



THE WATCH

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The typeface for the title and headers is Almendra, by Ana Sanfelippo

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BEFORE THE SHADOW

...your people were semi-nomadic, living in clans with an ever-shifting network of alliances and enmities. Although one people, the clans were diverse in tradition, outlook, and custom. Those along the old border were traders, prosperous and widely traveled. Those living in the central plains were gatherers and trappers. And those living furthest from the outside world were mountain herders, solitary and secretive.

AND THEN THE SHADOW CAME.

Four months ago, it attacked without warning, overwhelming the border clans with superior numbers and the unnatural strength of the Shadow-held. Accustomed to dealing with raiders, the border clans initially attempted to fight back, but the men of the clans were too susceptible to the call of the Shadow; during those early desperate battles, most men turned against the clans, swelling the ranks of the Shadow's army. Weakened, wounded, and heart sore, the survivors fled to take refuge with neighbouring clans and to raise the alarm.

The chaos that resulted almost shattered the clans. News of the Shadow created new feuds and fanned the flame of old hatreds. But ultimately, as the Shadow's army pushed further and further into clan lands, clan divisions were set aside in the name of survival. It was clear that if the clans were to remain free of the Shadow's taint, they would have to stand together.

SO IT WAS THAT THE CLANS WERE DISSOLVED.

The people fell back, establishing a new border and a combined army known simply as the Watch, which is based out of the newly fortified encampments along the border. Not wanting a repeat of past tragedies, the Watch does not allow men to join its ranks, and keeps those men who remain untouched by the Shadow off the front lines and out of the Shadow's direct reach.

You are a soldier of the Watch, tasked with defending the new border and reclaiming the land taken by the Shadow. You have lost so much in a short time—clan, custom, land, and loved ones—that it sometimes leaves you breathless. You stand together with your comrades-in-arms in defence of the people, but though the clans were dissolved the old fault lines are always there, just below the surface. The Shadow seeps into those fault lines, hoping to shatter the strength of the people once more.



PREFACE

PREMISE OF THE GAME

The Watch is a low-fantasy game about women and other feminine-of-centre people who are fighting to retake their homeland from the Shadow, a darkly sorcerous threat that has the power to possess men and use them for its own violent ends. So much has already been lost to the Shadow: land, loved ones, and traditions. But your people have come together and formed a new fighting force—called the Watch—from those able to resist the Shadow.

The stories of *The Watch* are structured around the military campaign against the Shadow's forces. You will tell stories of war, love, and sacrifice as your characters fight to hang on to what they have left.

GENDER

Gender is a key theme in *The Watch*. The purpose of making gender front-and-centre is twofold:

First, *The Watch* is about stories of women and non-binary people. It is designed to make those people the centre of their own stories, and to cast them in roles usually reserved for male protagonists. *The Watch* produces stories of military campaigns, fantasy adventure, and clashes of armies, tales in which women and non-binary people do not usually get the spotlight.

Second, *The Watch* is designed to encourage conversations about toxic ideas of gender, and to explore how those toxic ideas damage both individuals and society, while still allowing for situations that are compelling and interesting to people of all genders.

This is why each playbook has a number of gender options to choose from.

GENDER OPTIONS AND WHAT THEY MEAN

It's important to note that the definitions of these options don't convey the full complexity of the terms. These definitions are instead starting points to assist players who may be unfamiliar with issues surrounding nonbinary gender identity.

Cis Woman: A cis woman is someone who is *cisgender*; they are someone who was originally assumed to be a girl or woman and who now identifies as a woman.

Trans Woman: A trans woman is someone who is *transgender*; a person who was originally assumed to be a boy or man and who now identifies as a woman.

Fluid: Someone who is gender fluid has a gender identity that changes over time. A person who is gender fluid might, at any time, identify as male, female, any other non-binary gender identity, or a combination of some or all of these.

Non-binary: Someone who is non-binary does not identify as male or female, but rather something outside the male/female binary. This can be someone who is agender (doesn't identify as any gender), but encompasses many other gender identities as well.

Genderqueer: Genderqueer is a queering of gender. It is an umbrella term, usually used by: 1) folks who don't feel they fit into any other gender category and use the term "genderqueer" in the absence of a specific term that fits them, and 2) people who are comfortable with the queering of gender *being* their gender.

Gender identity versus gender presentation

Gender identity is our internal sense of gender: the gender that we feel like “on the inside”. Gender presentation is how we choose to present our gender to those around us. For many people, these two are the same: how they identify is how they present themselves to the world. For some people, however, how they identify and how they present might not be the same.

For example:

“A man could present feminine, wearing dresses or makeup, while a nonbinary femme could wear a men’s style suit or even have facial hair. The two aspects do not have to directly align, the differences may confuse people who are unfamiliar with the complexities of identity and presentation.”

—Brie Sheldon

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

The information presented here is intended as a touchpoint for players unfamiliar with these issues, or for MCs in discussing gender options if they come up at the table. However, simplifications have been made in the interest of brevity. If you’re interested in doing some further reading, here are some excellent resources:

- **The Genderbread Person v2.0:** <http://bit.ly/ipmgbqr>
- **Gender is Messier than a Singular Point on a Two-Dimensional Line:** <http://tinyurl.com/gendervenndiagram>
- **Gender Identity and Associated Language: A Primer:** <https://geekdad.com/2016/04/gender-language-primer/>

WHY DO THESE OPTIONS MATTER? AND OTHER QUESTIONS.

If we're all women, why does it matter what kind of women we are?

Defaultism can be a powerful bias for everyone. If gender options didn't appear on the sheets, it's likely most characters would be cis-women. Showing players a range of gender options serves as a reminder that there are gender identities besides cisgender, and, hopefully, it also gives players permission to play a character they might not otherwise play.

Of course, there is no requirement to pick a particular gender for your character. Choose whatever you feel comfortable with.

Why are trans women allowed in *The Watch*? Why aren't trans men?

Trans gender identity is real. It's not imaginary, or invented, or fabricated.

In order to respect the gender identity of trans women, it follows that trans women in the fiction can resist the Shadow's influence in the same manner as their cisgender female counterparts. If it was instead their biology that made them vulnerable to the Shadow's influence, that would be the same as saying that gender cannot be separated from biological sex. Such a stance is hurtful, and moreover it is used to marginalize trans people in real life.

By the same token, it follows that trans men must be vulnerable to the Shadow, or, again, we would be saying that their gender identity is not real.

No one is completely immune to the Shadow. You'll find moves to Resist the Shadow's Influence, and to Let The Shadow In, and while members of the Watch can resist the Shadow, it's something that touches *everyone* regardless of gender.

Before the Shadow's invasion, how did clan society treat woman and people with non-binary gender identities? Were they normalized and considered equal? Or were they marginalized?

Some people approach a game like *The Watch* wanting to explore the idea of what happens when a patriarchal society is turned on its head, and that's great. Others don't want to have to have that as part of their character's background, and that's okay too. The same goes for attitudes toward trans and nonbinary gender identities: some people want to explore that sort of thing at the table, but others (especially trans and nonbinary people) want roleplaying to be an escape and don't want to have to wrestle with the same discrimination they face in real life on a daily basis.

This is why the setting is open-ended with regard to the structure and history of clan society. When preparing to play, make sure you all discuss your preferences around this issue.

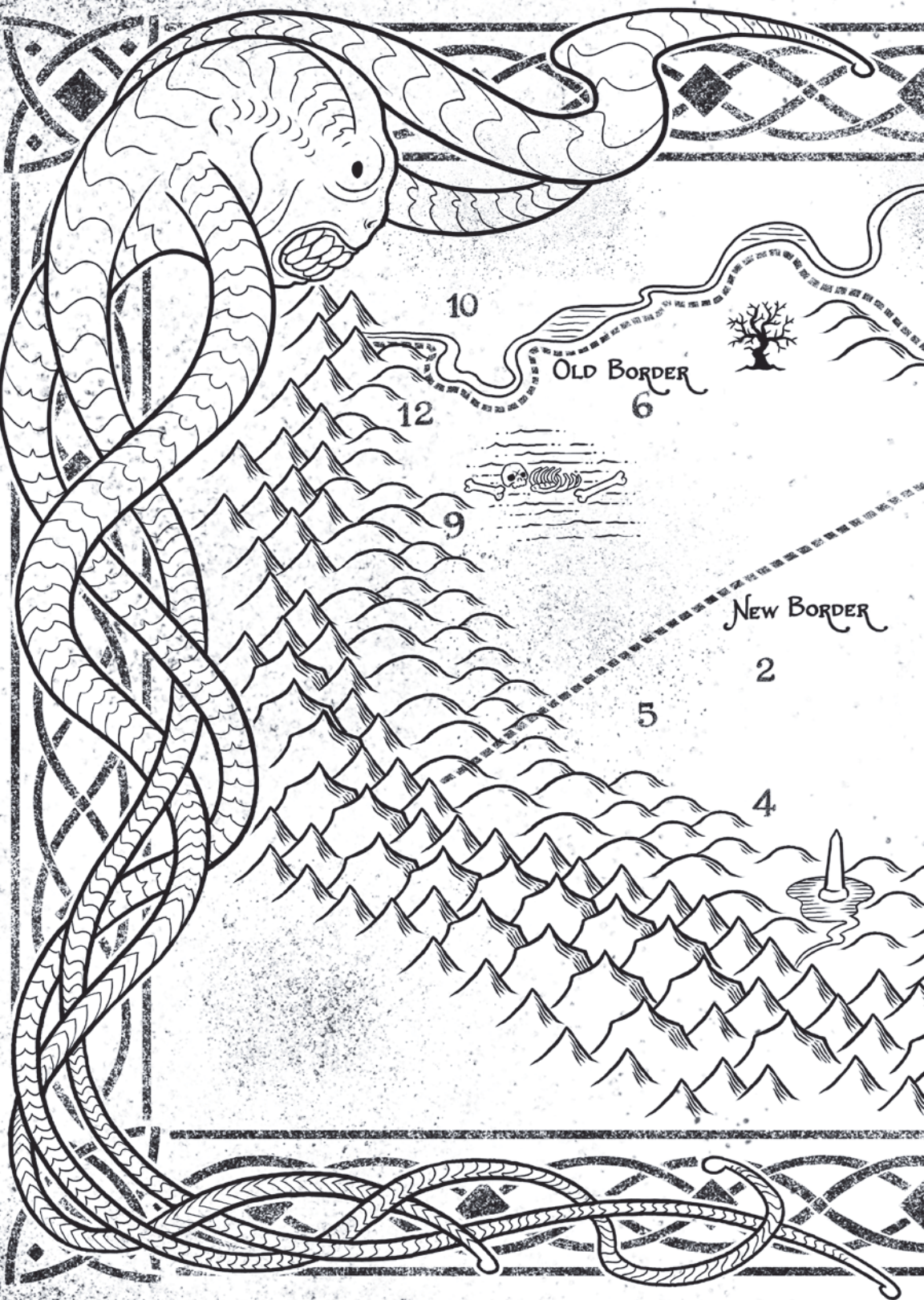
How do I play a character with a gender that's not mine? What if I screw it up?

Don't fixate on the "correct" way to play someone with a gender identity that doesn't match yours.

Similarly, don't put characters into boxes based on gender identity. Simply play a character according to their background and motivations, regardless of gender identity, and the rest will take care of itself.

Isn't this game kind of misandrist?

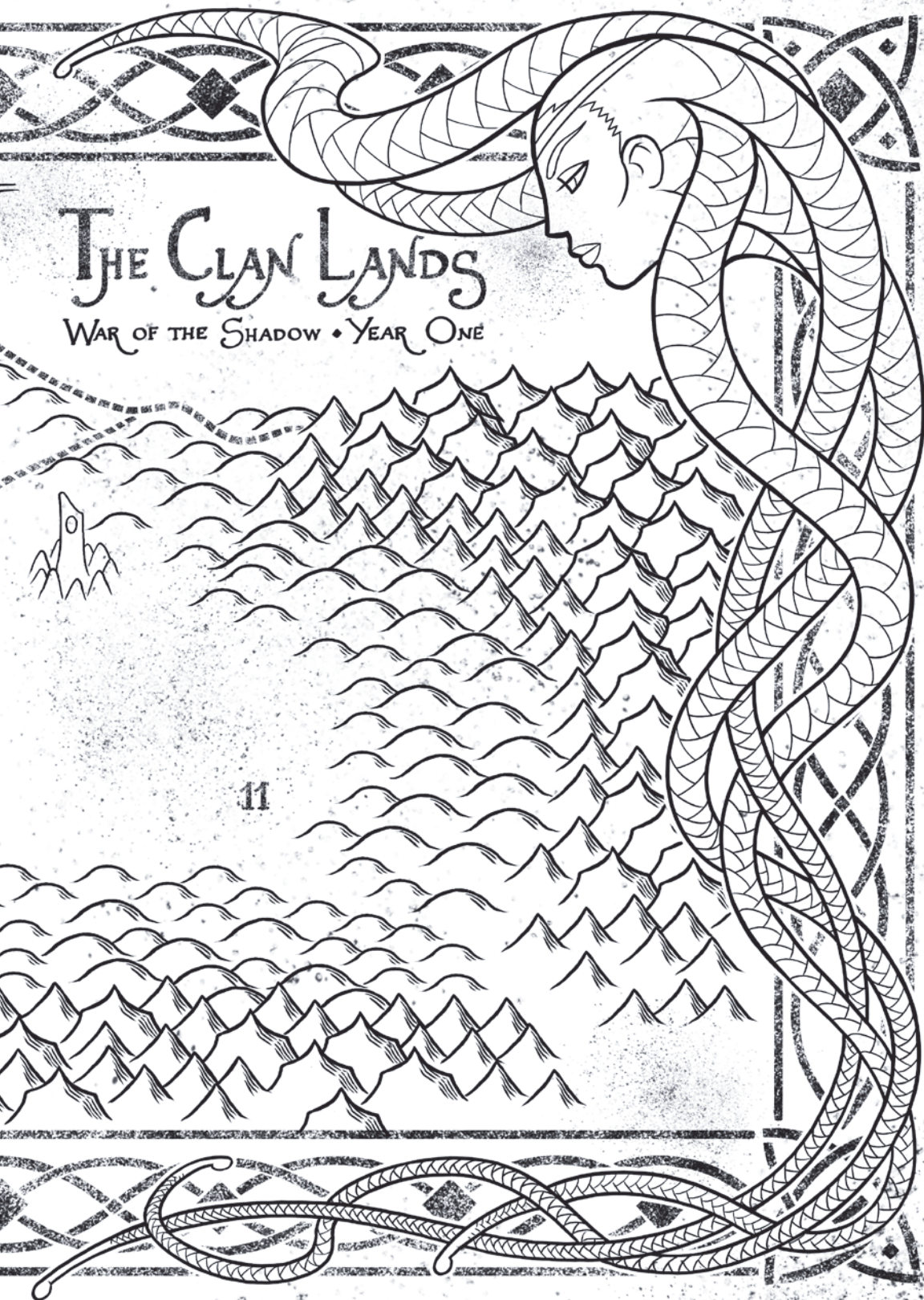
No.



THE CLAN LANDS

WAR OF THE SHADOW • YEAR ONE

11





THE BASICS

The Watch is a game that is Powered by the Apocalypse, which means that it is based on the system originally created for Apocalypse World by D. Vincent Baker. (For information about Apocalypse World and where to purchase it: apocalypse-world.com) For those who have played Apocalypse World or other PBTA variants, you won't encounter anything too unfamiliar here. But if *The Watch* is your first introduction to PBTA games, there's no need to worry: all of the rules you need to play the game are simple, intuitive, and easy to master.

As a player, most everything you need to play the game is contained in your playbook, which serves as both a character sheet and reference guide, and the moves sheet. The play materials for *The Watch* are meant to be printed double-sided on letter-sized paper, but single-sided will do just fine if you don't have access to a double-sided printer.

WHY PLAY?

So why do this? Why take the time to resolve competing schedules and differing interests to play a tabletop game, let alone this game?

Because *this* game offers something you won't find many other places. *The Watch* will help you tell adventure stories about women and feminine-of-centre people as the heroes of their own stories. *The Watch* allows you to collaboratively tell the story of women and non-binary people fighting a military campaign against an overwhelming supernatural force.

It's a chance to tell an old story with a new twist. Together, these women and non-binary people will make a stand for what's right, and they will save the world. What could be more satisfying than that?

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

In order to play, you'll need the following:

- ▶ one Mistress of Ceremonies, or MC, the player responsible for representing the Shadow and every character who is not a PC (player character)
- ▶ three to five other players, who will each play one of the protagonists of the story. Though other people serve in the Watch, these players will represent the stars of the show.
- ▶ two six-sided dice (d6s) for each player
- ▶ pencils
- ▶ a copy of each playbook for your group to choose from
- ▶ basic moves sheets for everyone at the table (including the MC)
- ▶ one copy of the MC moves and resource sheets

The playbooks serve as both a character sheet and reference guide; the playbook and moves sheet are all that the players will need to play an entire campaign of the game. (The MC, however, will have more to juggle, obviously.)

Character creation will take approximately 90 minutes from start to finish.

TERMINOLOGY USED

If you are not familiar with roleplaying games, some of the terminology used may be unfamiliar to you. Here is what you need to know to make sense of these rules:

- ▶ **MC:** Stands for Master of Ceremonies. Other games commonly call this position the Game Master (GM) or Dungeon Master (DM). The MC is the player responsible for pacing the overall arc of the story and for portraying the world and all the other characters in it.
- ▶ **PC:** Stands for Player Character, and refers to a character controlled by a given player. The MC does not play a PC, and the other players play one PC each. PCs are the protagonists of the story you will be telling.
- ▶ **NPC:** Stands for Non-Player Character. This refers to all characters that the MC controls, and are not protagonists. They are all the secondary characters—both allies and enemies—who populate the world.

Also, in the example text in the following chapters, we refer at points to a PC by name and at other points to the player of that PC. This is to clarify the difference between something that governs how a player interacts with the rules versus how the rules create fiction for the characters in the game.

THE X-CARD

The Watch is a game that deals with difficult subjects, such as gendered violence and oppression, and as such has the potential to venture into uncomfortable or even traumatic territory for some players. While it is certainly the goal that *The Watch* should encourage exploring this material, it's important to remember that caring for the emotional safety of your MC and fellow players is paramount. While there are a variety of ways of handling difficult material at the table, at the very least groups playing *The Watch* should be sure to use the X-Card.

What is the X-Card? Well, in the creator's words:

The X-Card is an optional tool (created by John Stavropoulos) that allows anyone in your game (including you) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen till it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction people don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise. —John Stavropoulos, The X Card

The X-Card is simple to use. A card with an X drawn on it is placed in the centre of the table, and if content arises that makes someone uncomfortable, they can invoke the X-Card by either tapping it, lifting it, or pointing to it. At that point, that content is backtracked or edited out. Players using the X-Card don't have to explain their reasons, if they don't wish to, and should never be shamed for using it.

For more information on using the X-Card effectively and how to handle conversations surrounding introducing this tool to your players, please visit: tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg

But remember: the existence of safety tools don't negate the need to keep an eye out for player safety.

To quote one of the authors of *The Watch* from discussions on this topic:

As MCs/GMs/Facilitators, part of learning our craft is learning to recognize when your players are having fun. If you've been running games for any length of time, you know the difference between a good game and a bad one. When someone asks how your game just went, it's the difference between "Eh, it was a B- game. Two players really loved it, but the third player really wasn't feeling it" and "it was totally great! Everyone was super into it! The energy was high and we all had a great time!"

When a player switches from "having fun" to "not", you should always check in – especially if that transition is sudden or abrupt. The reason could be entirely mundane – their blood sugar could have bottomed out, or they could have a headache coming on, or they might feel they're not getting enough spotlight. But it could be something bigger.

You don't need to make a big deal of it. Something as simple as "hey, you got kinda quiet, everything okay?" between scenes can make all the difference.

—Anna Kreider, *Go Make Me a Sandwich*

STATS AND MOVES

A character's **stats** describe a character's abilities, innate talents, and weaknesses. In *The Watch*, there are four stats that define your character: Cunning, Luck, Training, and Valour.

- ▶ **Cunning** is smarts, intellect, and shrewdness
- ▶ **Luck** is mystique, fortune, natural charm, and looks
- ▶ **Training** is combat ability, discipline, toughness, and experience in the field
- ▶ **Valour** is courage, boldness and leadership

Stats range from -3 to +3; they can never go any higher or lower. If a move would cause a stat to go higher or lower, set that stat to -3 or +3 accordingly. Protagonists begin play with stats as indicated in their playbook.

Stats are used to either add to or subtract from a die roll made to resolve a **move**. Moves are covered in the next chapter (see page 25).

HARM AND HEALING

For rules on harm and healing, please see Harm and Healing at the end of the next chapter (page 43).

ADVANCEMENT AND EXPERIENCE

Protagonists in *The Watch* have two tracks for advancement: **Experience** and **Jaded**.

Experience is a reflection of positive growth as characters learn, grow, and acquire new skills. **Jaded**, on the other hand, is a reflection of accumulated burnout and hard lessons learned. The stress of war takes its toll on everyone: long nights awake; constant violence; and loss of comrades all add up.

Both tracks have five boxes. When the rules tell you to gain Experience or Jaded, you mark one box on the appropriate track. When one of these tracks is filled, you erase all of the marks and take an appropriate advance, either a standard advance or a Jaded advance. When you do this, mark off the advance that you are choosing and modify your character sheet if needed. You may not choose the same advance more than once, with the singular exception that one of the Experience advances allows you to erase a Jaded move to take again later.

Experience can be gained in one of five ways: by rolling a highlighted move, by completing missions, marking Camaraderie for a character with whom you already have 3 Camaraderie, through certain playbook-specific moves that give Experience, and through **Eulogizing** a fallen character.

Rolling highlighted moves is the most common way that characters receive experience. At the beginning of the session, each player makes the **Start of Session** move, which will cause two basic moves to be highlighted for the session. Whenever you roll a highlighted move, you mark a point of experience.

Completing missions is the second most common way that characters will receive experience. Most of the missions grant either 0 or 1 experience per PC upon completion, although the last mission in Phase 1 and Phase 2 each grant 2 experience.

Marking Camaraderie with a character will sometimes result in experience if your Camaraderie is already at 3 with that character. Because the maximum is 3, you will mark experience instead of taking the additional Camaraderie.

The least common way that characters will gain experience is when a PC **Delivers a Eulogy** for a fallen character. Everyone present may convert their Camaraderie with that character into either Jaded or Experience: player's choice.

Jaded is gained through: going on and completing missions, **Letting The Shadow In**, **Licking Your Wounds**, and using Jaded moves. Jaded moves are especially potent, but come at the cost of marking more Jaded when used. They showcase a character becoming a more experienced and effective soldier but at the cost of their soul.

Each character has one common Jaded move: The Tipping Point. It can be chosen at any point a Jaded move could be taken, and *must* be chosen if no other Jaded moves remain.

Characters race against Jaded to remain protagonists in the story before time runs out. Marking Jaded is optional—except during missions—but the player is ultimately in control of how quickly their character gains Jaded.

CAMARADERIE AND WEARINESS

Camaraderie is a resource that you gain with other characters – both PCs and NPCs. When you gain Camaraderie, it is a reflection of deepening ties through shared meaningful experiences. You may never have more than 3 Camaraderie with one character; if a move would tell you to mark Camaraderie for a character with whom you already have 3 Camaraderie with, mark Experience instead.

Camaraderie is a currency which may be spent or hoarded, as the player chooses. If a player uses **Need a Hand** (see page 29) to gain assistance from a character, they may spend Camaraderie one for one to boost a roll. NPCs gain Camaraderie with the PCs too, but it works a little differently for them. An NPC may spend Camaraderie, one for one, to either increase a PC's roll by 1 or to decrease the roll by 2, so long as the NPC is fictionally in a position to do so.

A player may choose to hold on to their Camaraderie in order to gain experience. However, this can be a risky proposition, as the PCs can lose Camaraderie on a successful **Weary** roll.

Weary is a negative resource that, like Jaded, reflects how close you are to being overloaded. The more Weary you have, the closer you are to the end of your rope and to damaging relationships with the people around you. So while Jaded is a long-term measure of the effects of the war and the accumulation of trauma and burnout, Weary is a measure of your short term ability to keep yourself together without losing your temper or shutting down.

As soon a player marks their fourth box of Weary, they erase all Weary and roll **Surrender to Weariness**, adding the number of boxes erased. Additionally, the MC can require a player to roll **Surrender to Weariness** at any level of Weary. In that case, add the current level of Weary to the roll.

Surrender to Weariness is an “inverted” move: rolling a full success means that character acts out or shuts down in a way that damages relationships with those they are closest to, and will cause you to lose all Camaraderie with two characters. A partial success will erase all Camaraderie with one character.

Losing Camaraderie in this way doesn’t mean that you are severing ties, or that the relationship is broken for good. It means you have done something to hurt the other person (or people) involved and will have to put time and effort into rebuilding trust. When you hold a lot of Camaraderie with someone, it represents being able to trust them and anticipate what they’re going to do. Losing Camaraderie through **Surrendering to Weariness** is a fundamental disruption of the relationship, and it will take time to get back to being “in synch”.

This is different, however, from losing Camaraderie through spending it using **Need a Hand**. Camaraderie spent this way is still lost, but it doesn’t represent damage or disruption to the relationship. In that instance, it reflects the give-and-take of any meaningful relationship. You can’t always expect someone to give extra effort to help you if you don’t take the time to invest energy back into that relationship.



MOVES

Moves are the key mechanic driving any Powered by the Apocalypse game. A move happens when a player narrates their character taking an action corresponding with a written rule that details the potential outcomes of that action. Most of the time moves will require a player to roll dice and add a stat to determine the overall success or failure of the character's course of action. When a die roll is required, roll two six-sided dice (2d6), add the two results together, and then add the stat indicated by the move that is being rolled.

If the final number is a 6 or lower, the result is a “miss”. On a miss, your character has either failed in their objective, or they have succeeded, but at the cost of introducing a new twist, complication, or difficulty. When a miss is rolled, the MC will make a move as appropriate to the fiction. (See the Mistress of Ceremonies chapter for more information on MC moves, page 111.)

If the resulting number is 7 or higher, that is a “hit”. On a hit, your character has succeeded in their objective. However, not all successes are created equal. A 10+ is an unqualified success, and means you have achieved your goal with little to no cost. Whereas a 7-9 is a partial success; you get most or all of what you are looking for, but with an undesirable cost or complication.

TRIGGERING MOVES

A large part of the MC's job is watching for instances when moves would take effect, or “trigger”, and asking players to roll as indicated by a given move. When a player narrates their character taking an action that falls within the scope of a move, dice are rolled to resolve that action. The MC should first verify that that move fits the course of action the player was hoping to take. If it does, have the player roll the appropriate move. If it doesn't, however, pause for a moment to discuss with the player what it is that they are trying to achieve, and have them roll a different move if that move would be more appropriate.

Players may then change their narration to fit a different move. This will probably occur more often while players new to Powered by the Apocalypse are learning how moves interact with fiction.

The most important thing for players to remember about moves is that they need to describe how their character is taking action to cause a move to trigger. The golden rule of PBTA is: “to do it, do it”. If you want to **Look Beyond**, describe how your character is confronting another character in order to assess their intentions. If you want to **Prevent Bloodshed**, describe how your character is putting themselves in harm’s way in order to prevent violence.

FORWARD, ONGOING, AND HOLD

Some moves in *The Watch* will tell you to “**take +1 forward**” as a result of resolving that move; this means that you will add 1 to your next die roll on top of the stat you are rolling. Sometimes the circumstances in which that bonus applies are limited. For example, on a 10+ when using **Cooler Heads Prevail** (a move from the Bear playbook), you get +1 forward, but only when you are rolling for moves involving the character you’re currently interacting with. Other times the circumstances will be left undefined. In that case you simply take +1 to the next time you roll dice to do anything, whether it is related to the circumstances that granted the +1 forward or not.

Other moves will tell you to “**take +1 ongoing**” as a result of resolving the move. This means that you will add 1 (again, on top of the stat you are rolling) to *all* rolls made for the specified duration. Usually the duration will be limited to the current scene. For example, on a 10+ when using **Mama Bear** (another move from the Bear playbook), you take +1 ongoing for the remainder of the scene.

It is possible to have negative modifiers to rolls both forward and ongoing. If something tells you to take -1 forward, you will subtract 1 from the total of your next roll. Similarly -1 ongoing will require you to subtract 1 from every roll for the specified duration.

Lastly, some moves will tell you to “**take hold**”. Hold is a currency pertaining only to the move that has been rolled. The results of the move will tell the player how much “hold” they receive and what they can spend each hold on, then the player chooses when to spend it. Hold from one move may never be applied to another move.

BASIC MOVES

The Basic moves are subdivided into two types: **Active** moves and **Reactive** moves.

The five **Active** moves are: Blow Off Steam, Let the Shadow In, Look Beyond, Open Up to Someone, and Provoke Someone. Active moves are moves that can be highlighted as part of the **Start of Session** move in order to gain experience when these moves are rolled.

The three **Reactive** moves are: Need a Hand, Prevent Bloodshed, and Rely on Your Training. Reactive moves cannot be highlighted.

In this chapter, each move will be followed by examples of what it looks like in play. To avoid confusion, these examples will reference one consistent group and cast of characters:

- ▶ Locha (she/her), the Bear, played by Drew
- ▶ Marro (she/her), the Wolf, played by Kit
- ▶ Lovo (they/them), the Owl, played by Amelia
- ▶ Dalu (she/her), the Lioness, played by Seamus
- ▶ Various NPCs, played by Anna, the MC

BLOW OFF STEAM

When you find a way to **Blow Off Steam**, roll with **Luck**. On a hit, you find some measure of peace; lower your Weary by 1. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1:

- ▶ You bond with someone and gain Camaraderie with them
- ▶ You make a discovery or realize something that's eluded you
- ▶ You find moment of true peace; lower your Weary by 1 more
- ▶ You gain a sense of purpose; take +1 forward

The war against the Shadow is gruelling, both physically and mentally, and going out on mission after mission takes its toll. When a character inevitably looks to relax, unwind, or release tension during their downtime as a way of recovering from the stress of the war, that is when they **Blow Off Steam**.

Depending on the character, **Blowing Off Steam** can look like a lot of different things. It might be sparring with a rival, a romantic interlude with a lover, looking for trouble with friends, or picking fights with squad mates. What's important isn't the action itself, but the intent.

Also, if a player chooses to **make a discovery**, that's handled differently. Rather than the player choosing and narrating the outcome, the MC will tell them what that discovery or realization is.

Dalu and Lovo never seem to see eye-to-eye, and they have been arguing about the outcome of their most recent mission. When they arrive back at camp, Lovo challenges Dalu to an archery contest and dares her to name the stakes. Dalu says that if she wins, she wants Lovo to do all her camp chores for a month, and Lovo counters that if they win they get the necklace that Dalu always wears. The two agree and soon have a crowd of people watching as they start performing increasingly more challenging trick shots.

Dalu and Lovo are both Blowing Off Steam, because they are using competition to release tension after a hard and stressful mission, so both roll the move. Dalu hits with an 11, while Lovo hits with an 8. Dalu decides to take Camaraderie with Lovo and to lower her Weary by an additional 1, meaning she reduces her Weary by a total of 2. Lovo, who gets only one option, also chooses to gain Camaraderie (with Dalu), but only lowers her Weary by 1.

As for the outcome of the contest, there's no move governing competition between players, so the MC decides to give the victory to the player with the highest roll. Because Lovo rolled only a partial success to Dalu's full success, the MC decides that Dalu wins the archery contest and asks her to narrate her victory.

The mission that was just completed was a disaster from start to finish, and the squad only just achieved the mission objective. Corporal Locha is dispirited about having to make a disappointing report to her superiors, and is heading back to her tent when Corporal Lyshe, who has always set herself up as Locha's rival, intercepts her. Before long, the two are arguing again. Locha loses her cool and almost throws a punch. Instead, she storms off and works out on the practice dummy until she's too tired to feel angry. Locha is venting her anger at herself and her dismal performance, which is Blowing Off Steam.

Locha rolls a partial success with an 8. She doesn't want to take Camaraderie with Lyshe, no one else is present in the scene, and she is currently at 0 Weary, so she chooses to take +1 forward to her next roll.

NEED A HAND

When you Need a Hand with a roll you've just made, ask someone you have Camaraderie with to lend you aid or cut you some slack. If they agree, you spend Camaraderie you have with them to increase your roll by +1 for each Camaraderie spent. The MC may ask them how they plan to help; that's on them.

Need a Hand is always invoked by the player rolling a move. When a roll for that move falls short of the desired result, they may turn to any other player, including the MC, whose character is in the scene, or could conceivably enter the scene, and ask for their help. If the player being asked for help agrees, Camaraderie may be spent to increase the roll on a 1-for-1 basis; the acting player may spend as little or as much of their Camaraderie with that character as they like. Doing so lowers that Camaraderie rating accordingly.

Need a Hand is the exception that proves the “to do it, do it” rule, because in order to be triggered, the player asking for help must ask for the consent of the player they are seeking help from. Without consent, **Need a Hand** cannot be used.

You cannot invoke **Need a Hand** involving a character that you do not have Camaraderie with. However, you can invoke **Need a Hand** with an NPC, so long as you have Camaraderie with that NPC. The MC will decide if the NPC you name is inclined to help you or not. Once Camaraderie has been spent this way, it is gone and must be built back up.

Need a Hand is the only basic move that may be used to assist with results of mission moves.

*It is time for another mission, and Lovo has been assigned to **Recon** (for mission moves, see page 144). When Lovo makes their roll, the result is a 6. “Crap, folks, even with my +2 Luck, I still failed. Marro, you’re **Watching Our Backs**, you want to help me out? I’d really rather not give the MC an extra Complication right now.”*

Kit agrees; Lovo has 2 Camaraderie with Marro and spends 1 to boost the roll from a 6 to a 7.

Anna speaks up. “Cool, so she’s going to pull your bacon out of the fire. Mostly. You’ll still get a Complication, though. Marro, why don’t you tell me how you manage to step in and prevent a disaster?”

The PCs have been sent on a mission to collect conscripts for the Watch from clan lands. They get the recruits they need, but the people are unhappy and dissenters are stirring up sentiment against the Watch. On the way back to headquarters, the squad is surrounded by thirty or so civilians—some of whom are armed—who are determined not to let their young people be taken.

*Marro, concerned that the squad is outnumbered and that they might have to fight their own people, decides that she wants to **Prevent Bloodshed** (see page 36). She aggressively confronts the leader of the mob to get her to back down. The roll hits, but the result of 9 is only a partial success. Kit decides to ask for help. “If I have to insult someone or play favourites, this is going to come back to haunt us, so... Locha? Dalu? I’ve got Camaraderie with both of you – either of you want to help?”*

*Locha volunteers to help, saying that she’ll assist Marro’s attempts to intimidate the crowd into backing down. Marro spends 1 Camaraderie with Locha, which bumps her roll from a 9 to a 10. Now she only has to choose 1 option on the **Prevent Bloodshed** move instead of 2.*

Marro decides that she is the only one to bleed and marks Harm, putting her at Hurting. She narrates that the leader of the mob doesn’t like being crowded and throws a punch, giving Marro a black eye. The rest of the crowd, however, starts getting nervous about the prospect of fighting trained soldiers. The mob shortly disperses, dragging off the instigators and leaving the squad in peace.

OPEN UP TO SOMEONE

When you Open Up To Someone, roll with Valour. On a hit, your words and actions touch their heart. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1. If they responded to your vulnerability with compassion or respect, they can choose 1 for themselves as well.

- ▶ Gain Camaraderie with them
 - ▶ They must promise you something
 - ▶ You lower your Weary by 1
 - ▶ Ask them “what is your character thinking right now?”
 - ▶ You take +1 forward
-

When you **Open Up to Someone**, you are lowering your defences and making yourself emotionally vulnerable to someone you care about. Being authentically you can be a scary thing, which is why **Open Up** uses Valour as its key stat, but being open and emotionally honest is something that can deepen relationships.

Opening Up to Someone requires lowering your barriers, and scenes in which two characters bond through **Opening Up** will look very different from scenes where they bond by **Blowing Off Steam**. While characters can use **Blow Off Steam** to bond with another character through jovial insults, aggression, or getting into trouble, **Opening Up to Someone** requires you to approach the interaction without the deflection, aggression, insults, or the other sorts of friendly banter of casual friendships that circumvents deep emotional bonding.

When you **Open Up to Someone**, you always gain a benefit if you roll a success. Additionally, if the person you are **Opening Up** to responds with compassion or respect (their choice), they can choose 1 option for themselves as well that does not replace the benefit that you receive. It is always up to the player of the responding character to decide if their response was compassionate or respectful.

When **they must promise you something**, if you are the one **Opening Up**, you name a promise that you want them to make and they must make it. On the other hand, if the person you **Open Up** to responds with compassion or respect and they choose **they must promise you something**, you must make *them* a promise that they name. There is nothing preventing an exchange of promises; asking someone for a promise does not prevent them from asking you for a promise in return.

These promises are not mechanically binding: they are fictional complications. Breaking a promise made this way won't incur any mechanical penalties, but it will surely create drama if the person who demanded the promise finds out!

While on a mission, Dalu was Wounded and is currently recuperating in the healers' tent. She is sulking because she's going to be out of action for at least a week. After reporting in, Lovo decides to check in on Dalu, but Dalu is brusque in response to Lovo's attempts to make conversation.

Lovo sighs and says, "you're an idiot, you know." As they say this, Lovo's player starts reaching for some dice.

"Hang on," Anna says. "What are you angling for?"

*"I'm **Opening Up** to Dalu."*

*Drew shakes his head. "How is that **Opening Up**? You just called her an idiot."*

Kit agrees. "That's not exactly lowering your defences."

Amelia reconsiders. "I guess you're right. Let me back up a bit." They change the narration to: Lovo sighs and says, "I want to tell you a story". Lovo tells Dalu about the first mission they ever went on, when they made a mistake that almost got half of the squad killed. "So cheer up," they finish. "At least you only decided to duck the wrong way and took a mace to the ribs. It could have been a lot worse."

*Lovo then rolls **Open Up** and hits with an 11. Amelia decides to gain Camaraderie with Dalu and to get Dalu to promise not to tell anyone else that story.*

Dalu nods. "You have my word, I won't tell anyone. Thank you." Because Dalu is responding with compassion, Seamus thinks about asking for a promise in return, but decides to just take an additional Camaraderie with Lovo instead.

After a stressful mission, Marro was possessed by the Shadow and attacked Locha, wounding her badly. Marro was able to prove to her superiors that she was being controlled, but hasn't been able to look Locha in the eye since it happened.

After Locha is cleared for duty, she corners Marro, and says that they need to talk about what happened. She contends they have to get past the incident so they are not fatally distracted in the field. Marro, after some coaxing, finally breaks down and says that every time she looks at Locha, she can't help but remember how it felt being a passenger in her own body, and how it felt to watch herself hurt someone she cared about. Because of the guilt and the memories, she's been avoiding Locha, because she knows there's no way she can ever make amends for what she did.

Locha listens quietly, then responds that she doesn't have ill will toward her because she knows that Marro would never have attacked her that way. She adds that Marro's dedication to protecting the other members of the squad is something that inspires her, and that Locha only hopes to be worthy of being Marro's commander. Overwhelmed, Marro hugs Locha and sobs an apology.

"You're definitely both **Opening Up**," Anna chimes in. "Why don't you roll the move?"

Locha and Marro hit with a 10 and an 11 respectively. Locha decides to take Camaraderie with Marro and to reduce her Weary by 1. Marro also decides to take Camaraderie with Locha, and to make Locha promise that if Marro is ever possessed by the Shadow again, Locha will do whatever it takes to make sure Marro doesn't hurt anyone else.

PROVOKE SOMEONE

When you Provoke Someone to act, roll with Luck.

For NPCs: On a 10+, they give you the reaction you were hoping for. On a 7-9, they act, but the MC decides how.

For PCs: On a 10+, they mark Experience if they give you the reaction you want, otherwise they mark Weary if they don't. On a 7-9, they mark Experience if they give you the reaction you want.

Any time that you try to get someone to act in a way they otherwise wouldn't, you need to **Provoke Someone**. You might want them to perform an action, i.e. throwing the first punch, following a difficult order, or telling the truth.

In some cases, however, you might want them to *not* perform an action. For example, you might want them to remain silent about what they've seen, step aside and let you pass, or not attack you. This second case can seem confusing and counter-intuitive to some players, because "provoke" usually implies a course of action. The MC and other players need to look out for cases like these.

It might help, in these cases, to reframe what the player wants from the other party as something clearly active. So rather than "I want to **Provoke Someone** to remain silent about what they've seen", maybe "I want to **Provoke Someone** to become complicit in keeping my secret". Or maybe "**Provoke Someone** to back down and lose face" rather than "**Provoke Someone** to not attack". What's important to remember is that when the PC takes action in an attempt to change someone else's behaviour, they are always **Provoking Someone**.

This move works differently against NPCs than against PCs. Against NPCs, a hit is always enough to change their course of action, though they may not do what the rolling player expected if you roll a partial success. When rolling to **Provoke Someone** against PCs, however, a partial success allows you to offer the other player either a carrot or a stick, while a full success allows you to offer both carrot and stick for going along with what you want. The choice to go along with your wishes always remains in the hands of the player being **Provoked**.

Lovo believes that Sergeant Prithe is acting strangely and has possibly been corrupted by The Shadow, but when they approach Corporal Locha, their concerns are dismissed. They decide to go behind Locha's back and speak with Watch Commander Paemo directly. After Lovo makes their case, they urge Paemo to take action to make sure there isn't a spy in their midst and rolls to **Provoke Someone**. The result is a 7. Paemo is an NPC, so she acts, but not necessarily how Lovo would have wanted.

Anna decides that Paemo hears Lovo out and expresses grave concern, then assures them the matter will be handled. The next day, when Lovo passes by the armoury, they hear agonized screaming and recognize the voice of Sergeant Prithe. With a start, Lovo realizes that Paemo believed the accusation, and is now torturing Prithe for information.

Warden Dalu believes she has a chance to catch the sorceress Teyka—who has been hounding them for months now—but only if she acts immediately and against orders to hold position until reinforcements arrive. Dalu decides to tell Corporal Locha about her plan. When Locha seems reticent, Dalu turns on the charm and tries to persuade Locha into going along with the idea. She wants to **Provoke** Locha to join her in going after the sorceress. Dalu rolls an 11, meaning that Locha will gain Experience if she complies or Weary if she refuses.

Locha is close to an advance, and her player doesn't particularly relish the thought of more Weary, so Drew happily marks Experience and accepts what Dalu wants. The next scene begins with Dalu and Locha sneaking out of camp and into the surrounding hills.

PREVENT BLOODSHED

When you put yourself in harm's way to Prevent Bloodshed, roll with Training. On a hit, you disarm the situation but at a cost to yourself. On a 10+, choose 1. On a 7-9, choose 2:

- ▶ You are the only one to bleed; suffer harm
- ▶ You insult or offend someone
- ▶ You're seen as taking sides or playing favourites
- ▶ The instigator escapes any consequences or responsibility

Prevent Bloodshed is used to defuse tense situations that could easily come to blows. In order to **Prevent Bloodshed**, a character must put themselves in a risky situation with the intention of deterring violence. This could be wading into the beginnings of a drunken brawl to break it up or standing up to an angry mob to get them to disperse.

As an important side note, while Preventing Bloodshed is a move directed to stopping violence, causing violence itself is, with one exception, not covered by a specific move. The only move that allows for intentional directed violence against a person is the Wolf's **Unleash the Wolf** (see page 107). Although *The Watch* is a game about a military campaign against a supernatural that wants to dominate everything, it is not a game *about* violence. So while characters will use violence in their fight against the Shadow, through completion of missions and use of mission moves, violence is *not* a useful solution to problems faced by characters when not in the field. In fact, if a character turns to violence to solve problems when not on the battlefield, that is a prime trigger for that character to **Resist the Shadow** (see page 48). If there is a situation in which a character wants to use force to stop an enemy outside of a mission, that can be covered by **Rely on Your Training**.

There is a sneak attack by Shadow forces against the headquarters of the Watch, and while the attack is repelled, many good soldiers die in the defence. In the aftermath, many of those who have lost comrades fall to drinking, and it isn't long before arguments about clan politics erupt. The mess tent is about to erupt into a drunken brawl.

*Marro decides that she is going to shame the instigators in front of everyone in order to disrupt things before violence breaks out, and so rolls to **Prevent Bloodshed**. She rolls an 8.*

Kit decides that Marro is the only one who bleeds and marks a harm. Marro was already Hurting and is now at Wounded. Because Kit has to make two choices, he also decides that someone is insulted or offended, and narrates how Marro ends up yelling at Commander Rezi—Paemo's second-in-command—who doesn't take kindly to being publicly rebuked by a mere Warden.

RELY ON YOUR TRAINING

When you **Rely On Your Training** to overcome an obstacle, seize an opportunity, or create an opening, roll with Training. On a hit, you do it. On a 7-9, the MC will tell you what it's going to cost you or how it's imperfect or compromised.

Each member of the Watch is a soldier with a depth of military training, combat skills, and field experience. Any time your character is put into a dangerous situation or chooses to engage in a risky course of action, they will need to **Rely on Their Training**.

Rely on Your Training also comes into play when a character wants to do something that they have expertise in from a past profession. If a former miner from clan Charsa wants to assess the safety of a cave, or a former Dothas mystic wants to perform a ritual against the Shadow, both of those would be covered by **Rely on Your Training**.

The trigger for this move is intentionally open-ended. **Rely on Your Training** usually happens when it seems a character should be rolling a move, but no other move applies. Usually it will be the MC, and not the players, who calls for this move by saying something like, “sure, you can do that, but you’ll need to **Rely on Your Training** to succeed”.

*During a mission, Locha was knocked off her horse and fell down a ravine during a torrential downpour. When she comes to, her ankle is sprained and she is disoriented. Locha decides that she will bind her ankle before finding her way back to camp. Anna responds, “Cool. You took a pretty nasty hit on the head in addition to that ankle, though, so why don’t you **Rely on Your Training** to make sure you don’t get even more lost?”*

*Before joining the Watch, Dalu was a priestess in training. Locki, a member of her squad, has been wounded by a strange Shadow weapon while on a mission and is trapped in an unnatural sleep. They are far from help and are being pursued, so Dalu decides that she is going to use a ritual of purification that she learned as a novice in an attempt to free Locki from the Shadow’s influence. Since no other move seems appropriate, Anna tells Dalu to **Rely on Her Training** (as a priestess) in order to purify Locki’s wound.*

LET THE SHADOW IN

When you **Let The Shadow In** to gain hidden knowledge or insights, roll with the number of Jaded Moves you've earned. On a hit, the MC will tell you something new about the current situation through dark visions and portents. On a 10+, the details are clear and distinct. On a 7-9, they're strange and alarming; mark Jaded or Weary.

When a player wants to know information about a person or location they have no way of observing, or to gain information they could not perceive through normal senses, they may choose to **Let the Shadow In**.

Letting the Shadow In is dangerous business, because it involves lowering the barriers that protect a PC from involuntary influence. Even if a player succeeds in their attempt, the information they gain should be conveyed in an unnerving manner. And if a player fails, the MC should make the results as strange and terrifying as they like.

Corporal Locha is leading a mission to rescue Draile, an elder of clan Richti who was captured by Shadow soldiers. Draile was instrumental in the formation of the Watch and knows a lot of vital intelligence about its operation, so Locha's squad has been dispatched to make a foray behind enemy lines and either rescue her or make sure that she can't reveal important intelligence to the enemy.

Locha's squad rode hard and caught up to Draile's captors. They dispatch the Shadow forces, but Draile is unconscious and isn't responding to treatment. Their medic thinks Draile may be under the influence of the Shadow. Locha isn't sure if it is safe to take Draile with them if she may already be possessed.

*Locha has had many encounters with the Shadow and believes she can recognize its influence. She lays her hand on Draile's forehead and opens her senses to detect the Shadow, then rolls to **Let the Shadow In**. It is early in the campaign, so Locha has only 1 Jaded move, adding only +1 to the roll. She gets an 8, a partial success, which means that she will get her answer, but it will be strange and alarming.*

Anna narrates that Locha suddenly feels herself trapped in Draile's body. She feels Draile's panic as she tries to move, to open her eyes, to speak, and can't do any of those things. The chill touch of the Shadow hasn't changed who Draile is, but it is keeping her paralyzed. With a start, Locha comes back to herself. The rest of her squad is gathered around her in concern, and they tell her that she passed out as soon as she touched Draile's forehead.

*Wanting to be on her own after the burial of a comrade, Lovo takes their bow and goes out to the woods to hunt. While walking through the trees, they think about the sorceress Teyka, who killed their comrade. Lovo decides they need to know Teyka's weakness, so they find a quiet glen and sit down to meditate and **Let the Shadow In**. Unfortunately, Lovo rolls a 4.*

Anna tells Lovo that just as they open themselves up to the Shadow's influence, they hear a sound and turn, finding themselves looking directly into Teyka's eyes. Lovo was able to resist Teyka's gaze once before, but this time they're caught flat-footed and Teyka's power binds them in place. "Well, well, well," Teyka says. "Looks like the rabbit came looking to pick a fight with the snake."

Teyka's eyes blaze, and the next moment Lovo finds themselves in an elegantly furnished tower room with no exit and barred windows. In the centre of the room is a table with a crystal goblet full of shining liquid. Lovo knows that if they drink it, they can stay here, safe and comfortable, forever.

"Meanwhile," Anna says. "What is actually happening is that Tekya is standing in front of Lovo with their face in her hands. Teyka is staring into Lovo's eyes and whispering that if they just give in, it will all be over soon."

LOOK BEYOND

When you **Look Beyond** the surface to discover the truth—either of the situation at hand or of someone's words—roll with Cunning. On hit, choose 1:

- ▶ Ask the MC or another player a question about someone in the scene; they must answer honestly
- ▶ Ask the MC a question about your situation; she must answer honestly

On a 10+, you may ask a follow-up question. When you act on the answers, take +1 forward to your roll.

Look Beyond is the go-to move for when players want to know information about a person or a situation that could be perceived through their normal senses. (Read 'perceived through their normal senses broadly; the move should cover observation, deduction, and hard work, but also hunches, intuition, and educated guesses.) When choosing to **Look Beyond**, ask a person about either a character present or about the situation at hand (not both).

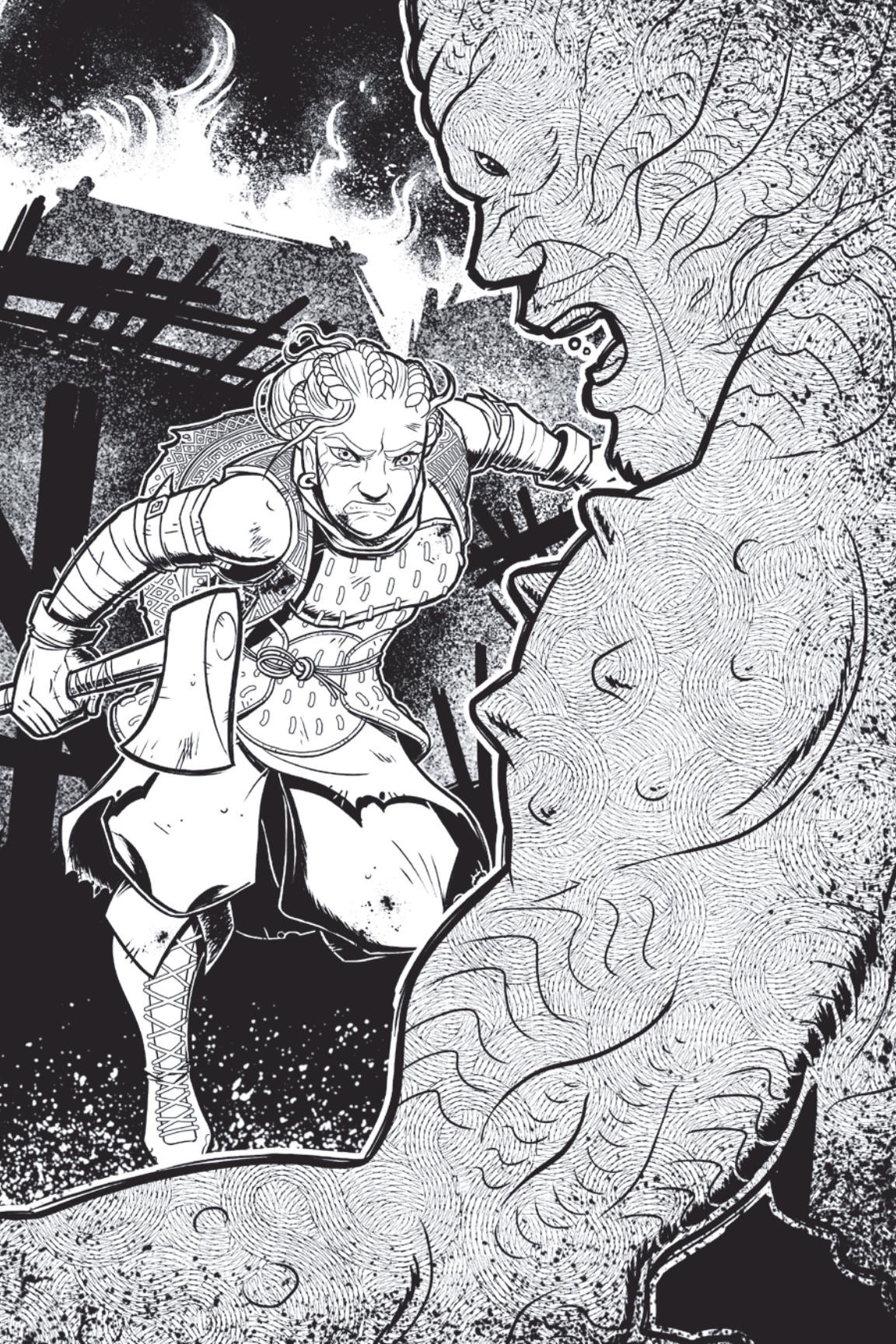
The player should still needs to narrate how it is that they are **Looking Beyond**. Are they following the target of their suspicion, looking for any uncharacteristic behaviour? Are they looking someone in the eye? Or if they are examining a situation, are they climbing a tree to get a better view of the surrounding land? Are they assessing the area they're in, its exits, and the strength of its fortifications? A player must always narrate how they are looking for this information before they get the answers.

*Lovo has a bad feeling about the aftermath of the mission they just completed and worries that something might be following them back to base. When the squad stops for a few minutes' rest, Lovo climbs a tall tree to **Look Beyond** their surroundings. They roll a 9. They decide to ask, "what danger are we overlooking?"*

Anna considers, then narrates that the danger being overlooked is that the Shadow's sorceresses are clearly up to something. A mile away, the trees are full of cawing crows, hundreds and hundreds of them. Lovo suddenly remembers the last time they witnessed crows congregating strangely, moments before the squad ran into a group of Shadow sorceresses.

*Marro is talking to Draile, an elder of her clan, and suspects that the elder is hiding something important from her. Marro's player decides to **Look Beyond**, narrating that Marro grows impatient with the old woman's hedging and finally corners her, looking her square in the eye. Marro rolls a 12 and asks the MC, "what secret is Draile keeping from me?"*

Anna responds that after a moment's hesitation, Draile admits that Marro's missing sister has been found, but she is fallen into the service of the Shadow. As her follow-up question, Marro demands to know where her sister is now. Anna must answer honestly, and from then on Marro will get a +1 forward to find and free her sister.



HARM AND HEALING

There are three levels of harm; in order, those levels are Hurting, Wounded, and Critical. When a player character suffers harm, their player marks the first available harm level on their sheet. If they suffer harm again without healing, they mark the next level. When a protagonist reaches Critical harm, they **Suffer Great Harm** and need to roll the move as written (for details of the harm moves, see the following section).

As the MC, when you make a hard move you can choose to either inflict harm (a player marks harm once) or inflict terrible harm (they mark harm twice), whichever is appropriate to the situation. If a character with no harm suffers terrible harm, they would be Wounded, and if a character at Hurting suffers terrible harm, they would be Critical. A character can never suffer harm beyond Critical. If a protagonist would additional harm while at Critical, they would again roll the Suffer Great Harm move (see page 45).

Harm can be recovered by protagonists in two ways. First, characters may choose to **Lick Their Wounds** on their own; on a hit, they will erase one level of harm from their sheet, but failure has the potential to make their situation more complicated. Or they may ask the Spider's help, if the Spider playbook is in use, in which case the Spider will roll **Mender** instead. Failure still comes with consequences, but they will be smaller in scope.

The MC can also trigger **Lick Their Wounds** for a protagonist, when appropriate. After a mission, if a character has been wounded they're obviously going to want to get those wounds seen to. For example: "Report to the healers, Corporal, and get that arm seen to". Then tell them to **Lick Their Wounds**.

Also, sometimes it makes sense to have fictional time pass between sessions. When that happens, the MC can tell the other players to clear one or more harm if it makes sense. If everyone in the squad is on the verge of death, your commanders aren't likely to send you back in the field the next day for what would be a suicide mission.

Lastly, harm for the MC's characters is handled a bit differently. MC characters don't have stats, so they cannot **Suffer Great Harm** – although protagonists may always **Rely On Their Training** to treat an MC character's harm if they wish. Consequently, any MC character that reaches Critical harm is probably going to die, though as MC it's always up to you to make that call. If an MC character gets Wounded (especially a character that the protagonists care about), consider using a soft move to have their condition grow steadily more serious, even having them progress to Critical if not addressed.

HARM MOVES

LICK YOUR WOUNDS

When you have the time and necessary supplies to **Lick Your Wounds**, roll with Luck. On a hit, you remove one level of harm. On a 7-9, you also mark Jaded or Weary, your choice. On a miss, you still heal the level of harm, but there are complications or something else goes wrong, MC's choice.

Whenever a character has safety, time, and some supplies, they may tend to their own injuries or someone else's by **Licking Their Wounds**. Rolling **Lick Your Wounds** always results in a level of harm healed, even on a failure. This is a move that players may trigger for themselves or for another character if they narrate that they are tending to another character's wounds. Additionally, if the MC wishes, they may have an NPC trigger **Lick Their Wounds** for a PC, if the circumstances warrant it.

When a character **Licks Their Wounds**, they must wait a reasonable length of time before **Licking Their Wounds** again.

*While out on a mission, Locha was Wounded by an enemy spear. Upon returning to camp, she tries to make her report to Watch Commander Paemo, but Paemo orders Locha to get herself to the healers before reporting on the status of the mission. Grumbling, Locha goes to see Reth, her healer friend. The MC tells Locha to **Lick Her Wounds**.*

Locha rolls a 8. She erases a harm to go back to Hurting and decides to mark Weary.

*While scouting the enemy's position, Dalu came under enemy fire and took an arrow to the shoulder, becoming Wounded. Dalu has Lovo help her see to the wound and **Licks Her Wounds**, however, she rolls a 2. Dalu still recovers harm, but the MC gets to make a move. Anna decides that just as Lovo is tying off the bandage, Locha catches sight of three squads of enemy soldiers closing fast on their position.*

SUFFER GREAT HARM

When you **Suffer Great Harm** either by taking a hit that should kill you or by reaching Critical harm, roll the dice. On a hit, suffer harm as the MC feels is appropriate. On a 7-9, choose 1:

- ▶ Strike out an advance from your character sheet (if already taken, lose its benefit)
- ▶ Lower one of your Stats by 1 permanently
- ▶ The injury leaves you maimed

On a miss, choose all three of the above or have your character go out in a blaze of glory, your call.

A character **Suffers Great Harm** in two distinct circumstances: 1) when they would reach Critical harm and 2) when a fictional circumstance occurs that should kill them.

If a PC takes harm that would put them up to Critical during a mission, they defer rolling **Suffer Great Harm** until the mission has concluded. Make the roll as soon as you get back to “normal” play. Once a character has **Suffered Great Harm**, so long as they have not chosen “go out in a blaze of glory”, it is the MC’s choice whether their harm is reduced to Wounded or they remain at Critical. Either way, the character is considered “stable” and would not Suffer Great Harm again unless they took subsequent harm.

As for fictional circumstances that “should” kill a PC, the MC should be prepared to be lenient with interpreting this. This is a world of adventure and heroism, and while taking an arrow wound or being hit over the head by a mace in the real world might be things that “should” kill you, it’s not necessarily the case in the game. Your job is to be a fan of the PCs; they are the heroes of this story. If a PC is going to **Suffer Great Harm** from a single blow, then make sure that blow is epic indeed.

If a character misses their **Suffer Great Harm** roll and chooses to go out in a blaze of glory, they need not die that instant. Take a moment to talk with the player about what they would like for their death, and if need be it can be deferred for a little while in order to set up a truly heroic demise. When the moment comes, the player gains authority to narrate the scene. The death of a PC is a big deal and deserves to be treated as such.



*After failing to **Resist the Shadow** (see page 48), Marro has been possessed and is being controlled by the Shadow. Since spreading rumors about Locha was what caused Marro to roll, the MC decides that Marro is going to attack Locha. She frames a scene in which Locha is sleeping in her tent when she is awoken by agonizing pain. Locha opens her eyes to see Marro pulling a knife from Locha's chest and raising it to stab her again.*

*Lovo and Dalu were sleeping nearby and hear the commotion as Locha shouts and tries desperately to fend off Marro. They pull Marro out of the tent and prevent Locha from taking any further harm. However, though Locha had no harm at the time, the MC tells Locha that being stabbed in the chest while sleeping is something that should probably kill her and tells her to **Suffer Great Harm**.*

*Locha rolls an 8 and says that she **Needs a Hand**, if Dalu or Lovo could spare one. She has 2 Camaraderie with each of them. Seamus describes Dalu making sure that Lovo has Marro restrained, and then comes to Locha's aid. Locha crosses off her 2 Camaraderie with Dalu and bumps her roll to a 10. Anna tells Drew to mark Critical harm, but adds that Dalu manages to get Locha stable enough that the healers are able to prevent her from bleeding to death. Locha will live, although her recovery will be slow.*

Later, Lovo has been captured by Shadow soldiers and is being held in one of their forts. Corporal Locha leads a small team of Watch soldiers behind enemy lines to rescue Lovo. Lovo is freed, but the enemy is alerted as they escape and the squad is under heavy pursuit. At one point, they come under fire from horse archers, and the MC tells everyone to take a level of harm.

*Marro, who was at Wounded and decided to come along anyway, marks Critical harm. Because this is not a mission, she rolls **Suffer Great Harm** right away and misses with a 4.*

It's halfway through the campaign, and none of the PCs have died yet, so Kit decides that it would be nicely dramatic to go out in a blaze of glory. Anna talks with Kit about what he'd like, and he says that he'd like to fight the enemy off long enough for the rest of the squad to get to safety, sacrificing Marro's life in the process. No one has a problem with that, so Anna turns the scene over to Kit, who narrates the following:

"The squad takes a moment to rest the horses and Marro approaches Locha; she knows that she is too badly wounded to make it back to camp alive, but she can buy the rest of them enough time to escape. They argue briefly, but Marro convinces Locha to abandon her and Locha orders the others to move out.

Marro's sword, known to her clan as Desert Wind, is magical but cursed. She knows she can call on its magic if she is willing to forfeit her life. She slashes her palm with the blade and charges at the enemy, sword held high as she shrieks an unholy battle cry. A scorching wind blows from in nowhere, becoming a desert cyclone that scourges the enemy from existence.

Locha and the others barely stay ahead of the fierce wind, and when it dies down, Locha knows that the threat has been dealt with. She orders the squad to turn back, and they find the pursuing enemy soldiers dead to a man, flesh stripped from their bones and their bodies half buried in sand. In the centre of the carnage lies Marro, her body intact, her face serene. Wordlessly, Locha lifts Marro's body up onto her horse to be brought home for a proper burial."

SECONDARY MOVES

The Secondary moves are subdivided into three types of moves: **Mission** moves, **Hardship** moves, and **Session** moves.

The four *Mission* moves are: Watch Their Backs, Navigate and Strategize, Recon and Lookout, and Take Point. These will be covered in the chapter on Missions/The Campaign Against the Shadow (see page 143).

The three *Hardship* moves are: Resist the Shadow, Surrender to Your Weariness, and Delivery a Eulogy

The two *Session* moves are: Start of Session and End of Session

RESIST THE SHADOW

When you give The Shadow an opening into your heart by engaging in toxic behaviour, roll with Valour to Resist the Shadow's Influence. On a 10+, you resist its influence and clearly know what it wanted from you. On a 7-9, you do or say something you regret; mark Jaded, Wary, or Harm from the struggle. On a miss, the Shadow takes hold of you for a short time.

Resist the Shadow is a move that will almost always be called for by the MC, so it's important for the MC to keep an eye out for potential triggers that could cause a character to need to **Resist the Shadow**.

The trigger for **Resist the Shadow** may seem a bit vague, so it's important to define what we mean by toxic. The Shadow is a reflection of toxic masculinity and the harmful socialization that people of all genders—not just men—internalize. In that context, toxic behaviour that could trigger **Resist the Shadow** is any behaviour engaged in by a person who is both 1) adhering to harmful ideas about interpersonal behaviour and 2) who is actively seeking to harm another person.

Toxic behaviour that triggers **Resist the Shadow** will often be stereotypically gendered. Toxic masculine behaviours are things like macho challenges of status, trying to resolve problems through violence, or asserting dominance through intimidation. That's not to say that only stereotypically male behaviours can trigger **Resist the Shadow**; stereo-

typically feminine behaviours that can act as triggers could be seeing other women as competition, attempting to undermine someone's status through gossip, or policing a woman's appearance or sexual behaviour to other women.

Remembering the Shadow's motivations may help the MC spot triggers for **Resist the Shadow**. The Shadow is a force that wants to corrupt men into mindless, emotionless killing machines incapable of communication or human relationship. It also wants to crush the autonomy of women and non-binary folks, who represent a threat to its supremacy, and to force women to accept subservience with "gladness and delight". Any behaviour which fits that ideology and gives the Shadow an opening is probably toxic.

And if you're really not sure, MC, then ask another player. "Hey, that seems kind of toxic, Player A. What do you think, Player B?"

As far as the results, on a 10+ the PC has a chance to stop their behaviour before it does harm, *and* they are aware of the Shadow's influence and what it wanted from them. (When figuring out what the Shadow wants from that moment, simply assume that the Shadow wants the most harmful possible outcome of the behaviour that triggered the move in the first place.) On a 7-9, the PC becomes aware of the influence of the Shadow only *after* they have done something regrettable, e.g., yelled at a friend, punched a superior, or spread lies about a rival.

On a failure, the MC takes control of that PC and has them do something with disastrous consequences that will directly benefit the Shadow. For example, stealing battle plans and turning them over to a Shadow spy, attacking someone important, or letting Shadow forces into the compound. Whether the character remembers any of what they did is up to the MC. Generally limit yourself to a single task before the character regains control.

Marro and Locha have been arguing lately, and while out on a mission Locha made a bad call that results in Marro and Locki getting Hurt. After returning to camp, Marro seeks out Dalu and starts trying to convince her to come with her to talk to Paemo about Locha's bad judgement. It seems to Anna that Marro is annoyed and wants to get revenge on Locha, because she sounds so eager to see Locha get humiliated, so Anna speaks up. "Whoa, that's more than just gossip. Sounds toxic to me. What do you think, Seamus?"

Seamus agrees, so Anna tells Kit to roll **Resist the Shadow**. Marro misses, with a 3, which means that the MC gets to control her for a short time.

Anna narrates that Dalu manages to talk Marro down, or so she thinks. Later, however, in the dead of night, Marro sneaks into Locha's tent and attacks her in her sleep, stabbing her in the chest with a knife.

The commotion brings Lovo and Dalu running, who pull Marro off of Locha and then draw weapons. Anna then tells Marro that the Shadow is no longer in control. "The last thing you remember was talking to Dalu in her tent, but now you're lying on your back outside Locha's. Lovo is advancing on you, sword drawn, and your hands are covered in blood. What do you do?"

Locha was recently promoted to Sergeant and now outranks Corporal Lyshe. Their fort came under a surprise attack by Shadow soldiers, and during the fighting Lyshe disobeyed an order from Locha which almost caused their defensive line to fall apart. After the fighting is over, Locha gets into Lyshe's face and starts yelling at her, but Lyshe just taunts her and challenges her to a fight.

In response, Locha throws down her sword and shield and raises her fists as a crowd starts to gather around the two women.

"Cool," Anna says. "That's some pretty macho posturing going on there. Why don't you roll to **Resist the Shadow**."

Drew rolls and hits with a 10, and Anna tells him that the Shadow wants her to beat Lyshe to a pulp so that Locha will be demoted and Lyshe's faith in the command structure will be shaken. Unnerved, Locha stops herself. She picks up her sword, tells Lyshe that fighting won't solve anything, and goes to talk about her concerns with Watch Commander Paemo.

SURRENDER TO WEARINESS

When you Surrender to Weariness—by marking four Weary or when a move tells you to—erase all your Weary and roll with the number erased. On a hit, you do something to emotionally distance yourself from those you hold most dear. On a 10+, erase all your Camaraderie for the two people with whom you have the highest Camaraderie. On a 7-9, erase all your Camaraderie for the one person with whom you have the highest Camaraderie. On a miss, you're able to keep it together. This time.

The MC can ask a player to **Surrender to Weariness** any time they could make a move. Similarly, a player can also choose to **Surrender to Weariness** as a Complication after a mission. In both cases, the player erases all of their Weary, even if it's less than 4, and adds the number they erased to their die roll.

A player *has* to **Surrender to Weariness** if they ever mark their fourth box of Weary. And yes, +4 to the roll means you're pretty much *guaranteed* to lose Camaraderie with at least one person. That's no accident. **Surrendering to Weariness** represents some kind of loss of control, or acting out, that damages relationships with the people closest to you. Lashing out can be satisfying in the moment, but afterward you're going to have to spend time and effort rebuilding trust with the people you hurt.

*While on a mission, Dalu takes a Complication that results in Lovo marking their fourth box of Weary. Once the mission is complete, Lovo rolls **Surrender to Weariness** and hits with a 13. Lovo has more Camaraderie with Dalu and Locha than anyone else, 3 apiece, and so has to erase all Camaraderie with both of them.*

Back at camp, Dalu and Lovo start squabbling, as they usually do. However, Lovo, at the end of their rope, snaps and takes a swing at Dalu. When Locha goes to pull them apart, Lovo turns on her and accidentally gives her a black eye. Ashamed, but still angry, Lovo blurts out an apology and then storms off.

*After the funeral of a fallen squad mate, Locha is feeling depressed and hopeless. Anna has a move available, and it seems fictionally appropriate, so she tells Locha to **Surrender to Weariness**. Locha rolls a partial hit with an 8. The person she is closest to is Marro, who sees how distraught she is and tries to comfort her. Locha responds by saying she doesn't want to talk, then, when Marro presses the issue, gets up and walks away without saying anything further. Drew erases all Camaraderie with Marro.*

DELIVER A EULOGY

When you Deliver a Eulogy for those you've lost, roll with Training. On a hit, you honour their memory and word spreads; the MC will ask you how. You and anyone present convert what Camaraderie you had with those lost into Experience or Jaded. On a 10+, everyone lowers their Weary by 1. On a 7-9, only you do. On a miss, the MC will say what happens.

All that **Delivering a Eulogy** requires is that words of remembrance be spoken for a listening audience in honour of the dead. Where those words are spoken, or in what context, doesn't matter. Whether it's a ceremony of remembrance held on the battlefield to honour the fallen, or a proper funeral attended by priests and ritual, what matters is that someone is speaking to honour the memory of those who have died.

If multiple characters have died with whom you have Camaraderie, you may convert all of that Camaraderie to *either* Experience *or* Jaded (choose only 1). However, you only lower Weary once, if applicable.

Locki, a Warden under Locha's command, was killed during the mission to rescue Lovo. When they return, a funeral is held for both Marro and Locki.

*Corporal Locha **Delivers a Eulogy** about her experiences of serving with them in the field and how they touched her life. When Drew rolls, he hits with an 11. Locha, Dalu, and Lovo all lower their Weary by 1.*

Lovo had 2 Camaraderie with both Locki and Marro. She currently has one Experience marked, so she decides to convert that Camaraderie into Experience and take an advance.

Locha and Dalu had Camaraderie with Marro, but not Locki. Dalu converts her 3 Camaraderie with Marro into Experience, while Locha converts her 2 Camaraderie with Marro into Jaded.

START OF SESSION

At the start of the session, or during a lull in play, the MC (or the highest ranked PC past Sergeant) will choose a new mission for the group. The ranking character will tell everyone involved to mark Jaded, and will then assign one PC to each of the three primary mission roles: 'Navigate and Strategize', 'Recon and Lookout', and 'Take Point'. Anyone left over will Watch Their Backs. If the person assigning roles doesn't have Camaraderie with each PC involved, they must choose 1 Complication.

If the group wants to achieve any secondary objectives, such as rescuing someone or capturing an enemy in addition to the mission objective, the group chooses an additional Complication for each objective selected. The Basic Moves cannot be used during a mission, with the exception of Need a Hand.

If there was anything that needed to be resolved from the end of last session, the MC might decide to delay the mission until later in the session.

Once the mission is complete, each player chooses another PC and describes a meaningful moment both characters shared during the mission. The player you choose will highlight one Active move for you, and the MC will highlight another. Whenever you roll a highlighted move, you mark Experience.

The session begins with the action of a mission. It is only after the mission that meaningful moments are described and moves are highlighted. Narrate your meaningful moments as small but significant interactions between characters. (Think of it as your character's moment during a montage.) The player of the character with whom you choose to have a meaningful moment will highlight one Active move for you, and the MC will highlight a second.

Veterans of games Powered by the Apocalypse may find it strange to highlight moves instead of stats, as this requires a character to act in certain ways to gain experience. However, highlighting a stat also functions to reward characters by constraining their actions, just a bit less directly – and often the language used at the table reflects that. (I.e., “I want you to open your brain, so be Weird.”)

If the MC defers the mission in order to resolve urgent matters from last session, highlighted moves from last session will not change until the mission has been run.

*It is time to start the session and Locha, the highest-ranked character, is now Lieutenant Commander, so Drew chooses the mission. Based on circumstances at the end of the previous session, Drew chooses “secure and hold a location until reinforcements arrive” and assigns Lovo to **Recon**, Dalu to **Strategize**, and Marro to **Take Point**, leaving Locha to **Watch Their Backs**.*

*After the mission is complete (for an example of what running missions looks like, see page 149), it is time to describe meaningful moments. Drew decides that because Locha used her hold from **Watching Their Backs** to help Marro with her **Take Point** roll, Locha’s meaningful moment happens when Locha steps in and blocks a spear that would have impaled Marro, followed by Marro claspings Locha’s hands and thanking her after the battle. Drew then hands Kit his moves sheet. Kit highlights **Blow Off Steam** for Locha, then hands the sheet to Anna who highlights **Provoke Someone**.*

*Amelia goes next. Lovo is still Hurting from a Wound they took on a previous mission, so Amelia narrates how Locha looks at Lovo when she is assigning tasks and Lovo knows they’ve been assigned to Recon to keep them away from the fighting. Drew tells Amelia to highlight **Look Beyond** and Anna highlights **Let the Shadow In**.*

*Seamus decides that Dalu’s meaningful moment is actually with Lovo. In the previous session, Watch Commander Paemo sternly rebuked the squad for not working together effectively. Normally, Dalu wouldn’t care that Lovo is struggling, but she is eager to prove Paemo wrong. When she sees Lovo sfalling behind, Dalu finds an excuse to call a halt so that Lovo can have a few minutes to catch their breath. Amelia tells Seamus to highlight **Let the Shadow In** and Anna selects **Provoke Someone**.*

*Lastly, Kit narrates Marro’s meaningful moment and chooses to mirror what Drew had already established. He narrates the battle from Marro’s perspective, how she saw the spear coming and knew she wouldn’t be able to deflect it in time, and then Locha just appeared out of nowhere. Watching her commander in battle inspired Marro to fight even harder. Drew tells Kit to highlight **Provoke Someone** and Anna highlights **Open Up to Someone**.*

END OF SESSION

At the End of Session, choose one or two people, if there were any, who earned your trust, respect, or love and tell them to take a point of Camaraderie with your character; you can choose PCs and NPCs. The MC will decide if anyone earned Camaraderie with her NPCs and give it out accordingly.

It's important to remember that players can and should award Camaraderie to NPCs. PCs won't always be around when they want help with a roll, for example. It also makes things more interesting for the MC if they have Camaraderie that they can use either for or against the PCs.

If someone gives you Camaraderie and your Camaraderie with that person is already at 3, mark Experience instead.

It's the end of a session, and everyone is reviewing their sheets to decide who they will give Camaraderie to.

Amelia starts by saying, "Dalu gets Camaraderie, obviously, since we finally had that anger sex we all knew was going to happen. Also, I'm going to give one to Rethe, the healer, for being really sweet when she was patching me up."

Seamus goes next. "Lovo gets one, obvs. Also, I really enjoyed that training scene with the Initiates, so I'll give a Camaraderie to Initiate Otac. She shows a lot of promise."

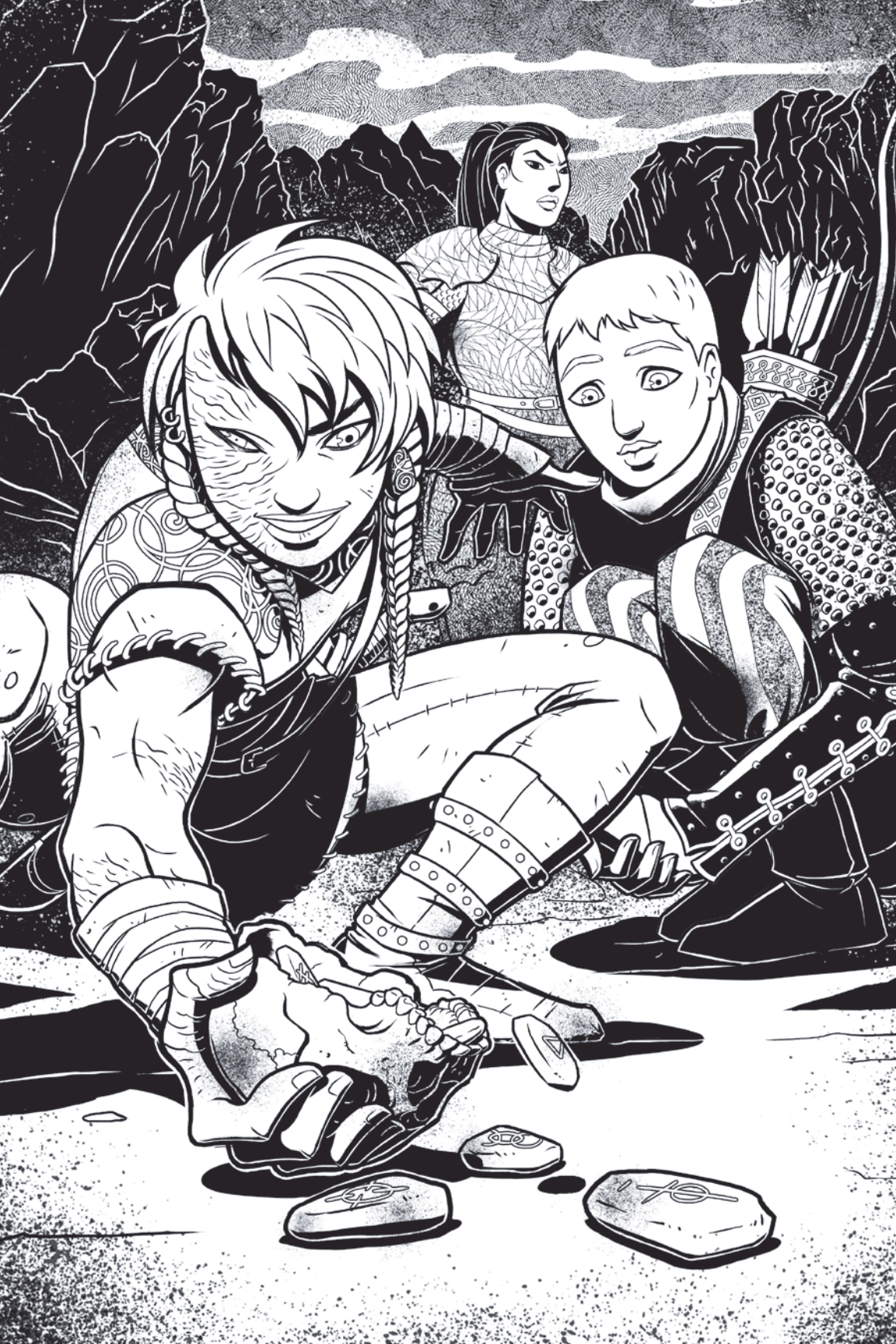
Amelia snorts. "You're only saying that because she sucked up to you so much."

"You say that like it's a bad thing."

Drew is still thinking about whom he wants to give Camaraderie to, so Kit takes his turn. "Dalu, you helped Marro out of a bad situation when everything went sideways on that mission, so have a Camaraderie. Also, Locha really kept a level head and managed to get everyone back safely, and Marro was pretty impressed by that. She can have a Camaraderie too."

Drew nods. "As for Locha, she's going to take a Camaraderie with Marro. I feel like we're finally getting past a bunch of awful stuff. I was also tempted to give a Camaraderie to Paemo, but not after the way she dressed Locha down after the mission. So Lovo, you can have one instead. You try so hard to be tough and cool, but Locha sees right through that."

*All the players have given Camaraderie, so now Anna looks over her list of NPCs. "Lovo, you can have a Camaraderie with Rethe, and with Locki for **Blowing Off Steam** with her. Locha, you can have one with Paemo; she didn't like having to give you that lecture and likes the way you handled it. Dalu can have a Camaraderie with Otac. And Marro, you spent the whole session doing things with PCs and didn't really impress any NPCs one way or the other, so better luck next time."*



CHARACTERS

When gathering for the first time, the MC summarizes the playbooks for the players and has each select a playbook. Players with previous experience with *Apocalypse World*, or other games *Powered By the Apocalypse*, will probably want to look through the playbooks themselves. If that is the case, focussing on moves and the playbook agenda will help them quickly get a feel for what each playbook is about. There can only be one of each playbook in play; when starting a new campaign, duplicates are strictly not allowed.

At the start of play, all the PCs will know one another, as they all serve together in the same squad. They may have personal history with each other as well.

In this chapter, we will go through all of the sections of the playbook and the steps that need to be taken in order to create a character. (In order to read about creating the Shadow at the start of a new campaign, see page 134.)

NAME, GENDER, PRESENTATION, AND Demeanour

These are the details that determine who your character is and how she presents herself to the outside world.

A list of names is provided with each playbook. This is for the sake of creating consistency and the feeling of all of the characters belonging to a unified, consistent culture. Choose 1 of the provided names for your character.

Options for gender and presentation were discussed in the introduction. As gender is very much an important theme in *The Watch*, how your character identifies and presents herself to the world is an important aspect of what makes her unique. Feel free to play a character whose gender or presentation does not align with your own. There aren't any incorrect choices here.

Lastly, the options for demeanour are intended to give you a foothold on how to play your character when you start play, nothing more.

GEAR

Gear in *The Watch* is meant to provide inspiration into who your character is and how they fight, but it doesn't have any mechanical effect. Your character's weapons and armour are reflections of her past and backstory. Choose options that appeal to you and that suggest the sort of person you want your character to be, and feel free to flesh out details if you are inspired.

RANK

The Watch is an army, and you are all soldiers in that army. As such, each of you will have a rank, and you will advance through the ranks during the course of play.

When creating characters, you will choose to be a Recruit, Initiate, Warden, or a Corporal. It will be important to decide as a group which character will be the highest rank. There can be only one Corporal at the start of play, and the highest-ranking character will be responsible for deciding which characters will be assigned to the various mission roles.

If your character is not the Corporal, you may choose freely between Recruit, Initiate and Warden. A Recruit is someone without any real training who has either just joined or been drafted into the war effort. An Initiate has had basic training but is not yet considered a full member of the Watch. They must still be supervised by more senior soldiers when out in the field. A Warden is considered a full member of the Watch, with all of the rank and responsibilities that come with that.

During the course of play, characters will gain promotions through advances and by completing missions. The highest rank that a character can achieve while still remaining a player character is Watch Captain. If a character ever assumes the rank of Field Marshall, they are retired from play and that player either creates a new character or takes over as MC.

THE TIES THAT BIND

Each playbook has Bonds that you will fill out to create a starting web of relationships among PCs at the start of the campaign. The number of Bonds you take with someone will determine your initial Camaraderie with that character.

Bonds are done as a group *after* everyone has completed the individual portion of character creation.

CLAN

Each character in *The Watch* comes from one of the ten clans, and while the clans have been officially dissolved, the old clan divisions are still deeply felt by many. Each clan has its own specialty: Morsh is known for their traders, Dothas is known for their mystics, Royshan is known for their warriors. Choose a clan that feels appropriate to your character.

STATS

Each playbook indicates a set of starting stats. This reflects that each playbook starts with a fundamentally different outlook and set of skills.

Add 1 to a single stat and write out the resulting stat values in the appropriate boxes on your character sheet.

CUNNING

LUCK

TRAINING

VALOUR

PLAYER PRINCIPLES AND AGENDA

In running *The Watch*, the MC has a list of key principles and agendas which shape how they portray the world you are all playing in. This establishes a list of best practices for how to effectively run a game of *The Watch* and to properly convey the spirit of the game.

Players also have principles and agendas that should guide how they approach the game, though their list is simpler.

PLAYER PRINCIPLES

There are two principles that every player shares:

*MAKE THE OTHER CHARACTERS LOOK AWESOME
AND SHARE SCREEN TIME WITH THEM*

Roleplaying is a social activity, and it's no fun when one player tries to dominate the action. The best storytelling happens when players involve each other and look for ways to give other characters a chance to shine.

*KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR EACH OTHER'S EMOTIONAL SAFETY
AND BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER*

It's true that conflict is the engine that drives good story, but do remember to keep animosity in character, and to keep an eye out for the emotional well-being of everyone at the table. Being sensitive to other people's emotions isn't something that will limit your story! Far from it. When you build trust with a group by showing that you care about the emotional safety of the people you are playing with, you will find that players are often willing to explore difficult subjects with you because they know you won't sacrifice their safety for the sake of good story.

PLAYBOOK AGENDAS

While the playbooks all share the same principles, each playbook has a unique agenda, reflecting the fact that each playbook archetype encourages a different style of play.

The playbook agendas are:

- ▶ **Bear:** be overprotective and bold
- ▶ **Lioness:** be charming and daring
- ▶ **Owl:** be clever and give advice, solicited or not
- ▶ **Spider:** be enigmatic and fearless
- ▶ **Wolf:** be aggressive and fiercely loyal

These agendas aren't hard and fast rules; if you feel strongly about something your character would do that doesn't fit an agenda, don't let the agenda constrain you. The agendas are simply a guide for what to do if you're ever unsure about what to do next.

CHOOSING MOVES

When creating characters, read through all of the available moves in your playbook and select two. (The Spider always takes **Mender** and chooses only 1 additional move.) Your character will start play with these two moves and must unlock the others through Experience and Jaded advances.

MC: CREATE NPCs

MC, while your players are creating their characters, this is a good opportunity for you to create the NPCs that will fill out the rest of the squad and the command structure. The PCs will all be part of the same squad of 8 to 10 soldiers, so you will need NPCs to make up the rest of the squad. You will also need to create your Watch Commander, and perhaps her trusted second in command.

When creating NPCs, be sure to give them a name, a rank, a clan, and a brief description of their life before the war. For example, "Milluc, a 16-year-old Warden of clan Richti, who joined at the very beginning of the war to avenge her family" or "Locki, an Initiate in her late 30s from clan Toltho, who had spent her entire life on her family's farm and never lifted a sword or spear before joining the Watch". You needn't get any more complex or detailed than that. If your players engage with an NPC, more details will emerge through play.

ASSIGNING CAMARADERIE

Camaraderie is assigned only after all characters have been created and introduced to the group. Players will take turns choosing one of the options in **The Ties That Bind** from their playbook and naming the player character that selection applies to. Each time they do this, their character gains 1 Camaraderie with the character they named.

Players need not fill in a name for every option provided. Once they are finished, players write down the resulting Camaraderie totals with each of the other player characters.

CLAN QUESTIONS

Once Camaraderie has been assigned, you will go through the clan worksheet as a group. For each clan represented by a player character, have that player answer the first question for that clan. If there are two players from the same clan, have them collaborate on the answer. Then ask the player of the character with whom they have the *least* Camaraderie the second question for that clan.

The clan questions are as follows:

Clan Thason (Herders & Equestrians)

- ▶ What ancient transgression do people say this clan committed?
- ▶ What does this clan offer that no other can?

Clan Morsh (Traders)

- ▶ What hero came from this clan and what were they famous for?
- ▶ Why is this clan's political position unassailable?

Clan Sharn (Hunters & Gatherers)

- ▶ What tyrant came from this clan, and what small good came from their reign?
- ▶ What key area do they still control?

Clan Charsa (Miners)

- ▶ What ancient prophecy of this clan do people say is linked to the Shadow?
- ▶ Why do all the other clans respect this one?

Clan Toltho (Craftsfolk & Farmers)

- ▶ What relic did this clan create and which clan currently holds it?
- ▶ What is unusual about the eyes of those from this clan?

Clan Dothas (Mystics)

- ▶ What makes this clan indispensable to the others?
- ▶ What tragedy was this clan responsible for?

Clan Richti (Nomads)

- ▶ What sacred object is this clan reputed to possess?
- ▶ Which clan did Richti split from?

Clan Thedon (Builders and Masons)

- ▶ Which important site built by this clan do they still hold?
- ▶ What unique physical trait do members of this clan share?

Clan Molthas (Rugged Mountaineers)

- ▶ Why is this clan so reclusive, and how is this different from how they were before?
- ▶ What ancient mountain fortress do they hold?

Clan Royshan (Warriors)

- ▶ Why do all of the other clans fear their warriors?
- ▶ What secret knowledge does this clan possess that they have sworn never to use against the other clans?

You may wish to answer the questions for one or two other clans which seem particularly evocative or compelling, if they are not already represented by a player character. Otherwise, leave those clans aside; if their clan comes up in play later you can always pause for a moment to answer the questions as a group.

You should not feel compelled to answer all of the clan questions before beginning play.

In fact, it's best if you don't. If someone ends up joining your group part-way through, you can ask them some of the questions that weren't answered as a way of getting them involved in building the world you are playing in.

After clan questions are complete, move onto the starting question worksheet.

STARTING QUESTIONS

The MC asks each player at least one of the following:

- ▶ Your clan is the one that first encountered the Shadow. How did you find out about it, and what happened? Why did that encounter leave a wound your clan can never recover from? And which clan blames your clan for everything that happened after?
- ▶ After the first attack by the Shadow, your clan was to play a vital role in the early response. What was your clan supposed to do, and why were you not able to do that? What do you wish you could have done differently?
- ▶ Your clan was the only one that voted against dissolving the clans. Why did the rest of the clans vote against you, and why did you go along with them anyway?
- ▶ Your clan suffered the deepest losses, with only a few dozen survivors of the initial disaster. Which clan do you blame for your losses? Whose absence gnaws at you like a festering wound, and where did you bury them?
- ▶ Your clan had an opportunity to prevent the violence and chaos of the Shadow's first invasion. Why didn't you act, and when did you realize you'd made a terrible mistake?
- ▶ Most of the women in your clan revelled in the violence that occurred during the Shadow's earliest incursions. What did they do that crossed the line? Were you one of them? Who outside the clan knows about it?
- ▶ Your clan was the most isolated, and your secret lore tells of a haven, safe from the outside world, high in the mountains where your clan has retreated in times of great danger. Why hasn't your clan retreated there? Which characters would you take with you if you went?

FIRST SESSION CHECKLIST

Because there are a lot of important steps to getting through your first session of *The Watch*, it can be confusing knowing which step needs to be completed when. As such, here is a checklist the MC should use when playing the first session of a campaign so that things go as smoothly as possible. (If you are playing a one-shot or a convention game, your setup will look slightly different. See page 165)

1. Everyone should introduce themselves by name and preferred pronoun(s) [he/she/they/____]
2. Read the **introductory text** (see page 7).
3. Read the playbooks descriptions on the MC sheet and let players choose theirs. They should fill out the following in this order:
 - i. **Name**; they can choose from the list or make up their own
 - ii. **Gender, Presentation and Demeanour**; choosing from the list is highly encouraged but not necessary
 - iii. **Gear**; make sure they select their options and detail the symbol of their clan
 - iv. **Rank**; they can choose from any of the first four ranks but only one of them can be Corporal
 - v. **Clan and Stats**; these can be found on the back of their sheets
 - vi. **Moves**; they each get to choose moves based on their playbook
4. Ask everyone to introduce their characters, including look and personality; everyone should write down the other characters' names in their **Camaraderie** box during this step.
5. One at a time, ask each player to choose options from '**The Ties That Bind**' on their playbook. They can fill in as little or as many as they choose, but each time they do they gain one **Camaraderie** with the person they chose.
6. Go through and choose the Shadow options in the **Threats and Shadow Worksheet** together (or the MC can do some or all of this on their own).
7. Consult the **Clans Worksheet**. For the clans represented by characters, ask their player the first question and then ask the character they have the least Camaraderie with to answer the second. You can answer questions about the remaining clans if you like.
8. Together, answer **The Opening Days** questions (skip these or only ask a few if you're running a one-shot).
9. Read off the names of the moves on the move sheets; go into more detail if you want.
10. Have everyone work through the **Start of Session** move, this will launch you into a mission so everyone gets directly into the action and deals with its fallout.



PLAYBOOKS

Each of the playbooks has a different feel, and players will find that different playbooks will appeal to them depending on their preferred play style. Here are the types of play that each playbook encourages:

Bear: Fierce, maternal, and overprotective. Good for players who like the role of nurturer, den mother, and protector.

Eagle: Egotistical, vain, and glory-seeking. Good for players who like creating tension, leaping head first into danger, and being self-centered.

Fox: Strange, mystical, and sometimes alarming. Good for players who like the supernatural, creating setting, and alternately aiding fellow PCs and putting them in harm's way.

Lioness: Charismatic, gorgeous, and inspiring. Good for players who like romance, leadership, and influencing others through words.

Owl: Sly, opinionated, and sneaky. Good for players who like being a troublemaker, learning secrets, and provoking those around them.

Raven: Priestly, philosophical, and distant. Good for players who like playing with religion, ethical questions, and acting as a moral compass.

Spider: Creepy, dark, and mysterious. Good for players who like being a healer, being seen with suspicion, and tampering with dark powers best left alone.

Wolf: Aggressive, loyal, and pack-oriented. Good for players who like taking charge, challenging for dominance, and making sacrifices for the good of the group.



BEAR

GET BEHIND ME! AND WATCH OUR FLANKS, DAMMIT, THEY COULD BE TRYING TO SURROUND US!

Names

Trull, Otac, Locha, Mehic, Radec, Dralla, Erdo, Prithe, Troshic, Athoc, Lyshe, Proeshe, Rezi, Rethe, Leyma

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Fluid, Non-binary, Cis Woman, Trans Woman, Genderqueer
- ▶ Strong Face, Weathered Face, Pinched Face, Scarred Face
- ▶ Common Clothing, Well-Worn Clothing, Patched Clothing, Dull Clothing
- ▶ Arrogant, Quiet, Gentle, Lively

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is ancient, handed down through the generations
 - ☐ Your spear's head was forged by a legendary smith
 - ☐ Your bow was made with wood from the Blessed Grove
 - ☐ Your shield is blazoned with your clan's crest
 - ☐ Your armour is finely crafted mail

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan:

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Thedon** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **0**, Luck **-1**, Training **1**, Valour **1**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs in play. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ _____ and I are from the same clan.
- ▶ I've defended _____ from insult.
- ▶ _____ did me a big favour recently.
- ▶ I've been impressed with _____'s abilities.
- ▶ I've opened up to _____ about my clan's traditions.

Bear Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **Contained Wrath:** When you **Surrender to Weariness**, do not add your Weary to the roll. When you **Blow Off Steam** by physically exerting yourself, roll with Training instead of Luck.
- ☐ **Tough Ol' Bear:** When you **Suffer Great Harm** or **Lick Your Wounds**, you may roll with Training instead.
- ☐ **Sensible Leadership:** When you give someone a direct order and they follow it, they mark Experience. When someone gives you good advice and you take it, you mark Experience.
- ☐ **Mama Bear:** When someone important to you feels threatened or is in danger, roll with Valour. On a hit, you show up right there and then with or without explanation. On a 10+, you take +1 ongoing for the scene. On a miss, the MC will tell you when you show up, and you're not going to like it.
- ☐ **Cooler Heads Prevail:** When you advise caution to someone you fear is about to act foolishly, roll with Training. On a hit, they choose 1. On a 10+, take +1 forward with them.
 - ▶ *They listen to you and stand down*
 - ▶ *They attack you*
 - ▶ *They ignore you and take -2 forward (or get themselves hurt if an NPC)*

On a miss, they do as they will. Lose 1 Camaraderie with them, and mark Jaded.

Standard Advances

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Get +1 to Cunning | ☐ Get a move from another playbook |
| ☐ Get +1 to Cunning | ☐ Get a move from another playbook |
| ☐ Get +1 to Luck | ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat |
| ☐ Get +1 to Training | ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat |
| ☐ Get +1 to Valour | ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat |
| ☐ Get a new move | ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later |
| ☐ Get a new move | ☐ Retire your character from play |
| | ☐ Switch to a new playbook |

The Bear's Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Elite Veteran:** When you **Rely On Your Training**, mark Jaded to treat your roll as a 10+, even after rolling.
- ☐ **Intimidating:** Mark Jaded to force an NPC to do what you want through use of threats and bullying.
- ☐ **Painful Truths:** Mark Jaded to chew someone out publicly and clear their Weary track.
- ☐ **Discerning Eye:** Mark Jaded to ask someone if their character is lying to you; they must answer you honestly and directly.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you, your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE BEAR

The character

You are strong, maternal, and fiercely protective of those under your care. Clear-sighted and unwavering, you are someone who is a stable touchstone for those around you. You see the best in others and expect them to live up to that best self. You hold yourself and those around you to a higher standard: after all, in the fight against the Shadow, if you allow your morals to be compromised, have you truly won anything?

Sometimes your caretaking instinct has a darker side. You can be aggressive or bullying to get those you protect to do what you feel is in their best interest: if they won't look out for themselves, someone has to make sure they stay healthy and alive. The problem is, sometimes you're so focused on other people's needs that you forget to consider your own.

As an officer, you are a hardass to your subordinates, constantly pushing them to be and to do better. Better that they hate you than get themselves killed through carelessness or lack of skill. But over time, those under your command will grow as loyal to you as you are to them.

Playbook Moves

With **Sensible Leadership**, it will be fairly obvious as to what constitutes a direct order, though assigning mission roles does *not* count as a trigger for this move. As for when you act on good advice, this is fairly open to interpretation. Be judicious in its use.

Mama Bear can be used any time a character's safety is in danger, but because getting up to a +3 *in addition to* your bonus for Valour all but guarantees at least a partial success, you *must* decide whether to spend Camaraderie before the roll. If you don't, you take your chances.

When **Intimidating** is used, the MC should watch out for triggers to **Resist the Shadow**.



EAGLE

TO ARMS, MY FRIENDS! TODAY MAY BE OUR LAST, BUT WE WILL GIVE
OURSELVES AN END TO BE REMEMBERED BY!

Names

Measho, Dobuc, Piene, Rirte, Presti, Maetu, Troefi, Traega, Povi, Leile, Pyldu, Lemni, Treela, Tovy, Ralda

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Non-binary, Genderqueer, Cis Woman, Fluid, Trans Woman
- ▶ Scarred Face, Young Face, Tough Face, Caring Face
- ▶ Distinctive Clothing, Uniform Clothing, Perfect Clothing, Loud Clothing
- ▶ Cheerful, Aggressive, Vain, Intense

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is one of a matched pair; who if not you carries its twin?
 - ☐ Your spear is short and razor sharp, designed for close-quarters
 - ☐ Your bow is made of unbreakable wood
 - ☐ Your shield buckles into place, allowing you to wield two weapons
 - ☐ Your armour is glorious and bulky

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Theдон** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **0**, Luck **-1**, Training **0**, Valour **2**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ _____ has saved my life more than once.
- ▶ I've seen _____ at their worst and kept it to myself.
- ▶ _____'s clan and my own were once the same clan but split generations ago.
- ▶ I see a rival in _____; I must keep my skills sharp to compete.
- ▶ _____ is destined for greatness, as long as they follow my lead.

Eagle Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **One on One:** When you Blow Off Steam by facing off against someone in front of an audience, add these options to the list.
 - ▶ *You embarrass them; lower your Weary by an additional 1*
 - ▶ *You let them win; remove a point of Jaded*
- ☐ **Rebel Rebel:** When you **Provoke Someone** by challenging a person's actions or words, roll with Valour instead of Luck.
- ☐ **Battlecry:** When you are assigned to Take Point on a mission, everyone else gains +1 to their mission rolls.
- ☐ **Your Own Woman:** During the Start of Session, you choose the two moves you will be highlighting. At the End of Session, you also choose someone you think benefited from your skills and gain Camaraderie with them.
- ☐ **Build Up To It:** When you brag about your accomplishments or skill just before Opening Up to Someone, treat a miss as a 7-9 and a 7-9 as a 10+.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

Eagle Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Wrapped Around My Finger:** Mark Jaded to Provoke a Reaction from someone as if you rolled a 10+. You can choose to do so after rolling.
- ☐ **To Die For:** Mark Jaded to have someone in the scene suffer harm in your place. If it's another PC, they mark Experience.
- ☐ **Exemplar:** Mark Jaded when another PC is making a roll using Valour to add your own Valour score in addition.
- ☐ **Meant To Do That:** When you miss a roll, you can mark Jaded to treat the next roll you make in the scene as a 10+.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE EAGLE

The character

You are egotistical, vain, and glory-seeking. You don't waste time with false modesty, because you really are one of the best. When the war is over, people will sing songs of your deeds, and surely if any one person can change the tide of battle against the Shadow it is you.

However, your pride in your skills and your accomplishments makes you self-centred, and your tendency toward boasting often drives people away. You have lots of friends and admirers, but few, if any confidantes, because the bravado you present to the world keeps people at arm's length. And as amazing as you are, even you do need other people sometimes.

As an officer, you are bold and courageous. You see what needs doing and know how to get it done. When you lead from the front, most often you and your subordinates will end up basking in glory. However, you don't delegate effectively; you don't trust any of your subordinates to do anything as well as you could. This causes a lot of resentment and grumbling. You're the officer no one wants to be assigned to.

The moves

One on One generally ends up getting used when characters want to **Blow Off Steam** by picking a fight in front of an audience, but really it can apply to any sort of test of physical skill, like an archery contest or an axe throwing competition. What matters is the physical competition and the audience, the two things an Eagle loves most.

When you are **Building Up To It** before you **Open Up To Someone**, remember that "bragging about your accomplishments or skill" means talking yourself up, not putting the other person down. If you are looking to gain Camaraderie with someone through friendly insults and teasing, then you're looking to **Blow Off Steam**, not **Open Up**.

When you make another character take harm using **To Die For**, do exercise discretion and pay attention to other PC's harm levels before using it. Heightening drama is great, but you don't want to create bad feeling by killing other PCs.

Lastly, when using **Exemplar**, yes that means that you could end up giving someone more than +3 to a roll. Use your power wisely.



FOX

THE VEIL THAT SEPARATES US FROM THE DEAD IS THINNER THAN YOU
KNOW. TAKE MY HAND; I WILL SHOW YOU.

Names

Doena, Treni, Maeno, Raish, Rende, Teka, Rilo, Lyda, Dorte, Reatha, Tobac, Rysac, Raynti

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Genderqueer, Non-binary, Cis Woman, Trans Woman, Fluid
- ▶ Strained Face, Lined Face, Arresting Face, Unsettling Face
- ▶ Natural Clothing, Strange Clothing, Ragged Clothing, Flowing Clothing
- ▶ Distracted, Smug, Mysterious, Ominous

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ A token, mark, or scar that shows the price you paid to speak with the spirits (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword hums when in the presence of the Shadow
 - ☐ Your spear is adorned with many trinkets and oddments
 - ☐ Your bow is famous for slaying the Three Kings
 - ☐ Your shield is covered in spikes
 - ☐ Your armour is enamelled with sigils and runes

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Thedon** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **0**, Luck **2**, Training **-1**, Valour **0**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ I have communed with _____'s long dead ancestors.
- ▶ _____ seems frightened of me, and with good cause.
- ▶ I nearly died and _____ sat by my side until I recovered.
- ▶ _____'s clan and mine have never seen eye-to-eye.
- ▶ I've shared my bed with _____ in the past.

Fox Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **Spirit Walk:** When you have time, safety, and the chance to retreat into nature, you may slip free of this world to walk with the spirits. Choose 2:

- ▶ *You temporarily sever the Shadow's control over a person or place*
- ▶ *You reappear in a different place than where you started*
- ▶ *You can take a few willing souls with you*
- ▶ *You can ask the spirits a question, and they will answer it honestly*
- ▶ *You leave something behind for safekeeping*

You can choose additional options by marking **Weary**, **Jaded**, or **Harm**, 1 per option. If you do, when you return from the spirit world it will be obvious to everyone who sees you.

- ☐ **Eyes in the Sky:** You may mark an animal's forehead (with dirt, mud, or blood) to see through their eyes no matter the distance between you. When you **Look Beyond** this way, roll with Luck instead of Cunning, and treat a miss as a 7-9 instead.
- ☐ **Read the Bones:** When you divine someone's fortune for them, roll with Luck. On a hit, the MC will tell you something that character should know that they don't already. On a 10+, if you're honest with them about your divination, take 1 Camaraderie with them; if you lie about it, take +1 forward against them. On a 7-9, the spirit's force your hand: you must speak truthfully. On a miss, you speak truthfully, but they don't believe you: lose 1 Camaraderie with that character or mark **Jaded**.
- ☐ **Ward Against Evil:** When you use protective charms to **Watch Their Backs** on a mission, roll with Luck instead of Training.
- ☐ **Spirit Bond:** When you teach someone about the spirits, you may **Open Up to Them** by rolling with Camaraderie with that person instead of Valour.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

Fox Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Evil Eye:** When you have access to a piece of someone's personal belongings, mark Jaded to ask the MC their location, their mood, and their health; she will answer you honestly.
- ☐ **Supernatural Alertness:** When you are caught off-guard, mark Jaded to act before anyone else does and take +1 ongoing for the scene.
- ☐ **Protecting Spirits:** When you suffer harm, you may mark Jaded instead.
- ☐ **Dark Mark:** Mark Jaded to place a hex on someone in your presence and choose 2. If you mark 2 Jaded, instead hex them from a distance or choose all 4:
 - ▶ *It lasts for a long time*
 - ▶ *It's especially potent*
 - ▶ *It's apparent to all who look upon them*
 - ▶ *Only you know how to break the hex.*
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE FOX

The character

You are strange, mystical, and sometimes alarming. You see through the veil into the world beyond, and that gives you perspective others lack. With the help of the spirits, you will protect your comrades from the sorcerous depredations of the Shadow, even if they find that protection unnerving.

Your comrades rely on you to counteract the sorceries of the Shadow. However, your comrades may blame you when they suffer misfortunes; that is the plight of the mystic. There are also those among the clans that speak against the arts you practice. Clan prejudice is strong, and the mystic knowledge you keep has been forbidden by some.

As an officer, you are aloof and hard to understand. You are accustomed to the ignorance of others, and you have a habit of assigning your subordinates directives they don't always fathom. The combination of force of arms with your skills can be potent. You can often achieve the impossible. However, your subordinates have trouble trusting you, and your interactions with other officers will be strained at best.

The moves

Spirit Walk is a very powerful move. It can be used to accomplish some hard-hitting objectives that wouldn't be possible any other way. However, you may only spirit walk when you have time, safety, and the chance to retreat into nature, which means you cannot pop in and out of the spirit realm in the midst of battle, or while you are imprisoned in a stone fortress. Also, keep in mind that complex objectives will require sacrifice. Plan accordingly.

When you use **Eyes in the Sky**, marking an animal is purely for fictional detail. There's generally no need to roll a move to accomplish this, unless you are trying to accomplish something truly out there, like marking a rabid bear.

Evil Eye may be used against any character, PC or NPC, Shadow, or otherwise.

When you use **Protecting Spirits**, each time you would mark Harm, you mark Jaded instead. That means if you suffer 2 harm at one time, you would have to mark Jaded twice.



LIONESS

LET ME HANDLE THIS. I HAVE A WAY WITH PEOPLE.

Names

Papho, Mossuc, Milla, Lautu, Ruumo, Tyla, Deshi, Dalu, Pilte, Loete, Daruc, Liasa, Pasac, Lanec, Ega, Pilta

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Genderqueer, Fluid, Trans Woman, Non-binary, Cis Woman
- ▶ Perfect Face, Gorgeous Face, Striking Face
- ▶ Colorful Clothing, Tailored Clothing, Elegant Clothing, Pristine Clothing
- ▶ Arrogant, Volatile, Charming, Jovial

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is a piece of art, magnificent and beautiful
 - ☐ Your spear is of unique make and famed among your clan
 - ☐ Your bow was blessed by the Four
 - ☐ Your shield is thick and crafted of wood and iron
 - ☐ Your armour is gleaming and gorgeous

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Theдон** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **0**, Luck **1**, Training **-1**, Valour **1**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ My clan and _____'s clan were sworn enemies.
- ▶ _____ and I are related by marriage.
- ▶ My clan and _____'s clan have fought side-by-side against the Shadow.
- ▶ I know that _____ will fall to the Shadow; it is only a matter of time.
- ▶ _____ once saved my life, a debt that I am eager to repay.

Lioness Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **Animal Magnetism:** When you pour on the charm and **Provoke Someone**, treat a miss as a 7-9. When doing so with a PC and they give you the reaction you want, they choose 2 instead: gain Camaraderie with you, mark Experience, and remove a point of Weary.
- ☐ **Show Off:** When you **Blow Off Steam** by trying to impress or entertain others, choose an extra option, even on a miss.
- ☐ **On The Prowl:** When you have a moment of physical intimacy with someone new, gain Camaraderie with them and you both mark Experience.
- ☐ **Passionate Orator:** When you speak boldly before a crowd of people, roll with Luck. On a hit, they listen to you without interrupting and consider your words carefully. On a 10+, you convince them to believe a truth you put forward. On a miss, the crowd turns ugly before you can finish.
- ☐ **Inspirational:** When you **Need a Hand** from someone and they agree to lend it, they mark Experience.
- ☐ **Charmed:** Once per session you may ignore marking harm or take a 10+ when you Suffer **Great Harm**.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

The Lioness' Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Those Eyes:** When you're alone with someone, mark Jaded to **Look Beyond** with them as if you rolled a 10+.
- ☐ **Keep Your Friends Close:** Mark Jaded to keep a Camaraderie you just spent.
- ☐ **Style Is Everything:** When you **Need a Hand** and get it, mark Jaded to add +2 to your roll for each Camaraderie spent instead of 1, but only if you describe yourself or them looking amazing or epic while doing it.
- ☐ **Lucky Charm:** Once per mission, mark Jaded to ignore 1 Complication that arises.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE LIONESS

The character

You are charismatic, gorgeous, and full of panache. People can't help but respond to you, and when you exert yourself you can charm your way past just about any obstacle. And you have a way of getting out of tough scrapes with grace and style that even your detractors can't help but admire.

You know how to touch people's hearts and souls, and can use that ability to inspire those around you to work together and strive for something better. But that gift has a dark side as well. You can be selfish and manipulative, using your beauty and charm to benefit only yourself, which has a tendency to sow division and disunity.

As an officer, you are a born leader. Command comes naturally to you, and people will follow where you lead. Whether they will trust you, on the other hand, depends on you.

The moves

For **On the Prowl**, physical intimacy doesn't necessarily have to be romantic or sexual, although it probably will be. It could also include holding a grieving comrade or sharing sleeping accommodations for warmth (either with or without ulterior motives). Note that you gain the benefits only once for any particular person with whom you share physical intimacy.

When you use **Passionate Orator**, don't feel pressured as a player to deliver a completely polished speech, just do your best. If words fail, describe your intent and what you look like as you speak, because let's face it, your looks are a big part of why people respond to you the way they do.

You may not **Keep Your Friends Close** in order to avoid losing Camaraderie as a result of **Surrendering to Weariness**, because Camaraderie is not being *spent*, it is being *destroyed* and must be rebuilt.



OWL

I TOLD YOU THIS WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO ME. ...OW!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?!

Names

Lovac, Loeri, Taima, Reme, Lassecc, Yeli, Russic, Milluc, Auky, Lephoc, Lati, Launo, Teaso, Raylic, Lovo

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Trans Woman, Genderqueer, Fluid, Cis Woman, Non-binary
- ▶ Pinched Face, Serene Face, Stern Face, Sly Face
- ▶ Dark Clothing, Foreign Clothing, Striking Clothing, Embroidered Clothing
- ▶ Quiet, Charming, Arrogant, Feisty

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is foreign and strange in these lands
 - ☐ Your spear was a gift from your clan and is marked in some way
 - ☐ Your bow was created by a friend that you lost before the war
 - ☐ Your shield is simple and reliable; circular, wooden, and scored
 - ☐ Your armour is light and lets you move about quietly

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Thedon** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **1**, Luck **0**, Training **1**, Valour **-1**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ My clan elder has forbidden me from getting close to _____.
- ▶ I keep a careful eye on _____ because I do not trust them.
- ▶ _____ understands me as few others do.
- ▶ _____ lives by a different code than I do; I hope we will not come to blows.
- ▶ The time has come for my clan to put aside our feud with _____'s clan.

Owl Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **Quick and Quiet:** When on **Recon and Lookout**, treat a miss as a 7-9 and a 7-9 as a 10+.
- ☐ **Method to My Madness:** When you share a plan you've laid out for an upcoming mission, roll with Cunning. On a 10+, hold 2. On a 7-9, hold 1. During the mission, spend your hold(s) to do one of the following:
 - ▶ *Change someone's miss into a 7-9*
 - ▶ *Choose who is to be affected by a Complication that was selected*On a miss, your plan backfires in some way; the MC will choose 1 new Complication for the mission.
- ☐ **Told Ya So:** When you give someone advice and they ignore you, they take -2 forward. Later, when you remind someone of past advice you gave them that they ignored, choose one:
 - ▶ *Gain Camaraderie with them*
 - ▶ *Lower your Weary by 1*
- ☐ **Sharp-Eyed:** When you **Look Beyond**, take +2 instead of +1 to rolls when acting on the answers; on a hit, ask an additional question.
- ☐ **Playing the Long Game:** When you **Open Up to Someone** with ulterior motives in mind, roll with Cunning instead of Valour.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

The Owl's Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Snoop:** Mark Jaded to appear in a scene. You were actually hidden there all along and heard everything that was said.
- ☐ **Between the Cracks:** Mark Jaded to gain entry someplace you have no business being. Mark a second Jaded to bring others with you.
- ☐ **This Can't End Well:** Mark Jaded to ask the MC if a current course of action is wise or foolish. If it's wise and you continue, mark Experience; if it's foolish and you continue, mark Jaded.
- ☐ **That Looks Fun:** Mark Jaded to use a move from another playbook, excluding Jaded moves.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE OWL

The character

Sly, sneaky, and cunning, you are a born troublemaker. You don't miss anything, and you are constantly observing those around you with raptor-like intensity. But you often see what others don't, and have a way of putting bits of information together to see the bigger picture. You don't let yourself be bound by convention or rules if something needs to be done in order to defeat the enemy. Most irritatingly, you have a habit of being *right* about things, which you don't hesitate to point out.

Of course, the dark side of these strengths is that you hold yourself apart from those around you, never letting them get too close or touch you too deeply. You just don't care about people the way other people do. That can make it hard for others to trust you, especially when you're always haring off, breaking the rules, and doing your own thing. Your self-reliance, if unmoderated, can turn to selfishness, which will make you more vulnerable to the Shadow's influence than others.

As an officer, you are a born strategist. With the right team and the right resources, there is almost nothing you can't accomplish. However, unless you make an effort to act against your nature and foster connection with your subordinates, the soldiers who serve under you will largely resent you for your superiority.

The moves

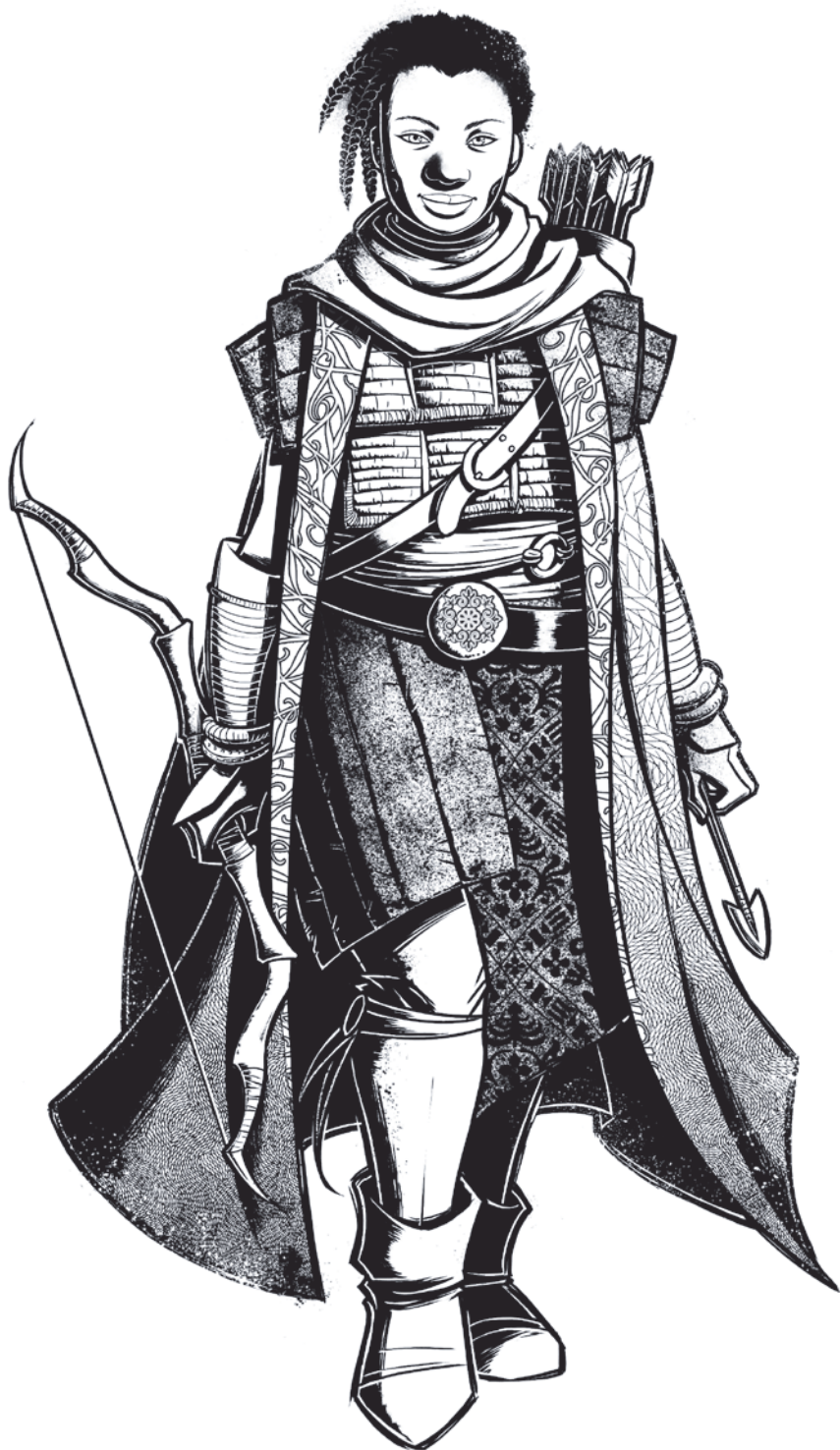
For **Method to My Madness**, you can choose to target PCs or NPCs when choosing the target of a Complication. Just remember that restrictions on Complication targets still apply (i.e. you can only pick ____ **didn't make it back alive** for NPCs) and don't let the power go to your head. Too much. When using **Method to My Madness** to change the target of Complications, wait until after all Complications have been selected but before the mission summary has begun to select new Complication targets. (For more about missions and when Complications are selected, see page 146)

When using **Sharp-Eyed to Look Beyond**, a hit will get you a second question about anything you like, but keep it related to your first question.

When you Open Up by Playing the Long Game, most often you will be doing so in attempt to manipulate someone into doing something you want. Just remember that you still have to be genuine when you Open Up. The MC should also be on the watch for triggers to Resist the Shadow, depending on what you are after.

When using **Snoop** and **Between the Cracks**, you are not obligated to explain how you managed to get there without anyone being the wiser.

This Can't End Well can be amusing on its own, but it can be useful when combined with **Told Ya So** or **Provoke Someone**.



RAVEN

TO FEAR IS TO PROVE WE ARE HUMAN. TO OVERCOME THAT FEAR IS TO
KNOW THE MINDS OF THE GODS.

Names

Troecke, Maega, Lollec, Taerde, Teasa, Laema, Lito, Peyma, Deyne, Laynda, Risoc, Prea, Teema, Raefa, Mease, Teldy

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Trans Woman, Cis Woman, Genderqueer, Fluid, Non-binary
- ▶ Angular Face, Weary Face, Sharp Face, Gentle Face
- ▶ Priestly Clothing, Black Clothing, Ritual Clothing, Drab Clothing
- ▶ Pious, Deliberate, Thoughtful, Charismatic

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is made of rock-hard bone
 - ☐ Your spear is a well-known relic of the clans
 - ☐ Your bow is of foreign make
 - ☐ Your shield belonged to an ancient tyrant
 - ☐ Your armour is ceremonial and masterfully crafted

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Theдон** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **0**, Luck **1**, Training **-1**, Valour **1**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ _____ serves the gods faithfully. I trust them implicitly.
- ▶ The alliance between my clan and _____'s clan was destroyed by the Shadow.
- ▶ _____ has lost their way; only I can guide them back to the true path.
- ▶ I saw _____ in my dreams before I ever met them and am afraid to tell them.
- ▶ I have fond memories of the time spent with _____'s clan.

Raven Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **Divine Agent:** You worship a deity that embodies one of the following: war, hunting, law, hearth and home, commerce, travel, secrets, seas and rivers, art, building, love and sex, celebration, death and dreams. When you encounter something related to your deity's focus, ask the MC a question about it, and they will answer you honestly: take +1 forward when acting on the answer.
- ☐ **Shepherd To All:** When you **Watch Their Backs**, roll with Luck instead of Training.
- ☐ **Healthy Discourse:** When you engage someone in philosophical, moral, or ethical debate, roll with Valour. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1:
 - ▶ *They must mark Weary or Jaded, their choice*
 - ▶ *You gain Camaraderie with them*
 - ▶ *You remove a point of Weary*
 - ▶ *If they concede the point to you, they mark Experience*On a miss, you lose esteem with those around you; mark Weary or Jaded.
- ☐ **We Too Few:** When you **Deliver a Eulogy**, treat a miss as a 7-9 and a 7-9 as a 10+. Anyone converting Camaraderie into Experience or Jaded gains 2 per Camaraderie instead of 1 for each.
- ☐ **Holy Official:** When you perform a religious or spiritual rite (marriage, naming, coronation, etc.), mark Experience and either remove a point of Weary or gain Camaraderie with someone involved.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

Raven Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Confessor:** Mark Jaded when someone confides in you to either lower your Weary or their Weary by 2. (Not both)
- ☐ **Beyond the Veil:** When you look into the eyes of someone recently deceased, mark Jaded to ask 2:
 - ▶ *What were they doing before they died?*
 - ▶ *Who and/or what killed them?*
 - ▶ *What was the last thing they saw?*
 - ▶ *What were their final thoughts?*
 - ▶ *What secret did they take to their grave?*
- ☐ **Final Blessing:** Mark Jaded when a comrade dies in your presence to heal 1 harm, take +1 forward, and mark Experience. If you had a hand in their death (MC's call), mark Jaded again.
- ☐ **Miracle:** When a comrade rolls **Suffer Great Harm** or **Lick Your Wounds**, mark Jaded to change a miss to a 7-9.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to The Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE RAVEN

The character

The Raven is priestly, philosophical, and distant. As a priest, either of your clan or of the clans as a whole, you are a spiritual leader to those around you. Your comrades rely on you to make sense of the senseless, to help them find meaning in a time of bleakness and despair.

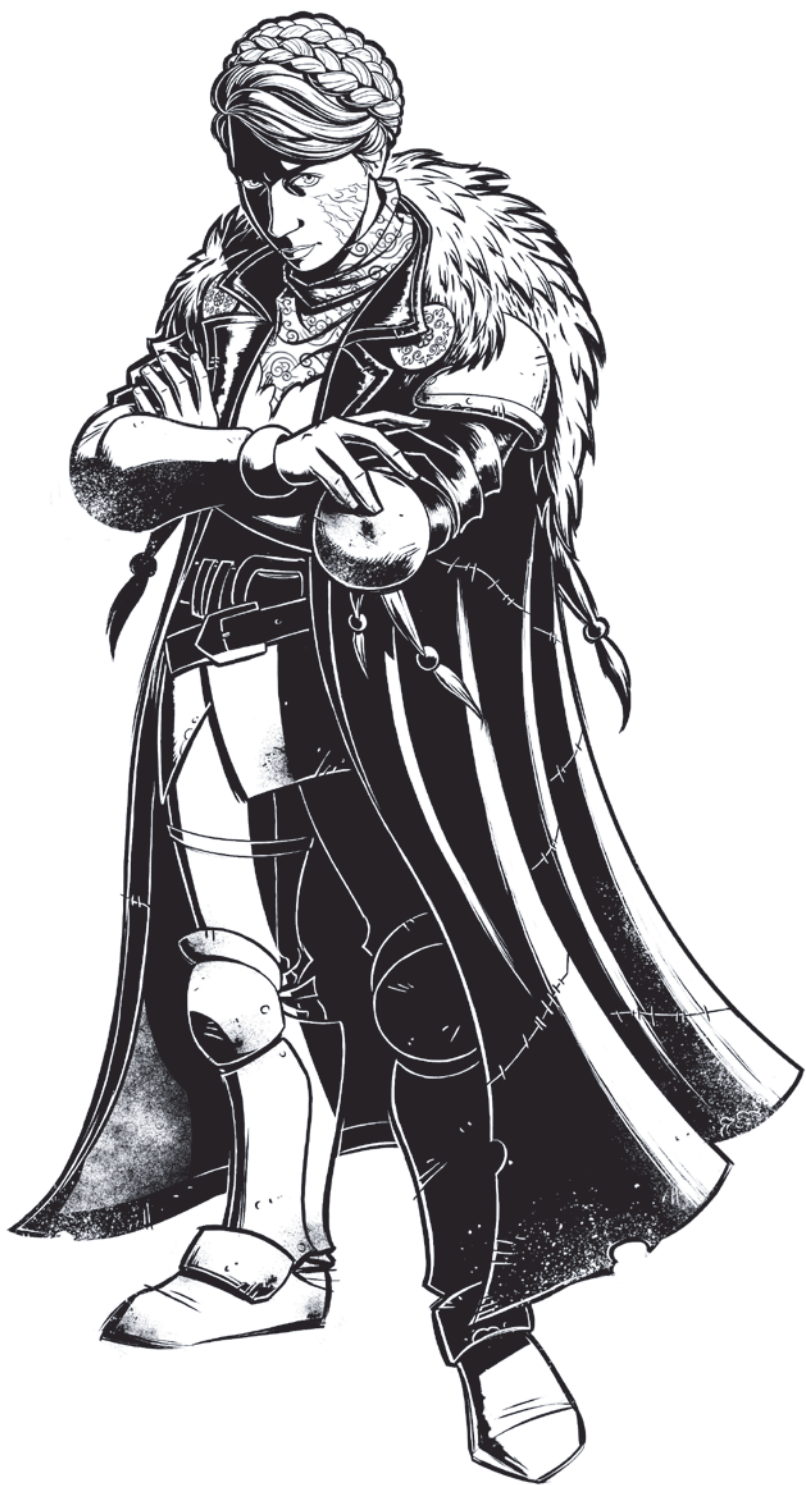
Since the invasion of the Shadow, there are many who have lost faith, and your piety will draw their anger. Your focus on the spiritual and the will of the gods can make you seem aloof, and others find it difficult to connect with you. Though many will rely on you as a touchstone, there are very few, if any, to whom you can turn to when you need support or strength.

You are a competent, if indifferent officer—you would much rather focus on spiritual, rather than temporal leadership—although you are accustomed to having people follow you. You are reflective and rarely act with haste, taking the time to act with care, and your subordinates value the care you have for their lives.

The moves

When you take **Divine Agent**, be sure to put some thought into the deity you worship and share what you come up with with the group. What is your deity's name? Gender? What are some traditions associated with that deity? How widespread is their worship? Etc.

When you act as a **Holy Official**, it's up to you how richly you describe the rites. It can be a lot of fun inventing ritual or scripture in the moment, but if you're feeling uninspired feel free to stick to the general outline of what you're going for. Or even consider asking other players if they have opinions about what the ritual should look like.



SPIDER

HOLD STILL, WILL YA? WE'RE NOT ALONE HERE, AND IF I DON'T GET
YOU STITCHED UP, YOU'RE NOT GONNA MAKE IT HOME.

...DID YOU HEAR THAT?

Names

Reule, Roenti, Rystoc, Draile, Parda, Tordec, Lerti, Laluc, Reynda, Duba, Lufu, Paeka, Laustec, Dyfic, Tethi

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Non-binary, Cis Woman, Fluid, Trans Woman, Genderqueer
- ▶ Expressive face, Burned face, Grim face, Long face
- ▶ Dirty Clothing, Concealing Clothing, Tattered Clothing, Fine Clothing
- ▶ Cryptic, Professional, Defensive, Smarmy

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is light and easily concealed
 - ☐ Your spear's head is forged of star metal
 - ☐ Your bow is a relic of your people
 - ☐ Your shield is legendary among the clans
 - ☐ Your armour is simple but surprisingly durable

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Thedon** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **1**, Luck **1**, Training **0**, Valour **-1**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of Camaraderie with them:

- ▶ _____ would never approve of my clan's secret rites.
- ▶ _____ will never understand what our clan has suffered.
- ▶ _____ has a secret only I know about.
- ▶ I can always count on _____ to keep their head when there is trouble.
- ▶ _____ owes me a debt they have yet to repay.

Spider Moves

You get Mender and choose one more move

- ☐ **Mender:** When you heal another character's wounds, roll with Cunning. (If they are a PC, they don't roll to **Lick Their Wounds**.) On a hit, they recover harm. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9 choose 1:
 - ▶ *You do it quickly and cleanly*
 - ▶ *They don't need significant bedrest to recover*
 - ▶ *You gain Camaraderie with them*
 - ▶ *One of you lowers their Weary by 1 (your choice)*

If you spend 1 Camaraderie with them, add +2 to your roll (choose after rolling). On a miss, they still recover harm, but something unrelated goes wrong.

- ☐ **Step Into My Parlour:** When someone comes to you with threats, demands, or to ask a favour, choose one:
 - ▶ *They lose 1 Camaraderie with you and you gain 1 Camaraderie with them*
 - ▶ *Take +1 ongoing against them for the scene*
 - ▶ *Look Beyond them as if you rolled a 10+*
- ☐ **Dark Reflections:** When you **Let the Shadow In** or **Resist the Shadow**, treat a miss as a 7-9 and a 7-9 as a 10+.
- ☐ **Hidden Motives:** When you interfere with someone's actions after they've rolled, roll with Cunning. On a hit, they take -2 to their roll. On a 7-9, you expose yourself to fire, danger, or retribution. If you spend Camaraderie with them, add +2 to your roll.
- ☐ **Best of Intentions:** When you **Open Up To Someone** by being really weird and cryptic, roll with Luck instead of Valour.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

Spider Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Shadow-Touched:** Mark Jaded to lay hands on someone and have them recover harm. If they receive this healing willingly, they mark Jaded. If it's unwilling, they mark Weary instead (if they're an NPC, the MC will make a move instead).
- ☐ **Dark Whispers:** When you **Look Beyond** someone, even on a miss, mark Jaded to ask their player what their greatest fear and deepest shames are.
- ☐ **Can Stop Anytime:** Mark Jaded to **Let the Shadow In** or **Resist the Shadow** as if you rolled a 10+.
- ☐ **All Tangled Up:** When someone **Opens Up to You**, mark Jaded to choose 2 from the same list.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE SPIDER

The character

The Spider is creepy, dark, and mysterious. Although you have devoted yourself to helping others, your skill as a healer doesn't entirely make up for the fact that there is something subtly wrong about you. You don't resist the Shadow the way the others do: you keep it close so that you may study and learn from it. You touch the darkness because you know that you can learn its secrets, and so that others do not have to. If you are to win this war, the Watch will need to use every weapon at its disposal.

You know that you are playing with fire. Once you let the Shadow in, there is no guarantee that you can shut it out again. Pride goeth before the fall; if you over-reach, the Shadow will use you as a tool against everything that you hold dear. And contrary to what some may think, you do care. You care deeply, which only makes it all the more painful that others see you as sinister and manipulative.

As an officer, you are able to achieve what others cannot because no one understands the enemy the way you do. You are able to anticipate the enemy's moves and strike at them where they are vulnerable. The real question is, will your subordinates follow where you lead?

The moves

Using **Mender** is essentially the same as making someone's **Lick Your Wounds** roll for them, but it has the benefit of less drastic consequences for failure. It also has some extra benefits for you as the healer, such as gaining Camaraderie.

It is true that **Dark Reflections** makes you effectively immune to possession by the Shadow, since any failure gets treated as a 7-9. Just make sure you don't forget to keep an eye on your Jaded, since **Dark Reflections** and **Can Stop Anytime** combined can have you rack up Jaded pretty quickly.

The Spider is the only playbook that can negatively affect another PC's roll, through the use of **Hidden Motives**. As with any other move, make sure you describe how you are influencing their outcome, either subtly or overtly.



WOLF

I KNOW THINGS ARE GETTING HARDER, BUT TRUST ME, WE ONLY GET THROUGH THIS ONE WAY, AND THAT'S TOGETHER!

Names

Lindi, Prunti, Reano, Lomo, Reudic, Rinic, Loisa, Eari, Teyka, Laya, Lophuc, Ruvac, Roivi, Paele, Marro

Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour

- ▶ Cis Woman, Non-binary, Genderqueer, Fluid, Trans Woman
- ▶ Sharp Face, Round Face, Open Face, Hungry Face
- ▶ Loose Clothing, Common Clothing, Practical Clothing, Rough Clothing
- ▶ Arrogant, Volatile, Friendly, Angry

Gear

- ▶ A symbol of your clan (detail it)
- ▶ Spear, Sword, Bow, Shield, and Armour. What makes your gear unique? Choose 2:
 - ☐ Your sword is magical, but legend says it's cursed
 - ☐ Your spear is crafted from the Tree of Life
 - ☐ Your bow is famous, with a name and reputation
 - ☐ Your shield is large and made of hard steel
 - ☐ Your armour is light and menacing

Rank

Choose your rank from Recruit, Initiate, Warden or Corporal (one of you, but only one, must be the Corporal):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Recruit | ☐ Sergeant |
| ☐ Initiate | ☐ Lt. Commander |
| ☐ Warden | ☐ Commander |
| ☐ Corporal | ☐ Watch Captain |
| | ☐ Field Marshall |

Choose your clan

Thason (Herders/Equestrians), **Morsh** (Trades People), **Sharn** (Hunter/Gatherers), **Charsa** (Miners), **Toltho** (Crafts Folk/Farmers), **Royshan** (Warriors), **Dothas** (Mystics), **Richti** (Nomads), **Theдон** (Builders/Masons), **Molthas** (Mountain Folk)

Starting Stats

Add 1 to one of these: Cunning **1**, Luck **0**, Training **-1**, Valour **1**

The Ties That Bind

Fill in the following with any of the other PCs. Each time you enter someone's name, gain a point of **Camaraderie** with them:

- ▶ _____ and I have sworn an oath of blood sisterhood.
- ▶ My clan and _____'s clan were sworn allies.
- ▶ I want to know _____ better, but they make me nervous.
- ▶ I respect _____ as a true warrior.
- ▶ The ways of _____'s clan are strange to me.

Wolf Moves: Choose 2

- ☐ **Alpha Dog:** When you stare someone down, roll with Valour. On a hit, they choose one: throw the first punch and mark Experience *or* stand down and mark Weary. On a 10+, you choose 2. On a 7-9, you choose 1:
 - ▶ *Mark Experience*
 - ▶ *Gain Camaraderie with that person*
 - ▶ *Lower your Weary by 1*
 - ▶ *Someone arrives to help you*

On a miss, they do whatever they want and everyone sees you for the animal that you are.

- ☐ **Strength in Numbers:** When you **Need a Hand** and get it, you can spend a Camaraderie to increase a miss to a 7-9 instead of the usual +1.
- ☐ **No Bridges Burnt:** When you apologize to someone, roll with Cunning. On a hit, they're receptive to your apology. On a 10+, choose both. On a 7-9, choose one:
 - ▶ *You gain Camaraderie with each other*
 - ▶ *You both lower your Weary by 1*

On a miss, you come across all wrong; erase a Camaraderie with them or mark Weary if you don't have any.

- ☐ **Unleash The Wolf:** When you attack someone, roll with Valour. On a hit, you harm them and choose 1:
 - ▶ *Inflict terrible harm upon them*
 - ▶ *Take something away from them*

On a 7-9, you either find yourself in a tight spot or suffer harm. On a miss, both. If you spend Camaraderie with them, add +2 to your roll (choose before rolling).

- ☐ **The Good of the Pack:** When on a mission, you can shift any harm another character suffers onto you instead. When you do, gain Camaraderie with whomever you spared, and you both mark Experience.

Standard Advances

- ☐ Get +1 to Cunning
- ☐ Get +1 to Luck
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Training
- ☐ Get +1 to Valour
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a new move
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Get a move from another playbook
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Gain a promotion and +1 to a stat
- ☐ Erase a Jaded Move to take again later
- ☐ Retire your character from play
- ☐ Switch to a new playbook

Wolf Jaded Moves

- ☐ **Reckless Abandon:** When in a dangerous situation, mark Jaded and suffer harm to turn any roll into a 10+.
- ☐ **Learned From the Best:** When you gain this move, take a Jaded move from another playbook.
- ☐ **Sniff 'Em Out:** Mark Jaded to ask someone what emotions their character is currently feeling: they must answer you honestly.
- ☐ **Go For Their Flanks:** Mark Jaded to show up in a scene in a superior position, with or without explanation.
- ☐ **The Tipping Point:** The weight of this war has finally caught up with you; your character leaves play. Choose one: your character deserts the Watch, transfers in search of more danger, falls to the Shadow, or finds peace at the end of a spear.

PLAYING THE WOLF

The character

The Wolf is aggressive, loyal, and pack-oriented. A born warrior, you are excellent at what you do, and do not suffer fools lightly. However, once someone earns your respect and loyalty, they have it for life. You use your strength to protect the members of your “pack” and often put yourself in harm’s way to protect them, counting on your skill at arms to keep you whole.

However, like the wolf, you are always jockeying for status and position. Your pride can cause you to hurt others without thinking. When you feel cornered you don’t back down from a fight, even when you know you should. You think yourself indestructible, but the truth is that even you can’t keep everyone safe. You are the most likely to burn bright and fast and fall before the end.

As an officer, you are fierce and driven. You know how to get people to work together as a team, and you never ask anything of your subordinates that you yourself would not do. Most often you are right on the front line with them. However, you take too much on yourself, and don’t delegate when you should, which can make some of your subordinates resentful of your lack of trust in them.

The moves

Yes, **No Bridges Burnt** is an apology move. Given that the Wolf is the only character that can directly inflict harm outside of missions (through **Unleash the Wolf**) and can otherwise bully and intimidate people using **Alpha Dog**, it’s inevitable that there will be occasions where you’re going to need the extra help in making up for doing something hot-headed.

When you use **Unleash the Wolf**, keep in mind that “inflict terrible harm” means you are inflicting harm twice. If used against a PC with any previous harm, that PC will have to **Suffer Great Harm**. If used against an NPC, that NPC will be at least in dire need of medical attention, if not dead or dying (MC’s choice).

When you **Go For Their Flanks**, it is entirely up to you whether you explain how you obtained the high ground.



MC

The previous chapters are meant to be read by the MC and players alike. However, what follows from this point on is meant for the Mistress of Ceremonies.

PSST: THIS GAME IS ABOUT PATRIARCHY

Okay, MC, let me tell you a secret: *THE SHADOW IS TOXIC MASCULINITY*.

What do I mean when I say that? Well, the definition of toxic masculinity I like best comes from the Geek Feminism Wiki:

***Toxic masculinity** is one of the ways in which patriarchy is harmful to men. It refers to the socially-constructed attitudes that describe the masculine gender role as violent, unemotional, sexually aggressive, and so forth.*

The options you will select when creating the Shadow are all manifestations—both actual and allegorical—of toxic masculinity. It is not a coincidence that player characters may be any gender but male (either cis or trans). The Shadow is toxic masculinity made real, and the reason why men cannot be trusted to resist it is that it's almost impossible to separate the idea of what makes a man from our cultural ideas of toxic masculinity.

So those who conceive of themselves as *men and nothing else* will always be the *most* vulnerable to the Shadow's influence. Whereas those who are women, or who are neither men nor women, or who are something in between, or vary on a scale between maleness and femaleness, or those who don't have a gender at all, all of these have some base protection from the Shadow's influence.

While the PCs may not be susceptible to involuntary possession, they are still at risk of inviting the Shadow in through their actions. In play, each PC will have to wrestle with the Shadow's influence: toxic masculinity, and by extension patriarchy, is an ideology that people of all genders have been programmed to follow.

In *The Watch*, the trigger for the **Resist The Shadow** move can be looked at as allowing cultural programming to cause you to put self-interest before the common interest. This, too, is very purposeful. One of the challenges of feminism is that patriarchy blinds us to marginalizations that we don't experience, and all too often it can be easy for people with relatively more privilege to throw people with less under the bus and call it progress. For example, when white feminists focus on issues of gender while insisting that race be a separate conversation. Or when cis women who insist that trans women are not welcome in their women-only spaces.

...so what? Who cares? Why is this even important to this game?

This is important because it will help you understand and internalize the purpose of the Principles, MC moves, and Threat moves. In the chapter that follows, we'll explain what these moves are and how they work, but knowing the intent behind them will make your decisions as an MC easier.

Understanding this will also help you to heighten the feeling of threat felt by your players by drawing parallels to your players' daily experience. The Shadow wants different things from different people, and being able to tailor the Shadow's machinations towards your players will help increase player investment and make for better story.

However, *never* forget the need to keep an eye out for each other's emotional safety. Never let "story" or "accuracy" cause you to introduce things that players are not comfortable with, and make sure that you check in with players if you think they may be struggling with a move that you have made. *The Watch* is supposed to be intense and hard-hitting, not traumatizing. (For more on this, see MCing with Care, page 138)

AGENDAS

Agendas are the MC's goals; as MC, you should always be aiming to achieve these three things:

- ▶ Direct the game toward a dramatic tale of love and sacrifice
- ▶ Fill the PCs' lives with action, loss, and occasional moments of grace
- ▶ Play to find out what they do next

As MC, it's your job to help the players tell stories of love and heroism in the midst of a desperate military campaign to save their lands, their people, and their way of life. You'll use the Shadow to maintain a sense of imminent threat, to sow discord in *The Watch*, and to grind down the spirits of those who fight against it. But you'll also give the characters moments of grace: interludes of friendship, love, and understanding. The rest of this chapter exists to give you the tools needed to do this.

It is *not* your job to take your players through a pre-planned epic military saga, especially given the linear nature of the campaign phases. (For more about campaign phases, see page 153.) Neither is it your job to make the PCs lose, to do nothing but punish them, or to introduce NPCs who will solve every problem. These sorts of things will make players stop caring.

Your job is to always remember the three agendas, and to keep yourself open to anything that might happen. It may be tempting between sessions to think about the interactions that the PCs have set up and things that could happen as a result in the next session. But while it's good to think about the fallout of the PCs' actions and the complications that could arise, it's important not to let yourself get too attached to a potential storyline. Keep in mind what your various factions and NPCs think of the current state of affairs and what they want, and what they intend to do to get what they want. That way you'll be able to adapt accordingly when (not if) your players do something surprising.

PRINCIPLES

The Agendas are your goals as MC, and the Principles are how you will achieve those goals. The Principles are also the MC's rules, in a way. If you follow the rules by fulfilling your principles, the story will sing. Break the rules, or simply forget to focus on these Principles, and the story will suffer.

- ▶ Remind the PCs what they fight for
- ▶ Address yourself to the characters, not the players
- ▶ Make your move, but misdirect and don't speak its name
- ▶ Make the Shadow relentless
- ▶ Name everyone, make them feel real, and illustrate their clan's culture
- ▶ Never showcase sexual violence!
- ▶ Respect people's gender identities
- ▶ Keep clan politics an ongoing problem
- ▶ Ask questions that generate new ideas and build on them
- ▶ Mirror patriarchy and toxic masculinity in the Shadow
- ▶ Respond with adversity and infrequent rewards
- ▶ Be a fan of the characters
- ▶ Think about what's going on all over the nation
- ▶ Sometimes, let someone else decide

REMINDE THEM WHAT THEY FIGHT FOR

The war against the Shadow will be long, gruelling, and full of brutality, so it's important not to make the war your exclusive focus. Be sure to bring in family, friends, clan, and other elements that remind the PCs of home. Give them small moments of humanity and hope so that they can remember what it is that they're fighting to protect.

ADDRESS YOURSELF TO THE CHARACTERS, NOT THE PLAYERS

The players aren't the ones waging war against a supernatural force that wants to crush their free will. That's their characters. So address yourself to the characters and not the players; this will push your players to talk and respond as their character. Instead of, "Amelia, your character got separated from the squad and is now lost. What do they do?". Rather, "hey, Lovo. During the fighting, a couple of the Shadow's soldiers conked you on the head and carried you off. When you came to, you managed to take them by surprise and fight your way free, but now you're alone and lost behind enemy lines. What do you do?"

This also means you should be free with information about what characters see and hear that would be obvious to anyone standing there. “Dalu, the girl approaches you nervously, sweating bullets, and *it’s obvious* she’s going to ask you to save her father”. *It’s obvious*, because this way it’s something the character knows and not exposition that you’re spoon-feeding the players.

MAKE YOUR MOVE, BUT MISDIRECT AND DON’T SPEAK ITS NAME

There will be times many during the session when you, as MC, get to make a move. When you do (we’ll get into specifics later), don’t lead with the move and then decide the fiction. So don’t say something like, “I’m going to **Take Something Away**” and then look around to decide what you’re going to take, or don’t tell a player they can’t do what they want because you’re about to **Obstruct With Tradition**.

The golden rule, “To do it, do it”, applies to the MC as well. Your job is to create interesting story, and it gets boring pretty fast, and becomes difficult to respond to, if all you do is name rules and invoke mechanics. As MC, you have to lead with the fiction and let the rules follow. Or rather, that’s what you have to make your players **think** you’re doing, because here’s the trick.

For you, it’s **all** rules and mechanics, and it’s your job to trick the players into believing that the moves you make are coming directly from the story. As the MC, you’re playing a shell game to show how the moves are coming directly from the fiction, and never mind the MC behind the curtain.

Harm One or Many by saying, “hey, Dalu. You’re sound asleep and it’s the dead of night when you’re awoken to the sound of trumpets and shouting. The camp is under attack by archers with burning arrows, and your tent is on fire. Since you and Lovo were sleeping together, you’re both going to take harm while escaping the burning tent”. Or **Take Something Away From Them** by saying, “the sorceress raises her hands and throws a bolt of energy at you, Locha. All around you, the battlefield goes eerily silent, and you realize you can’t hear a thing”.

Of course you’re the one calling the shots all along, but this way you make it look like the fiction chooses the move and you’re just relaying what is obviously true about the world.

MAKE THE SHADOW RELENTLESS

Portraying the Shadow requires ruthless discipline. It *doesn't care* if your characters are at the end of their rope and just need a moment to breathe, all it cares about is imposing its will and crushing all opposition. If the Shadow's influence ruins a relationship that you love, or if it leads an NPC you enjoy to destruction, let it happen. In order for the Shadow to be a threat with teeth, you can't pull your punches.

Remember that the Shadow doesn't want to *kill* the characters. Not all of them. After all, it requires servants and adherents to fulfill its desire for domination and supreme power over all things. So make your Shadow unpredictable. Sometimes have it attack directly through force and violence, and other times have it come at your players in ways they don't expect. Always look for cracks into which the Shadow might seep, and exploit those cracks whenever you have an opening.

The Shadow will inevitably fall. Making the Shadow relentless will give the players' eventual victory meaning and power.

NAME EVERYONE, MAKE THEM FEEL REAL, AND SHOWCASE THEIR CLAN'S CULTURE

There is an entire army of NPCs for your player characters to interact with. There is a list of names provided on the MC sheet, so when the PCs encounter someone new, always give that NPC a name and some detail.

So don't introduce "a sergeant who might be willing to keep a secret", introduce Sergeant Deshi, the hardass with one arm, a scarred face, and eyes that have seen too much. Giving each of your NPCs names and details will make your world feel real. Don't stress too much about the descriptions. It's for the best if most of your NPCs aren't that complicated; this story is about the PCs and most of your NPCs will be secondary supporting characters.

Lastly, each NPC needs to come from a clan. The solitary nomads of Rich-ti are going to be very different from the gregarious traders of Morsh, and both clans might very well be mistrustful of the enigmatic mystics of Dothas. An easy way to create an NPC's personality is to allow it to be informed by the clan they come from. Use clan differences between NPCs to highlight the clans' cultures and customs.

NEVER SHOWCASE SEXUAL VIOLENCE!

While *The Watch* is a game about gender and violence, it is *not* a game about *gendered violence*. If a player decides that they want to have sexual violence as part of their character's backstory, that is one thing, but sexual violence should never happen either on-screen or off-screen. Full stop.

There's a common trope of making female (and gender variant) characters "strong", or showcasing that they are "strong", by having them react to sexual violence. But replicating injustice that exists in the real world is *not* the same thing as being critical of it. All you're doing is reinforcing pre-existing toxic social norms. More importantly, because of the stigma against survivors of sexual violence, the chances that at least one person at your table has experienced sexual harassment or assault are a lot higher than you might think, and they might not feel comfortable opting out of content that might out them as a survivor.

There are a lot of tools at your disposal to complicate your character's lives and generally make them miserable. Leave sexual violence in the toolbox.

RESPECT PEOPLE'S GENDER IDENTITIES

Non-binary expressions of gender identity are real. They are not invented or fabricated. A character should never face questions about the validity of their gender, or what it means to their membership in the Watch.

And, because it needs to be said explicitly, *trans gender identity is real and should always be treated as such*. Do not have your NPCs treat trans women with suspicion and mistrust because of their gender. That is invalidating and gross. Wrestling with the nuances of how a culture deals with social change around issues of gender is okay. Mindlessly replicating oppressive attitudes that are used to victimize real trans people on a daily basis is not.

KEEP CLAN POLITICS AN ONGOING PROBLEM

You will need to think politically when it comes to the actions of the characters and how those actions are perceived by people from other clans. For example, if a PC from Morsh leads a mission to conscript recruits, which clan's traditional territory might they be conscripting from? And how could other members of the Watch from that clan react? The clans were widely divergent in custom and culture: it's inevitable that they would have different attitudes toward events. And just because the clans have united against the common threat of the Shadow, that doesn't mean that past problems have magically disappeared, or that past disputes have been resolved or forgiven.

Keeping clan politics an ongoing threat will also give the Shadow openings into which it can force wedges and divisions. This will only make your job as MC easier.

ASK QUESTIONS THAT GENERATE NEW IDEAS AND BUILD ON THEM

One of the things you need to do is to ask your players lots of provocative or leading questions. Questions like, “when you touch the Shadow, whose voice does it speak in?” or “how did the feud between your two clans begin?” are good because they add detail to the world. Also, ask questions that push the players to think of their characters in a new way, like “who did you have to kill during the recent attack, and why haven’t you spoken of it to anyone?” or “what promise did you make her before the war that you were unable to keep?”. Use the answers your players give you to build a more interesting world than you could on your own.

You do this by incorporating the answers back into the fiction. It’s not enough to ask a question, get the answer, then drop it altogether. You have to weave the answers you get back into the story. Sometimes this can be fairly straightforward. “During the last attack, I had to kill Marro’s brother. I didn’t tell anyone because she thinks he’s still alive and I couldn’t bear to tell her.” Then you could start dropping hints about the timing and circumstances of his death, pushing Marro to confront them about it. Sometimes you may need to ask follow-up questions to determine why their answer could be significant, or to give you something you can use.

Be sure to add details to the contributions your players give you, and introduce those new details to the players. That way, their contributions feel like an organic part of the world you’re creating. If someone tells you about a feud between two clans, introduce some NPCs who are trying to keep the feud going, and ask for the PCs’ help to fan the flames. Finally, the answers players give you can help push the fiction in unexpected directions.

In addition to this general principle, there are also specific questions that should be used for the first session (see page 66).

MIRROR PATRIARCHY AND TOXIC MASCULINITY IN THE SHADOW

The Shadow's actions, servants, and desires are all meant to represent the socially-constructed idea that masculinity requires men to be violent, unemotional, and domineering, among other traits. So when you are portraying the Shadow and its servants, reflect those ideas in their actions. Make them cold, calculating, and unemotional. If they do express emotion, make those expressions selfish, angry, or both.

RESPOND WITH ADVERSITY AND INFREQUENT REWARDS

Sometimes, give your players what they asked for, but follow the letter of the law and not the spirit. If Locha is looking for her missing brother, Dalen, and knows that he hasn't yet fallen to the Shadow, maybe she finds him a prisoner of paranoid villagers, and broken, traumatized, and missing a hand.

But don't do that all the time. Sometimes, give them everything they asked for and maybe a little more. Not too frequently, but not too rare either. Intermittent reinforcement is powerful, and that will keep the players hopeful that maybe *this time* everything will work out how they want it.

BE A FAN OF THE CHARACTERS

Your job as the MC is to create complications and to portray a relentless Shadow, but that doesn't mean that everything you do has to make the characters' lives worse. Any good story has ups and downs, lucky breaks and bad blows. Making your PCs' lives nothing but constant suffering is *boring*. So when you make your moves, don't always make the *hardest* move available just because you can. The Shadow is threat enough without the MC trying to destroy the characters as well.

Your job is to challenge, not overwhelm. Sometimes a character should be able to overcome that challenge, and sometimes they shouldn't, and that's good because both are interesting. Take that approach when selecting which moves to highlight, and don't always default to choosing a move tied to the lowest stat. You want to complicate the PC's lives, but you also want to see them shine.

By that token, when a character *does* succeed, don't deny that success or negate it, or at least not often—especially when it's something they have fought long and hard for. Triumph in the face of adversity is incredibly satisfying, and denying them their victories is a cheap move that will sabotage player investment in the story you are creating together.

Instead, evaluate how that success causes ripples that reshape the factions around them. Marro might successfully kill the sorceress, but now she's got every other sorceress gunning for her. Meanwhile, some believe the sorceress should have been rehabilitated, and this only emboldens the pacifist faction to speak openly against the Watch's violence against former family and loved ones. Success makes characters a threat to the Shadow and its servants, and sometimes allies might become enemies (or vice versa).

Lastly, being a fan of the characters means respecting the things that make them unique and interesting. If your Spider has **Dark Reflections** and **Shadow-Touched**, don't thoughtlessly take away their ability to touch the Shadow. The Spider is supposed to be creepy and meddle with dark powers best left alone. Taking away that interaction with the Shadow is removing the heart of what makes that playbook unique, and it makes their life *less* interesting.

That's not to say don't do it at all. If the Spider has to wrestle with the temporary loss of their special connection with the force that is out to destroy them, that could be pretty interesting. But exercise caution and always make sure that the effect is of limited duration.

THINK ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON ALL OVER THE NATION

When it's time for you to make a move, don't just think about what is immediately in front of the PCs. Think about what's been happening all over the land! What have Shadow forces been up to behind the front lines that might just now become apparent? What have NPCs been planning that might involve the PCs? What about the various factions within the Watch: who haven't the PCs been paying attention to, and who is most likely to take advantage of that?

This is vital to making the world you are creating feel multi-dimensional and real, and it will also keep your story from growing stale.

SOMETIMES, LET SOMEONE ELSE DECIDE

Sometimes you won't know what to do next in the story, either because you're put on the spot and the pressure is on, or you simply can't think of anything. That's okay. As an extension of the principle to ask questions, you can always put decisions in the hands of others. Doing so will give you a break and allow for surprises that you never would have come up with yourself. When a moment like this comes up, or you just don't feel like making a call, you can do one of three things:

1. You can let one or more of your players decide for you.
2. You can let one of your NPC's decide by thinking about what they would do in the situation and doing that.
3. Or you can let your Threats decide; look to your threat impulses and let those guide the decision for you.

Don't be afraid to try new things or leave them up to others; you'll be surprised at how well it can turn out for everyone!

ALWAYS SAY...

When you're MCing, you might find yourself unclear on what to say or without a clear path forward. Always say:

- ▶ What the principles demand (see the previous section)
- ▶ What the rules demand
- ▶ What the Shadow demands
- ▶ What honesty demands

The principles and rules are the framework on which your story is built, so respect that framework. If a move calls for a character to take harm, inflict that harm. If a move succeeds, then accept that it succeeds. Always have the discipline to say what the rules and principles demand, even if you were hoping for it to go a different way. *Especially* if you were hoping for it to go a different way.

It's also important to be open and generous with information. Don't attempt to be cute and hide information from your players in the name of making them solve a mystery; that's *boring*. Your players don't know something until you tell them, so *always tell them*. If an NPC is harbouring resentment and hatred for one of your characters, show them or tell them. By the same token, if an NPC has a secret crush on a character, show them or tell them. And if trouble is brewing and the Shadow is gearing up for an attack, tell your players. Keeping secrets is boring, so always be honest.



MC MOVES

Principles are the guidelines that inform your contributions as MC. Moves are the concrete actions you take when you make an addition to the fiction.

Playing any game *Powered by the Apocalypse* is a conversation in which the players and the MC take turns. The players narrate scenes and make moves, then you build on those moves by making your own moves in ways that: reflect the setting, rules, and fiction; add to the story you are telling; and create opportunities for the players to make more moves.

Sometimes players making moves is enough to keep things going along. They make their moves, you interpret the results according to how they rolled and what the move says will happen, and the fiction flows naturally from there. Other times, though, that's not sufficient. The players still make their moves, but you have to make your own contributions in order to keep the story moving. This is when you make MC moves, by portraying how the world reacts to their actions, in keeping (of course) with your agendas and principles.

Not all moves are created equal. There are **soft** moves, **hard** moves, and moves in between. Each is used for different purposes, and when the fiction calls for you to make a move, you decide how hard a move to make. Soft moves are used as foreshadowing, to highlight imminent threats, and to set up future moves. Hard moves are things that will escalate the situation and irrevocably change the fiction. For example:

- ▶ **Softest:** You hear rumours that your aunt is suspected of being a spy
- ▶ **Soft:** You notice that your aunt is always discreetly followed by the Watch Commander's aides
- ▶ **Hard:** The Watch Commander has taken your aunt into custody for interrogation.
- ▶ **Hardest:** The Watch Commander has executed your aunt for treason.

There's no hard and fast rule as to what type of move is best, because every situation is different. **Being a fan of the players' characters** means not always making the hardest move you can, because it's no fun if the PCs don't have a chance to overcome adversity. But in order to **respond with adversity** and **make the Shadow relentless**, sometimes you need to go for the throat. It's a balance that you have to keep an eye on as you go.

PUT SOMEONE ON THE SPOT

This move is going to be one of your more useful go-tos, and can put either a PC or an NPC into a difficult or untenable situation. The characters are soldiers, which is a dangerous occupation, so be sure to make that danger a constant presence in their lives.

“Lovo, somehow word got out that you were the one who ratted out Sergeant Prithe to Watch Commander Paemo, and there have been a lot of ugly whispers against you ever since it turned out that Prithe wasn’t the spy. You’re walking through the camp at nightfall when you realize that you’re being trailed by several Royshan—Prithe’s clan mates—who don’t look happy. What do you do?”

“Dalu, after getting in from your mission, you headed toward the healers’ tent to fulfill your promise to spend more time with Rethe. When you get there, though, the place is in shambles, the other healers are fleeing, and Rethe is being held by one of the refugees you helped out earlier. The girl is crazed and obviously Shadow-tainted. She snarls at you to back off as she holds a knife to Rethe’s throat. What do you do?”

TAKE SOMETHING AWAY FROM THEM

Taking something away can be a useful way to ratchet up tension in a scene, as long as you don’t over use it. If you take away something that makes a PC unique, be sure that you’re not breaking that character’s ability to be interesting in that scene.

“Marro, you’re fighting the Grotesque, and mostly holding your own by being nimble and staying just out of reach. He turns out to be quicker than you thought, and with one powerful swipe he knocks the spear out of your hands and sends it flying. What do you do?”

“Locha, the sorceress raises her hands and flings a bolt of darkness, which hits you square in the chest. All of a sudden, you realize the battlefield has gone silent around you. You can’t hear a thing. What do you do?”

BRING CLAN POLITICS INTO IT

Remember that one of your principles is **keep clan politics an ongoing problem**. Look for opportunities to push clan politics to the fore, especially when your PCs would rather be dealing with more important things or when they go to an NPC for assistance with a problem. Make some of these problems trivial and some deadly serious, but always make it an obstacle that demands attention.

“Dalu, after rescuing the niece of elder Papho of clan Dothas on a recent mission, you think that you can convince the elder to perform a ritual to cure Locha’s deafness. She is receptive to your request until she finds out that you are asking on Locha’s behalf. ‘If you think I’m going to risk myself to help a Royschan, you’re sadly mistaken,’ she says. ‘They left us to die when the Shadow invaded, and they’re the reason why there’s only a handful of Dothas left.’ What do you do?”

“Locha, you’re in the mess tent that evening. There’s a lot of drinking and spirits are running high. All of a sudden, a Molthas under Corporal Lyshe’s command takes a swing at someone at the next bench. Before you know it, a brawl has broken out between half a dozen members of Molthas and Richti. What do you do?”

HARM ONE OR MANY

Harm can be a useful way to raise the stakes in an already tense situation. You can use this move to inflict harm on PCs, NPCs, or both. How much harm you inflict is up to you, though you should act in accordance with the situation, and also remember that NPC harm works differently than PC harm. (See Harm and Healing, page 43)

“Marro, you try to take the high road by walking away, but as soon as you turn your back on her, she grabs something heavy and clubs you over the head. You see stars and you are knocked over by the force of the blow. Take a harm. What do you do?”

“Locha, you’re not sure how they managed to sneak up on you, but you and your squad walk straight into an ambush. A rock slide falls across the path, and while you manage to escape being buried, you all get battered by the tumbling rocks. Everyone in the squad can take 1 harm. What do you do?”

SHOW THE SHADOW'S REACH

In order to make the Shadow an omnipresent threat, show that the Shadow can be anywhere and affect anything. Hit the characters where they don't think they're vulnerable: attack them on home ground far behind enemy lines; corrupt someone they never expected; or undermine a touchpoint of stability. Use the Shadow to keep your PCs off balance and insecure.

"Locha, you finish making your report to Paemo about Dalen and the men you freed from captivity in the village. The Watch Commander listens impassively until you make your recommendation that resources be devoted to ensuring the remaining men—those not held by the Shadow—are not mistreated. At this, Paemo looks angry. 'We're not going to waste time and resources because a bunch of men are sad that people weren't nice enough to them,' she growls. When she speaks, you could swear that her voice isn't quite in synch with her lips, and that something is moving behind her eyes. What do you do?"

"Lovo, when your squad was assigned to conscript troops far from the front, you heard relieved whispering in the squad that they would at least get away from the fighting for a day or two. However, en route, your squad has stopped to rest and water the horses, and you get a terrible feeling. You climb a tree and see that three squads of Shadow soldiers are bearing down on your position. You have no idea how they could have gotten this far into clan lands, but you know you're outnumbered and you won't be able to outrun them for long. What do you do?"

TEMPT SOMEONE WITH POWER

Part of what makes the Shadow such a threat is that no one is immune to its influence: it touches every heart and can offer great power to those who serve it willingly. Take opportunities to offer the PCs power in ways that will lead to or hasten their corruption. It will remind them that they can trust no one, not even themselves.

"Lovo, the sorceress has you trapped with some kind of spell. You can't move or speak. 'I'm not entirely unkind,' she purrs, gesturing languidly. 'You don't have to die, you know. You could surrender, serve the Shadow willingly.' You suddenly have a vision of yourself, bleached and pale

like the other sorceresses. You have immense power, and can use it to get everything you want. Power, position, Locha's respect, Dalu's submission. You know that all you have to do is say yes, and it will be yours. What do you do?"

"Locha, you're eating by yourself in the mess tent when your Aunt Rezi, Paemo's second, comes to sit with you. You exchange pleasantries for a few minutes before she lowers her voice and tells you that they have discovered that there is at least one spy leaking information to the enemy. Rezi says that they want to make you the head of a secret task force to find and eliminate spies within the Watch. She says you would be given carte blanche to use whatever methods you feel are necessary. What do you do?"

USE WORDS INSTEAD OF SPEARS

Physical injury isn't the only harm that you should think about inflicting. Sometimes instead of inflicting harm, choose to inflict an emotional or spiritual blow. Hurtful words can often cut deeper than swords, and their effects can be much more lasting.

"Locha, you thought your brother Dalen was dead, that he had died in the massacre after that first invasion by the Shadow. You are overjoyed to see him, but he shrinks back from you in fear. 'Get back,' he says. 'I don't want you to kill me like you killed the other men of our clan'. What do you do?"

"Dalu, between missions and training the new recruits, you've been running every minute of every day. You fall asleep as soon as you lie down at night and morning always comes too early. One morning, you realize that it's been more than a week since you made time to see Rethe, after promising her that you would spend more time with her. You woke up a bit early this morning, so you go looking for Rethe and find her in the mess tent. When you start to apologize, she cuts you off, saying 'It's all right. I should have known better. You're too self-centred to care about anyone but yourself'. What do you do?"

REVEAL A NEW PIECE TO THE PUZZLE

The story you are telling is one of chaos, war, and upheaval. Keep the characters off balance by sometimes giving them new pieces to the puzzle that will force them to see things in a different way.

“Locha, after a long and unsettling conversation with elder Papho about the troubled history between your two clans, you hit the sack. You don’t sleep all that well, though, as your dreams are troubled with visions of the past. All night long, you see people of the clans fighting the Shadow, but their war is different. The enemies, the battlegrounds, the strategic decisions—none of them are the same. But somehow, you know that this is more than just a dream, that all of this really happened. When you wake, you realize that the story-songs passed down through your clan were more than just stories. The Shadow has invaded before, and was defeated. What’s more, the story-songs of your people tell of weapons made of light that can beat back the darkness. You just need to find them.”

“Lovo, you’re not really sure how long you’ve been chained up in the Shadow-held fort when the sorceress walks in. You expect to see Teyka, but instead, another woman greets you. ‘Hello, daughter,’ she says. ‘It’s been too long.’ With a start, you recognize your mother, Myarta, who abandoned you to the Morsh as a small child and vanished. You wouldn’t have recognized her, for like all the other sorceresses her hair and skin are bone white, and she looks twenty years younger than she ought to.

As Myarta stands watching, waiting for a response, it occurs to you that Teyka is also a name from the clans. With horror, you realize that the sorceresses aren’t foreign invaders. They’re all women of the clans who surrendered to the Shadow, letting it transform them in exchange for power.

GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY WITH OR WITHOUT A COST

Being the MC isn't all about punishing the PCs and making their lives miserable. Sometimes it's good to drop things in their lap, because part of **being a fan of the characters** is helping them succeed as well as fail. So, give your PCs opportunities, and then tell them what it will cost. Heck, sometimes make it free, just to keep them hoping; just, not most of the time.

"Hey, Marro. You're positive that the sorceress doesn't see you, and that you could get into a position where you could get the drop on her. You could probably take her down, but it would also mean opening yourself up to attack from the five grotesques with her. You wanna do it?"

"Locha, when you report in to Paemo for your mission orders you can tell that Paemo never went to bed last night. She looks exhausted, and you're pretty sure you could get her to reverse, or at least reconsider, that terrible decision she made if you play your cards right. What do you do?"

REVEAL A SECRET TO THE WRONG PEOPLE

It's inevitable that the PCs will have secrets they don't want revealed. Maybe the shifty former thief doesn't want people to know that a sorceress offered to make her one of them, or maybe someone who is pursuing one person romantically doesn't want them to know that they fooled around with someone else. So, watch for opportunities for those secrets to come out, then try to make them seem even worse than they are.

"Hey, Lovo. Remember that last mission, how that sorceress offered to make you one of them when she got you alone? Well last night, you were checking in with Rethe to see how she was doing, and she had this weird look on her face, like she smelled something unpleasant, and she just stared at you. You know, like she saw right through you. And you thought she was just being weird, because she's a Dothas and you know how strange they can get. But ever since then, you've had at least one Dothas following you at all times, just... watching. What do you do?"

"So, Dalu. You and Lovo are getting hot and heavy in your tent when you hear someone outside your tent. It's Rethe. 'Dalu? Locha told me I could find you here,' she says. She doesn't wait before pushing back the tent flap, and there you are in a very incriminating position. Rethe stands there for a long moment, her eyes filling with tears, before she turns and runs off. What do you do?"

MAKE THEM MARK WEARY OR SURRENDER TO WEARINESS

When you use this move, you have a choice. You can have them mark Weary, or you can have them erase all of their current Weary and Surrender to Weariness. Weary is a currency that represents potential stress and damage to their relationships, but players tend to feel “safe” if they have only 1 or 2 Weary or if the choice to take Weary is completely under their control. We can’t have that!

“Locha, you’re dreading what will happen when you make your report to Watch Commander Paemo after how badly the mission went. It’s just about as bad as you expected. She rips into you something fierce. Go ahead and mark Weary.”

*“Marro, after the eulogy is finished and the funeral pyre has been lit, you watch the fires burn and wonder if there’s any point to fighting. Is this a war that can be won? Or are you destined to lose and to see the Shadow destroy everything you hold dear? Please **Surrender to Weariness.**”*

AFTER EVERY MOVE: “WHAT DO YOU DO?”

Always remember that MC moves are always meant to set up future PC moves. So, make your move, then put the story back in the hands of the PCs by asking “what do you do?”.

THREATS

There are four Threats in *The Watch*. These represent different factions within the clans that pose a danger to the success of the campaign against the Shadow. The Threats are: **Traditionalists**, **Radicals**, **Agents of the Shadow**, and **The People**. Each Threat has its own impulses and moves. Impulses are guiding urges for you to keep in mind as MC to decide what a particular faction wants. Moves can be made any time you would be able to make a normal MC move. You still have to **misdirect** and not speak the name of the move to make it seem as if the move is coming from the fiction, not from you.

All NPCs, even sympathetic ones, are potential Threats! You can add to your Threats at any time by assigning prominent NPCs to the Threat faction that is most appropriate for that character. The Threats sheet is used to keep track of this information. This way, when you are looking for a move, you can easily reference which Threat a given NPC represents and what that Threat can bring to bear in that situation.

Traditionalists are those among the clans who hold fast to the old ways; who want to bring back the old clans once the war is over; and who work hardest to keep clan divisions alive. The elder of clan Dothas, who refuses to cure Locha's deafness because Locha is a Roysan, is a **Traditionalist**. **Radicals** are those among the clans who want to completely overthrow the old ways; who don't draw distinctions between men who can be trusted and men who can't; and who are not willing to compromise extremist ideals in favour of pragmatism. Watch Commander Paemo, who will not devote resources to protect men not yet touched by the Shadow, is a **Radical**. Both Traditionalists and Radicals are inflexible, unyielding, and unwilling to compromise their values in the face of adversity.

TRADITIONALISTS

Impulses

- ▶ To bring back the old ways
- ▶ To remind you of your place
- ▶ To rigorously enforce tradition

Moves

- ▶ Undermine through ancient authority
- ▶ Seek allies from the shadows
- ▶ Bring their clan's ways into it
- ▶ Shut you down or drown you out

RADICALS

Impulses

- ▶ To challenge the status quo at every turn
- ▶ To show everyone their ways
- ▶ To reach out to all who will listen

Moves

- ▶ Challenge a prevailing rule or custom
- ▶ Sacrifice something important to make a point
- ▶ Ignore an obvious threat in order to help someone
- ▶ Punish the old-fashioned publicly

The **Agents of the Shadow** are those who serve the Shadow in secret, and who exist among the people of the clans and the Watch without openly revealing their loyalties. They always seek to create disunity, cause chaos, and undermine the campaign against the Shadow.

AGENTS OF SHADOW

Impulses

- ▶ To placate the powerful
- ▶ To submit their will to a higher power
- ▶ To undermine from the shadows

Moves

- ▶ Strike hard and without warning
- ▶ Slip away in the night
- ▶ Channel the Shadow outward
- ▶ Convince you they're your friend

Lastly, **The People** are those among the clans who are not part of the Watch. Children, the elderly, the infirm, and men who are being kept away from the front lines. They have not ever taken up arms against the Shadow and do not understand what the Watch goes through to fight for their freedom. Their grief, confusion, and loss often make them reactionary, irrational, and short-sighted. Locha's brother Dalen, who wants Locha to advocate to Watch Commander Paemo for special protection for the remaining men of the clans.

THE PEOPLE

Impulses

- ▶ To complain about their worries
- ▶ To thank those who help them
- ▶ To keep to their own clan

Moves

- ▶ Ask the impossible of you
- ▶ Display their raw pain and sorrow
- ▶ Conspire against the Watch
- ▶ Erupt into clan-on-clan violence

THE SHADOW

While there are lots of threats, there is only one Shadow. The Shadow touches everyone and everything, and it is the real foe that must be defeated if the people of the clans are to remain free. However, not every Shadow will look the same. In the first session, when your group creates the Shadow, you will choose two options from the following lists in order to define what form the Shadow will take in your campaign.

Additionally, each time the campaign progresses from one phase to the next, the Shadow gains a new option for **what it wants**, **what it does**, and its **servants**. **What it is** remains unchanged.

WHAT IT IS (CHOOSE TWO)

- ☐ Darkly sorcerous
- ☐ Subtle and hard to discern
- ☐ Reality warping
- ☐ Terror-inducing
- ☐ Technological

When you define **what the Shadow is**, you are essentially defining the genre of story that your campaign will be telling. *The Watch* takes place in a fantasy universe, but is that universe low fantasy? Lovecraftian fantasy horror? Fantasy-steampunk? Dark fantasy? The options you choose will define the feel of the campaign, so be sure that everyone in the group gets a say for these options. For the other lists, you may choose options mostly or entirely on your own.

WHAT IT WANTS (CHOOSE TWO)

- ☐ For women to serve with gladness and delight
- ☐ For men to serve without emotion
- ☐ To pervert the land and all its creatures
- ☐ Submission without resistance
- ☐ Perfect order and hierarchy
- ☐ Dissension and disunity among its enemies

The Shadow's desires are monstrous in their simplicity. You should never have to ask yourself what the Shadow's real motivation is, because **what it wants** are simple things, and to take those things to their utmost logical extreme.

The Shadow's **wants** are also its goals: the circumstances that it is striving to create. The Shadow's **wants** are your signposts. If you are ever unsure about what the Shadow should be doing, right now, look to its **wants** for inspiration.

WHAT IT DOES (CHOOSE TWO)

- ☐ Turns men into weapons
- ☐ Turns women into objects
- ☐ Amplify the voices of the shadow-held
- ☐ Silence all opposition
- ☐ Crush autonomy and grind down the willful

The Shadow's **wants** are its goals, while **what it does** are the actions it takes to achieve those goals. And yes, it is true that the actions it takes are sometimes not well suited to the goals it wants to achieve. For example, **crushing autonomy and grinding down the willful** is not generally considered a good way to get *anyone* to **serve with gladness and delight**. **What it does** is the Shadow's toolbox, and that toolbox happens to contain nothing but hammers. That makes all of its problems (and **wants**) into nails.

THE SHADOW'S SERVANTS (CHOOSE TWO)

- ☐ Men hollowed out into automatons who never eat or sleep
- ☐ Men twisted into unnatural creatures of war
- ☐ Women turned to exemplars of sublime and unsettling beauty
- ☐ Women corrupted into idols and objects of veneration
- ☐ Cogs in a devastating machine of war
- ☐ Berserkers who fight to the bitter end

The Shadow's servants include those who have been forced into its service—men who have been possessed by the Shadow and corrupted, hollowed out, or altered in whichever way will please the Shadow most—as well as those who have fallen to its influence. But there are more than just men in the Shadow's army. All people are vulnerable to the Shadow's song.

The Shadow's servants also include those who could have served the Watch, but instead surrendered their will to the Shadow in exchange for power. In any war, no matter how high the stakes, there are always collaborators. Such servants can make very good vehicles of temptation for your PCs.

THE SHADOW'S MOVES

- ▶ Attack en masse
- ▶ Eliminate support
- ▶ Terrify the opposition
- ▶ Make them doubt themselves
- ▶ Snuff out ambitions and dreams

Just as with your other Threats, the Shadow has its own moves, these may be used any time you would be able to make a normal MC move. **Misdirection** for the Shadow's moves should be easy, MC, since the Shadow can be anywhere and do anything.

NPCs

The PCs' relationships with each other will be important to the shape of the story, but the Watch is an army, which means there will be a host of other characters needed to make their world seem real.

MAKING NPCs

You will need NPCs to fill out the rest of the squad: commanding officers, rivals, healers, elders, loved ones, and a few distinctive enemies for the players to enjoy hating.

It need not be a momentous task. Most of your NPCs are going to be secondary or tertiary characters with no real need for complexity or hard-hitting backstory. Most NPCs will only need to start with a name (chosen from the names list), a clan, and a detail to make them distinctive. If they're a member of the Watch, don't forget to give them a rank as well.

For your more important NPCs, you might consider tying them to the backstories of your PCs. For instance, maybe Watch Commander Paemo's second-in-command, Commander Rezi, is Locha's aunt or Dalu's estranged mother. For the most part, keep things simple. If your players express interest in an NPC, you can always expand on that NPC later.

Lastly, we're big fans of using image-sharing sites to create collections of character images for both PCs and NPCs. It's a way to put faces to names, though it may not be to everyone's tastes. Pinterest in particular can be a useful tool for differentiating NPCs and helping them all feel unique.

CAMARADERIE WITH NPCs

As previously noted, Camaraderie works slightly differently for NPCs. Your NPCs can gain Camaraderie with the PCs, but they can spend Camaraderie, one for one, to increase a PC's roll by 1, or to decrease their roll by 2, so long as they're in a position to do so.

DANGEROUS ISSUES: MCING WITH CARE

One of the player principles is **keep an eye out for each other's emotional safety and be kind to one another**. That applies to you too!

The Watch is a game that focusses strongly on themes that some players may find uncomfortable, either because they have not previously explored the issues that arise from these themes, or because the opposition provided by the Shadow mirrors real-life experiences of marginalization, or even both! It is vital that you play with an eye to the emotional safety of everyone involved, including you.

You'll note that in the first chapter, the X-Card was listed as a required tool of play. Having an X-Card on the table, however, doesn't actually *solve* the problem of player safety. Putting a safety tool on the table and telling people how it works is *not always enough* to get someone to use that tool when they need it. Sometimes people need to feel they have permission to actually use the safety tools provided, and sometimes people don't realize that they won't be okay with something until it's already happened in play.

So, if playing with issues like gender and patriarchy can be so dangerous, why do it at all? Why not play something "safer"? Because roleplaying can be a safe way to explore our feelings about uncomfortable subjects, and because telling stories about *things that matter* can be intensely, deeply satisfying.

With that in mind, here are four tips to keep in mind to make sure that everyone stays safe and has fun:

First: Tell your players upfront about elements of the game that are, or may become, problematic

Don't be cute and hide things from your players to give them a more "intense" experience. Tell them up front what they're in for and let them decide to play or not play.

For convention games, this starts with putting a small disclaimer in the description of your game. I.e., "this game deals with issues surrounding toxic masculinity", or "this game deals with gendered oppression", or "this game deals with toxic masculinity". When players are looking over the list of games, trying to decide which game they want to play in

during a given time slot, that is *stuff they need to know*. However, by the same token, don't assume that they actually *read* the description. Maybe there was a scheduling mix-up, or maybe a friend dragged them into the game at the last minute. Maybe the game they were scheduled to play got cancelled and the organizers just tried to find them *something* to replace it. Which means you'll also need to tell the players when they sit down what they're getting in for.

Providing content warnings about problematic elements in your game isn't "coddling" your players, or "insulating them from reality". Providing content warnings lets people prepare themselves so that when the problematic content comes up, it isn't a horrible surprise.

Second: Don't put up with problematic behaviour at the table

Some players will see content warnings as an invitation to be as "dark" and "edgy" as they can, or to treat the problematic content as a joke. If you have a player that is making light of what is meant to be a serious issue, X-card it hard and fast.

It will absolutely not be fun, but a bad player can be just as harmful as an irresponsible GM.

Third: Don't just replicate injustice. Be critical of it.

There's a reason why **never showcase sexual violence** and **respect people's gender identities** are MC principles. Simply having strong female characters *does not* automatically make something feminist. Even more importantly, however, is the fact that just replicating injustice is *not* the same thing as actually criticizing injustice. Without some sort of change that turns the situation on its head, all that you're doing is reinforcing toxic social norms that already exist.

Fourth: Actively watch out for player safety

This might sound intimidating, but we promise you, you're already better at this than you think.

As MCs, part of learning our craft is learning to recognize when your players are having fun. If you've been running games for any length of

time, you know the difference between a good game session and a bad one. When someone asks how your game just went, it's the difference between "Eh, it was a B- game. Two players really loved it, but the third player really wasn't feeling it" and "it was totally great! Everyone was super into it! The energy was high and we all had a great time!"

When a player switches from "having fun" to "not", *you should always check in*, especially if that transition is sudden or abrupt. The reason could be entirely mundane: their blood sugar could have bottomed out, or they could have a headache coming on, or they might feel they're not getting enough spotlight. But it could be something bigger. You don't need to make a big deal of it. Something as simple as "hey, you got kinda quiet, everything okay?" between scenes can make all the difference.

FURTHER READING

For more guidance on this topic, you can read a more expanded take on this topic from this blog:

- ▶ **Part One:** <http://tinyurl.com/DifficultGMPt1> and
- ▶ **Part Two:** <http://tinyurl.com/DifficultGMPt2>

We would also recommend reading the following posts by Kate Bullock:

- ▶ **Public Gaming: Rules for Engagement:** <http://tinyurl.com/mh38djd>
- ▶ **Allies and Dice: Creating Diversity as a GM:** <http://tinyurl.com/km-fb6qr>

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR SMOOTH MCING

The Watch comes with a lot of moving parts, so here are some things about running this game that can help your experience as an MC go more smoothly.

Relationship maps are helpful

Over the course of the campaign, you're going to end up with a lot of NPCs, and keeping a relationship map of PCs and their relationships to your notable NPCs can be useful. Keeping an up-to-date relationship map can provide inspiration for potential story complications, and can be an easy way to visually reference NPC Camaraderie.

Have the PCs report to their superiors as a group

The PCs will often report on the outcome of their missions to their superiors. When this happens, sometimes have the PCs report as a group, rather than just having the highest-ranking character make the report.

A group report can create conflict among the PCs, which is always interesting. It can also help alleviate the issue of the highest-ranking character missing out on opportunities to join their squad in **Blowing Off Steam**.

Do things that creep you out

The Shadow is a force of preternatural evil, and it should be unsettling and horrifying to interact with. If you're at a loss trying to figure out what your players will find scary or creepy, narrate things that creep **you** out. You will often find your players reacting accordingly.

Use the map constantly, add to it and expand on it

The map is a tool to ground the world you are creating, to make it real by defining its geography. As you're playing, add villages and other important cultural sites to the map. Get players to name them, and to tell you whose traditional clan territory they belong to. When your players run missions centred on a particular location (**defend a fort, retake an ancient cultural site, or recover a captured fort**, for example), have the players draw that location on the map. Doing this will enrich the experience of the fiction.



MISSIONS

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE SHADOW

By playing *The Watch*, you and the other players will tell a story of a military campaign to retake your homelands from the Shadow, and how the PCs help to reclaim their people and their lives. The military campaign gives structure to the story and delineates its milestones, from the early defensive days of the campaign when the Watch is just trying to dig in and hold the new border, to the final days when they are closing in on the stronghold of the Shadow.

That the Watch will defeat the Shadow is never in question. What you are playing to find out is how much will it cost you. On the day of the Shadow's final defeat, who is it that you will say should have been standing beside you? Which of you will burn bright and fast, and which of you will hunker down and see this thing through to the end?

While the missions give structure to the story, much of your play time will be spent between missions. The general rule of thumb is to expect an average of 1.5 missions per session, over the course of a long campaign, with missions taking around 20 minutes to half an hour to complete.

Time between missions often gets spent fixing everything that went wrong during missions. But if events start to get stale, feel forced, or if everyone is looking to you to find out what happens next, it's probably time to run another mission.

MISSION MOVES

Mission Moves are the moves that are rolled when going on missions. With the exception of **Need a Hand**, the Basic Moves and the playbook moves may not be used during missions, unless explicitly specified otherwise.

Each session of *The Watch* begins with a mission, as indicated by the Start of Session move, unless you decide otherwise. If there was a lot left unresolved at the end of the last mission, you may decide to hold off on the mission until later in the session. However, highlighted moves will not change until the first mission of the session has happened.

Mission moves are always rolled in the order that they appear on the sheet: Watch Their Backs, then Navigate and Strategize, then Recon and Lookout, then Take Point.

START OF SESSION

At the start of the session, or during a lull in play, the MC (or the highest ranked character past Sergeant) will choose a new mission for the group. Whoever is in charge of the mission will tell everyone involved to mark Jaded, and assigns one person to each the three primary mission roles: **‘Navigate and Strategize’**, **‘Recon and Lookout’**, and **‘Take Point’**. Any one left over will **Watch Their Backs**. (All of the PCs *must* be assigned a mission role.) If the person in charge doesn’t have Camaraderie with each PC involved, they must choose 1 Complication.

If the group wants to achieve any secondary objectives while on this mission, the group chooses an additional Complication for each objective selected. (An example of what adding objectives to the mission and of what highlighting moves looks like in play can be found on page 54.)

If things were left in the air at the end of last session, you may decide to hold off on the mission until later in the session.

Once the mission is complete, you will choose another character and describe a meaningful moment you two shared during the mission. Their player will highlight an **Active Move** for you, the MC will highlight another. Whenever you roll a highlighted move, you mark Experience.

The person assigning mission roles is not obligated to assign characters to moves that they are mechanically suited to. In practice, it’s best to do what feels fictionally appropriate. If all of your missions are great successes, the fiction gets boring pretty fast.

WATCH THEIR BACKS

When you **Watch Their Backs** on a mission, roll with Training. On a hit, hold 1. On a 7-9, you also mark Weary. Spend your hold to increase a comrade's mission roll by 1; if you don't spend this hold during the mission, you may take +1 forward instead. On a miss, choose 1 more Complication.

This move is always rolled first, giving the PCs who got a hit the option to intervene as subsequent players make their rolls. The character(s) **Watching Their Backs** have the choice to spend their hold or not as they see fit. The choice is entirely theirs.

NAVIGATE/STRATEGIZE

When you **Navigate** a route or **Strategize** during a mission, roll with Cunning. On a hit, you're not significantly delayed or you execute your stratagem correctly. On a 7-9, choose 1 Complication. On a miss, you still get there or your plan is executed but not without cost: choose 1 Complication and you all mark Weary.

Navigating or Strategizing is simple and straightforward. The characters are always able to reach their destination. The roll is to determine how well the character performs under pressure, and if it causes consequences for the squad as a whole.

RECON/LOOKOUT

When you **Recon** or keep **Lookout** on a mission, roll with Luck. On a hit, your scouting doesn't attract unwanted attention and provides valuable intel. On a 7-9, choose 1 Complication or you mark Weary. On a miss, something goes wrong: choose 1 Complication and the MC will choose a second one.

As with Navigating, failing this move is never going to result in failing the mission. However, the consequences of failure while keeping Lookout are higher, and are more likely to hurt the people around you.

TAKE POINT

When you **Take Point** on a mission, roll with Valour. On a hit, your group achieves your primary objective, if only barely. On a 10+, choose 1 Complication. On a 7-9, choose 1 Complication *and* you mark Weary or an additional point of Jaded. On a miss, you still complete your mission but with significant costs and setbacks: choose 1 more Complication, you all mark Weary, and the MC will choose 1 more Complication.

It's no coincidence that even on a 10+, the character **Taking Point** will still need to select a Complication. In war, no plan survives first contact with the enemy.

On a miss, **Take Point** also results in the harshest consequences for the rest of the squad: when you screw up in a war, your squad mates will also suffer.

COMPLICATIONS

After all the moves have been made, anyone instructed to **Choose a Complication** picks from below:

- ▶ _____ *didn't make it back alive (NPCs only, unless choosing this for yourself)*
- ▶ _____ *and I were both Hurt during the mission (each of you mark 1 harm)*
- ▶ _____ *got separated from us and is now lost*
- ▶ _____ *was captured by the enemy*
- ▶ _____ *was wounded during the fighting (mark 2 harm)*
- ▶ *Something followed us home*
- ▶ *We lost a pivotal asset or territory (We all mark an additional Jaded)*
- ▶ *We screwed up big time (We all mark Weary)*
- ▶ *I panicked at a crucial moment and everyone saw it (I mark Weary twice)*
- ▶ *This mission was particularly hard on me (I mark Weary and Jaded)*
- ▶ *The Shadow took hold of me for a time (I mark Jaded and the MC will say what I did)*
- ▶ *I betrayed or abandoned someone to accomplish a goal (I mark Jaded and everyone else marks Weary)*
- ▶ *I suffered a deeply personal loss (I must **Surrender to Weariness** after the mission)*

MC, when it is time to select Complications, have the players select theirs in the order in which they were incurred. So, if the commanding character got a Complication for not having Camaraderie with everyone in her squad, that player picks first. Then the PC(s) assigned to **Watch Their Backs**, then **Navigate/Strategize**, and so on.

Once your players have selected all their Complications, it is time for you to select yours (if any). If you are fortunate enough to have Complications, MC, there are some things to remember.

First:

Be sparing in your use of “___ got separated from us and is now lost”; be even more judicious in your use of “___ was captured by the enemy” when you are applying these to player characters. Capturing a PC, or even just having them get separated while behind enemy lines, can be highly dramatic! But when it’s overused, it loses its impact and becomes repetitive. It can also feel patronizing if not handled well.

If you choose either of these options, it’s best to do it for a good reason. Have a character get separated, and then approached by one of the Shadow’s sorceresses so that they can be tempted with power and their heart’s desire. Or have a character get captured and make it clear that she can free herself, but she’ll have to kill her brother, who disappeared during the first waves of the Shadow’s invasion. You know. Just for example.

Second:

War is hell, and people die. Any of the NPCs that go out into the field are fair targets for “___ didn’t make it back alive”. In order to make the Shadow feel like a real threat with reach, make sure to kill off key NPCs now and then, especially NPCs that some or all of the PCs have an attachment to. If you only ever kill NPCs that your PCs don’t interact with, or that they don’t particularly care about, it won’t have an impact.

Further, look for opportunities where killing a particular NPC would be especially tragic. For example, say the Bear—a Corporal—takes time out to give extra training to an Initiate in sword work, because she’s passable with a spear but terrible with a sword. During the next mission, you get to pick a Complication and you choose to kill that Initiate, narrating that her spear got knocked away and her sword work was too weak to allow her to defend herself. That sort of thing packs an extra punch.

That said, draw targets on everyone, then let some of them live. You can't have drama without relationships, and you can't form relationships if everyone around you is dropping like flies.

Third:

"Something followed us home", "We screwed up big time", and "We lost a pivotal asset or territory" are all great choices if you want to set up a future mission. There might be a mission on your current list of available missions that you're not sure how to fit into the existing fiction, and any of these provide great openings.

Fourth:

"The Shadow took hold of me for a time", "I betrayed or abandoned someone to accomplish a goal", and "I suffered a deeply personal loss" are Complications that should mostly be reserved for selection by players; foisting one of these Complications on a PC can detract from the player's agency.

If you have set up something that would make a character particularly vulnerable to the Shadow on this mission, or if there are circumstances which make it seem especially appropriate, sparing use of "The Shadow took hold of me for a time" can work well, especially with a playbook like the Owl or the Spider. However, you should stay away from "I betrayed or abandoned someone to accomplish a goal" and "I suffered a deeply personal loss".

HOW TO RUN MISSIONS

As previously mentioned, when a mission begins, whether because orders are being handed down or a crisis hits, the highest-ranking character needs to choose who in the group will be **Navigating and/or Strategizing**, who will be on **Recon and/or Lookout** duty, and who will **Take Point**. The others will **Watch Their Backs**. If there are multiple characters who share the highest rank, or if it seems fictionally appropriate, the group can select who leads the mission.

Once the mission moves are rolled (see page 144), it's time to begin crafting the story of how the mission went based on the Complications selected. Start with the obvious points: how did those Complications arise, and if someone was personally involved in one of them, what actions did they take that led to it? Then move onto the smaller beats: how did they feel before things went haywire, what were they doing during the fighting, what weapon did they use against their foe, and so on. You and the other players will work together to craft the narrative. Keep asking questions until a clear picture of how events transpired. Your job as MC is to hand the players the paint and the brush: it's up to them to actually paint it.

*It is the third session of this campaign. The session began with a mission during which one of the players chose the complication **something followed us back home**. After having some scenes dealing with the aftermath of the mission, Anna, the MC, decided to use that complication to set a second mission for the session: **defend a fort**.*

"You're not really sure how long you've been sleeping when you're awakened by the sound of trumpets and shouting, and you know something has gone horribly wrong. Marro, you awaken and grab your weapons, and scramble out of your tent. A flaming arrow just misses you and hits the tent next to yours. You take a moment to stomp out the flames, but see other tents burning. You see Locha burst out of her tent, sword drawn. Locha, you emerge from your tent, and as soon as you see the camp burning you know that you didn't kill all of the grotesques on that last mission. One of them must have gotten away and followed you here, then fetched reinforcements.

"Lovo, when you wake up, your tent is on fire. Since you and Dalu were sleeping together and are still, ahem, partially clothed, you can get out of the tent with your weapons and a shirt, but you're both going to get singed while escaping the burning tent. Take a harm each, please."

"I knew sleeping together would be a bad idea," Seamus grumbles as he marks off a harm on Dalu's sheet.

“Right, because you missing that roll and giving the MC a move was totally Lovo’s fault,” Amelia retorts.

Anna grins. “You’ll be defending a fort. It just happens to be your fort. Locha, why don’t you assign mission roles.”

Drew nods. “Well, Dalu and Lovo are injured and under-equipped so... Lovo, you get yourself up on the wall and do some **Recon**. Dalu, you go grab yourself a bunch of recruits and start **Strategizing**. I’ll **Take Point**, and Marro you can **Watch Our Backs**.”

“Don’t forget to mark Jaded for starting a mission,” Anna adds. “Locha, you have Camaraderie with everyone, right?”

Drew nods. “Yup. No extra Complications from that.”

“Drat. Okay, Kit. Please roll to **Watch Their Backs**.”

Kit rolls and gets a 7. “Phew. I’ll hold one, but I get to mark a Weary.”

Next, Seamus rolls **Strategize**. “Oof. Snake eyes. Guess my 0 Cunning didn’t matter with a roll that bad.”

“Congratulations! You’ll get to choose a Complication! Also, everyone needs to mark Weary, since Dalu missed.”

The players all mark Weary, then Amelia rolls **Recon** and gets a 9. “Hey, Marro. I’m only 1 away from a 10, you mind using that hold to bump my roll so we don’t get another Complication?”

“No prob,” Kit responds. “It’s all yours.”

“Cool. So that means no Complications or anything bad from my end.”

Last, Drew rolls **Take Point** and gets a 4. “Sorry, folks. Looks like things aren’t going well for us. I guess I’m choosing a Complication and we all mark Weary. Again.”

“Crap.” Kit frowns as he marks off his fourth box of Weary. “Looks like I’m **Surrendering to Weariness** after the mission is over.”

“Hooray! I mean, let’s choose Complications, starting with Dalu. Dalu, what Complication would you like?”

“Ugh. These choices all suck right now.” Seamus sighs. “I guess I’ll take **this mission was particularly hard on me**. That puts me up to three Weary, so I’ll have to make sure I clear some Weary after the mission. But the Jaded puts me pretty close to my first Jaded advance.”

“Cool. Drew? How about your Complication?”

*“Hrm. I think I’ll say that Locha is **harmed twice during the fighting**. That will put her up to Wounded, which seems appropriate given that she’s basically fighting without armour.”*

“Makes sense. As for mine, I think I’ll say that your new Recruit, Erdo, doesn’t make it back alive.”

“No!” Amelia pouts. “She was so adorable!”

“Hey, what can I say? War is hell. So Dalu, the camp is in chaos all around you, and your arm hurts from the burns you took. Locha orders you to gather what recruits you can and reinforce the fighters on the walls. What goes wrong that keeps you from doing that?”

“Hmm. Well, gathering Recruits isn’t a problem. They’re easy to spot, because they’re the ones who look like they don’t have the faintest idea what they should be doing. However, once I have enough of them to do something with, I see that the picket lines where we keep the horses have caught fire. So instead of going to fight on the walls, the Recruits and I put out the fire and save the horses.”

*“Good call. Not what Locha ordered, but good call. Lovo? How about you? What is it that you do in order to get some **recon**?”*

“Oh, that’s easy. I’d climb the nearest wall and get a look at things.”

“Makes sense. You’re able to do that with no problems, but only after a little help from Marro. Marro, how do you help Lovo avoid some serious trouble?”

“Hmm. So just as Lovo is getting to the top of the wall, a grotesque breaks through. He spots Lovo and is preparing to throw a massive rock at her, possibly knocking her off the top of the wall, but Marro charges and takes him by surprise. She and some other nearby soldiers are able to take down the grotesque and Lovo is able to do what she needs to do.”

“Great. Lovo, what are you doing now that you’re up there?”

“Once I get a look at what’s going on, I start shouting down to Locha where the weak spots are in our defences, where the attackers are concentrating their forces, things like that.”

*“Awesome. So, Locha, you’re **Taking Point**, and things don’t go well for you. What does that look like?”*

“Locha’s a Royshan. She’s no stranger to this kind of fighting. She charges the gate where the enemy is making the hardest push and gets the other women around her to form a shield wall. She’s in the thick of the fighting, yelling out encouragement to the women around her, but it’s a long, hard battle, and she doesn’t so much take one big wound as lots of small ones that accumulate as she’s fighting.”

Anna nods. “Of course. For a while you’re not sure if you’re going to be able to hold the enemy back. At one point, this massive grotesque, easily the tallest one you’ve ever seen, charges and breaks through the shield wall. He roars, and swats at a young Recruit, who you realize is Erdo, knocking her spear out of her hands. You watch her fumble with her sword, but her sword work is too clumsy; you’re always having to yell at her to keep her guard up.

“You want to help her, but you’re yelling at the other soldiers around you to re-form the shield wall, and all you can do is watch as the grotesque picks up Erdo’s fallen spear and impales her with it. It howls its triumph right before Lovo puts an arrow through its eye.

“What eventually turns the tide is more people joining Lovo up on the walls. Unable to break through the shield wall and stand up to the hail of arrows, the enemy breaks and runs. You don’t pursue them.”

“Whoa, harsh,” Amelia grunts.

“So. Locha is Wounded, Dalu is Hurting, your newest Recruit is dead—as are many others—and the camp is still partially on fire, although Dalu and her Recruits have gotten that mostly under control. What do you do?”

*Kit sighs and reaches for his dice. “**Surrender to Weariness**, apparently.” Kit erases the four boxes of Weary marked on his sheet and rolls. “That’s an 8, which means I roll a 12. Oh goody. Looks like I’m losing a whole bunch of Camaraderie.”*

Anna nods. “Cool. We’ll get to that in a second. Locha, you’re the highest-ranking officer still on her feet and a lot of the lower ranking soldiers are looking at you. They’re tired and unsure of what they should be doing. What do you tell them?”

CAMPAIGN PHASES

As MC, you'll decide the order that missions are undertaken until someone is promoted to Lieutenant Commander: then they get to choose. The final mission listed in each stage cannot be attempted until all but one of the other missions above it are completed. After the final mission, you move to the next theatre of war. As a mission is completed, check it off. All of the PCs gains the benefits listed in brackets.

Phase 1: Defend the remaining clan lands

- ☐ Defend a fort (mark Experience)
- ☐ Protect a supply caravan (no mission reward)
- ☐ Rescue a clan leader and/or prisoners or war (mark Experience)
- ☐ Save a village under attack (mark Jaded)
- ☐ **Break the siege of a Clan Stronghold** (mark two Experience and gain new camp responsibilities)

Phase 2: Take Back Lost Territory

- ☐ Recover a captured fort from the enemy (mark Experience)
- ☐ Collect conscripts from the clans (mark Jaded)
- ☐ Retake an ancient cultural site from the Shadow (mark Experience)
- ☐ Secure and hold a location until reinforcements arrive (no mission reward)
- ☐ Attack a Shadow-held strategic point (mark Experience)
- ☐ **Drive the Shadow's main force from the Clan Lands** (mark two Experience and gain new camp responsibilities)

Phase 3: Assail the Shadow's Lands

During this phase, the MC chooses one Devastating Complication per mission.

- ☐ Scout the Shadow's forces (mark Experience)
- ☐ Head an attack against the Shadow's main force (mark Jaded)
- ☐ Lead a dangerous feint against the Shadow (mark Experience)
- ☐ Sever the Shadow's supply lines (mark Experience)
- ☐ Secure the lands surrounding the Shadow's stronghold (no mission reward)
- ☐ **Invade the Shadow's Stronghold** (begin The Final Confrontation)

After the completion of each phase, take some time to play out what it looks like in the fiction as the Watch shifts from one phase of their military campaign to the next. Make sure you play out scenes to highlight the significant personal changes for player characters, if any, such as promotions. Lastly, each time one phase of the campaign ends, the Shadow grows more complex. Fed by the darkness and death of the war to defeat it, it will gain a new **want**, a new tactic (**what it does**), and **servants**. Choose one new option from the appropriate lists (see page 134).

Each campaign phase represents an advancement of the military campaign against the Shadow. The first phase represents the early days of the campaign, days of desperation and of grim determination to dig in and suffer no further losses. At the beginning of the first phase, the fate of the war is uncertain, as it is unknown whether the Watch will be able to prevent the wholesale slaughter of their people. By the end of the first campaign phase, the Watch has found its strength, has fortified its defences, and has learned enough of its enemy to be able to fight the Shadow to a stand-still.

The second phase of the campaign are the awful middle days. There are triumphs, as the Watch moves the front line back, retaking lost lands that were once theirs. But there are horrors, new enemies, and cultural sites once sacred to the people, now defiled. At the beginning of the second campaign phase, there is hope for the future of the clans and for life after war. By the end of the second campaign phase, there is only exhaustion at the scope of the task to be completed, and heartache for fallen comrades.

The third phase of the campaign represents the final days of the war. Triumph is inevitable, but even the staunchest believers question if the cost will be too high. Clan lands have been retaken, but the Shadow has grown darker, more virulent, and its servants have gained terrifying new powers. Worse, the servants of the Shadow fight like cornered animals, and the lands the Shadow comes from are full of new horrors and dangers. The third phase of the campaign is when each of the characters feels the full weight of their accumulated Jaded and asks themselves if they have the strength to see the campaign through to the very end.

ADVANCING IN RANK

As players earn advances, they may choose to spend advances on rank promotions. As the campaign against the Shadow progresses, the scale of the missions will get larger and will require more people. As that happens, the squad leader will be assigning roles to groups of soldiers, each led by one of the PCs, rather than assigning the mission roles to individual PCs.

Advancement in rank comes with new responsibilities. At the end of campaign phases 1 and 2, each PC that advanced in rank will take on new responsibilities, such as: training recruits, attending strategy meetings, training to become a field medic, etc. The MC should ensure that those new responsibilities don't pull the character away from the rest of the squad. Their new duties are important, but their connection to the squad should always be central to the story.

Players who choose rank advances for their PCs are giving the MC a love letter: they are telling the MC how they want to be challenged. Characters can always refuse promotions, such as a Sergeant refusing to be promoted because they want to be able to focus on field work. You might have a group of PCs who decide that they're not interested in rank advancement at all. That's fine too: in that case the PCs will become more like an elite team who are forming the vanguard of increasingly critical missions.

At the beginning of the campaign, Locha is a Corporal, Dalu and Marro are Wardens, and Lovo is an Initiate. When they go out in the field, they are doing small missions with their squad of 10, and when they get back to camp none of them have any responsibilities besides making their report to the Watch Captain.

Near the end of the campaign, Locha is a Commander, and still the ranking character. Marro and Dalu are Sergeants, and Lovo is a Corporal. Marro is responsible for teaching Recruits a crash course in sword fighting, while Dalu is responsible for running drills on the basics of battle formations. Lovo has been given a squad of scouts to command, and when they're not in the field she spends time teaching them every dirty trick she learned as a hunter and a thief. And Locha now finds herself in on strategy meetings when missions are being planned.

THE FINAL CHAPTER: NEW COMPLICATIONS AND CHANGING THE WORLD

When the campaign progresses to phase 3, there are several important changes to how missions are run, comprising the introduction of **Devastating Complications** and a move called **Change the World**.

DEVASTATING COMPLICATIONS

As the war progresses, the Shadow draws upon the resulting hatred and suffering to strengthen itself and grow more powerful. The beginning of phase 3 also marks when the Shadow must fight to preserve its very existence, and it will draw upon every ounce of its accumulated power to destroy its enemies. In every mission that happens during phase 3, the MC may at her option select one item from the list of **Devastating Complications** for free:

- ▶ *Half of the PCs (round up) endure terrible injuries and must **Suffer Great Harm***
- ▶ *Your squad suffers devastating losses during the mission*
- ▶ *The Shadow takes control of women in clan lands, causing mass chaos and violence*
- ▶ *The Shadow sneaks past the border and destroys an important site/building/relic*
- ▶ *Assassins breach the front line and kill many of the Watch's leadership*
- ▶ *The Watch has to split its forces to put down a rebellion back home*
- ▶ *A faction of the Watch leads a violent mutiny against its leaders*

Only one **Devastating Complication** may be selected per mission. As noted above, choosing a **Devastating Complication** is free—it is chosen in addition to any Complications the MC might receive—and it is optional. The consequences of a **Devastating Complication** are often far-reaching and will take a lot of play time to resolve, so the MC shouldn't feel bound to choose one for every phase 3 mission.

CHANGE THE WORLD

When the last mission of phase 2 has been completed, part of the transition that you will play out includes **Changing the World**. By agreeing to come together and discard tradition in the name of defeating a common enemy, and through the efforts of the Watch, the people of the clans and clan society are changed forever. Further, the Shadow and its invasion will leave a lasting mark on the society of the clans. Even when the Shadow is defeated, the clans will never be able to reclaim what they once were. The wounds left by the Shadow will be too deeply felt.

After completing the last mission of phase 2, and again after defeating the Shadow, each PC will roll the **Change the World** move:

When you *Assail the Shadow's Lands* and again when you defeat the Shadow, your efforts have the chance to **Change the World**. Roll with the number of Jaded moves you've taken. On a 10+, tell the MC something positive that has changed within society through the efforts of the Watch. On a 7-9, the change only occurs within your own clan.

On a miss while Assailing the Shadow's Lands, the change only occurs within your own clan, but it enrages the Shadow and it does everything it can to strike back at your people.

A miss on a roll to **Change the World** does not mean no change happens. The formation of the Watch, and the campaign against the Shadow, will necessarily change the world forever, and the PCs are instrumental agents of that change. A full success represents a positive social change that spreads throughout all the clans, while a partial success represents a positive social change that takes hold in your clan. A miss differs depending on the campaign phase.

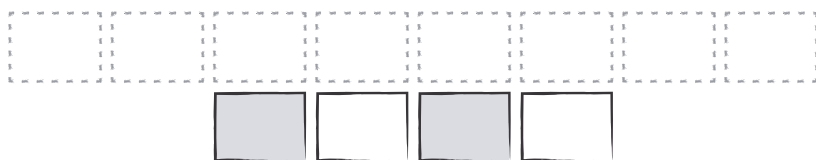
At the start of phase 3 (Assailing the Shadow's Lands), a miss represents a change that comes with drastic complications. **Changing the World** can be dangerous business; sometimes when you seek to make change, the backlash by those who support the status quo can be fierce and astonishing as they try to roll back the tide of positive progress. Those who fight hardest for change often pay the highest price. (For miss results after the Final Confrontation, see page 162.)

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

After you complete the final mission of phase 3, **invade the Shadow's stronghold**, you will play out the final, terrible battle against the Shadow itself.

When you successfully Invade the Shadow's Stronghold, you and the other characters will come face-to-face with The Shadow. The MC will start a countdown track with 2 segments per player (see the MC sheets and play materials), and you now use the following **battle moves** to resolve the confrontation.

For each successful action taken against Shadow, the MC will mark a segment in the track. When 4 segments remain, the scenery gives way or changes to a new venue, MC's choice. When 2 segments remain, the Shadow will make as hard as a move as it is capable of. When the final segment is reached, the Shadow is defeated; the MC will decide what that looks like.



The battle against the Shadow advances through the use of **battle moves**. A full hit on a **battle move** results in a marked segment in the final confrontation track, a partial hit results in a marked segment with some negative consequences attached, and a miss results in no segment marked and a hard move by the MC.

When the time comes for the scenery to **give way or change to a new venue**, consider the fiction you have established and narrate accordingly. Are the characters battling a titanic Shadow-colossus in the heart of an obsidian palace? Perhaps the colossus smashes the palace to pieces, causing a rain of jagged stone. Or perhaps the palace begins to twist into horrid configurations around them as the Shadow drags them all into a horrid Shadow dimension. However it happens, the battle against the Shadow is so fierce that it changes the land or scenery around it.

When only two segments remain, the Shadow makes as hard a move as it is capable of, the hardest move that still makes sense in the context of the fiction you've established for your final battle against the Shadow.

When the Shadow is finally defeated, make that defeat large, dramatic, and satisfying. This represents the culmination of a long and brutal campaign, so go big. Like, Sauron's eye blinking in confusion as his obsidian tower crumbles to pieces. Your players deserve it.

BATTLE MOVES

Perform a Manoeuvre

When you **Perform a Manoeuvre** to outsmart the Shadow, roll with Luck. On a hit, you open up an opportunity for your allies; mark a segment. On a 7-9, you find yourself alone and in a tight spot.

Having attacked the Shadow's stronghold and breached the walls of the enormous, obsidian keep, the PCs have completed the final mission and are ready to confront the Shadow itself. A thick, dark miasma hangs over the battlefield, and then, to the horror of those watching, the corpses of the fallen from both sides lift into the air, forming themselves into a grisly giant.

"It roars," Anna adds. "And you're almost knocked over by the smell of rotting flesh. What do you do?"

*Seamus decides that Dalu is going to lead a feint, to distract the giant from Lovo and her archers, who are preparing to fire a volley of arrows at it, and so rolls to **Perform a Manoeuvre**. He gets a 10, so the manoeuvre is carried off successfully. A segment is marked and no consequences are incurred.*

Cover Someone

When you **Cover Someone** as they fight, roll with Training. On a hit, you free them up to make their move; mark a segment. On a 7-9, you suffer harm according to the MC.

Locha and Marro are harrying the giant, hacking at its ankles and doing their best to keep out of the beast's reach, when they spot an opening, a weak point where the Shadow titan is starting to have trouble holding its form together.

Kit decides to **Cover Someone**. “Marro yells at Locha to go as she puts herself in between Locha and the giant, which raises its fist to strike at them. ‘Hit it hard and make it count!’” Kit rolls with Training and gets an 8.

“You manage to direct its attack away from Locha,” Anna responds, as she marks another segment. “And free her up to make her attack. But the full force of the blow meant for two people comes down on your raised shield, and sends you to one knee. You’re pretty sure your arm is broken, and it’s a damn good thing the shield is strapped on. Take two harm.”

Call Out a Strategy

When you **Call Out a Strategy** for your team to execute, roll with Cunning. On a hit, they listen and form up, executing your plan; mark a segment. On a 7-9, The Shadow targets you with its power.

Lovo sees the spot that Marro is in and wants to draw the beast’s attention away from her comrades.

“Lovo casts about frantically looking for a solution,” Amelia narrates. “when they spot a giant chain lying next to a battered siege engine. They whistle to get the attention of the Recruits under their command, then outline a plan to mount up and use the chain to clothesline the giant at ankle level.”

“Sounds like you’re **Calling Out a Strategy**,” Anna says.

Amelia agrees and rolls with Cunning, getting a 7, so Anna marks another segment.

“Your plan is successful. What’s more, Sergeant Lyshe sees what you’re up to and gets her squad do the same with another discarded chain. Between the two squads, you completely tangle the titan up, preventing it from stomping around. The colossus throws its head back and howls. Two red lights begin to gleam in its featureless face. It turns to look directly at you, and you find yourself completely frozen, unable to move.”

Directly Engage

When you push through to **Directly Engage the Shadow**, roll with Valour. On a hit, you wound it with your attack; mark a segment. On a 7-9, it strikes back with all its strength, and you suffer harm according to the MC.

*With the giant's attention fully occupied, Locha decides to **Directly Engage** with the giant. "I throw my shield aside and pick up one of the giant spears that the grotesques favour. I pinpoint the weak spot and drive it in with all of my strength."*

Drew rolls with Valour and gets an 8. Anna marks a segment while considering how to respond.

"You stab the beast, halfway severing its foot from the rest of its leg. From above you, corpses and body parts begin to fall off the giant: its ability to hold itself together is obviously weakening. You weren't expecting that, however. You're hit on the head by something heavy, falling from about fifteen feet up, and it dazes you and sets your ears ringing. Take a harm."

Follow Through

When you **Follow Through** on someone else's action, roll with Training. On a hit, you ride their wave and exploit the opening they created; mark a segment. On a 7-9, you find yourself facing the consequences they avoided.

"Back to me, huh?" Seamus asks. "Well, I think Dalu is going to exploit the opening created by Locha. She leads her soldiers in a charge against the monster and is the first one strike at the beast, aiming to sever its leg entirely."

*"Awesome. Roll to **Follow Through** then," Anna replies.*

Seamus rolls and gets a 10.

Anna shakes her head and marks a segment. "You're luckier than you deserve, Dalu. You lead the charge, and you and the others succeed in cutting off the titan's foot. It bellows as it topples over slowly backward, and you and the others have just enough time to get out of the way before its full weight hits the ground. Your heart is beating quickly, because you know if you had been just a little slower it would have crushed you."

"However, it's not dead yet. Now grounded, the titan contracts, becoming a writhing shape without definite form, and before long tentacles made of Shadow and the dead erupt from the centre of the mass. The fight is not over."

CHANGING THE WORLD ONE MORE TIME: THE ENDING

After the final battle with the Shadow and the Shadow's defeat, players will roll to **Change the World** one more time, with the results being incorporated into the campaign's epilogue. The success results are the same as the previous time, however, the miss result changes slightly:

On a miss after defeating The Shadow, the change occurs in your clan alone, but only as a result of the deep cultural trauma inflicted by The Shadow's occupation.

After the Shadow's defeat, a miss on **Change the World** represents a change tied to deep and lasting cultural trauma. Perhaps a custom is lost forever because there are none left alive who can carry the tradition forward. Perhaps there are negative social consequences that result from a populace that has been decimated and its survivors traumatized. Perhaps a tradition or custom that once held deep significance is discarded because it no longer holds meaning in a world forever changed by the Shadow. Whatever form it takes, it will be a change that has been forced on a clan rather than one actively sought.

Once epilogues for the PCs and for what this new, post-Shadow world will look like have been narrated and everyone feels that a satisfactory conclusion has been reached, your story is over. Well fought, valiant warrior. Lay down your arms and rest.

FINAL THOUGHTS

AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Designing a game as large and complex as *The Watch* is a monumental undertaking, and we would be remiss if we did not mention those who helped make *The Watch* into the game that it became.

First and foremost, many thanks go to Aaron Friesen for their many invaluable contributions, including their early design feedback on options for the Shadow, MC moves, and feedback on gender definitions in the text. Thanks also to Aaron, Kira Magrann, and Bryanna Hitchcock for their invaluable perspective on gender options for character creation. Your perspective was important and hugely influential.

Also influential was Shoshanna Kessock's *Keeping the Candles Lit*, a LARP about Jewish partisans during World War II and about trying to balance survival with keeping alive the traditions that give your life meaning. Playing that game provided inspiration for *Changing the World* and what that would look like.

Thanks also to Sean “Seamus” Horwich and Jamie Easton for their ideas for the extended playbooks, the Eagle, the Fox, and the Raven.

Thanks to Meghan Dornbrock and Jason Cordova for generating early interest and enthusiasm through their podcasts, *±Modifier* and *The Gauntlet*, respectively. It was humbling to have such enthusiasm surrounding an early alpha stage game.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to conversations in our Google+ playtest community, most notably Josh Roby, Mikael Tysvær, Oli Jeffrey, Marshall Miller, and Bryanna Hitchcock.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our earliest playtesters (who often had to put up with us changing things on them mid-playtest): Shane Liebling, Robert Bohl, Meghan Dornbrock, Jeffrey Dieterle, James Holder, Sean Kelly, Janet Molson, Jamie Easton, Ryan Leandres, Jess Coughlin, Sean “Seamus” Horwich, Aaron Friesen, Kit Kreider, and Amelia Broverman. Additionally, thanks go to everyone who participated in playtest one-shots at Dreamation and GenCon in 2016.

Thanks also to the following late-alpha and beta playtesters: Alex Dudka, Kate Bullock, Daniel Sos, Stephen James, Mikael, Ole Peder og Per-Karsten aka “the soviet shadow”, Whit Carter, Erin Kisner, Peter Ortmann, Ian Brown, Modessa Jacobs, Sabe Jones, Misha “Moth Chan”, Tim Jensen, Willow Palacek, Shari Corey, Sophie Lagace, Bryanna Hitchcock, Sandy Jacobs-Tolle, Edmund Metheny, Jonathan Siregar, Rob Deobald, Rachelle Shelkey, Erica Stevenson, Daryna Dudka, Angela Duvall-Morgan, William Nichols, Ariana Tobias, Tim Salisbury, and George Austin.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who made our runaway success on Kickstarter possible, with special acknowledgement to Jason Cordova, Kate Bullock, and the rest of The Gauntlet community for yelling their enthusiasm at people until they backed the campaign. Keep it up, you glorious weirdos.

APPENDIX A

CONVENTION AND ONE-SHOT PREP

While *The Watch* is designed to be played as a campaign, it works quite well as a convention game or one-shot for a group with an uncertain schedule or inconsistent roster of players. The default setup instructions assume a first session that is spent mostly on character and world creation, laying the groundwork for a campaign of around 10 to 13 sessions. As such, here are guidelines to follow when running *The Watch* as a one-session or convention game.

(Don't forget! You need to provide adequate content warnings both before your game, and when just getting started, as discussed in *Dangerous issues: MCing with care* (page 138).)

First: aim for a running time of about four hours

Even with a shortened setup procedure, you're still looking at character and world creation of about 45 minutes to an hour. If you only have a two hour slot, some players are likely to end up feeling short changed in terms of spotlight, especially if you have five players. *The Watch* runs much better in a four-hour slot: you'll end up with about two and half hours to create your story, after the inevitable breaks, which will give you plenty of time to give everyone spotlight, tie the world into interesting story knots, and achieve a measure of resolution at the end of the session.

Second: use shortcuts to cut down time spent on character creation

This means being prepared to push through character creation quickly, omitting some unneeded steps, and doing other things prior to the session rather than doing them collectively as a group.

Prior to play, select the Shadow options yourself. Also, create your NPCs ahead of time: you'll need a Watch Commander, possibly a second-in-command, a clan elder, and enough NPCs to round out the squad.

Optional: Something we're a big fan of is using sites like Shutterstock to cheaply print character images from Pinterest or other image-collecting sites to use at the table. Then make the prints available to the players at character creation; it will really help them get a feel for their characters, especially if they are playing someone who is radically unlike themselves. Also, as an MC, being able to toss out a photo and say "that's Watch Commander Paemo" or "this is Elder Draile" is a great way of breathing life into NPCs quickly.

During character creation, tell your players to start with one additional playbook move and one additional Jaded move, just to make sure that each PC gets to be unique, since you only have the one session.

When you sit down at the play, your checklist should look like this:

1. Everyone should introduce themselves by name and preferred pronoun(s) [he/she/they/____]
2. Read the introductory text aloud to the players.
3. Read the playbooks descriptions on the MC sheet and let players choose theirs. They should fill out the following in this order:
 - i. Name: they can choose from the list or make up their own
 - ii. Gender, Presentation, and Demeanour: choosing from the list is highly encouraged but not necessary
 - iii. Gear: make sure they select their upgrades and detail the symbol of their clan
 - iv. Rank: they can choose from any of the first four ranks but only one of them can be Corporal
 - v. Clan and Stats: these can be found on the back of their sheets
 - vi. Moves: they each get to choose moves based on their playbook. *Remember to have the players select 1 additional playbook move and 1 Jaded move.*
4. Ask everyone to introduce their characters, including look and personality; everyone should write down the other characters' names in their Camaraderie box during this step.
5. One at a time, ask each player to choose options from 'The Ties That Bind' on their playbook. They can fill in as little or as many as they choose, but each time they do they gain Camaraderie with the person they wrote in.
6. Ask each player only *one* of the 'The Opening Days' questions
7. Read off the names of the all moves on the move sheets; go into more detail if you want.
8. Have everyone work through the **Start of Session** move, which includes a mission to get everyone directly into the action and dealing with its fallout.

Third: standardize which missions you run

Some missions are just harder to work into the fiction than others, especially if you don't have the benefit of an ongoing campaign. As such, we've discovered that it's best to follow a standard setup when running one-shots.

Start the session with the **rescue a clan leader** mission: there is a clan elder who has valuable intelligence about the Watch and its weaknesses who has been captured by the enemy, and the PCs have been sent to either recover that elder or make sure that they can't reveal vital secrets to the enemy.

By the end of the mission, your characters should be deep behind enemy lines, wounded, with an elder in bad shape that they have to decide how to help. (Personally, we like to have the elder be kept unconscious by foul Shadow sorcery, but that's a matter of personal taste.) By the time your PCs manage to extricate themselves from the mess that the mission leaves them in, get back to camp, make their report, and have time to blow off some steam, you should have an hour to an hour and a half left in the session.

That is when you tell the players that they are starting a second mission: **defend a fort**. The fort just so happens to be their own. Inform the PCs that they are awoken by a concerted attack in the middle of the night by a large Shadow force. If you have any hard moves to use, inflict harm on some of the PCs to start with, and play out the mission.

By the time the mission is over, you should have lots of bodies and/or casualties. If you kill at least one NPC that the PCs care about, there will be funeral arrangements to be made, or perhaps your PCs will decide to go haring off recklessly after the enemy. However it goes, the end of the second mission should leave you with about half an hour to wrap the session and do character debriefs.

Because it is inevitable that you'll end on a cliffhanger, as a character epilogue we like to ask people to describe what the one shot of their character is that they would see as a teaser for "next week's episode of *The Watch*", but again, that's a matter of personal taste.

Lastly: leave time for player meta conversation at the end

If you can, try not to run to the very end of the slot. You'll probably find that at least one of your players wants to have a conversation about things that came up for them during play, and it's important to leave space for that sort of conversation.

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