fire, fresh tracks
9	–	Creatures pass by, uninterested → Biome
10	✓	Food or clean water
11	✓	High ground: you see the way ahead
12	✓	Shelter

On the Water

D12		RESULT
1–2	✗	Creature attacks from below → Biome
3	✗	Something follows the boat → Biome
4	✗	Wind or current turns: blown off course
5	✗	Leak or snag
6	–	Fog
7	–	Another boat → Region
8	–	Encounter with a local → Region
9	–	Wreckage worth a look
10	✓	Good fishing
11	✓	Fair water: a quick passage
12	✓	Safe mooring

Old Works

D12		RESULT
1–2	✗	Creature attacks → Biome
3	✗	Something has nested here → Biome
4	✗	A mechanism wakes
5	✗	Something shifts or gives way
6	-	An opening closes, or a seal changes
7	-	The hum or the light changes
8	-	Scavengers → Region
9	-	Marks of earlier explorers
10	✓	A small working device
11	✓	Salvage cache
12	✓	Something opens that was closed