

FREE STARTER

ASHES IN THE WAKE

A road, a wagon, and people who need what you carry.

“This world does not promise fairness. It promises consequences.”

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Everything needed for The Last Clean Shipment. Includes GM material.
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START PLAYING

A wagon of grain is held outside Greyharbor. The people waiting for it cannot eat a receipt. You have one afternoon to bring it home.

Ashes in the Wake is a tabletop roleplaying game for a Game Master and a crew of players. Players describe their characters' actions. The GM describes the people, places and dangers around them, then answers those actions honestly.

What you need

- A d20 and a d6; a second d20 makes advantage easier.
- Paper, pencils and the character sheets in this pack.
- One person to read the adventure as GM. Everyone else can start with a pregen.

Your first session

1. Agree the tone and any subjects to leave out. Balen is a hard world; the people at the table should still feel welcome.
2. Choose Kessa, Orin, Mira or Tavi in [Pregenerated Characters](#), or follow [Starting Characters](#).
3. Read [Playing the Game](#). Casters also read their source of magic and the spell descriptions on their sheet.
4. The GM reads [The Last Clean Shipment](#), including its facts, NPC motives and endings. Players can leave that chapter unread.
5. Begin at Elin's storehouse. Describe the offer, ask what the crew does and follow their decisions.

This pack contains everything needed for that adventure. The core book adds full progression, more roles, lineages, spells, relics and tools for ongoing campaigns. The starting rules work the same in both editions.

A choice can help someone. Keep that help real. A successful delivery can feed families; a fair bargain can settle a dispute. Follow the costs and people involved.

BALEN: THE WORLD YOU ENTER

Thirty-five years ago, the ley lines collapsed. Magic had carried water, held bridges and guided trade for generations. When the lines failed, green Plaguefire swept through their works. Roads broke, stone turned to glass and living things changed.

Civilization survived. Now a working mill, a sound boat and a promise kept are things worth defending. Rulers still command armies. Merchants still fix prices. People keep one another alive, sometimes in defiance of both.

A city that needs its neighbours

Greyharbor stands on the River Untrel's delta. Dalehaven grows much of its grain; riverfolk and wagon crews bring it to the city. Greyharbor is Delinor's capital. Delinor and Dalehaven belong to Travia alongside Riven and Olthrya. Its members share routes and defence while keeping their own laws and grudges.

The Patrician rules Greyharbor. The Iron Guard enforces his authority and protects the interests that pay it. Merchant guilds control warehouses and contracts. Mother Gray leads the city's Syndicate guild, trading in information, favours and quiet violence.

The Upper City houses wealth and power. The Riverside works its docks and markets. In the Outmarsh, refugees and people changed by Plaguefire build lives on ground the city is content to forget.

Faith and power

Balen is both the world and the god who made it. The Twelve are real, and people disagree about what they owe the world. Selmira, Lady of Mercy, is honoured in kitchens and sickrooms. Veyra watches growth and harvest; Meris is invoked over trade; Edrath over law and judgment.

Ley magic draws on the damaged lines and can leave lasting Marks. Divine magic passes through a mortal body and causes strain that can recover; deliberate overreach can injure. Elven nature traditions work through living systems that survived. Use the rules for the actual source of the work.

A shrine rite may be welcomed where a green flare causes fear. Who sees it, what it does and whom it helps determine the response. A miracle does not assign its caster a compulsory duty.

The Last Clean Shipment

Your first job concerns eight sacks of grain, a detained driver and an Outmarsh kitchen. People have reasons to obstruct you, but they can also listen. You can negotiate, investigate, carry the grain another way or fight. The deadline is real; the ending belongs to your crew.

PLAYING THE GAME

Describe the action, then roll if needed

Say what you want and how you try to achieve it. Routine, unopposed work succeeds. Roll when the outcome is uncertain and failure would change the situation. The GM names the difficulty and immediate stakes before you roll.

Check: $d20 + \text{ability modifier} + \text{applicable training}$. Meet or beat the Difficulty Class (DC). Training is +2; Expert training is +4. Role and background training share one bonus slot and never add together.

Difficulty

DC	USE
8	Routine work with a meaningful risk
12	Challenging: the usual risky task
15	Hard: expertise or leverage helps
18	Severe: preparation matters
22	Extreme: a remarkable undertaking

On failure, the GM describes what changes. They may offer the stated objective at a clear price; you may accept or refuse. A successful check achieves its objective. Known hazards still apply, but success creates no new punishment.

To oppose someone directly, both roll the relevant check; the higher total wins. A tie leaves the situation unchanged. Spellcasting uses the separate result bands in the magic chapters.

Advantage: roll two d20s and keep the higher. **Disadvantage:** keep the lower. Neither stacks; if both apply, they cancel.

Turns and distance

When violence begins, roll initiative. Roll $d20 + \text{Dexterity modifier}$, highest first. Break a tie with the higher Dexterity modifier, then let tied players choose; a tied NPC acts after a player. Each round, everyone gets a turn.

On your turn, move, take one major action and one minor action. A major action is an attack, spell, decisive manoeuvre or sustained help. A minor action draws an item, gives brief assistance or provides basic care. Aid is major and gives an ally advantage on their next relevant roll. Assess is major and obtains information available from the scene.

Distance

ZONE	MEANING
Engaged	Touch, melee and grappling
Near	A short move or thrown weapon
Far	A distant position or ranged shot

Move between Engaged and Near when the route is clear. Reaching Far may take your major action as well, depending on distance and obstacles; the GM says before you commit. Describe a chase or withdrawal with the same zones.

Guard. As a major action, choose either to reduce Health loss from each attack against you by 1 (minimum 0), or impose disadvantage on attacks against you by one visible attacker, until the start of your next turn. Declare your choice and attacker. Hold the Line makes Guard a minor action and grants Engaged allies +1 Defense until your next turn.

Use a reaction only when a weapon, feature or creature trait grants it. Each combatant has one reaction per round unless that rule explicitly grants more. State the trigger before resolving it.

Attacks, armor and Health

A melee attack uses d20 + Strength + applicable training. A ranged attack uses Dexterity. Finesse weapons can use either. Meet or beat Defense: **10 + Dexterity modifier + armor + cover**. Light armor is 1, medium 2 and heavy 3; a shield adds 1. Medium armor gives disadvantage on Stealth; heavy armor gives disadvantage on Dexterity checks. A shield occupies a hand.

A normal weapon hit costs 1 Health. Beat Defense by 5: add 1 Health loss or inflict a fitting condition instead. Reduce Health loss by the armor rating when it can protect against the blow. If armor reduces it to zero, the attacker chooses Exposed or Impaired until the target's next turn. Cover adds +2 Defense when it protects the target from that attack.

A Reach weapon attacks from Near and grants a reaction strike when a foe closes. Finesse allows Strength or Dexterity. Two-Handed prevents a shield or off-hand item. Concealable gives advantage to hide the item. NPC Defense and Morale are final printed totals; apply Health-loss armor only when its stat block lists a rating.

Conditions

CONDITION	EFFECT
Exposed	Attackers have advantage against you.
Impaired	Disadvantage on precision and control, including attacks and casting.
Exhausted	Disadvantage on physical checks; movement is reduced.
Shaken	Disadvantage on social and morale checks.
Restrained	You cannot move; attackers have advantage against you.
Panicked	Disadvantage on rolls; you cannot willingly approach the threat until steadied.
Bleeding	Lose 1 Health at the end of your turn until treated.

Conditions last until their cause is addressed or their stated duration ends. Tell the player how a temporary condition can end. Bandaging ordinary Bleeding usually takes a minor action. Steadying panic uses the morale check when reassurance is uncertain.

Injuries and dying

Start with 6 + Constitution modifier Health, minimum 4. Make an Injury Roll when one hit costs at least 3 Health, reduces you to zero, or is explicitly brutal or lethal: **d20 + Constitution**. Moderate DC 12; severe DC 15; lethal DC 18. Failure adds one appropriate injury; success adds none. Make one Injury Roll for the same hit, even if several triggers apply. Each injury reduces maximum Health by 1; cap current Health at that new maximum.

Each injury gives disadvantage on actions using the affected part and reduces maximum Health by 1. Cap current Health at the new maximum. You can carry three injuries; a fourth is fatal. Treating one injury for a week removes it. Sleep and ordinary Health healing leave injuries in place.

At 0 Health, start three-step Bleed-Out. The first step occurs at the end of the following combat round, then each round end; outside combat, advance once per full minute. On timing changes, retain steps and start a fresh interval, never an automatic step. Healing above 0 clears the clock; further Health loss to a stabilized patient at 0 restarts it without refreshing the final action. When all three steps fill, the character dies. A new wound while stabilized restarts Bleed-Out.

Resolve the triggering Injury Roll first. Once per dying episode, a surviving character may immediately take one final major action with normal rolls and costs, no extra movement or minor action. Afterward suffer one additional injury without a save; a fourth is fatal. Declining avoids this injury. Collapse at 0 Health; further harm grants no new final action until recovery above 0 Health.

Stabilize. Stabilize: an adjacent helper spends a major action, using a medical kit or clean cloth and water, and rolls Wisdom + one relevant training bonus vs DC 12. Without supplies, roll with disadvantage. Success clears Bleed-Out and ends Bleeding, but restores no Health or injuries. Failure changes nothing; retry on a later action. Bandaging with supplies is a minor action without a roll; it ends Bleeding, not Bleed-Out.

A stabilized character at zero is helpless. Healing to at least 1 Health ends that dying episode. Basic bandaging alone does not restore Health.

Recovery

- A breather of 10–15 minutes clears unconverted Traces of both sources. It clears no boxes or strain.
- A one-hour short rest with basic care restores 1 Health and clears Traces.
- An eight-hour long rest, safe and fed, restores Health to its current maximum, clears Traces, 1 arcane box and 2 divine strain. Neither track falls below zero.

Morale. For a character, roll d20 + Wisdom or Charisma modifier against DC 12. For an NPC, use d20 + the printed Morale instead; do not add another ability modifier. On failure, seek cover, retreat, surrender or bargain as the situation allows. Intelligent opponents can accept a reasonable bargain even after a successful morale roll.

Finish the job

Settle payment, count what reached its recipients and record promises, injuries and magic costs. The GM awards 1 Advance for completing a major job or resolving a meaningful tie. Add 1 if reputation genuinely changed or a lasting cost was accepted; record the event. Full progression is in the core book. Starting play in this pack uses Tier 1 spells and starting features.

STARTING CHARACTERS

You can play immediately with a pregen. To make someone of your own, follow these steps. Start at zero Advances with a Clean lineage. Ancestry describes your character; it grants no score change or free spell.

1. **Name a life and a pressure.** Give your character a name, a place in Balen and a reason to take this job. A former escort might need work; a kitchen devotee might want the grain delivered.
2. **Assign scores.** Put 15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8 once each into Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma. Strength is force; Dexterity precision; Constitution endurance; Intelligence knowledge; Wisdom awareness; Charisma influence.

Ability modifiers	
SCORE	MODIFIER
8	-1
10	0
12	+1
14	+2
16	+3
18	+4

Odd scores use the same modifier as the preceding even score: 13 is +1, for example. The formula is $(\text{score} - 10) \div 2$, rounded down.

3. **Choose a background.** Name one focused skill, trade or tool; it is Trained (+2) when it clearly applies. It shares the role-training slot.
4. **Choose one role below.** Take its starting feature and training. Casters choose two spells from their tradition in this pack.
5. **Take ordinary kit.** One weapon, light armor (Soldiers may choose medium), trade tools, bandages, blanket, water, one day's food and 4 quarter-bits. A sword or club is plain; a knife is Finesse and Concealable; a bow reaches Far and is Two-Handed.
6. **Write the totals.** Health is $\max(4, 6 + \text{Constitution modifier})$. Defense is $10 + \text{Dexterity modifier} + \text{armor}$; cover applies during an attack. Write weapon and casting bonuses. Begin with empty magic tracks, no injuries and no Marks.
7. **Connect the crew.** Ask another player how you know each other. Name one promise you have chosen to keep and one thing you need.

Soldier

Trained: Weapons, endurance and formation work.

Hold the Line. When you Guard, Engaged allies gain +1 Defense until your next turn. You may Guard as a minor action.

People recognize your military bearing. Their response depends on their history with soldiers.

Arcanist

Trained: Arcane casting and learned spellcraft.

Disciplined Channel. Cast with Intelligence. Your arcane capacity is $\max(3, 4 + \text{Constitution modifier}) + 1$. Sense arcane Traces and nearby arcane casting within Near.

Ley work leaves recognizable evidence. You begin with two learned arcane cantrips.

Devout

Trained: Divine casting and the practices of your faith.

Steady Faith. Cast with Wisdom. Your safe divine strain limit is $\max(3, 4 + \text{Constitution modifier}) + 1$.

Your rites identify your faith. Choose your relationship to a god; an oath is optional. You begin with two learned minor rites.

Fixer

Trained: Negotiation, contacts and arranging deals.

Everybody Owes Somebody. Name three contacts with the GM. Once per session, one provides information, access or a minor resource without a roll.

Agree the favor and what you owe before accepting it. The contact has needs of their own.

The core book adds Skirmisher and Scholar, role paths, other lineages and the full spell catalog. Your starter character carries across with the same scores, features and costs.

Kessa Vale – Soldier

Human · Clean · Former caravan guard

A road veteran who will not leave another driver behind.

Starting character · no Advances spent

Strength 15 (+2)	Dexterity 12 (+1)	Constitution 14 (+2)	Intelligence 8 (-1)	Wisdom 13 (+1)	Charisma 10 (+0)
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Health: 8/8; current ____ · **Defense:** 13 before cover · **Initiative:** d20 +1.

Armor: Medium armor, rating 2: adds 2 Defense and subtracts 2 Health loss. Disadvantage on Stealth checks. A hit reduced to 0 still gives Exposed or Impaired until your next turn; armor does not cancel brutal/severe Injury Rolls.

Training: Trained +2 in endurance, formation, and controlled violence. Other skills are untrained; overlapping training does not stack. Background: Caravan escort formations (overlaps role).

Starting feature — Hold the Line: You may Guard as a minor action. When you Guard, allies Engaged with you gain +1 Defense until your next turn.

Defining risk: People recognize your military bearing. Their response depends on their history with soldiers; establish that history before a check.

Sword: d20 +4 vs Defense; 1 Health loss before armor. A hit by 5+ adds 1 Health loss or a condition instead of that extra loss. One hand; no additional weapon tag in this starter.

Gear: Medium armor; Sword; Rope; Bandages; Blanket; Waterskin; One day of rations. **Coin:** 4 quarter-bits (1 quadbit); current ____.

Tie: Driver Dena Holt once carried you out of a failed escort. She wants you to bring her and her wagon home.

Obligation: You promised keeper Ada Venn that you would protect this food run. Walking away leaves the Outmarsh kitchen without its promised grain.

First move: Ask why the wagon is held before drawing steel. Offer to inspect the disputed sack with Dena.

Arcane capacity: 6 = max(3, 4 + Constitution +2).

Arcane boxes: 0/6 □ □ □ □ □ □ · **Arcane Traces:** 0 (keep 0–2) □ □; the third immediately converts to one box.

Highest tier on current track: none; now ____ · **Acquired Marks:** none; arcane entry / severity / effect:

Injuries: none; area / maximum Health reduction: -----

Bleed-Out: □ □ □ · **Conditions:** -----

Plaguefire attention: 0/4 □ □ □ □ · **Promises / favor debts:** -----

Advances: 0; earned ____; spent ____.

Orin Flint – Arcanist

Gnome · Clean · Warehouse lamp-tender

A careful caster proving that useful magic need not destroy a neighborhood.

Starting character · no Advances spent

Strength 8 (-1)	Dexterity 13 (+1)	Constitution 14 (+2)	Intelligence 15 (+2)	Wisdom 12 (+1)	Charisma 10 (+0)
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Health: 8/8; current ____ · **Defense:** 12 before cover · **Initiative:** d20 +1.

Armor: Light armor, rating 1: adds 1 Defense and subtracts 1 Health loss. No armor penalty. A hit reduced to 0 still gives Exposed or Impaired until your next turn; armor does not cancel brutal/severe Injury Rolls.

Training: Trained +2 in arcane spellcraft and arcane lore. Other skills and weapon attacks are untrained; overlapping training does not stack. Background: Arcane lamp tending (overlaps role).

Starting feature — Disciplined Channel: Cast arcane spells with Intelligence. Gain +1 Mark-track capacity. Sense others' ley Traces within Near and know when arcane magic is worked nearby, even unseen.

Defining risk: Your work leaves Traces. Anyone with Trace Reading recognizes your signature; witnesses can identify your work later.

Club: d20 -1 vs Defense; 1 Health loss before armor. A hit by 5+ adds 1 Health loss or a condition instead of that extra loss. One hand; no additional weapon tag.

Gear: Light armor; Club; Lamp and oil; Flint; Bandages; Blanket; Waterskin; One day of rations. **Coin:** 4 quarter-bits (1 quadbit); current ____.

Known cantrips · access Tier 1

Cast as a major action: d20 +4 (Intelligence +2, role +2). Pay even on failure or natural 20. Before payment, declare any Draw Deep: +2 to this roll per extra arcane box, not extra effect or new spell access. Natural results still apply; use the full outcome table in the reference.

- **Spark** — threshold 9; 1 Trace. Ignite dry tinder, shock one small target, or distract one watcher briefly. A shock costs 1 Health on a hit; distraction opens a moment to act, rather than compelling obedience. *Starter application:* Light the checkpoint cookfire or briefly distract one watcher.
- **Telekinetic Nudge** — threshold 9; 1 Trace. Move or tip one unattended object you could lift with one hand, within Near. It cannot lift a person, move a wagon, or force a loaded gate; slacken the load first. *Starter application:* Tip the gate peg once Dena has slackened its loaded cord.

Tie: Guild factor Elin Rusk gave you honest work. She wants the wagon recovered without her name attached to another magical disaster.

Obligation: You owe the kitchen a week of lamp-lighting after scorching its old awning. Completing the delivery does not automatically discharge that promise.

First move: Check for actual ley Traces; your starting sense is not Trace Reading and cannot identify another caster's last spell.

Arcane capacity: 7 = max(3, 4 + Constitution +2) + 1 Disciplined Channel.

Arcane boxes: 0/7 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ · **Arcane Traces:** 0 (keep 0–2) □ □; the third immediately converts to one box.

Highest tier on current track: none; now ____ · **Acquired Marks:** none; arcane entry / severity / effect:

Injuries: none; area / maximum Health reduction: -----

Bleed-Out: □ □ □ · **Conditions:** -----

Plaguefire attention: 0/4 □ □ □ □ · **Promises / favor debts:** -----

Advances: 0; earned ____; spent ____.

Mira Sen – Devout

Dwarf · Clean · Selmiran kitchen attendant

Mercy measured in bowls filled, not speeches.

Starting character · no Advances spent

Strength 12 (+1)	Dexterity 10 (+0)	Constitution 14 (+2)	Intelligence 8 (-1)	Wisdom 15 (+2)	Charisma 13 (+1)
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Health: 8/8; current ____ · **Defense:** 11 before cover · **Initiative:** d20 +0.

Armor: Light armor, rating 1: adds 1 Defense and subtracts 1 Health loss. No armor penalty. A hit reduced to 0 still gives Exposed or Impaired until your next turn; armor does not cancel brutal/severe Injury Rolls.

Training: Trained +2 in divine rites and Selmiran doctrine. Other skills and weapon attacks are untrained; this grants no universal medicine bonus. Background: Selmiran kitchen rites (overlaps role).

Starting feature — Steady Faith: Cast divine miracles with Wisdom. Gain +1 safe strain limit after the base minimum: your limit is 7. Reaching it is safe; exceeding it is declared overreach, not a Divine Mark.

Defining risk: Your miracles identify Selmira's faith. Priests, rivals, and witnesses remember how you use them. Failed rites spend effort without creating a duty or a demand for atonement.

Faith: Selmira's mercy means offering available food and basic care to people in immediate need, without extracting obedience or profit. Promise only supplies you can give.

Walking club: d20 +1 vs Defense; 1 Health loss before armor. A hit by 5+ adds 1 Health loss or a condition instead of that extra loss. One hand; no additional weapon tag.

Gear: Light armor; Walking club; Selmiran prayer cord; Bandages; Cooking spoon; Blanket; Waterskin; One day of rations. **Coin:** 4 quarter-bits (1 quadbit); current ____.

Known rites · access Tier 1

Cast as a major action: d20 +4 (Wisdom +2, role +2). Pay even on failure or natural 20. Before payment, declare any Draw Deep: +2 to this roll per extra strain, not extra effect or new spell access. Natural results still apply; use the full outcome table in the reference.

- **Sanctify** — threshold 10; 1 divine Trace. Purify one sack of food, one waterskin, or a small touched household space. Remove ordinary spoilage or contamination; it cannot create supplies, cleanse active Plaguefire, or remove a Mark. *Starter application:* Purify the opened grain sack; the sealed sound sacks need no rite.
- **Comfort the Faithful** — threshold 10; 1 divine Trace. Remove Shaken or Panicked from one willing creature within Near. It steadies fear without changing beliefs, erasing debts, or forcing consent. *Starter application:* Steady Dena if she willingly accepts help.

Tie: Kitchen keeper Ada Venn taught you the daily rites. She wants a truthful account of what can be served tonight.

Obligation: You accepted responsibility for receiving the shipment. If it cannot arrive, warn Ada and help ration what remains rather than conceal the loss.

First move: Offer to inspect and purify the opened sack. You know no Health-restoring miracle: use bandages and care for casualties.

Divine strain: 0/7 safe limit; current ____ · **Divine Traces:** 0 (third becomes 1 strain). Overreach: 1 Health per new strain above 7, paid after the rite; Exhausted and no channeling until strain recovers. State the price first; use the reference for injuries. Long rest: clear 2 strain, not all.

Arcane capacity: 6 = max(3, 4 + Constitution +2).

Arcane boxes: 0/6 □ □ □ □ □ · **Arcane Traces:** 0 (keep 0–2) □ □; the third immediately converts to one box.

Highest tier on current track: none; now ____ · **Acquired Marks:** none; arcane entry / severity / effect:

Injuries: none; area / maximum Health reduction: _____

Bleed-Out: □ □ □ · **Conditions:** _____

Plaguefire attention: 0/4 □ □ □ □ · **Promises / favor debts:** _____

Advances: 0; earned ____; spent ____.

Tavi Reed – Fixer

Human · Clean · Riverside errand broker

Someone always owes you one; today, you need that to matter.

Starting character · no Advances spent

Strength 8 (-1)	Dexterity 14 (+2)	Constitution 10 (+0)	Intelligence 13 (+1)	Wisdom 12 (+1)	Charisma 15 (+2)
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Health: 6/6; current ____ · **Defense:** 13 before cover · **Initiative:** d20 +2.

Armor: Light armor, rating 1: adds 1 Defense and subtracts 1 Health loss. No armor penalty. A hit reduced to 0 still gives Exposed or Impaired until your next turn; armor does not cancel brutal/severe Injury Rolls.

Training: Trained +2 in influence, negotiation, and leverage, including relevant Persuasion or Deception. Other skills and weapon attacks are untrained; overlapping training does not stack. Background: Trade negotiation (overlaps role).

Starting feature — Everybody Owes Somebody: Begin with three named contacts. Once per session, call in one favor for information, access, or a minor resource without a roll.

Defining risk: Agree the favor and what you owe before accepting it. Record the promise; the contact has needs of their own.

Knife: d20 +2 vs Defense; 1 Health loss before armor. A hit by 5+ adds 1 Health loss or a condition instead of that extra loss. Finesse permits Strength or Dexterity; Concealable grants advantage to hide or smuggle this knife. Tags: Finesse, Concealable.

Gear: Light armor; Knife; Ledger, charcoal and sealing wax; Bandages; Blanket; Waterskin; One day of rations.

Coin: 4 quarter-bits (1 quadbit); current ____.

Three contacts · favor used? ☐

- **Pell Doss** (Roadside milestone, scene 2): Show the dry bypass and its gate peg without a check. *Debt:* Take his next kitchen errand when this job ends.
- **Elin Rusk** (Riverside storehouse, scene 1; sends replies with Pell): Lend 8 quarter-bits for the legitimate toll, separate from the job advance. *Debt:* Repay the 8 quarter-bits after the job; this is not extra payment.
- **Ada Venn** (Outmarsh kitchen, scene 1 or 4; a message takes 30 minutes each way): Send a handcart and two volunteers to the milestone for a bypass plan. *Debt:* Help repair the kitchen roof during the next downtime.

Tie: Runner Pell Doss covered your last failed delivery. He wants his name kept out of an official complaint.

Obligation: Elin Rusk entrusted you with the original delivery receipt. Return it with an honest destination and sack count; falsifying it puts your work relationship at risk.

First move: Decide whether to spend your once-session favor now; no check is required for the listed favor.

Arcane capacity: 4 = max(3, 4 + Constitution +0).

Arcane boxes: 0/4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ · **Arcane Traces:** 0 (keep 0–2) ☐ ☐; the third immediately converts to one box.

Highest tier on current track: none; now ____ · **Acquired Marks:** none; arcane entry / severity / effect:

Injuries: none; area / maximum Health reduction: _____

Bleed-Out: ☐ ☐ ☐ · **Conditions:** _____

Plaguefire attention: 0/4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ · **Promises / favor debts:** _____

Advances: 0; earned ____; spent ____.

ARCANE MAGIC

Arcane work draws on the broken ley. It can light a fire or move a peg; its residue remains in the caster. These are Tier 1 cantrips. You can cast only spells you have learned. Casting training comes from your role or a relevant background; use one bonus.

Declare, pay, roll

1. Name the spell, target and practical effect. Declare at most 2 extra arcane Draw Deep boxes: each grants +2 to this roll.
2. Pay the cantrip's 1 arcane Trace, then any declared Draw Deep boxes. Every three Traces are consumed to add 1 box. When a box fills capacity, clear that completed track and record an owed Minor Mark; keep paying any remaining boxes. These Tier 1 castings seed Tier 1 history.
3. Roll d20 + Intelligence modifier + applicable training + Draw Deep, against DC 9. Natural 1 or 20 takes precedence over the total.
4. Resolve the result below, including backlash when required. Then choose or roll any owed Marks in payment order. The casting still paid its full price.

RESULT	OUTCOME
Meet or beat 9	The spell works.
Miss by 1–4	The spell works with instability: a smaller effect, brief delay or conspicuous sign.
Miss by 5+, or natural 1	The spell misfires; roll d6 backlash.
Natural 20	The spell works and is modestly empowered; committed costs remain.

A misfire changes the target, shape or scale of the attempted effect. Keep it within that spell's practical scope. Resolve the effect once; if backlash redirects it, use that target. Announce known hazards before the player commits.

What the spell can do

Unless an entry says otherwise, casting takes a major action and affects one creature or object you can see within Near. Touch means Engaged. A scene lasts while the same immediate encounter or task continues; ending a fight, leaving the place, or moving to a different task ends scene effects.

For direct harm, roll once. Use the printed casting threshold for the casting outcome, and compare the same total to the target's Defense for a hit. A controlled spell can miss; that miss alone causes no backlash. A hit deals the entry's flat Health loss. Beating Defense by 5 adds 1 Health loss or a fitting condition instead. A natural 20 hits and empowers the spell. Armor reduces harm when it can protect against the effect. No separate attack or damage roll is needed.

Natural 20 improves one part modestly; use one improvement if a 5+ result already improves it. It grants no extra spell or refunded price. Draw Deep improves only the roll.

- **Spark.** Ignite dry tinder, shock one small target, or distract one watcher briefly. A shock costs 1 Health on a hit; distraction opens a moment to act, rather than compelling obedience.

- **Telekinetic Nudge.** Move or tip one unattended object you could lift with one hand, within Near. It cannot lift a person, move a wagon, or force a loaded gate; slacken the load first.
- **Sense Residue.** Detect whether magic has recently affected a visible object or small area within Near. Learn its source and rough nature, not the caster's identity or a complete history.
- **Ember Script.** Write a short message in harmless hovering fire within Near. Everyone with a clear view can read it; it fades within an hour and cannot burn another object.

Backlash

Roll one d6

D6	AFTER THE CASTING
1	Arcane shock: lose 2 Health and become Bleeding. Armor does not protect against this internal recoil.
2	Ley feedback: become Impaired until the start of your next turn, or for a minute outside combat.
3	Wild discharge: redirect the spell to a random nearby target. Resolve the effect once; this does not repeat a misfire already resolved.
4	Focus fracture: a fragile casting focus or carried tool breaks. If you have neither, the discharge plainly reveals your position.
5	Visible brand: an obvious ley sign lasts until your next long rest. Witnesses can recognize it; this result adds no permanent Mark.
6	Plaguefire flare: add 1 attention beyond the point already gained for backlash.

For a random target, number up to six plausible nearby targets and roll d6; reroll unused faces. With no plausible target, the effect dissipates into the surroundings. Do not create a person merely to take the hit.

Keep Plaguefire attention from 0 to 4. Backlash adds 1; result 6 adds a further 1. Forbidden Arcana adds 1 and direct Plaguefire adds 2; these costs add together, capped at 4. When you reach 3, introduce a local Plaguefire complication. At 4, a lasting Mark or pursuit follows. Explain who or what can follow the evidence. Reduce attention by 1 per week of downtime, or through a cleansing ritual or costly service agreed before it begins.

A local complication may be a nearby scar flaring or touched creatures noticing a ley signature. State the link to the casting and what warning the crew can perceive. Attention does not give every distant faction your name.

Marks and recovery explains capacity, Traces and lasting Minor Marks. Divine rites use their own strain; the two tracks never mix.

DIVINE MAGIC

A miracle is a petition to a real god. A mortal body must carry the effort. These Tier 1 minor rites cost a divine Trace, not a lasting Mark. Choose a faith and the relationship your character has to it.

Petition, declare, pay, roll

1. Name a learned rite, target and practical effect. If it plainly breaks an established divine prohibition, the GM says so before any payment. A failed roll creates no new prohibition or duty.
2. Declare optional Draw Deep: each extra divine strain grants +2 to this Faith Roll. Count that strain and the rite's 1 divine Trace; every three divine Traces become 1 strain. Agree any overreach price before committing.
3. Pay the committed strain and Traces. Roll d20 + Wisdom modifier + applicable training + Draw Deep, against DC 10.
4. Resolve the miracle, then pay accepted overreach Health and resolve any injury. Natural results never refund the effort.

RESULT	OUTCOME
Meet or beat 10	The rite works.
Miss by 1–4	It works partially: reduce one useful part of the effect.
Miss by 5+, or natural 1	It fails; the committed price and accepted overreach remain.
Natural 20	It works and is modestly empowered; committed costs remain.

Safe strain and overreach

Your safe limit is $\max(3, 4 + \text{Constitution modifier})$, plus explicit divine bonuses. Steady Faith adds 1 after the minimum. Reaching the limit exactly is safe. Strain stays on the track; it never resets merely for reaching the limit.

If a payment would cross the limit, name the ending strain and price first. Each new point above the limit costs 1 Health **after** the rite resolves. Accept that price or change the declaration. You cannot promise more Health than you have now or borrow against healing you hope to receive.

Above the limit you are Exhausted and cannot channel another miracle. Health healing does not restore channeling. Strain must recover to the limit or below; then strain-caused exhaustion and the block end.

A price of 3 or more Health calls for d20 + Constitution vs DC 12. If it spends all Health held at declaration, use DC 15 instead, even for a smaller price. Make one Injury Roll for that exertion. Failure adds one bodily injury; success adds none. Armor and damage-reduction features do not discount the price. At zero Health, use the ordinary dying rules.

Example. Mira's limit is 7. With 6 strain and 2 divine Traces, she declares a rite with 1 Draw Deep strain. The third Trace converts to a strain point, reaching 7; Draw Deep then raises strain to 8. She gets +2 to the roll and owes 1 Health afterward. Her rite can finish before she becomes Exhausted and loses channeling.

Minor rites

Unless an entry says otherwise, casting takes a major action and affects one creature or object you can see within Near. Touch means Engaged. A scene lasts while the same immediate encounter or task continues; ending a fight, leaving the place, or moving to a different task ends scene effects.

For direct harm, roll once. Use the printed casting threshold for the casting outcome, and compare the same total to the target's Defense for a hit. A controlled spell can miss; that miss alone causes no backlash. A hit deals the entry's flat Health loss. Beating Defense by 5 adds 1 Health loss or a fitting condition instead. A natural 20 hits and empowers the spell. Armor reduces harm when it can protect against the effect. No separate attack or damage roll is needed.

Natural 20 improves one part modestly; use one improvement if a 5+ result already improves it. It grants no extra spell or refunded price. Draw Deep improves only the roll.

- **Sanctify.** Purify one sack of food, one waterskin, or a small touched household space. Remove ordinary spoilage or contamination; it cannot create supplies, cleanse active Plaguefire, or remove a Mark.
- **Light of Balen.** Set steady divine light on one touched object for a scene. It lights the surrounding Near area, gives no harmful heat, and ends if you dismiss it.
- **Comfort the Faithful.** Remove Shaken or Panicked from one willing creature within Near. It steadies fear without changing beliefs, erasing debts, or forcing consent.
- **Litany of Resolve.** Give one willing creature advantage on its next morale check this scene. It does not force the creature to fight or cancel an established reason to surrender.

Recovery

Choose a temporary sign of your faith: warm palms, a second voice or a briefly visible sigil. A 10–15 minute breather clears unconverted divine Traces. A one-hour short rest with care restores 1 Health but no strain. An eight-hour safe, fed long rest clears 2 strain and restores Health to its current maximum. Heavy exertion can require several rests; injuries still need treatment.

The source matters. A Devout caught in a ley hazard still suffers arcane contamination. Neither source's recovery clears the other. Promises you freely choose and people who see your rites remain part of the world; a failed petition invents no atonement task.

ARCANE MARKS AND TRACES

Arcane capacity is $\max(3, 4 + \text{Constitution modifier})$, plus explicit bonuses. An Arcanist's Disciplined Channel adds 1. Orin's capacity is 7. Write current boxes and unconverted Traces separately; printed pips do not change your capacity.

Each three arcane Traces become one Tier 1 box. A 10–15 minute breather clears only Traces that have not converted. A safe, fed long rest clears 1 box. If that empties the track, its remembered tier also clears. Traces and boxes stay paid after a failed casting.

Temporary signs

Choose a sign or roll d6. One Trace is easy to miss; two are harder to hide. When the third converts, clear those three Traces and add the box.

D6	TRACE	SIGN
1	Greenshimmer	Faint green light moves under the skin of your hands.
2	Glass sweat	Your sweat beads like tiny glass spheres; they shatter without sound.
3	Copper aftertaste	Everything you taste for the next hour is hot copper.
4	Wrong echo	Your voice arrives half a beat after your lips move.
5	Static touch	Small objects cling to your fingers; your hair lifts on its own.
6	Cold burn	Your fingertips go numb as if frostbitten, though the skin is unmarked.

When capacity fills

Each full track owes a Mark. Clear the completed boxes and history, then keep paying any remaining boxes. Apply the owed Mark after the casting resolves. Tier 1 work in this pack earns Minor Marks. The core book tracks stronger tiers and their more severe consequences.

Example. Orin has 6 boxes and 2 Traces. Another cantrip converts the third Trace into a seventh box. Capacity fills; after the casting he takes a Minor Mark. His track is empty, even if the spell failed.

Lasting Minor Marks: choose or roll d6

D6	MARK	EFFECT
1	Veins of green	The veins in your hands glint faint green in dim light.
2	Glass fingertips	Your finger pads are smooth as glass; you leave faint prints on everything you touch.
3	Ashen streak	A lock of your hair has gone white-green, and it will not take dye.
4	Wrong shadow	Your shadow moves a half-beat behind you, always.
5	Cold spots	Patches of your skin are cold to the touch, whatever the weather.
6	Ember eyes	Your eyes catch light green-gold, even in darkness.

Minor Marks are visible changes, without an additional numerical penalty. Someone must see or identify a Mark to react to it. Gloves, collars and careful dress can conceal many signs.

Ordinary rest and healing do not remove a lasting Mark. The core book describes treatment that reduces boxes and the dangerous deadfire-ash ritual that can remove a chosen Mark. None is required to finish the starter adventure.

TABLE REFERENCE

A risky action

d20 + ability modifier + training (+2 Trained, +4 Expert). Meet or beat the announced DC. Role and background training do not stack. Advantage keeps the higher of two d20s; disadvantage the lower.

A turn

Move, one major action, one minor action. Strike, cast, Aid, Assess and stabilize are major. Guard is major, except for a Soldier's Hold the Line. A reaction needs a printed trigger; one per round.

A hit

Attack against Defense. Most weapons cost 1 Health; a hit by 5 adds 1 Health or a fitting condition. Armor protects Health; at zero loss it instead leaves Exposed or Impaired until the target's next turn. NPC totals already include Defense modifiers.

An injury or dying character

One hit of 3+ Health, zero Health or a brutal/lethal effect triggers d20 + Constitution vs 12/15/18. Failure adds one injury. At zero, three-step Bleed-Out advances at each round's end or each minute. Stabilize: an adjacent helper spends a major action, using a medical kit or clean cloth and water, and rolls Wisdom + one relevant training bonus vs DC 12. Without supplies, roll with disadvantage. Success clears Bleed-Out and ends Bleeding, but restores no Health or injuries. Failure changes nothing; retry on a later action. Bandaging with supplies is a minor action without a roll; it ends Bleeding, not Bleed-Out.

Resolve the triggering Injury Roll first. Once per dying episode, a surviving character may immediately take one final major action with normal rolls and costs, no extra movement or minor action. Afterward suffer one additional injury without a save; a fourth is fatal. Declining avoids this injury. Collapse at 0 Health; further harm grants no new final action until recovery above 0 Health.

A spell

Declare intent, target and Draw Deep, announce costs, pay, then roll. Arcane: Intelligence + training vs 9. Divine: Wisdom + training vs 10. Every Tier 1 casting pays one source-specific Trace. Every three convert to one arcane box or divine strain. Natural results apply before the total; costs remain paid.

Arcane failure by 1–4 works with instability; by 5+ or natural 1 misfires and rolls d6 backlash. Divine failure by 1–4 works partially; by 5+ or natural 1 fails. Divine failure adds no new duty or Mark. Natural 20 empowers either source.

Draw Deep and limits

Each declared arcane box or divine strain gives +2 to that casting roll. Arcanist capacity and Devout safe limit are $\max(3, 4 + \text{Constitution}) + 1$. Arcane capacity fills earn Minor Marks in this Tier 1 pack; clear each completed track and keep paying. Divine strain stays: each new point above the limit costs 1 Health after the miracle; accept the price first. Above the limit, Exhausted and no channeling. Serious overreach uses the injury procedure in [Divine Magic](#).

Rest

10–15 minutes clears unconverted Traces. One hour with care restores 1 Health. Eight hours safe and fed restores Health, clears 1 arcane box and 2 divine strain. Lasting Marks and injuries remain.

Close the session

Resolve delivery and payment. Record costs, injuries, promises and what each witness knows. An honest success helps its recipients. Take earned Advances and save further progression for the core rules.

THE LAST CLEAN SHIPMENT

GM MATERIAL · Draft adventure

For one session with the four printed starting characters. Review the facts and endings before play.

A grain wagon from Dalehaven is detained on the last stretch into Greyharbor. Its cargo is promised to an Outmarsh kitchen; an Iron Guard collector claims contamination and demands three times the posted toll. The grain really can be delivered. There is no concealed monster, inevitable betrayal, or punishment for a clean success.

GM briefing: the whole situation

- **Time:** noon. Detention becomes impoundment at six; the kitchen opens at seven. Normal road travel from Elin's storehouse to the milestone takes 30 minutes, then 15 to the checkpoint; return with the wagon to the kitchen takes 45. Tell the players the current time after a major delay.
- **Cargo:** one ox-drawn wagon, driver Dena, 8 sacks of grain. Seven sealed sacks are good; one opened sack is damp and spoiled, not Plaguefire. A successful Sanctify can purify that one sack. Discarding it is a viable nonmagical solution.
- **Offer:** 60 quarter-bits to the crew (15 quadbits): 20 now and 40 after delivery of the sound cargo to Ada. The advance belongs to the crew and covers any expenses; the balance is the same if the spoiled sack is discarded. No payment is conditional on fighting.
- **Truth:** posted toll 8; demand 24. Brann uses the spoiled sack to justify an invented surcharge. He can accept a witnessed inspection plus the real toll without losing face.
- **Routes:** pay/negotiate release; prepare a quiet bypass or gate opening; confront the two custodians; or retreat and arrange partial/diverted delivery. Use the same map and NPC motives for all routes.
- **No-roll essentials:** show the receipt, posted toll, wagon, sound sacks, deadline and bypass whenever the characters ask the relevant person or inspect the relevant place. A failed check never erases these facts.

Dalehaven grows grain; Greyharbor depends on its delivery. Merchants hold the contracts, and the Iron Guard controls this road. The people and opponent statistics you need are printed below.

Six people, not six quest dispensers

Elin Rusk – Merchant Guild factor; Riverside storehouse

Wants: Her grain delivered and a signed count, without a public killing attached to her contract.

Leverage: The delivery receipt and 60 quarter-bits in payment; she can authorize the kitchen as an alternate destination.

Knows: Eight sacks were purchased for the Outmarsh; the legitimate unpaid road toll is 8 quarter-bits, not 24.

Bargain / retreat: Accepts a signed delivery to Ada's kitchen. If threatened, withdraws from the room and asks Pell to mediate; she does not summon an automatic combat encounter.

Dena Holt – Detained wagon driver; checkpoint yard

Wants: Her ox, wagon, and passengers home before dark.

Leverage: Knows the wagon brake, load, gate peg, and the guard's inspection story; will drive as soon as a route is clear.

Knows: One opened sack is damp and sour; seven sealed sacks are sound. There was no green fire or magical contamination.

Bargain / retreat: Will unload or divert cargo with the crew. Refuses a plan to charge people with the ox; takes cover in a fight and bargains away the wagon before a life.

Brann Sedge – Iron Guard toll collector; barrier

Wants: Fill a 24-quarter-bit collection quota and retain face before his hired help.

Leverage: Controls the barrier and has a written detention receipt, but no medical expertise or genuine evidence of Plaguefire.

Knows: His posted toll is 8; the other 16 is an invented inspection surcharge. A public signed receipt or a witness makes the surcharge embarrassing.

Bargain / retreat: Accepts 8 and a witnessed clean-cargo inspection, or the full 24 without argument. Accepts nonviolent surrender and stops chasing at the milestone. He fights only if attacked, openly robbed, or bodily forced aside; morale may make him bargain.

Ada Venn – Selmiran kitchen keeper; Outmarsh

Wants: A reliable meal for twelve families tonight; an honest warning if none is coming.

Leverage: Handcart, two willing kitchen volunteers, a safe place for basic care, and the signature Elin will accept.

Knows: One sack provides twelve family meals in this scenario. Grain is ordinary food, not a relic or cure. She can accept cargo at the roadside if the wagon cannot enter.

Bargain / retreat: Will share rather than demand ownership. Withdraws civilians from violence; will shelter an injured collector too. Does not require conversion, obedience, or a favor in return for emergency care.

Pell Doss – Road runner; milestone and bypass

Wants: A safe road and no official complaint naming him.

Leverage: Can carry messages and show the dry footpath around the barrier; one message between milestone and kitchen takes 30 minutes each way.

Knows: Brann's posted toll, the inspection's pretext, and a rear service gate with a loose peg. The path takes people or a handcart, not a loaded wagon.

Bargain / retreat: Offers directions freely. A Fixer favor gets direct escort without a risky navigation check. Retreats into the reeds if fighting begins, returning at the milestone when it ends.

Nell Arvo – Hired checkpoint lookout; uses Veyrian Deserter statistics

Wants: Her promised wage and no return to a soldier's grave.

Leverage: Watches the yard and can leave Brann alone if persuaded by a genuine safe alternative.

Knows: The wagon is wholesome except the opened sack; Brann will impound it at six. She has no loyalty to the invented surcharge.

Bargain / retreat: Accepts 4 quarter-bits to stand aside and not pursue, or a credible offer of safe paid unloading work from Elin. Does not betray that bargain. At 2 Health or less she breaks and seeks escape or surrender.

Scene 1 – Take the job

Read or paraphrase: "Elin places a delivery receipt beside twenty copper quarter-bits. 'Dena should have been here at dawn. The road collector says the grain is unclean. Ada has twelve families coming at seven. Bring the sound grain to her, get her signature, and there are forty more. Bring Dena home too, if you can.'"

Give the crew the original receipt, advance, eight-sack count and route. Elin explicitly authorizes Ada's kitchen or a safe roadside handover signed by Ada. Returning a warning without grain earns no balance, but the crew keeps the advance. She accepts the seven good sacks if the spoiled one cannot be saved; deliberate diversion for resale does not satisfy the contract.

Why these characters care: Kessa owes Dena her life; Orin works for Elin and owes the kitchen lamp service; Mira has promised Ada a truthful meal count and serves Selmira's mercy; Tavi must return an honest receipt and has contacts on this route. Invite revisions before using a tie as pressure.

First meaningful decision: spend time contacting Ada or use Tavi's favor, head directly for Dena, or gather tools for a quiet approach. Give the choice now; no skill check is required to accept the job or learn where to go.

Optional risk: demand an extra 8-quarter-bit expense allowance with Charisma/Persuasion DC 12. Say before rolling: success grants it; failure means 30 minutes elapse in an unsuccessful dispute over the accounts; Elin grants no extra money. The original job remains available, but that time is spent. A Fixer's listed 8-quarter-bit loan favor needs no roll but must be repaid.

Forward: all approaches lead to the milestone. Ada can provide a handcart in person or through Tavi's favor; ordinary arrangements take 30 minutes and require the crew to promise its return, not a check.

Scene 2 – Investigate the delay

At the milestone, Pell points out the toll notice and checkpoint smoke. The road runs to a gated yard; a dry footpath curls behind the reed bank to the rear of the yard. Pell gives these directions freely and says Brann will impound at six. From the bank the crew can see Dena, her wagon, Brann and Nell; no perception roll is needed to discover them.

Essential information: calling to Dena or speaking at the barrier reveals the single sour sack, seven sound sacks, and the 24-quarter-bit demand. Inspection by smell and sight confirms mundane spoilage without a roll. Orin senses no other caster's ley Traces within Near. That feature is not a general contamination detector; ordinary smell and sight establish the spoilage. These facts allow an immediate bargain or a bypass plan.

Optional risk: observe Nell's patrol unseen, Dexterity/Stealth DC 12. Success identifies a five-minute gap at the rear gate and grants advantage on one later quiet gate approach. Failure means Nell spots the observer and asks them to come speak at the barrier; that gap is closed, not the entire infiltration route or negotiation. She does not attack merely for being watched.

Optional preparation: spend 15 minutes laying rope along the dry footpath and there is no navigation check. Rush alone without rope or Pell and use Wisdom/Survival DC 12: success saves those 15 minutes; failure reaches a muddy dead end, costs 15 minutes, then the path is found. No grain or crucial clue disappears on that roll.

Forward: parley at the gate, prepare the bypass, or withdraw to contact Ada/Elin. No route requires a successful investigation roll first.

Scene 3 – Resolve the obstruction

The checkpoint in engagement zones

The barrier and Brann are Engaged with anyone bargaining at the front. Dena's wagon and the covered cookfire are Near behind him; Nell's reed-bank lookout is Far from the barrier and Near the rear gate. A person can move between neighboring areas as the situation allows. The narrow footpath takes a handcart or two people carrying a sack, not the ox or loaded wagon. The front barrier is controlled by Brann. The rear service gate leads along a broad gravel spur back onto

the main road beyond the checkpoint: the wagon fits there, unlike the narrow footpath. That service gate is held by a light wooden peg; pulling it while the gate is slack opens it. Dena knows how to slack it safely.

Announce hazards: the drainage ditch is waist-deep mud, not a death pit. A rushed crossing without rope calls for Dexterity DC 12; failure leaves the traveler Restrained in mud until an ally spends a major action pulling them free (no second check). The stable dry path avoids this entirely. There is no automatic damage from weather or movement. If someone deliberately overturns the cookfire, its known burning patch costs 1 Health before armor to cross; taking the clear way around avoids it. Do not ignite it as an unannounced price for a successful Spark.

A. Negotiate or pay

Brann opens with “Twenty-four, or I keep the wagon.” Paying 24 buys immediate release of all cargo and driver. The crew’s advance is only 20; personal coin can cover the difference. Brann keeps this bargain.

Show the original receipt, separate/purify the sour sack, offer the posted 8, and insist on a witnessed written toll receipt: **Brann accepts without a check.** An honest solution meeting his face-saving need is not a Persuasion tax. Purification is not mandatory; leaving the sour sack to be discarded satisfies the inspection. Nell will witness the count.

Without that leverage, Charisma/Persuasion DC 15 can reduce the demand to 8. On failure, Brann refuses the discount and starts a 30-minute formal reinspection. State this before the roll. The crew may wait, acquire the leverage, attempt another route, or accept a clearly offered alternative; repeating the same speech does not reset the scene.

B. Prepare, infiltrate, or move the cargo

Ada’s handcart takes four sacks per trip. With Pell’s escort or the prepared rope route, a trip between yard and milestone takes 15 minutes and needs no navigation roll. Dena helps load. One sack carried by two people follows the same route in 15 minutes; that slower plan makes partial delivery meaningful. Quiet loading and gate work while Nell watches requires one Dexterity/Stealth DC 12 for the acting character, with advantage if the patrol gap was learned. Failure means Nell arrives and offers to overlook it for 4 quarter-bits or a credible paid unloading job, or to bring Brann; decide now instead of rolling again to erase discovery.

Alternatively, draw both guards to the front with a real inspection while another character pulls the rear service-gate peg and Dena guides the wagon along the gravel spur onto the main road. Removing the slack peg is ordinary unopposed handling, not a lockpick check; remaining unseen while doing it uses the check above. Once Dena and the wagon pass the milestone, the custodians do not pursue into town. They can later name actual witnesses and missing toll, not invent a global manhunt.

Magic can solve something: a successful Telekinetic Nudge tips the slack peg from Near without a person reaching it; pay its Trace and casting result, then the gate opens. A successful Sanctify restores the one spoiled sack; a successful Comfort the Faithful removes a willing Dena’s panic if violence caused it. A successful Spark can light the cold cookfire for an inspection or distract a watcher; announce which objective and visibility before payment. No extra unrelated problem is required.

Concrete Tier 1 outcomes: arcane instability can make the peg fall loudly (gate still opens) or the fire sputter visibly; divine partial success purifies half the opened sack, or steadies Dena enough to move while she remains Shaken. Misfire/backlash use the published arcane table. On an ordinary divine failure, Sanctify leaves the sack spoiled or Comfort leaves Dena Panicked; Mira still pays the committed strain. Injury or collapse is a risk only if she deliberately cast beyond her safe limit of 7, with the stakes announced before commitment. Natural 20 can quietly catch the falling peg or preserve the purified grain in rain; committed costs remain paid. These are scenario applications of the published result bands, not optional bargains.

C. Confrontation, surrender, retreat

Brann and Nell are the only hostile combatants. Roll initiative when someone commits violence. Brann holds the gate; Nell protects her exit. They prefer warning, disarming, separation and surrender to killing. Dena shelters behind the wagon and does not grant the party free attacks; noncombatants leave threatened space rather than gaining invented combat statistics.

OPPONENT (EXISTING BLOCK)	STATISTICS	ATTACK AND TRAIT
Brann: Iron Guard Toll Collector	Defense 13 · Health 7 · Morale +2	Halberd +5 → 1 Health loss; Reach: attacks from Near, one reaction per round when a foe closes. Killing him has Iron Guard aftermath.
Nell: Veyrian Deserter	Defense 12 · Health 5 · Morale +0	Short blade +4 → 1 Health loss. Breaks at half Health; can be reasoned with, bribed or intimidated.

Creature stat blocks: use those listed Defense values as totals; these blocks publish no separate armor rating, so do not invent a second damage reduction for them. Their ordinary attacks use the existing 5+ increased-effect rule. No hidden reinforcements or relic powers are added.

Morale triggers: Nell automatically breaks at 2 Health or less (at or below half of 5), dropping her blade and seeking safe retreat or surrender as her published block says. Otherwise roll d20 + listed Morale vs DC 12 when Brann reaches 3 Health or less, when either sees the other fall or surrender, or when either is offered escape while visibly outnumbered after the first exchange. Roll once for each new trigger. Failure: Brann offers the wagon for safe withdrawal; Nell drops her blade and leaves. Success does not oblige either to reject a later reasonable bargain or override Nell's automatic half-Health break.

Retreat is a route: declare withdrawal toward the milestone; move with cover/Guard while the other side has turns. Reach still reacts to closing, not an invented departure attack. Once the crew breaks contact and reaches the milestone, the guards stay with the wagon. Surrender costs weapons held as collateral and the wagon remains detained, but the crew is released to arrange payment or a witnessed inspection. No executions for accepting this stated offer.

If no one intervenes – a timeline, not a clock

- **Noon:** Elin makes the offer; Brann holds the wagon, Dena asks to inspect the grain together.
- **Two:** Nell takes a meal break; Brann guards the front alone for 15 minutes. This is an opportunity if the crew observes it, not a required event if a prior agreement has resolved things.
- **Four:** Ada sends Pell to ask for an honest count. He offers the handcart route if the crew has not considered it. The grain is still recoverable.
- **Six:** Brann begins moving the wagon into the locked store shed. It takes 30 minutes. Afterward he remains available to release it for the same legitimate inspection/toll terms; quiet retrieval now also requires the shed key from him, so bargaining or unloading assistance is easier than a new invented lock rule.
- **Seven:** Ada opens the kitchen with what arrived. If none arrived, she serves thin remaining broth and closes early. The wagon is held overnight, not magically destroyed; a late recovery can feed people tomorrow.

Scene 4 – Deliver, divert, or abandon

No-roll closure: Ada counts the sound sacks and signs the true receipt, either at the kitchen or an agreed safe handover. Food and a safe place for basic care are available to crew and injured strangers. Resolve the money now: Elin pays the outstanding 40 quarter-bits for all seven

originally sound sacks delivered, whether or not the eighth is purified. If the crew paid the legitimate toll from its advance, the job leaves 52 quarter-bits before other expenses; at the demanded toll it leaves 36. Divide as the players agree; keep personal starting coin separate.

- **Complete delivery:** seven sound sacks provide 84 family meals; purifying the eighth adds 12. Ada can feed twelve families for seven or eight nights. That is a real improvement; do not cancel it with an unrelated raid or spoiled-grain reveal.
- **Partial delivery:** Elin pays 5 quarter-bits from the outstanding balance per sound sack delivered (5–30 for one to six sacks). At seven sound sacks, pay the full 40. A purified sack may substitute for a lost sound sack; an eighth counts toward food, not additional payment. The maximum balance remains 40. Each sound sack still makes twelve family meals.
- **Diverted but honest aid:** Ada's signed roadside distribution to the intended families satisfies the contract and receives the same payment. Resale or delivery to a different buyer does not: no outstanding balance, and Elin refuses new credit until restitution. Actual hungry recipients still benefit from whatever was genuinely shared.
- **Abandon or return late:** report truthfully; keep the 20 advance, earn no balance until sound grain is delivered. Ada can ration her broth with warning. The held wagon and the people's requests remain future problems, not automatic character failure or an excuse for a surprise curse.

Optional last risk: if arriving after seven, rush the final unload with Strength/Athletics DC 12 to serve everyone before they leave. Success does so; failure means four families have already gone and Ada arranges a morning pickup. The grain and earned payment remain safe. Ordinary unhurried unloading needs no roll.

Causal aftermath: a fair receipt leaves Brann with a defensible account and no private vendetta. A paid Nell bargain holds. Quiet theft may lead to a claim for the missing 8-quarter-bit toll from identified participants; use witnesses and evidence. Killing Brann produces an Iron Guard investigation of the actual death, not an unrelated new catastrophe. Decide who saw what and record it. Successful mercy can earn trust without a counterbalancing punishment.

Advancement: declare at the start that delivering at least seven sound sacks to the intended families, including an honest roadside diversion, completes this major job: 1 Advance to each participating character. A partial/abandoned run can still resolve a specific tie or obligation; evaluate and name it, do not award automatically or require violence. Add 1 only if a reputation genuinely shifted or a lasting cost was accepted, recording the event. Do not count every individual sack as a separate major job or stack identical reasons.

Debrief: settle Tavi's called favor, record Mira's strain and any accepted overreach consequences, Orin's Traces/attention, and any injuries. A delivery does not automatically erase older promises or favor debts. Ask which choices felt informed, where lookups stalled, and whether magic, negotiation and retreat genuinely worked. Keep a short record of any unclear rulings for the next session.

Character Sheet

ASHES IN THE WAKE

VERSION 1.0 · v1.0-reconciled-2026-10-06

Player: _____

Campaign: _____

Date: _____

NAME

ANCESTRY

ROLE

BACKGROUND

LINEAGE

ADVANCES

STR

DEX

CON

INT

WIS

CHA

MOD

MOD

MOD

MOD

MOD

MOD

HEALTH

Current ____ / Maximum ____

$\max(4, 6 + \text{CON}) + \text{purchased increases} - \text{current injuries}$

DEFENSE

$10 + \text{DEX} + \text{armor} + \text{cover}$

Armor rating ____ (also reduces Health loss)

PLAGUEFIRE ATTENTION

Any character can gain attention. Plaguemarked lineage: starts at 1; minimum 1.

ARCANE MARK TRACK

Capacity ____

Boxes ____

Arcane Traces ____

Highest tier ____

$\max(3, 4 + \text{CON}) + \text{arcane bonuses (Arcanist +1)}$. Three arcane Traces → one Tier-1 box. Full track: owe Mark, reset, keep paying. Long rest: clear 1 box; zero resets tier.

DIVINE STRAIN

Safe limit ____

Strain ____

Divine Traces ____

Channeling lost? ☐

$\max(3, 4 + \text{CON}) + \text{divine bonuses (Devout +1)}$. Three divine Traces → one strain. Above limit: declared Health price, Exhausted, no channeling. Long rest: clear 2 strain.

Keep the ledgers separate; numeric totals are authoritative, printed pips are a counting aid. Breather (10–15 min): clear unconverted Traces (0–2 each). Health healing clears neither ledger.

FEATURES

Role feature tree

SPELLS

Name + tier

TIES & OBLIGATIONS

Min. 1 tie, 1 obligation

GEAR & RELIC

Exposure 0–4 per relic / ash lot

MARKS TAKEN

Arcane entry · severity · ongoing effect

INJURIES

NOTES

Player

GM