

 ROLLQUEST

ASHFALL

A d100 game of embers, dread and endurance

SYSTEM REFERENCE FOR GAME MASTERS AND PLAYERS

ASHFALL



Written for RollQuest. The rules match the game systems as they ship in RollQuest; the tables are generated from the systems' own data.

Illustrations were generated with an AI image model and reviewed by RollQuest.

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INTRODUCTION

ASHFALL

*Gaslight survival horror under
a sky that will not stop falling.*

Seven years ago the mountains at the top of the world opened and began to snow ash. It has not stopped. The river cities of the Hearth Concord ration coal, light, bread and hope, and out in the drifts beyond the boundary lamps the ash has started to remember what it used to be.

You play lamplighters, archivists, rail engineers, clerks, priests, reporters and thieves: ordinary people with a trade, who notice what others would rather not, and who sometimes go and look.

Ashfall is a game of percentile tests rolled under your skill, of named results from Triumph down to Disaster, of luck that burns away when you spend it, and of what it costs to know. One player is the Game Master (GM), who runs the world, its people and the things in the grey; everyone else plays an investigator.

You can win. You never win cheaply.



Vellmoor, from the river

THE WORLD UNDER THE ASH

"Light the posts at the bell, trim them at midnight, fill them at dawn. If a post is cold when you reach it, do not look for the reason. Relight it and walk on. If it is cold again when you come back, then you may look, but take someone with you."

LAMP-WARD STANDING ORDERS, VELLMOOR, THIRD REVISION, 993 AE

This chapter is the world your characters live in: how it came to be, who holds power in it and what life feels like under a sky that will not stop falling.

THE HEARTH CONCORD

The Hearth Concord is a league of river cities strung along the Vell and its tributaries, bound together by treaty, by rail and by a shared faith in fire. It is a gaslight age. Steam engines haul coal and grain between the cities, telegraph wire hums beside every line, and the presses turn out newspapers by the tonne. The Concord writes everything down and keeps most of it.

THE FIRST HEARTH

Nearly a thousand years ago, on a bank of the Vell where Vellmoor now stands, a handful of river families lit a fire and agreed that it would never go out. It was a practical promise before it was a sacred one: a fire everyone could carry a flame from was a fire nobody had to fight over. The night it was lit is the start of the Concord's calendar. Years since are counted AE, After the Ember; years before it are BE. The current year is 998 AE.

That fire still burns. It is the Mother Hearth, under a domed hall in the middle of Vellmoor, and every other public fire in the Concord was lit from it or from a fire that was. Each city keeps its own hearth, a public fire tended day and night. Parish hearths are lit from the city hearth, and household fires from the parish.

Carrying a flame from a hearth is an old courtesy. Since the Ashfall it has become a civic duty, and in some districts a matter of survival.

RAIL, WIRE, POWDER AND PAPER

Rail ties the cities together, with the Grisholt junction at the knot of the net and a timetable close to a holy text. Telegraph wire runs beside every line, read by more clerks than anyone likes to admit. Muzzle-loaders are still common outside the cities; breech-loading carbines and revolvers are new, costly and much wanted, and most people who carry a weapon carry a blade, a bar or a hammer. The respectable broadsheets print what the Assessors allow; the penny sheets print what people saw. The asylums have been full since the second winter.

THE ASHFALL

In Ashmark of 991 AE, in a single night, the Cinder Crown opened.

The Crown is a ring of dead mountains in the far north. It was long quiet, on no trade route, and visited by nobody but surveyors. Telegraph stations two hundred miles south reported a light on the horizon "like a door left open in a dark house". By morning the stations had stopped answering.

Ash began to fall that afternoon. It fell for a season, which everyone expected, and then it went on falling, which nobody did. The Banner-Sworn regiments marched north before the first winter to see what had happened to the Crown. Few came back, and those who did would not say what they had seen.

Seven years later:

- *The sun* is a pale coin behind the grey. Noon looks like late evening, and true night is darker than anyone's grandparents remember.
- *Harvests fail*. Grain comes in thin and grey-skinned. The cities ration bread, coal and lamp oil by warrant.
- *Ash-lung* fills the hospitals: a cough that starts dry and ends wet and black. Masks are worn outdoors by anyone who can get one.
- *The drifts*. Ash lies knee-deep on the roads between cities and deeper in the hollows. Rail crews clear the lines daily. Villages that could not keep their roads open have been abandoned, or have stopped answering.
- *The boundary lamps*. In the first winter every city ringed itself with lit posts. Inside the ring is the Concord. Outside it is the grey.

The official account is that the Crown is a volcano of an unusual kind, and that the ash will thin "within the decade". The official account has said that for seven years.

"Mother says it is only dust. Father says it is only dust. The man who sweeps our step says it is only dust, and he has stopped sweeping it."

FROM A CHILD'S COPYBOOK, FOUND IN AN ABANDONED HOUSE IN
THE NINTH DISTRICT

WHAT THE ASH IS

The ash is not dust. It is the remains of something that burned somewhere else: a world, a god, a mind, or all three. It burned for a very long time, and it remembers.

Few in the Concord know this for certain. What the ash remembers leaks into the world in four ways, and each of them is a rule in this book.

BREATHE IT AND YOU DREAM

Breathe enough ash and you begin to dream its memories: cities that were never built here, skies of the wrong colour, the long slow agony of being fuel. The dreams leave marks. Ash-workers' hands shake. Some hear whispering at sunrise. A few grow a grey, hard skin. In the rules this is **Corruption**, which only ever rises.

LEARN TO READ IT AND YOU CANNOT STOP

The patterns the ash makes as it falls, settles and drifts are not random. They can be read, the way a scholar reads a dead language. Every scrap of that reading is **Ashlore**, and Ashlore can never be un-known. Every point of it lowers the most Sanity you can hold. You can know a great deal or stay whole, but not both.

WHERE NO LAMP

BURNS, MEMORIES WALK

Where drifts lie deep and no lamp burns, the ash's memories stand up and walk. These are the **Unlit**. They are not ghosts of the Concord's dead, though they sometimes wear the shapes of them. They are memories of the burned place acting themselves out, over and over, in the nearest material to hand. Light drives most of them back; flame from a hearth drives them further. Some kinds have learned to put lamps out.

THE UNLIT SEEN SO FAR INCLUDE:

Drift-walkers. Human-shaped heaps of ash that walk a fixed path, again and again, and pull in whoever is standing on it.

Lamp-eaters. Low, quick things that come for the boundary posts and leave the glass unbroken and the wick cold.

Hollow mourners. The shape of someone you lost, standing at the edge of the light, calling you by the name only they used.

The grey choir. A crowd that is not a crowd, heard more often than seen, singing a hymn with no words in it.

The drowned watch. Shapes that rise from the harbour mud at Lantern Sound with the tide, wearing the faces of a ferry crew lost in the first winter.

BENEATH THEM, THE KINDLED

Beneath the Unlit, deeper in the ash and further back in its memory, stir the **Kindled**. They are what burned the other place. For them a world is fuel, and ours has just been laid in the grate. They do not walk the drifts the way the Unlit do. They send heralds: things that look almost like people and carry a warmth no one should be able to feel through a coat.

A small and frightened group of scholars has started to say aloud what the cinderbooks have hinted at for years: the Ashfall may not have been a disaster at all, but a sowing.

THE SHAPE OF THE CONCORD

Picture a long grey river running south to the sea, with cities on it like beads on a string, each a knot of brick, iron and smoke inside a ring of lamp-posts. Between them run the rail lines, kept open by crews with shovels and steam ploughs. Everything else is drift: grey fields, grey woods, and roads that are only roads where someone has walked recently.

North, past the last farms, the drifts deepen and the land climbs towards the Crown. Nobody goes there now except the Last Banner, the desperate and the curious. South, at the river's mouth, the sea is still the sea, though it has a grey skin on it most mornings.

VELLMOOR

The Concord's capital, built on both banks of the Vell and on the hundred bridges between them. Vellmoor holds the Mother Hearth, the Assessors' Hall and the great archives, which run deep under the bridges in vaults kept dry by steam pumps. The city is crowded with refugees from the abandoned towns and divided by ration warrants, district against district. When its lamps fail, the fog off the river and the ash in the air become the same grey thing.

The old districts climb the east bank in terraces of soot-black brick. The bridges carry shops, chapels and whole streets of lodging-houses, so that a person can be born, married and buried without ever setting foot on dry land. The newer districts on the west bank were built for factory hands in the boom years before the Ashfall; several of them now have abandonment notices nailed to their doors. The Ninth District, struck off two winters ago, is still dark. People say there are lights in it some nights, and that they are the wrong colour.

GRISHOLT

The rail junction where every line in the Concord meets. Grisholt is iron, coal smoke, sidings and company time, and nothing in it stops. Its engine sheds never close, its telegraph office never sleeps and its turntables groan day and night. The town runs on the company clock, and a Grisholt worker can tell you the time to the minute without looking. Lately its people have started to dream the same dreams.

LANTERN SOUND

The Concord's port, where the Vell meets the sea and the harbour lights are the brightest in the world. Ships still sail from Lantern Sound to coasts the ash has not reached, or has. Lately they come back with too few crew, and the crew who come back do not talk about the ones who stayed aboard. At low tide the harbour mud is a grey plain studded with old hulls, and some nights the tide brings things in that were not there when it went out.

TALLOW CROSS

A factory town of chandlers, foundries and rendering works on the Grisholt line. Tallow Cross has not stopped working since the ash came. The furnaces burn day and night, the candles go out by the cartload and the town pays its taxes early. Nobody there seems to sleep, and nobody seems to mind. Visitors notice how warm the streets are, even at night, and how the ash does not settle on the roofs.

THE DRIFTS AND THE DEAD VILLAGES

Between the cities lie the drifts, and in the drifts lie the places that could not keep their roads open. Some were evacuated in good order, their bells taken down and their hearths carried to the nearest city in sealed lanterns. Others simply stopped answering the telegraph. Ash-Walkers go out to them for salvage. Not all of them come back, and not all of those who come back come back alone.

THE CINDER CROWN

A ring of dead mountains at the top of the world, open now, and the source of everything. Nobody has mapped it since 991 AE. The Northern Survey's field di-

ary came back without its surveyor; its last pages are not in his hand.

FACTIONS AND POWERS

THE LAMP-WARD

The civic keepers of the boundary lights. The Ward lights, trims, guards and refuels the lamp-posts that ring every Concord city, and goes out into the grey when one fails. Its lamplighters carry hooked poles, oil and a hearth-lit wick. Underfunded, overstretched and respected, the Ward is the likeliest employer of investigators: it needs people who will go and look, and it has stopped asking too many questions about what they find.

THE CHOIR OF CINDERS

A faith that reads falling ash as scripture. Its members gather on rooftops in the grey afternoon to watch it fall and chant what they read. Most are harmless and many are kind: they run soup kitchens and sit with the dying when nobody else will. Its inner circles are not harmless at all. They know the Kindled are coming and have decided to be in the right place when they arrive. Their cantors lead the rooftop congregations; their ash-tongued elders, who have not eaten in years, read the fall in ways that turn out to be true.

THE PALE PHYSIC

A society of doctors who discovered that ash-dreams, harvested from the sleeping and distilled, dull pain better than laudanum and make the dying calm. Their clinics are clean, generous and full. They wear white, they are very polite, and nobody asks what happens to the patients whose dreams run out. The Physic's surgeons are among the best in the Concord. Its orderlies are big, quiet and gentle with the patients, until they are not.

THE LAST BANNER

What is left of the Banner-Sworn regiments that marched north in 991 AE. Those who came back kept their discipline, their colours and their grudge. The Banner hires out as guards and escorts and does the Concord's dirty work beyond the lamps. It believes the Crown can be fought. It may be right.

THE CONCORD ASSESSORS

The officials who decide which districts get coal and which are abandoned. They work from ledgers, maps and survey reports, and their rulings are law. Some Assessors are careful, decent people doing an impossible sum. Some have noticed that abandoned districts can be bought cheaply, and that the Kindled seem to prefer certain streets.

THE UNLIT AND THE KINDLED

The two powers that are not people. The Unlit are a place: they are where the light stops, and most fights with them are really fights about light. The Kindled are a plan: their heralds want something specific, such as a book read aloud, a hearth put out, a district abandoned or a door opened. Neither is negotiable in the way people are. The Choir of Cinders believes otherwise.

EVERYDAY LIFE

- *Masks and goggles* outdoors, for anyone who can afford them. Rag masks for everyone else. A cough in a crowded tram makes everyone look round.
- *Ration warrants* for bread, coal and lamp oil, stamped by district. Forged warrants are the commonest crime in the Concord, and a warrant-forgery

is a respected trade in some streets.

- *Lamps everywhere.* People carry a light at noon. Leaving a house without one is a sign of despair, or of something worse.
- *The bell at dusk.* Every city rings its hearth bell when the boundary lamps are lit. Anyone outside the ring after the bell is on their own.
- *Abandonment notices.* An Assessors' ruling, nailed to a district's doors, gives its people thirty days to leave. The coal stops on the thirty-first.
- *Sweeping.* Every household sweeps its step, its sills and its roof gutters, every day. A house that has stopped sweeping is a house to worry about.
- *Hearth-flame.* A lantern lit from the parish hearth is worth more than one lit from a match, and everybody knows it, even the ones who say they don't believe it.

MONEY

The Concord counts in pennies (p), shillings (s, twelve pennies) and crowns (Cr, twenty shillings). A clerk earns about a crown a month. A meal in a cookshop is a few pennies; a good revolver is a crown or more; a seat on the Grisholt express is half a crown and a ration warrant. Equipment lists every price.

RECKONING TIME

The Concord keeps the Ash Reckoning: twelve months of 28 days and one festival day outside the months, the Long Dark, at the turn of the year. On the Long Dark every lamp in a city is put out for an hour and relit from the hearth. Since the Ashfall it has become the most frightening hour of the year.

THE ASH RECKONING

Month	Days
1. Hollowmonth	28
2. Ashmark	28
3. Emberwane	28
4. Greyrime	28
5. Bleakmoor	28
6. Mourntide	28
7. Rotfall	28
8. Duskmere	28
9. Ironwake	28
10. Palelight	28
11. Withermonth	28
12. Lastdark	28
13. The Long Dark (<i>a festival day outside the months</i>)	1

THE WEEK

Length	Days, in order
6 days	Emberday, Ashday, Greyday, Mournday, Ironday, Darkday

Several of the month names are older than the Ashfall: Ashmark, Emberwane and Lastdark were on the calendar long before the Crown opened. People remark on that more than they used to.

TONE AND THEMES

Ashfall is horror, and it is survival. The tone is grey, close and human: soot on the cuffs, a lamp guttering at the end of a long street, a clerk who knows exactly how much your district is worth.

- *Knowledge always costs.* Every true answer is paid for in Sanity, Kindling, Corruption, time, money or a friend.
- *The lamps are never enough.* Light helps; it does not save. The oil runs low, the wick gutters and the posts are a long way apart.

- *People are the second horror.* The Choir, the Physic, the Assessors and frightened neighbours do more harm than the Unlit do.
- *Small kindnesses matter.* A shared lamp, a flame carried from a hearth, a door opened after the bell. In a world this grey, they are what the characters are fighting for.
- *Endurance, not glory.* Nobody in Ashfall becomes a legend. Characters get better at their trade and harder to frighten, and they pay for every step.

WHO YOU ARE

You play an investigator: an ordinary person with a trade, who noticed something and did not look away. Your archetype is who you were before the ash came down: a Lamplighter on the boundary posts, a Banner-Sworn veteran, an Ash-Walker who scavenges the drifts, a Cutpurse, an Archivist from the Vellmoor stacks, a Physician, a Rail Engineer, an Assessor's Clerk, a Penny Journalist or a Hearth-Priest.

You are not chosen and you are not special, which is exactly why you matter. The Concord's institutions are too slow, too frightened or too compromised to deal with what is happening in the grey. The Lamp-Ward hires people like you because nobody else will go. You will not save the world. If you are clever, brave and lucky, you might save a street, a parish or a trainload of people, and find out a little more of what the ash wants. That is the game.



"They asked me why I took the Ward's shilling. I said somebody has to walk the posts. They said, yes, but why you? And I thought about it, and the honest answer is that I had already seen one, and I could not go back to pretending I hadn't."

A LAMPLIGHTER, INTERVIEWED FOR THE PENNY SHEETS



Post forty-one has gone cold

How to Play

Ashfall is a conversation. The GM describes where you are; you say what your character does; the GM says what happens. You roll only when what you are trying might fail and failing would matter. This chapter is that roll: how to make it, read it and rescue it.

The Test

Every roll that decides whether something works is a **test**. To make a test:

1. The GM says what you are testing: a characteristic (such as Reflex), a skill (such as Climb), your Sanity or your Ember. That number is *your number* for the test, usually between 1 and 99.
2. You roll a d100: a number from 1 to 100.
3. If the roll is at or under your number, you pass. If it is over, you fail.

Low is good. A character with Climb 50 passes on any roll from 1 to 50 and fails on 51 to 100, so their number is literally their percentage chance.

Result Bands

Band	When	Counts as	Buttons offered after it
Triumph	A roll of 1, whatever the number.	A pass, and the best result	None
Sharp	A pass at a fifth of the number or under, rounded down.	A pass	None
Solid	A pass at half the number or under, rounded down.	A pass	None
Success	Any other pass: a roll at or under the number.	A pass	None
Failure	Any other roll over the number.	A fail	Press the test, Spend Ember, Spend Fate to reroll
Disaster	A roll of 100, whatever the number; or a roll of 96 or more, when the number is under 50.	A fail, and the worst result	Spend Fate to reroll

Halves and fifths always round down: half of 45 is 22, and a fifth of 45 is 9. So a character with Melee 45 gets a Sharp on 2 to 9, a Solid on 10 to 22 and a plain Success on 23 to 45. Here are the bands at some common numbers. A Triumph is always a roll of 1, whatever the number, so it is not in the table.

Rolling a d100

Roll two ten-sided dice of different colours, and say before you roll which is the tens and which is the units. Read the tens die first: a 30 on the tens and a 7 on the units is 37. A 00 on the tens with a 1 is 01, which is 1; a 00 with a 0 is 100. If you have one ten-sided die, roll it twice, tens first.

◆ In RollQuest

On an Ashfall sheet in RollQuest, click a characteristic, a skill, Sanity or Ember to test it. The d100 is rolled for you, and the result names its band under the number. Each weapon has a Strike button (on a firearm, Shoot) that tests its skill, and a Damage button.

Results: The Six Bands

A test does not just pass or fail. How low you rolled matters, and every result lands in one of six named bands. Read them from the top: the first that fits is your result.

BANDS AT COMMON NUMBERS

Number	Sharp	Solid	Success	Failure	Disaster
10	2	3–5	6–10	11–95	96–100
25	2–5	6–12	13–25	26–95	96–100
40	2–8	9–20	21–40	41–95	96–100
45	2–9	10–22	23–45	46–95	96–100
50	2–10	11–25	26–50	51–99	100
60	2–12	13–30	31–60	61–99	100
75	2–15	16–37	38–75	76–99	100
90	2–18	19–45	46–90	91–99	100

Doubles such as 11, 22 or 33 mean nothing special in Ashfall. Triumph and Disaster are the best and worst a roll can be.

WHAT THE BANDS MEAN

The bands give the GM a ladder to describe results with, and some rules care which rung you reached.

- **Triumph:** everything goes your way, and something extra besides. The lock opens and the door behind it was not even bolted. The GM decides what the extra is.
- **Sharp:** a clean, impressive success. Some weapons and creatures do something more on a Sharp: the Lamplighter's Hook Pole trips a foe.
- **Solid:** a good, firm success. Some tests demand at least a Solid: the first time you perform a rite, and a shot at long range.
- **Success:** you do it. No more, no less.
- **Failure:** you do not do it, or not in time, or not without cost. You may be able to try again with one of the buttons below.
- **Disaster:** it goes wrong in the worst way the situation allows. The GM decides how. Only Fate can save a Disaster.

When two results meet head on, as in a contest, the higher band wins. That order matters in fights; see "Contests" below.

FOR THE GM

Describe the band, not the number. "Solid" tells the table the lamplighter got up the post quickly and cleanly; "Success" says she made it with her knuckles skinned. When a Triumph or a Disaster comes up, give it something concrete: a clue that arrives early, a lantern that shatters, a door that slams behind them. Keep the Disasters fair. The roll is the dice's fault; what it costs should still make sense in the story.

WHO ROLLS, AND WHEN

You roll for your own character. The GM rolls for everyone else: the people the characters meet, the creatures in the grey and anything the world itself does.

Roll when the outcome is uncertain and failing would matter. Lighting a lamp in a warm room is not a test. Lighting one on a boundary post in a gale, with something moving in the drift, is.

Roll once. A test decides what happens. You cannot roll the same test again just because you didn't like the result, unless one of the buttons in "After a Failed Test" lets you, or the situation genuinely changes.

The GM names the test. You say what you do; the GM says what it tests. Often there is a choice, and the fiction decides it:

- **Characteristics** cover what anyone could attempt with raw ability. Brawn to force a door or hold one shut, Vigour to keep going through cold and hunger, Frame to wedge yourself where something cannot pull you out, Reflex to snatch, catch or react, Presence to command a room, Wits to spot the pattern no one else has, Resolve to stand your ground, Learning to remember something you once read.
- **Skills** cover what training makes possible. If a skill fits, use it. A Penny Journalist talking her way past a doorman tests Patter, not Presence.
- **Sanity** is tested when something terrible must be faced. See "Sanity and Dread" in Rules of Play.
- **Ember** is tested when nothing but luck can decide it: whether there is a cab at the end of this street, whether the night porter is the one who owes you a favour, whether the last match is dry.

HARDER AND EASIER TESTS

The GM can make a test harder or easier in three ways. Use the one that fits best; rarely more than one.

FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE

Fortune means roll two d100s and keep the lower. **Misfortune** means roll two and keep the higher. Since low is good, Fortune helps and Misfortune hurts. For something very much in your favour or very much against you, the GM can give Fortune $\times 2$ or Misfortune $\times 2$: roll three and keep the lowest, or the highest.

FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE

Mode	Roll	Keep
Fortune	2 d100s	The lowest
Misfortune	2 d100s	The highest
Fortune $\times 2$	3 d100s	The lowest
Misfortune $\times 2$	3 d100s	The highest

Fortune and Misfortune are the usual way to reflect circumstances: working with the right tools, in good light, with time to spare; or in the dark, under fire,

with your hands shaking. Several talents give Fortune on particular tests, and weather can bring Misfortune to tests to spot things (see "Weather" in Rules of Play).

When reasons for both apply, the GM weighs them. Most tables let one Fortune and one Misfortune cancel, so you roll normally. *This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.*

A BONUS OR A PENALTY TO THE NUMBER

Some rules add to or take from the number you are testing against. Steeled Mind's Resist is a Sanity test at +10; the Banner Cuirass gives -10 to Stealth; Ashen Skin gives -20 to Presence tests with the uncorrupted. The bands are worked out from the changed number: a Sanity of 70 resisting at +10 is a test against 80, with a Solid on 40 or under.

The GM can do the same for a situation: +20 for an easy job, -20 for a hard one. *This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.*

A TEST THAT NEEDS A BETTER BAND

Sometimes a plain pass is not enough. The rules call for a **Solid test** (only a Solid, Sharp or Triumph succeeds) in two places: the first time you perform a rite, and a firearm shot at long range. Beyond those, the GM can call for a Solid test whenever a plain success would not do, or a Sharp test for something close to impossible. *This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.*

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

To roll with Fortune, Misfortune, Fortune ×2 or Misfortune ×2 on the Form View, press and hold the characteristic, skill or button, choose the mode from the list that opens, and click Roll (on the Canvas sheet, right-click instead). Weather the GM sets on the scene adds its Misfortune to a plain roll: a click, or Flat. A mode you choose is used as it is, in place of the weather's: RollQuest never cancels one against the other.

AFTER A FAILED TEST

A Failure does not have to be the end of it. Straight after a Failure you may choose one of three things, each with a price. After a Disaster only the last one is open to you.

AFTER A FAILED TEST

Button	Offered after	What it does	Never on
Press the test	Failure	Roll the same test again. The new roll stands, marked Pressed. If it fails too, the result warns: "The press failed. You pushed past where you should have stopped, and something answers: the GM brings the cost of it now, in full."	A weapon's Strike or Shoot, Melee, Pistol, Long Gun, Dodge, Sanity, Ember and Ashlore
Spend Ember	Failure	Pay Ember point for point to lower the roll to your number. It becomes a plain Success.	Sanity and Ember
Spend Fate to reroll	Failure and Disaster	Spend 1 Fate point and roll the test again. The new roll stands, marked Fated.	Nothing: every test

You get one. Whatever a press, a spend or a reroll produces, it stands: you cannot press a reroll, or spend Ember on a pressed test. Moving on first means you have accepted the Failure.

PRESS THE TEST

You push harder than is wise. Before you roll again, say how: you lean further out from the post, you keep picking the lock while the footsteps come closer, you go back into the archive after the lamp-oil runs low. The GM should tell you what failing again would cost, if it isn't obvious.

Then roll the same test again. The new roll stands, marked *Pressed*. If it passes, you did it. If it fails, the GM brings the cost of pushing, now and in full: you fall, you are caught, the stack collapses, something hears you.

You cannot press a fight. Melee, Dodge, Pistol and Long Gun tests and weapon attacks are never pressed, and neither are Sanity, Ember or Ashlore tests: you cannot will yourself saner, luckier or wiser.

SPEND EMBER

Ember is your luck, and it burns down. After a Failure you may spend Ember, point for point, to bring the roll down to your number. A Climb of 50 rolled at 58 costs 8 Ember, and becomes a pass.

- A spend always buys a plain Success, so Ember cannot rescue a test that needed a Solid.
- You must pay the whole difference, and you cannot spend on a Sanity or Ember test, or after a Disaster.
- A pass bought with Ember does not tick the skill for Tempering (see Rules of Play). Luck teaches you nothing.

Ember does not come back with rest. Only Tempering, between stories, can raise it again, and only a little.

SPEND FATE TO REROLL

You have 3 Fate points. Fate is the rare moment the world decides you are not finished yet. After a Failure or a Disaster, on any test at all, you may spend 1 Fate point to roll the test again. The new roll stands, marked *Fated*. Fate also lets you stagger to your feet when you are Broken (see Rules of Play). Your Fate points all come back when you Recuperate.

WHICH TESTS ALLOW WHAT

Tests	Press	Ember	Ticked on a pass
A weapon's Strike or Shoot; Ashlore	No	Yes	No
Every other skill (37 of them)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dodge; Long Gun; Melee; Pistol	No	Yes	Yes
Every characteristic (Brawn, Vigour, Frame, Reflex, Presence, Wits, Resolve, Learning)	Yes	Yes	No
Ember; Sanity	No	No	No

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

After a failed test you rolled from your sheet, the buttons appear under the result in one row: Press the test, Spend Ember and Spend Fate to reroll, with Keep result at the end. A button you can't afford is greyed out with the reason, such as No Fate Points left. Rolling anything else, or clicking Keep result, puts them away. A strike resolved at a creature through Target, and the test buttons on talents, rites and kit, don't offer them: spend by hand on the sheet if the GM agrees.

CONTESTS

When someone strikes at you in melee, you do not just stand there. A contest lets you answer the blow.

1. **The attacker tests.** The attacker rolls the weapon's skill (usually Melee). On a Failure or a Disaster, the blow misses and there is no contest.
2. **The defender answers.** If the attack passed, the defender chooses one response and rolls it: *Dodge*, a Dodge test, to get out of the way; *Fight back*, a Melee test, to meet the blow with your own; or *Take the hit*, no roll: the attack lands on the attacker's result.
3. **Compare the bands.** The better band wins. If the defender wins, the blow misses. If the attacker wins, it lands and they roll damage.
4. **Equal bands** go to whoever had the higher number for the test (the attacker's skill against the defender's Dodge or Melee).
5. **Equal bands and equal numbers** go to the defender if they dodged, and to the attacker if the defender fought back.

BAND RANK		RESPONSES		
Rank	Band	Response	Test	A full tie goes to
1	Triumph	Dodge	Dodge	The defender: the blow misses
2	Sharp			
3	Solid	Fight back	Melee	The attacker: the blow lands
4	Success			
5	Failure			
6	Disaster			

A defender whose response fails has lost: a Failure is lower than any pass.

How many blows you may answer in a round is left to the table. Most tables let you answer every blow aimed at you, and answering does not use your turn. *This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.*

Firearms can't be dodged or fought back. A shot is a test of Pistol or Long Gun against the shooter's number, and it hits on a pass. See "Firearms" in Rules of Play for range.

FOR THE GM: TABLE RULING

The rules decide only whether the blow lands. If a defender wins with Fight back, describe the attacker's blow being turned aside. Many tables also let a winning Fight back land a blow of its own: the defender rolls their weapon's damage against the attacker. RollQuest does not enforce it: a won defence only turns the blow into a miss, and any damage back is rolled and applied by hand. Decide before the first fight and keep to it.

OPPOSED TESTS OUTSIDE A FIGHT

When two people test against each other outside a fight (a Cutpurse's Stealth against a watchman's Listen, a clerk's Patter against an Assessor's Read People), run it the same way. Both roll; the better band wins; equal bands go to the higher number; and if the numbers are equal too, the one resisting (the watchman, the Assessor) holds. Both failing usually means nothing changes: the Cutpurse is not noticed, but gets no further either. *This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.*

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

When a character strikes at a token through a melee weapon's Target button on their sheet, and the strike would hit, the target's player gets a Defend prompt showing the attack, with Dodge and Fight back (each with the defender's number) and Take the hit. For an enemy, the GM answers it; when RollQuest can't read the enemy's Dodge or Melee, the GM rules Pass or Fail instead. RollQuest compares the bands and turns a won defence into a miss. A plain click on Strike, without a target, opens no prompt, and nor does the ready-made Weapon strike macro. Opposed tests outside a fight are two ordinary tests: compare them yourselves.

AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Edda Callow is a Lamplighter on the boundary posts of a Vellmoor district. Her sheet shows Spot 85, Climb 50, Stealth 45, Melee 65, Dodge 62, Ember 45 and 3 Fate. It is night, the ash is falling thick, and post forty-one has gone cold.

EXAMPLE · A TEST WITH MISFORTUNE

The GM asks for Spot to see what is moving in the drift past the post. Thick ashfall gives Misfortune on Spot tests, so Edda's player rolls two d100s and keeps the higher: 14 and 63, so 63. Against Spot 85, a Sharp is 17 or under and a Solid 42 or under, so 63 is a plain Success. Without the ash, the 14 would have been a Sharp. The GM says: *"Something low and quick, the size of a dog, but it moves like spilled water. It's at the foot of post forty-two."*

EXAMPLE · A FAILURE RESCUED WITH EMBER

Edda has to relight forty-one from the top. Climb 50 against an iced post: she rolls 58. That is over 50, so it fails. It isn't a Disaster: her number is not under 50, and the roll isn't 100. Three buttons are open. She could press, but the GM says that if she falls from this height in front of the lamp-eater, she lands among it. She spends Ember instead: 58 less 50 is 8 Ember, so her Ember drops from 45 to 37 and the roll becomes 50, a plain Success. She is up the post with the wick lit. Climb is not ticked, because luck bought the pass.

EXAMPLE · A DISASTER SAVED BY FATE

The lamp-eater flows away towards forty-three. Edda follows on foot to see where it goes: Stealth 45. She rolls 97. Her number is under 50 and the roll is 96 or more, so this is a Disaster, and only one button is open. She spends 1 Fate (3 down to 2) and rerolls: 31. Against 45, a Solid needs 22 or under, so 31 is a Success, marked Fated. She stays downwind and unseen.

EXAMPLE · A CONTEST

At post forty-three a woman with an ash-written face is waiting: a Rooftop Acolyte of the Choir of Cinders, cudgel in hand (Melee 45, Dodge 30). The GM rolls the acolyte's strike: 19. Against 45, a Sharp is 9 or under and a Solid 22 or under, so 19 is a Solid. The blow would land, so Edda answers it. She chooses Dodge (62) and rolls 28. Against 62, a Solid is 31 or under, so she too has a Solid. Equal bands go to the higher number, and her Dodge 62 beats the acolyte's Melee 45. The cudgel whistles past her ear.

On her turn Edda swings her Hook Pole (Melee 65) and rolls 40: over 32, under 65, a Success. The acolyte dodges (30) and rolls 22: over 15, under 30, also a Success. Equal bands again, and Edda's 65 beats the acolyte's 30, so the blow lands. The Hook Pole does 1d6 plus Edda's Heft of 1d4: she rolls 4 and 3, so 7 Impact. The acolyte has no Armour and a Max Wounds of 10, so 7 Wounds go on, and 7 is at least half of 10. The acolyte is Grievous and must test Vigour (50). The GM rolls 73: a Failure. The acolyte drops Unconscious in the ash, and Edda is left alone on the boundary with the lamps, the drift and whatever the lamp-eater went to fetch.



The Lamp-Ward muster room, the night before a walk

MAKING A CHARACTER

An Ashfall character is an ordinary person with a trade and a reason to go out into the grey. Making one takes six steps and about half an hour. You roll your characteristics, choose who you were before the ash came down, spend points on the skills your life gave you, and buy what you carry. There

are no levels and no classes: from then on you change by what you learn, what you find and what the ash does to you.

You need a character sheet, a pencil, two ten-sided dice and a handful of six-sided ones.

Step	What it asks	Notes
Name Your Character	Who walks into the ash? Name them.	
Allocate Characteristics	Roll your eight characteristics and your Ember, each with its own dice. You test by rolling d100 at or under the number, so higher is better.	
Choose an Archetype	Pick a starting archetype: it defines who you were before the Ashfall, and grants its talent.	Pick exactly one.
Spend Skill Points	Your archetype's points buy its eight skills and your Standing; your Pursuits buy anything but Ashlore. At creation no skill may go above 75, your signature skill above 90, and Standing must sit within your archetype's range.	
Starting Funds	What did you scrape together before the ash came down? Roll for the coin in your purse. It pays for your starting gear.	Roll 3d6 shillings.
Starting Gear	Take your starting weapons.	You may skip it.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

In RollQuest, the builder walks you through these six steps and works the numbers out as you go. As a player, click **Build my character** on the banner that appears when your GM asks for a character, or open **Character Sheets** and click **+ Create**; as the GM, click **Character Sheets** on the tool rail, then **New Sheet, Build your own** and **Create Sheet**. A sheet that already has a name (as one made with **Build your own** does) starts at the next step.

BEFORE YOU ROLL: A PERSON

Spend a minute on who this is before the dice decide what they are good at. Three questions are enough:

- **What did you do before the ash?** This is your archetype, and you choose it in step 3. Have one or two in mind.

- **What did you see?** Every investigator has already met the grey once. A drift-walker on the road home, a patient who dreamed the same house as you, a ledger with the wrong numbers in it.
- **Who do you still look after?** A sister in a district marked for abandonment, a parish, a crew, an old commanding officer. The GM will use them, gently and not so gently.

STEP 1: NAME YOUR CHARACTER

Write a name. Concord names are plain and old-fashioned: Edda, Thomas, Marit, Joss, Alder, Hesper, Callow, Voss, Pennick, Ashby, Rooke. Many working people are known by their trade or their district as much as their surname ("Edda off the Ninth posts"). There is no level

to choose: Ashfall has none.

STEP 2: ALLOCATE CHARACTERISTICS

Your eight **characteristics** are your raw ability, and the ninth number, **Ember**, is your luck. Roll each one with its own dice, in the order on the sheet, and write it

down where it falls. You don't move numbers around: a strong character is one who rolled high for Brawn.

Characteristic	What it is	Rolled	Range	Average
Brawn	Strength and the force behind a blow.	3d6 × 5	15 to 90	52.5
Vigour	Health, stamina, and how long you can go on.	3d6 × 5	15 to 90	52.5
Frame	Size and mass. Bigger frames carry more Wounds and hit harder.	(2d6 + 6) × 5	40 to 90	65
Reflex	Speed of hand and foot.	3d6 × 5	15 to 90	52.5
Presence	Bearing, looks, and the weight of your attention.	3d6 × 5	15 to 90	52.5
Wits	Quickness of mind, and the knack of putting things together.	(2d6 + 6) × 5	40 to 90	65
Resolve	Will. Your Sanity starts here, and your Kindling is a fifth of it.	3d6 × 5	15 to 90	52.5
Learning	Schooling and reading. Most archetypes spend it on their trade.	(2d6 + 6) × 5	40 to 90	65
Ember	Luck that burns down. After a failed test, spend Ember point for point to lower the roll to the target.	3d6 × 5	15 to 90	52.5

Every characteristic is a number you test against, so higher is better. Frame, Wits and Learning are rolled with 2d6 + 6, so they are never lower than 40: every adult in the Concord is a decent size, has their wits about them and has had some schooling.

If your table allows it, a player who hates their whole set may throw it away and roll all nine again, keeping the second set. Agree that before anyone rolls. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

◆ **IN ROLLQUEST**

On **Allocate Characteristics**, click **Open Ability Allocator**, then **Roll scores**. Each characteristic and Ember is rolled with its own dice, shown beside it, and lands where it was rolled. **Re-roll all** rolls them again, as often as you click it, so hold to your table's rule; **Confirm** keeps them and **Next** moves on.

WHAT YOUR CHARACTERISTICS GIVE YOU

Several more numbers come from your characteristics. Work them out now; they change only if a characteristic does.

Value	How it is worked out	Limits
Max Wounds	Vigour + Frame, divided by 10 and rounded down.	1 to 99
Sanity	Starts at your Resolve. Horror takes it; very little gives it back.	0 to 99
Max Sanity	99 less your Ashlore. Knowing more leaves less room to stay whole.	0 to 99
Max Kindling	Resolve, divided by 5 and rounded down.	0 to 99

Value	How it is worked out	Limits
Kindling	The inner flame rites burn: your maximum less what you have spent. Catch Breath returns 1; Recuperate returns it all.	0 to 99
Initiative	Reflex, divided by 10 and rounded down. Each battle you roll d10 + Initiative.	0 to 20
Pace	Yards a round. 8; 7 when Brawn and Reflex are both under Frame; 9 when both are over it.	0 to 20
Heft	How many extra damage dice your weight puts behind a blow. The size of those dice: d4 until Brawn plus Frame reaches 165, then d6. Brawn plus Frame under 65 takes 2 from every blow, under 85 takes 1.	See the Heft table
Armour	Taken off every hit before it reaches your Wounds.	0 to 20
Corruption	Starts at 0; Max Corruption is 100.	0 to 100

Heft is the extra damage your size and strength put behind a melee blow. Add Brawn and Frame together and look it up:

Brawn + Frame	Heft (added to a melee weapon's damage)
Under 65	-2
65 to 84	-1
85 to 124	none
125 to 164	+1d4
165 to 204	+1d6
205 to 284	+2d6
285 and up	+3d6, and another d6 for every 80 more

A Heft of "none" adds nothing; -1 and -2 come off every melee blow you land (a blow never does less than 0). A firearm never adds Heft.

Pace is how many yards you can move in a round:

Archetype	Role	Talent	Signature skill	Archetype points	Standing
Lamplighter	Warden	Steeled Mind	Spot	Learning × 2 + Resolve × 2	9 to 30
Banner-Sworn	Soldier	Hardened	Melee	Learning × 2 + Brawn × 2	9 to 30
Ash-Walker	Scavenger	Scavenger	Survival	Learning × 2 + Vigour × 2	0 to 10
Cutpurse	Runner	Quickened	Sleight of Hand	Learning × 2 + Reflex × 2	5 to 20
Archivist	Keeper of Records	Card Index Mind	Archives	Learning × 4	10 to 40
Physician	Doctor	Steady Hands	Physic	Learning × 4	30 to 80
Rail Engineer	Engineer	Gauge and Pressure	Mechanics	Learning × 2 + Brawn × 2	20 to 50
Assessor's Clerk	Official	Follow the Ledger	Ledgers	Learning × 4	15 to 45
Penny Journalist	Reporter	A Name in Every Ward	Patter	Learning × 4	9 to 30
Hearth-Priest	Clergy	Hearth Blessing	Persuade	Learning × 2 + Presence × 2	9 to 60

Archetype points is how many points you will spend on your archetype's skills in the next step. They lean on different characteristics: a Lamplighter's come from Learning and Resolve, an Banner-Sworn's from Learning and Brawn, an Archivist's from Learning alone.

Brawn and Reflex	Pace (yards a round)
Both under Frame	7
Both over Frame	9
Anything else (one under, one over, or either equal to Frame)	8

You also start with 3 Fate points, 0 Wounds and 0 Corruption, and your **Sanity** starts at your Resolve.

STEP 3: CHOOSE AN ARCHETYPE

Your **archetype** is who you were before the Ashfall. It decides which skills your trade points can buy, which one skill you are best at (your **signature** skill), where you stand in society, what you carry and which talent you start with. Choose one.

Standing is your place in Concord society. Each

archetype sets the range it must sit in when you make the character: an Ash-Walker has almost none, a Physician a great deal.

Each archetype also grants a **talent**, a lasting knack described under Advancement in Rules of play. Its **starting kit** is a list of the everyday things you carry for your trade, in words. It adds nothing to your sheet: anything with game numbers (a weapon, armour, a lamp) you buy in step 6.

Archetype	Its eight archetype skills (Standing is always added)
Lamplighter	Climb, Spot, Listen, Melee, Occultism, Navigate, Mechanics, Intimidate
Banner-Sworn	Melee, Long Gun, Dodge, Field Dressing, Intimidate, Survival, Throw, Stealth
Ash-Walker	Survival, Track, Wildlore, Navigate, Climb, Appraise, Stealth, Ruinlore
Cutpurse	Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Locks, Climb, Patter, Dodge, Spot, Jump
Archivist	Archives, History, Tongues, Ledgers, Ruinlore, Occultism, Appraise, Read People
Physician	Physic, Field Dressing, Natural Philosophy, Mind-Mending, Read People, Persuade, Tongues, Archives
Rail Engineer	Mechanics, Drive/Ride, Natural Philosophy, Navigate, Craft, Climb, Intimidate, Spot
Assessor's Clerk	Ledgers, Law, Appraise, Archives, Read People, Persuade, Intimidate, Spot
Penny Journalist	Patter, Persuade, Archives, Spot, Listen, Read People, Disguise, Stealth
Hearth-Priest	Persuade, Charm, Read People, Occultism, History, Mind-Mending, Customs, Listen

THE TEN ARCHETYPES

Lamplighter. You keep the flames burning on the boundary posts, because what the dark brings is worse than the cold. You have looked at it directly and kept your name. *Starting kit:* Lamplighter's hooked pole, two flasks of lamp oil, a wick tin, an ash-mask, a Lamp-Ward badge.

Banner-Sworn. You held a line that no longer exists, for a banner nobody salutes. The discipline outlived the cause: you still stand where others break. *Starting kit:* A service greatcoat, a mended kit bag, a field-dressing roll, a whetstone, a tin of black powder.

Ash-Walker. You go out into the grey where the drifts are deepest and come back with things other people need. Nobody asks what you stepped over to get them. *Starting kit:* A rope and grapple, a shovel, goggles and an ash-mask, a salvage sack, a hand-drawn map of the drifts.

Cutpurse. The cities that survived did so by rationing, and rationing makes thieves of the hungry. You were faster than the people who came looking. *Starting kit:* A set of picks rolled in oilcloth, a short knife, a dark coat with deep pockets, a pawn-shop ticket.

Archivist. You kept the Vellmoor stacks in order while the city above them rationed coal. You know that every disaster was written down somewhere first, by someone who was ignored. *Starting kit:* A reader's ticket to the Vellmoor stacks, a magnifying glass, pencils and a notebook, a reading lamp, white cotton gloves.

Physician. The wards are full of ash-lung and worse, and you have stopped counting the ones you could not save. You count the ones you did, because somebody has to. *Starting kit:* A physician's bag with instruments, laudanum and carbolic, a stethoscope, a ledger of patients, a Concord licence.

Rail Engineer. You keep the Grisholt engines running on bad coal and worse orders. You trust iron because iron does what it is built to do, and lately you have seen things that do not. *Starting kit:* A toolroll of spanners and gauges, oilskins, a rail pass for the Grisholt line, a pocket watch set to company time.

Assessor's Clerk. You copied out the Concord Assessors' rulings: which districts get coal, and which are struck off the map. You know exactly how much a neighbourhood is worth, and to whom. *Starting kit:* An Assessor's seal and warrant case, a ledger, a fountain pen, spectacles, a list of districts marked for abandonment.

Penny Journalist. You write for the penny sheets that the cities actually read. The respectable papers print what the Assessors allow; you print what people saw. *Starting kit:* A press card, a notebook full of names, pencils, a cheap camera with three plates, yesterday's edition.

Hearth-Priest. You tend a hearth that has never gone out, in a parish that needs it more every year. People bring you their fears, and lately their fears have started to agree with each other. *Starting kit:* A hearth-priest's stole, a tinderbox and a lantern lit from the parish hearth, a book of litanies, a charity purse.

STEP 4: SPEND SKILL POINTS

Ashfall has 42 **skills**. Every skill starts at a **base** (most of them low) and goes up with the points you spend on it. Your skill is its base plus its points: Melee is 25 plus whatever you put into it, and Dodge is half your Reflex plus its points.

You have two budgets to spend:

Budget	Points	Spent on
Archetype skills	Your archetype's points (see its entry)	Your archetype's eight skills, plus Standing
Pursuits	Wits × 2	Any skill except Ashlore

Skill	Starts at	Archetype skill for	Signature skill of
Appraise	5	Ash-Walker, Archivist, Assessor's Clerk	
Archives	20	Archivist, Physician, Assessor's Clerk, Penny Journalist	Archivist
Ashlore	0	none: never bought at creation	
Charm	15	Hearth-Priest	
Climb	20	Lamplighter, Ash-Walker, Cutpurse, Rail Engineer	
Craft	5	Rail Engineer	
Customs	1	Hearth-Priest	
Disguise	5	Penny Journalist	
Dodge	Half Reflex	Banner-Sworn, Cutpurse	
Drive/Ride	20	Rail Engineer	
Field Dressing	30	Banner-Sworn, Physician	
History	5	Archivist, Hearth-Priest	
Intimidate	15	Lamplighter, Banner-Sworn, Rail Engineer, Assessor's Clerk	
Jump	20	Cutpurse	
Law	5	Assessor's Clerk	
Ledgers	5	Archivist, Assessor's Clerk	Assessor's Clerk

Each point you spend adds 1 to a skill. Spend **Archetype skills** points only on your archetype's eight skills and on Standing; spend **Pursuits** points on any skill at all except Ashlore, including your archetype's own. While you make your character, these limits hold:

At creation	Limit
Every other skill	No higher than 75
Your signature skill	No higher than 90
Standing	Must sit within your archetype's range (Lamplighter 9 to 30; Banner-Sworn 9 to 30; Ash-Walker 0 to 10; Cutpurse 5 to 20; Archivist 10 to 40; Physician 30 to 80; Rail Engineer 20 to 50; Assessor's Clerk 15 to 45; Penny Journalist 9 to 30; Hearth-Priest 9 to 60)
Cost	1 point buys 1 point of skill

Spend every point. Any you leave unspent are lost: nothing keeps them for later.

Skill	Starts at	Archetype skill for	Signature skill of
Listen	20	Lamplighter, Penny Journalist, Hearth-Priest	
Locks	1	Cutpurse	
Long Gun	25	Banner-Sworn	
Mechanics	10	Lamplighter, Rail Engineer	Rail Engineer
Melee	25	Lamplighter, Banner-Sworn	Banner-Sworn
Mind-Mending	1	Physician, Hearth-Priest	
Mother Tongue	Learning	none	
Natural Philosophy	1	Physician, Rail Engineer	
Navigate	10	Lamplighter, Ash-Walker, Rail Engineer	
Occultism	5	Lamplighter, Archivist, Hearth-Priest	
Patter	5	Cutpurse, Penny Journalist	Penny Journalist
Persuade	10	Physician, Assessor's Clerk, Penny Journalist, Hearth-Priest	Hearth-Priest
Physic	1	Physician	Physician
Pistol	20	none	
Read People	10	Archivist, Physician, Assessor's Clerk, Penny Journalist, Hearth-Priest	
Ruinlore	1	Ash-Walker, Archivist	
Sleight of Hand	10	Cutpurse	Cutpurse
Spot	25	Lamplighter, Cutpurse, Rail Engineer, Assessor's Clerk, Penny Journalist	Lamplighter
Standing	0	every archetype (its range is set by the archetype)	
Stealth	20	Banner-Sworn, Ash-Walker, Cutpurse, Penny Journalist	
Survival	10	Banner-Sworn, Ash-Walker	Ash-Walker
Swim	20	none	
Throw	20	Banner-Sworn	
Tongues	1	Archivist, Physician	
Track	10	Ash-Walker	
Wildlore	10	Ash-Walker	

WHAT THE SKILLS COVER

- **Appraise:** what a thing is worth, and whether it is what it claims to be.
- **Archives:** finding the one page that matters in a building full of them.
- **Ashore:** what the ash remembers. You can never buy it when you make a character; it comes from cinderbooks and from what you see. Every point lowers your Max Sanity by one.
- **Charm:** being liked. Warmth, flattery and a good first impression.
- **Climb:** posts, walls, roofs, cliffs and ropes.
- **Craft:** making and mending by hand. Write down which craft when you first put points in it: joinery, glazing, tailoring, candle-making.
- **Customs:** how other peoples live, mourn, trade and pray.
- **Disguise:** being taken for someone else.
- **Dodge:** getting out of the way, including out of the way of a blow.
- **Drive/Ride:** carts, carriages, a horse, or the rare motor-wagon.

- **Field Dressing:** binding a wound in the field. A success closes 1 Wound, and it cannot help the same injury twice. It is also how you stabilise someone who is Dying.
- **History:** the Concord's past, its families, its treaties and its old quarrels.
- **Intimidate:** making people afraid of you, and making that useful.
- **Jump:** ditches, gaps between roofs, the space between a platform and a moving train.
- **Law:** Concord law, warrants, rulings and the courts.
- **Ledgers:** accounts, debts and the paper trail money leaves.
- **Listen:** hearing what moves in the dark, and what is said behind a door.
- **Locks:** opening locks without their keys.
- **Long Gun:** muskets, carbines, rifles, fowling pieces and blunderbusses.
- **Mechanics:** engines, locks of the clockwork kind, telegraph keys and the machines of Tallow Cross.
- **Melee:** blades, bars, hammers and fists.
- **Mind-Mending:** talking a shattered mind back towards itself over weeks of care.
- **Mother Tongue:** the language you grew up speaking. It starts at your Learning.
- **Natural Philosophy:** the sciences of the Concord colleges: chemistry, anatomy, astronomy and the rest.
- **Navigate:** finding your way by map, compass, star or the line of the lamp-posts.
- **Occultism:** folk magic, secret societies and the long history of people who thought they understood.
- **Patter:** fast talk that gets you past a door before anyone thinks to stop you.
- **Persuade:** changing someone's mind with reasons, time and patience.
- **Physic:** real medicine: diagnosis, surgery and the treatment of disease.
- **Pistol:** revolvers, pistols, the Toxin Needler and the Flare Pistol.
- **Read People:** seeing through a face to the motive behind it.
- **Ruinlore:** old sites, buried towns and the things dug out of them.
- **Sleight of Hand:** palming, pocket-picking and the quick swap.
- **Spot:** noticing things. The most-rolled skill in the game.
- **Standing:** your place in Concord society, with the credit, the doors and the favours that come with it. Test it to be let in, believed or given credit.
- **Stealth:** moving unseen and unheard.
- **Survival:** staying alive in the drifts: shelter, water, warmth, a safe place to sleep.
- **Swim:** staying afloat in the Vell, the harbour or a flooded vault.
- **Throw:** a thrown knife or hatchet, a flask of lamp oil, a rope to someone in the water.
- **Tongues:** another language, learned rather than grown into. Write down which.
- **Track:** following a trail through ash, mud or snow.
- **Wildlore:** plants, beasts and weather outside the city lamps.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

On **Spend Skill Points**, each skill's row shows which budgets it draws on, its value with the points in it, its cap, and – and + buttons. The top of the step says how much of each budget is left. **Next** stays off while anything breaks a rule, and the step lists why, such as **Standing must be at least 9**. **Next** works with points still unspent, but they are lost.

STEP 5: STARTING FUNDS

Roll **3d6 shillings**. That is what you scraped together before the ash came down, and it pays for your starting gear. Every character can afford something: the cheapest weapon, a Cudgel, costs 6 pennies.

STEP 6: STARTING GEAR

Spend your purse on anything in the Equipment

chapter: weapons, armour and kit, as many as you can pay for. You may skip this step and keep the money. Most investigators want, at the least, a light (a Bull's-eye Lantern and oil), an Ash-mask and Goggles for the drifts, and something to hit with.

Whatever is left stays in your purse as coins.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Check the sheet: Wounds 0, Sanity equal to Resolve (Max Sanity 99), Kindling full, Ember as rolled, Fate 3, Corruption 0, Armour from what you wear, your talent and your kit. Then give your character a face: what they wear against the ash, how they sound, and one thing they always carry that has no use at all.

A CHARACTER FROM START TO FINISH

EXAMPLE

Edda Callow, Lamplighter.

Step 1. Edda's player wants someone who works the boundary posts on the edge of the Ninth District, the one the Assessors struck off two winters ago. She names her Edda Callow.

Step 2. She rolls each characteristic with its own dice:

- Brawn: 3d6 gives 4, 3 and 5, which is 12; times 5 is **60**.
- Vigour: 6, 2 and 4 is 12, so **60**.
- Frame: 2d6 gives 3 and 4, which is 7; plus 6 is 13; times 5 is **65**.
- Reflex: 5, 5 and 3 is 13, so **65**.
- Presence: 2, 3 and 4 is 9, so **45**.
- Wits: 2d6 gives 5 and 2, which is 7; plus 6 is 13, so **65**.
- Resolve: 6, 5 and 3 is 14, so **70**.
- Learning: 2d6 gives 5 and 4, which is 9; plus 6 is 15, so **75**.
- Ember: 3, 4 and 2 is 9, so **45**.

EXAMPLE

From these she works out:

- **Max Wounds:** Vigour 60 plus Frame 65 is 125; divided by 10 is 12.5; rounded down, **12**. One hit of 6 or more Wounds will make her Grievous.
- **Sanity** 70 (her Resolve) and **Max Sanity** 99.
- **Max Kindling:** Resolve 70 divided by 5 is **14**.
- **Initiative:** Reflex 65 divided by 10 is 6.5, rounded down to **6**.
- **Pace:** her Brawn (60) is under her Frame (65), but her Reflex (65) is equal to it, not under. So they are not both under, nor both over: **Pace 8**.
- **Heft:** Brawn 60 plus Frame 65 is 125, exactly the bottom of the 125 to 164 row: **+1d4**.

EXAMPLE

Step 3. She chooses the **Lamplighter**. Her signature skill is Spot, her Standing must be 9 to 30, and she gets the talent **Steeled Mind**. Her archetype points are Learning $\times 2$ + Resolve $\times 2$: 150 plus 140, which is **290**.

Step 4. Her **Pursuits** budget is Wits $\times 2$: **130**. She spends her 290 archetype points like this:

- Spot +60: base 25, so **85** (her signature skill, under its cap of 90).
- Melee +30: 25 becomes 55.
- Climb +30: 20 becomes **50**.
- Listen +30: 20 becomes **50**.
- Occultism +45: 5 becomes **50**.
- Navigate +30: 10 becomes **40**.
- Mechanics +30: 10 becomes **40**.
- Intimidate +20: 15 becomes **35**.
- Standing +15: 0 becomes **15**, inside the Lamplighter's 9 to 30.

That is $60 + 30 + 30 + 30 + 45 + 30 + 30 + 20 + 15 = 290$. Then her 130 Pursuits points:

- Dodge +30: half her Reflex is 32 (65 halved, rounded down), so **62**.
- Field Dressing +20: 30 becomes **50**.
- Stealth +25: 20 becomes **45**.
- Pistol +25: 20 becomes **45**.
- Melee +10: 55 becomes **65**, under the cap of 75.
- History +20: 5 becomes **25**.

That is $30 + 20 + 25 + 25 + 10 + 20 = 130$. Every other skill stays at its base; her Mother Tongue is her Learning, **75**.

EXAMPLE

Step 5. She rolls 3d6 for her purse: 5, 4 and 2, which is **11 shillings** (132 pennies).

Step 6. She buys a Lamplighter's Hook Pole (2 s), a Bull's-eye Lantern (2 s), a Flask of Lamp Oil (4 p), an Ash-mask and Goggles (3 s), a Hearth Tinderbox (10 p) and Oilskins (2 s). That is 9 shillings and 14 pennies, which is 10 s 2 p, leaving her **10 pennies**. The Oilskins give her **Armour 1** while she wears them. A revolver will have to wait: her Pistol is from the Ward's drills, not her own purse.

EXAMPLE

Finished. Edda Callow, Lamplighter of the Ninth posts. Brawn 60, Vigour 60, Frame 65, Reflex 65, Presence 45, Wits 65, Resolve 70, Learning 75. Ember 45, Fate 3. Max Wounds 12, Sanity 70 (Max 99), Kindling 14, Initiative 6, Pace 8, Heft +1d4, Armour 1. Spot 85, Melee 65, Dodge 62, Climb 50, Listen 50, Occultism 50, Field Dressing 50, Stealth 45, Pistol 45, Navigate 40, Mechanics 40, Intimidate 35, History 25, Standing 15. Talent: Steeled Mind. She carries her Ward badge, a wick tin and a hooked pole worn smooth at the grip, and she has never once let post forty-one go cold.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

Characters made before these rules. An Ashfall character made before Ashfall gained its eight characteristics and 42 skills was moved onto them: it has Frame, Learning and Ember, every skill at its base, and a talent named **Rules update: re-run setup** under **Talents**. To spend its skill points, open the sheet in the Form View, click **Edit**, then **Re-run character setup**, click **Next** to **Spend Skill Points**, spend both budgets and finish. Then delete the **Rules update** talent.



Post forty-three, and the woman waiting there

RULES OF PLAY

This chapter holds everything else: time and turns, fighting, Wounds and what happens when they run out, healing and rest, Sanity and Dread, Corruption, Ashlore, Kindling, rites and cinderbooks, light and weather, and how characters improve. It assumes you know the test, the bands and the three buttons from How to play.

TIME, TURNS AND DISTANCE

Most of the game runs in **scenes**: a conversation, a search of a house, a night watch on the posts. Time in a scene passes as fast or as slow as the story needs, and the GM keeps track of it: how long the oil has left, how many hours until the bell.

When a fight breaks out, or anything else where seconds matter, play moves into **rounds**. A round is about 30 seconds.

INITIATIVE

At the start of a fight, every character and creature rolls **d10 + Initiative** (a tenth of Reflex, rounded down). Act in order from the highest total to the lowest; the GM breaks ties. Keep the same order every round until the fight ends.

YOUR TURN

Ashfall's rules give each character a turn in the initiative order and a **Pace**, the yards they can move in a round, and leave the rest of what fits in a turn to the table. Most tables play it like this.

FOR THE GM

Table ruling. In a turn a character may move up to their Pace and do **one thing** that needs a test or real effort: a strike, a shot, a dive into cover, dressing a wound, picking a lock, lighting a lamp in the wind, performing a rite, reading the next line of a cinderbook. Saying a few words, dropping something or drawing a blade worn on the belt costs nothing. Some things take longer than a turn; the GM says how many. Answering a blow (Dodge, Fight back or Take the hit) is not that one thing and does not use the turn, and a character can answer every blow aimed at them. RollQuest does not enforce any of this: it orders the turns and leaves what happens in them to you.

DISTANCE AND THE MAP

Ashfall measures in **yards**. On a battle map, one square is one yard, so a character with Pace 8 moves up to 8 squares a round. Weapon ranges, lamp beams and reach are all given in yards.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

RollQuest's battle tracker rolls initiative as d10 plus the sheet's Initiative and orders the turns, highest first; for a creature, the GM enters its Initiative. An Ashfall game's map measures one yard to a grid square.

FIGHTING

MELEE

To strike in melee, test the weapon's skill (Melee for every melee weapon). Most tables let you strike anyone within arm's reach (the squares next to you), and let a weapon with **Reach** (the Hook Pole, the Billhook) strike from one square further away. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

If your strike passes, your target may answer it with a contest: Dodge, Fight back or Take the hit (see "Contests" in How to play). If the strike still lands, roll the weapon's **damage plus your Heft**. A melee blow with a negative Heft can be reduced to 0, never below.

Some weapons do more on a good band. The Lamplighter's Hook Pole trips a foe on a Sharp. Most tables keep a tripped foe on the ground until they spend their movement getting up. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

FIREARMS

To fire, test the weapon's skill (Pistol or Long Gun). A pass hits; there is no contest, because nobody can dodge a bullet. Roll the weapon's damage. Firearms never add Heft.

Range changes how hard the shot is:

- **Point-blank** (a few yards): roll with **Fortune**.
- **Within the listed range**: an ordinary test.
- **Long range** (beyond the listed range): only a **Solid or better** hits. The GM says when a target is simply too far.

Some guns say more: the Fowling Piece's scatter shot gives Fortune at short range, and the Blunderbuss gives it at point-blank. The Musket takes a round to reload, and the Carbine fires only once a round. For the rest, most tables read **shots** (Five shots, Six shots) as how many times a gun fires before it must be reloaded, and let the GM say how long reloading takes. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

THROWN WEAPONS

The Clasp Knife and the Coal Hatchet are marked **thrown (Throw)**, and a **Flask of Lamp Oil**, lit and thrown, does **1d6** fire to whoever it breaks on. The packs say no more than that.

FOR THE GM

Table ruling. A thrown knife or hatchet tests **Throw** instead of **Melee**, at anyone you could reasonably hit, and rolls its usual damage with Heft. A thrown weapon is not a melee strike, so it cannot be dodged or fought back. Fire is not one of Ashfall's damage types: count the lamp oil's 1d6 as physical damage that Armour reduces, and remember it is fire, because some things in the grey care very much about fire. RollQuest does not enforce any of this: a weapon's **Strike** button always tests **Melee**, so for a throw, test **Throw** from the sheet and apply the damage yourselves.

DAMAGE AND ARMOUR

Every hit has a **damage type**. Four are physical and go to your Wounds; the fifth, **Warp**, goes straight to your Sanity.

Damage type	Armour takes its share first	Then it comes off
Cutting	Yes	Wounds (they count up)
Impact	Yes	Wounds (they count up)
Rending	Yes	Wounds (they count up)
Toxic	Yes	Wounds (they count up)
Warp	No	Sanity (it counts down)

Armour is taken off every physical hit before it reaches your Wounds. A hit for 5 Cutting on someone with Armour 2 deals 3 Wounds. Armour does nothing against Warp. Your Armour is the total of what you are wearing, plus any talent or corruption that adds to it, and never more than 20.

TRIUMPH AND DISASTER IN A FIGHT

A Triumph strike lands as well as a strike can, and a Disaster goes as wrong as a fight allows: a dropped blade, a misfire, a friend in the way. The rules do not add damage for either; the GM decides what the moment looks like and what it costs.

WOUNDS AND HARM

Wounds count up. You start at 0 and every physical hit adds to the total. Your **Max Wounds** is a tenth of Vigour plus Frame, rounded down, and your Wounds never go above it.

These things happen as Wounds and Sanity change:

When	What happens
Wounds reach Max Wounds	You are Broken.
One hit deals half your Max Wounds or more (rounded down)	You are Grievous. Test Vigour at once. On a fail you are Unconscious.
Wounds reach Max Wounds while Grievous	You are Dying.
A hit deals Wounds while you are Broken	You are Dead.
You lose 5 or more Sanity in one go	Test Wits at once. On a pass you are Shaken for 1d10 rounds; roll on the Shaken Bout table.
Sanity reaches 0	You are Lost.
Each round while Dying	Test Vigour at the end of your turn. On a fail you are Dead.

Grievous is about a single bad blow, measured after Armour. Half your **Max Wounds**, rounded down, is the line:

Max Wounds	Grievous from a hit of	Max Wounds	Grievous from a hit of	Max Wounds	Grievous from a hit of
5	2	11	5	17	8
6	3	12	6	18	9
7	3	13	6	19	9
8	4	14	7	20	10
9	4	15	7	21	10
10	5	16	8	22	11

What each condition and end state means:

Condition	What it means
Broken	Your Wounds have reached their maximum. You fall and can take no actions. Any further hit that deals Wounds kills you outright. Spend a Fate point to stagger back to your feet with Wounds one below maximum. Healing that closes even one Wound ends this.
Dead	The ash has you. Nothing heals the dead, and no rest brings them back.
Grievous	One blow took half your Wounds or more. Test Vigour at once: fail and you fall unconscious. Reach your maximum Wounds while Grievous and you are Dying.
Dying	Your Wounds are full and the injury is grave. At the end of each of your turns, test Vigour: fail and you die. A companion who tends you with Field Dressing can stabilise you, and the GM lifts this when they do.
Unconscious	Out cold. You know nothing and can do nothing until you come round, which the GM decides.
Shaken	You understood what you saw, and that is the horror of it. For 1d10 rounds you are not yourself: the bout table says how it takes you.
Lost	Your Sanity has run out. The ash has your mind, and the character leaves play.
Haunted	A lasting dread has taken root: a fear or a compulsion that follows you from scene to scene. The GM applies this when a fifth of your Sanity goes in a single day.

A few points to make these exact:

- **Broken** comes from reaching your Max Wounds. The hit that takes you there does not kill you, however big it was; the next hit that deals you Wounds does.
- **Staggering up.** While Broken you may spend 1 Fate point to get back on your feet with Wounds one below your maximum. That lifts Broken. The rules do not say whether it lifts Dying; most tables rule that it does not, because only someone tending you can stabilise you. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.
- **Dying:** a Failure or a Disaster on the Vigour test at the end of your turn, and you are Dead. A companion's successful Field Dressing test stabilises you, and the GM lifts Dying.
- **Unconscious** from a failed Vigour test after a Grievous blow lasts until the GM says you come round. Most tables wake you at the end of the fight, or when someone shakes you awake. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.
- **Grievous** stays until the GM lifts it. Most tables lift it once the wound has been properly treated, or after a Recuperate. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

EXAMPLE

Edda Callow has Max Wounds 12 and Armour 1 from her Oilskins. In the drift she is bitten by an Ashhound: 1d6 Rending, rolled 5. Her Armour takes 1, so **4 Wounds**. That is under 6, half her Max Wounds, so she is not Grievous.

Then the Pack-mother mauls her: 1d10 + 1d4 Rending, rolled 7 and 1, so 8. Armour takes 1: **7 Wounds**, for 11 in all. That single hit is 6 or more, so she is **Grievous** and tests Vigour (60) at once. She rolls 44: a pass, so she stays on her feet, one Wound from her maximum.

A second hound bites: rolled 3, and Armour takes 1, so **2 Wounds**. That would make 13, but Wounds stop at her Max Wounds of **12**. She is **Broken**, and because she was already Grievous, she is **Dying** too. At the end of each of her turns she must test Vigour or die, until a companion dresses her wounds. Spending a Fate point would get her back on her feet at 11 Wounds, but by the usual table ruling she would still be Dying.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

On an Ashfall token, Wounds show as pips and Armour as a number. As damage lands, RollQuest applies Broken, Grievous, Dying and Dead for you, asks for the Vigour test after a Grievous blow and applies Unconscious if it fails. A hit that is Grievous and fills your Wounds at once asks no Vigour test: you are Broken anyway. In a battle, it asks a Dying character's Vigour test at the end of each of their turns. A heal that takes Wounds below the maximum lifts Broken and Dying; Recuperate and Catch Breath close Wounds without lifting either. You lift Grievous and Unconscious yourself, and you stagger up with Fate by hand: spend the point on the sheet's **Fate** row and set the Wounds, and if you heal a Wound to do it, put Dying back if your table keeps it.

When 5 or more Sanity goes in one go, RollQuest asks for the Wits test; on a pass it applies Shaken for its rolled rounds, which count down in a battle, and rolls the Shaken Bout table, which only the GM sees. At 0 Sanity it applies Lost.

HEALING AND REST

FIELD DRESSING

A companion with bandages can bind your wounds with a **Field Dressing** test. A success closes **1 Wound**. Field Dressing cannot help the same injury twice: once someone has dressed the Wounds from a blow, a second dressing does nothing for them. It is also how you stabilise someone who is Dying. The Field-dressing Kit has bandages and carbolic for ten dressings.

Most tables count a dressing as a character's one thing in a fight, or a few minutes out of one, and without a kit the GM may give the test Misfortune, or say there is

Button	Kind	What it does
Recuperate	Long rest	A night somewhere the ash cannot reach. Fate and Kindling return in full and 3 Wounds close. Sanity and Corruption never come back.
Catch Breath	Short rest	A few stolen minutes. 1 Wound closes and 1 Kindling returns.
Tempering	Not a rest: between stories	Between stories, take stock of what you learned the hard way. Roll d100 for each ticked skill: over the skill, or 96 and up, and it gains 1d10. Roll d100 against Ember: over it, and Ember gains 1d10. Every tick clears.

Recuperate needs a night somewhere the ash cannot reach: indoors, say, with the windows shut and a lamp burning. **Catch Breath** is a few stolen minutes: a sit-down in a doorway, a swig of water. The GM decides when there is time for either, and when the place is not safe enough. Sanity, Corruption and Ember never come back from rest.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

The **Recuperate**, **Catch Breath** and **Tempering** buttons sit in the vitals tile at the top of an Ashfall sheet. Each shows a preview of what it will do before you confirm it.

SANITY AND DREAD

Sanity is how much of yourself you still have. It starts at your Resolve and rarely comes back. Your **Max Sanity** is 99 less your Ashlore.

SANITY TESTS AND DREAD

When you witness something that should not be, you face its **Dread**, written as two amounts: what you lose if you hold together, and what you lose if you don't.

nothing to bind it with. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

PHYSIC

Physic is real medicine: surgery, setting a bone, treating a fever or ash-lung. The rules give it no set number of Wounds to close. The GM decides what a successful Physic test achieves: lifting Grievous after surgery, curing a disease, saving a limb, or telling you exactly what killed the man on the slab. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

RESTS

Dread 1/1d6 means: test Sanity; on a pass lose 1 Sanity, on a fail lose 1d6.

- You test against your **current** Sanity, so the more you have lost, the harder it gets.
- Only pass or fail matters on a Dread test. You cannot press a Sanity test or spend Ember on it. You can spend Fate to reroll it.
- You face a creature's Dread when you see it, or for some creatures when you first see what it really is: a herald with its gloves off, a cantor whose reading comes true. Most tables call for the test the first time you see it in a scene, and not again for the same horror until the next story. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

- Losing Sanity is Warp damage: Armour does nothing for it.

Dread	Sanity lost on a pass	Sanity lost on a fail	Seen in
o/1	Nothing	1 Sanity	Rooftop Acolyte, Pale Physic Orderly
o/1d2	Nothing	1d2 Sanity	Choir Cantor
o/1d3	Nothing	1d3 Sanity	Ash-tongued Elder, Ash-hound
o/1d4	Nothing	1d4 Sanity	Drift-walker, Lamp-eater, Pale Physic Surgeon
o/1d6	Nothing	1d6 Sanity	Drowned Watch, Ash-hound Pack-mother
1/1d6	1 Sanity	1d6 Sanity	Hollow Mourner, Hearth-thief
1/1d8	1 Sanity	1d8 Sanity	The Grey Choir, Gloved Herald
1d4/1d10	1d4 Sanity	1d10 Sanity	Herald Unveiled

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

The bestiary's eight **Dread** horrors are items, one for each Dread. To use one, the GM puts it on a sheet (a GM reference sheet will do) with **+ From pack** at the top of the sheet. Horrors are offered to the GM only, on any plan; a player is never offered one. On that sheet, open the horror's row, click **Target**, tick up to six witnesses and click **Resolve**. Each witness gets a prompt to roll the Sanity test, then a second prompt to roll the loss (such as **Lose 1d6 Sanity**), which lands as Warp; 5 or more asks for the Wits test as usual. The GM rolls for a creature. The prompt tests Sanity with any bonus the character carries, so a Lamplighter's Steeled Mind adds its +10 on its own. It offers no follow-up buttons: Steeled Mind's **Resist** is a separate roll that cannot answer it, so settle a Fate reroll by hand.

SHAKEN

When you lose **5 or more Sanity in one go**, test **Wits** at once. The test is to see whether you understood what you saw.

- **On a fail**, your mind refuses it. You lose the Sanity and nothing more happens.
- **On a pass**, you understood, and that is the horror of it. You are **Shaken** for 1d10 rounds, and roll on the Shaken Bout table to see how it takes you.

d10 Shaken Bout

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1 | You freeze where you stand, staring. You can defend yourself and nothing more. |
| 2 | You flee from it by the quickest way you can see, and will not turn back. |
| 3 | You strike at whatever is nearest, friend or foe, until someone stops you. |
| 4 | You laugh or weep and cannot stop. Every test you make is at Misfortune. |
| 5 | You will not look at it. You act as though it is not there, whatever it does. |
| 6 | You cling to a small ritual (counting, praying, trimming a lamp) and do only that. |
| 7 | You go to it. Something in you wants to see it closer, and you walk toward it unless someone holds you back. |
| 8 | Your voice goes. You cannot speak, shout a warning or perform a rite. |
| 9 | You light every lamp, match and candle you carry, whatever it costs, and stand in the light. |
| 10 | You faint, and lie Unconscious until the bout ends. You wake remembering every detail. |

HAUNTED

When a fifth of your Sanity goes in a single day, the GM makes you **Haunted**: a lasting fear or compulsion that follows you from scene to scene. The GM rolls on the Haunted table, and plays it with you. The rules leave the counting to the GM; most tables count a fifth of the Sanity you had when the day began, rounded down. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

RollQuest does not count the Sanity lost in a day or apply Haunted: add it to the token as a condition yourself. The **Haunted** and **Shaken Bout** tables are in the GM's **Rollable Tables** panel, or type `/table Haunted` in chat.

d10 Haunted

- 1 The dark. You will not sleep without a lamp burning, and going where none burns takes a Resolve test.
- 2 The ash. You cannot bear it on your skin. You wash until it hurts, and never go out without a mask.
- 3 The voice. At the edge of every silence, someone you lost calls you by the name only they used.
- 4 Hoarded light. You carry more oil, candles and matches than you could ever use, and give none away.
- 5 The count. You must count doors, steps and lamps as you pass them, and losing count means going back.
- 6 The faces. You see someone you lost in every crowd, and must go and look.
- 7 Open flame. Any fire that is not a hearth's makes you back away from it.
- 8 The dream. You wake every night from the same dream of the burned place and write it down. The pages are starting to agree with each other.
- 9 Borrowed skin. You are sure one of your companions is a herald wearing a face, and you watch them.
- 10 The pull. You want to go back to the drift, the cellar or the book where it happened, and you find reasons to.

Haunted lasts until it is mended. Most tables mend it with time somewhere safe and someone who knows **Mind-Mending**, the skill of talking a shattered mind back over weeks of care; the GM decides how many weeks and how many tests it takes. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

LOST

At **0 Sanity** you are **Lost**. The ash has your mind, and the character leaves play: into an asylum, into the drifts, or into the Choir's arms. Make a new investigator.

GETTING SANITY BACK

Very little gives Sanity back, and nothing raises it above your Max Sanity.

- The **Hearth Words** talent: a quiet scene talking someone down gives them back 1d4 Sanity.
- **Mind-Mending**, over weeks of care, may give some back; the GM decides how much. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.
- The GM may give a little back for a real victory: a district saved, a herald's plan undone. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

EXAMPLE

Edda has Sanity 70. At the edge of her lamp's beam stands the shape of her brother, lost in the first winter: a **Hollow Mourner**, Dread 1/1d6. She uses Steeled Mind's Resist, a Sanity test at $70 + 10 = 80$, and rolls 81: a fail. She rolls 1d6 for the loss and gets 5, leaving her on **65**.

That is 5 in one go, so she tests Wits (65) and rolls 30: a pass. She understood exactly what she saw. She is **Shaken** for 1d10 rounds (she rolls 4) and rolls on the bout table: 7. "You go to it." Unless someone holds her back, she walks towards her brother, out of the light.

Counting the way most tables do, a fifth of the 70 Sanity she started the day with is 14. She has lost 5 so far today. Nine more, and the GM will make her Haunted.

CORRUPTION

Breathe enough ash and it starts to grow in you. **Corruption** is a number from 0 to 100 that only ever

risers. Nothing raises it on its own: the GM raises it when the story says so, for long hours in the drifts without a mask, a night in an ash-choked house, a herald's touch, the Pale Physic's distillate or grey bread eaten too long. An **Ash-mask and Goggles** worn

outdoors means no Corruption from breathing ordinary ash for a day; it does nothing about the extraordinary kind.

As Corruption climbs, the GM gives you **corruptions**: lasting marks the ash leaves on body and mind. Each has a severity. Some name the Corruption at which they bite.

Corruption	Severity	What it does	On the sheet in RollQuest
The Tremors	Minor	–5 to all Reflex-based tests when Corruption $\geq$ 25.	Words only: the GM applies it
Whispers	Moderate	Lose 1 Sanity at each sunrise while Corruption $\geq$ 50.	Words only: the GM applies it
Ashen Skin	Major	+2 Armour, but Presence tests with the uncorrupted suffer –20.	+2 Armour, always on
Hollow Gaze	Major	Let the ash show in your eyes and whoever meets them faces Dread 1/1d4: a Sanity test, losing 1 Sanity on a pass and 1d4 on a fail.	Puts its Sanity test (losing 1 on a pass, 1d4 on a fail) to up to 6 people at once

The rules say nothing of what happens at 100 Corruption. Most tables make it the end of the character as a player character, and make it memorable. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it. How much Corruption a given exposure costs is the GM's call too; Running the game suggests amounts.

ASHLORE

Ashlore is what the ash remembers, learned by reading it. It starts at 0, can never be bought when you make a character, and can never be lost. Every point of it lowers your Max Sanity by one, and if that puts your Sanity above your new maximum, your Sanity drops to match.

You gain Ashlore mainly by studying **cinderbooks**. The GM may also give a point for something learned the hard way, first hand: watching a rite performed, hearing a herald explain itself. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

Test **Ashlore** to recognise a rite, read the pattern of a fall, understand what an Unlit is acting out, or guess what a herald wants. An Ashlore test cannot be pressed and never ticks for Tempering. You can spend Ember on it.

KINDLING AND RITES

Kindling is the inner flame rites burn: a fifth of your Resolve, rounded down. Keep track of it as **Kindling spent**, which counts up from 0; your Kindling is your maximum less what you have spent. Catch Breath gives back 1; Recuperate gives back all of it.

A **rite** is a working learned from the ash: a **ward**, a **summoning**, a **binding** or a **sending**. Rites work. That is the problem with them.

PERFORMING A RITE

Every rite costs Kindling and Sanity, and a rite that shows you something terrible has a Dread too. The **first** time you perform a rite it needs a **Solid** Resolve test: on anything less it fails, and you pay the cost anyway. The Sanity cost is Warp, so a cost of 5 or more asks for the Wits test for Shaken as usual. That much the rites themselves say. Most tables fill in the rest like this.

FOR THE GM

Table ruling.

1. **Pay the Kindling.** If you don't have enough Kindling left to pay the rite's cost in full, you can't begin it.
2. **Test Resolve.** The first time, you need a Solid or better. After that, any pass will do. On a fail, the rite does nothing.
3. **Pay the Sanity.** Pass or fail, roll the rite's Sanity cost and lose that much.
4. **Face its Dread.** Only if the rite works and shows you what it shows: make its Dread test after the cost.

In a fight, performing a rite is a character's one thing for the turn. Out of one, allow a few minutes, or longer where the rite says so: a herald arrives within the hour. RollQuest does not enforce any of this.

Because Resolve is a characteristic, you may spend Ember on a failed Resolve test for a rite. Ember buys only a plain Success, so it can never save a first performance, which needs a Solid.

Rite	Kind	Kindling	Sanity cost	Dread	What it does
Threshold Ward	Ward	2	1d2	None	Chalk and hearth-ash across a doorway: no Unlit crosses it until dawn. A herald may, once.
Circle of Embers	Ward	3	1d4	None	A ring of coals that burns without fuel for an hour. Inside it, the ash does not settle.
Skin of Soot	Ward	2	1d3	None	Ash rubbed into the skin turns the next blow: +2 Armour for a scene. The ash does not wash off for a week.
Call the Walker	Summoning	4	1d6	1/1d6	A drift-walker comes to the edge of the light and answers three questions about its path.
Speak with the Ash	Summoning	3	1d4	0/1d4	A handful of ash from a place is made to remember what happened there, aloud.
Summon a Herald	Summoning	6	1d10	1/1d8	One of the Kindled's heralds arrives within the hour. It will bargain. It always wants more than it says.
Iron Knot	Binding	3	1d4	None	An Unlit, or a herald's gift, is bound into a knot of iron wire. Untie it and it is free.
Candle Prison	Binding	4	1d6	0/1d3	A thing that walks the ash is held in a candle's flame for as long as the candle burns.
Name the Dead	Binding	2	1d3	0/1d2	Speak the true name of a hollow mourner and it must stand still until the name is spoken again.
Ash Letter	Sending	1	1	None	A message written in ash reaches one named person by their next waking, wherever they are.
Send a Dream	Sending	3	1d4	None	One sleeper dreams what you choose. Sending them the ash's dreams is possible, and cruel.
Back to the Grey	Sending	5	1d8	1/1d6	An Unlit is sent back down into the ash it rose from. It may not come back the same.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

A rite has two buttons, **Perform (Resolve test)** and **Sanity cost**, and both only roll: you judge whether the band is good enough. To have the cost taken from your Sanity as Warp, click the rite's **Target** first (it picks your own token, which must be on the map), then **Sanity cost**. Mark the Kindling yourself in **Kindling spent**.

CINDERBOOKS

A **cinderbook** is any text written by someone who could read the ash. Reading one teaches Ashlore and costs Sanity; studying one properly teaches the rites

Cinderbook	Study	Ashlore gained	Sanity lost	Rites it teaches	What it is
Northern Survey Field Diary, 991 AE	2 weeks	1d4	1d6	Speak with the Ash, Ash Letter	A surveyor's diary from the Crown expedition. The last pages are not in the surveyor's hand.
Psalter of the Choir of Cinders	4 weeks	1d6	1d8	Circle of Embers, Summon a Herald	Hymns transcribed from falling ash. Read aloud, the tune is obvious.
Pale Physic Formulary	2 weeks	1d3	1d4	Send a Dream	Recipes for distilling ash-dreams, with margin notes on dosage and on the patients.
Lamp-Ward Manual of Boundaries	1 week	1	1d3	Threshold Ward, Name the Dead	An old and nearly respectable handbook. The Ward pretends it does not exist.
The Black Ledger of District Nine	3 weeks	1d4	1d6	Iron Knot, Candle Prison	An Assessor's ledger of abandoned streets, with prices, and what was found in each.
Catechism of the Kindled	8 weeks	2d6	2d6	Call the Walker, Back to the Grey, Skin of Soot	Nobody knows who wrote it. Everyone who reads it agrees on what it is for.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

A cinderbook has **Ashlore gained** and **Sanity lost** buttons for the day the character finishes it. They only roll: change the sheet's Ashlore and Sanity by hand.

written in it.

- **Study** takes the time listed. When you finish, roll the Ashlore you gain and the Sanity you lose, and you know every rite it teaches.
- A **skim**, an evening with the book, teaches nothing and costs half.

Most tables halve a skim by rolling the Sanity loss and losing half of it, rounded down, and give nothing for a study abandoned part-way. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

EXAMPLE

Edda's captain lends her the **Lamp-Ward Manual of Boundaries**. She studies it for a week, then gains 1 Ashlore and rolls 1d3 for the Sanity loss: 2, taking her from 65 to **63**. Her Ashlore is now 1, so her Max Sanity falls to **98**. She now knows **Threshold Ward** and **Name the Dead**.

Days later she performs Threshold Ward for the first time, across the door of a house in the Ninth. It costs **2 Kindling** (her 14 drops to 12). She needs a Solid on Resolve 70, so 35 or under, and rolls 29: a Solid, and the ward holds. She rolls the Sanity cost of 1d2 and loses 1, to **62**. No Unlit will cross that threshold until dawn. A herald may, once.

LIGHT AND THE DARK

Light is the Concord's only real defence, and it is never enough.

- A **Bull's-eye Lantern** throws a narrow beam to 20 yards and burns three hours on a flask of oil. A **Flask of Lamp Oil** is three hours of light.
- A **Flare Pistol** shot lights a drift for a minute.
- **Hearth flame**, a flame carried from a parish or city hearth (the **Hearth Tinderbox** carries one), drives most Unlit back further than common light.
- Many Unlit are **light-shy**: a drift-walker's tests have Misfortune while a lamp is held towards it, and hearth flame drives it back for a full round. Some kinds have learned to put lamps out: a **lamp-eater** snuffs one it can reach with no test at all.

Darkness makes most tests that need sight harder. Most tables give Misfortune, or say the test cannot be made at all: you cannot Spot what you cannot see. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

FOR THE GM

Track the oil. Three hours sounds like a lot until the party spends one of them arguing in a cellar. Lamps are the game's clock: when a light gutters, everyone at the table should feel it.

WEATHER

The ash falls every day, but how heavily changes, and the Concord has rain, snow and river mist besides. Weather on a scene brings Misfortune to Spot tests:

Weather on the scene	How strong	Effect
Mist	Any	Misfortune on Spot tests
Heavy rain	Intensity 60% or more	Misfortune on Spot tests
Heavy snow	Intensity 60% or more	Misfortune on Spot tests
Thick ashfall	Intensity 60% or more	Misfortune on Spot tests

The GM may apply weather to other tests where it obviously matters: Climb on an iced post, Listen in a gale, Navigate in a whiteout of ash. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

When the GM sets mist, or heavy rain, snow or ash, on a scene in an Ashfall game, RollQuest adds the Misfortune to Spot tests on its own, unless the player chooses a roll mode for that test themselves.

ADVANCEMENT

Ashfall has no levels. Characters improve in three ways: their skills temper with use, they pick up talents, and their place in the world changes.

TEMPERING

When you **pass** a test of a skill (Triumph, Sharp, Solid or Success), **tick** that skill. A skill is ticked or it isn't: passing it again does not add a second tick. A pass bought with Ember does not tick, and Sanity, Ember and Ashlore tests never tick. A weapon's Strike or Shoot does not tick its skill either: only a test of the skill itself does (see "Which tests allow what" in How to play). Characteristics are not ticked: they never improve.

Between stories, when the GM calls for it, you **Temper**:

1. For each ticked skill, roll a d100. If the roll is **over the skill**, or **96 or more**, the skill gains **1d10** points.
2. Roll a d100 against your **Ember**. If the roll is over it, your Ember gains **1d10**.
3. Clear every tick.

The better you are at something, the harder it is to improve. No skill goes above 100, and Ember no higher than 99. The caps of 75 and 90 apply only when you make a character.

EXAMPLE

At the end of the story Edda's sheet shows ticks on Spot, Listen and Occultism. She rolls for each. Spot 85: she rolls 91, over 85, so Spot gains 1d10, rolled 6: Spot **91**. Listen 50: she rolls 32, not over 50 and not 96 or more, so no gain. Occultism 50: she rolls 97, which is 96 or more, so it gains 1d10, rolled 3: Occultism **53**. Then Ember, which she spent down to 37: she rolls 52, over 37, so Ember gains 1d10, rolled 7: Ember **44**. Every tick clears.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

RollQuest ticks a skill when you roll it from the sheet and pass, including a pass after **Press the test** or **Spend Fate to reroll**. A weapon's **Strike** or **Shoot** and the test buttons on talents, rites and kit don't tick, and nor does a pass bought with **Spend Ember**. The **Tempering** button rolls for every ticked skill and for Ember, adds what each gained, clears the ticks and posts one message saying what changed.

TALENTS

A **talent** is a lasting knack. Every archetype grants one, and the GM may award others as the story earns them: Hearth Words, which no archetype grants, is the obvious reward for an investigator who keeps talking people back from the edge. Talents are always on: there is nothing to equip.

Talent	Granted by	What it does	On the sheet in RollQuest
Hardened	Banner-Sworn	+2 Armour against the first hit each scene.	+2 Armour, always on
Steeled Mind	Lamplighter	+10 to Sanity tests against the warp.	Resist button: a Sanity test at +10
Quickened	Cutpurse	Once between breathers, reroll a failed Dodge. The use comes back when you Catch Breath or Recuperate.	Reroll the Dodge button after a failed Dodge, 1 use; the use comes back on Catch Breath and Recuperate
Scavenger	Ash-Walker	+10 Ruinlore to identify salvage and ruins.	Identify salvage button: a Ruinlore test at +10
Card Index Mind	Archivist	Once per session, recall something you once read: the GM answers one factual question about a person, place or event as if you had found it in the stacks.	Words only: the GM applies it
Steady Hands	Physician	Field Dressing and Physic tests made under fire or in the dark are rolled with Fortune.	Words only: the GM applies it
Gauge and Pressure	Rail Engineer	Mechanics tests on engines, boilers and rail machinery are rolled with Fortune.	Words only: the GM applies it
Follow the Ledger	Assessor's Clerk	Ledgers tests to trace money, property or debt are rolled with Fortune.	Words only: the GM applies it
A Name in Every Ward	Penny Journalist	Once per session, name a contact in any district who owes you a favour or a story. The GM decides what they know.	Words only: the GM applies it
Hearth Blessing	Hearth-Priest	Once per scene, steady someone beside you: their next Sanity test is rolled with Fortune.	Words only: the GM applies it
Hearth Words	None: the GM grants it in play	Spend a quiet scene talking someone down from what they saw: they regain 1d4 Sanity.	Talk down button: gives 1 person back 1d4 Sanity

Where a talent's text and what RollQuest does differ, as with Hardened, play the text at a table without the app. In RollQuest, the sheet's version is what happens.

STANDING AND MONEY

Your **Standing** goes up and down with the story: a commendation from the Lamp-Ward, a favour from an

Assessor, a scandal in the penny sheets. The GM changes it directly. It can also be ticked and tempered like any skill. Money comes from pay, rewards and salvage, and the GM hands it out.



What a lamplighter carries

EQUIPMENT

What an investigator carries says a great deal about them. A Lamplighter's hook pole is worn smooth at the grip; an Assessor's Clerk carries a sword cane because her employer expects it and has never drawn it; an Ash-Walker's shovel has dug out more than salvage. This chapter lists everything you can buy, with every number the rules need.

MONEY

Coin	Written	Worth
Penny	p	The smallest coin
Shilling	s	12 pennies
Crown	Cr	20 shillings (240 pennies)

Prices are written in the largest coins that fit: 1 Cr 10 s is one crown and ten shillings, or 360 pennies. A new character starts with **3d6 shillings** and spends it in the Starting Gear step.

WHAT THINGS COST IN THE CONCORD

These give a feel for money in play. The GM sets anything not listed.

- A clerk earns **about a crown a month**. A Lamp-Ward lamplighter earns a little less and is paid in oil as well as coin.
- A meal in a cookshop costs **a few pennies**. A bed in a lodging-house on the bridges, a few pennies more.
- A seat on the Grisholt express is **half a crown and a ration warrant**.
- A good revolver is **a crown or more**.
- A forged ration warrant costs whatever the forger thinks you will pay, and a good one is worth it.

Money is tight for almost everyone. When a character needs something the lists don't cover, the GM can call for a **Standing** test: on a pass, they can get it on credit, borrow it or have it sent round. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

MELEE WEAPONS

Every melee weapon is tested with **Melee** and adds the wielder's **Heft** to its damage. A melee strike can be answered with Dodge or Fight back (see Contests in How to play).

Weapon	Damage	Type	Qualities	Price
Rust Cleaver	1d10 + Heft	Cutting	Brutal	3 s
Iron Maul	2d6 + Heft	Impact	Heavy, two hands	4 s
Lamplighter's Hook Pole	1d6 + Heft	Impact	Reach, trips a foe on a Sharp	2 s
Rail Spanner	1d8 + Heft	Impact	Tool	2 s
Cudgel	1d6 + Heft	Impact	Concealable	6 p
Clasp Knife	1d4 + Heft	Cutting	Concealable, thrown (Throw)	1 s 6 p
Service Bayonet	1d6 + Heft	Cutting	Fixes to a carbine	2 s
Cavalry Sabre	1d8 + Heft	Cutting	Parries well	6 s
Coal Hatchet	1d6 + Heft	Cutting	Thrown (Throw)	2 s 6 p
Crowbar	1d6 + Heft	Impact	Tool, forces doors	2 s
Sword Cane	1d6 + Heft	Cutting	Concealable	8 s

Weapon	Damage	Type	Qualities	Price
Billhook	1d8 + Heft	Cutting	Reach	2 s
Brass Knuckles	1d3 + Heft	Impact	Concealable, never disarmed	1 s 8 p
Chain Flail	1d10 + Heft	Impact	Heavy, ignores a shield	5 s
Surgeon's Bone Saw	1d6 + Heft	Rending	Tool	3 s

The qualities are words on the weapon, with no rules of their own in the packs. Most tables read them like this.

FOR THE GM

Table ruling.

- **Reach:** you can strike from one square further away than arm's reach.
- **Thrown (Throw):** you can throw it, testing Throw instead of Melee (see "Thrown weapons" in Rules of play).
- **Concealable:** it can be hidden on your person, and a casual look won't find it.
- **Heavy, two hands:** you need both hands, and you can't use it in a tight space.
- **Trips a foe on a Sharp:** on a Sharp or better, your target is knocked down as well as hit.
- **Tool, Forces doors:** it has a use beyond fighting, and the GM should take that into account when you use it for one.
- **Never disarmed, Parries well, Brutal, Ignores a shield, Fixes to a carbine:** describe how the weapon fights. The GM uses them when they matter: a disarm, a shield, a bayonet charge.

RollQuest does not enforce any of these.

FIREARMS

Firearms test **Pistol** or **Long Gun**, add no Heft, and cannot be dodged or fought back. A shot at **point-blank** (a few yards) is rolled with **Fortune**; a shot within the listed range is an ordinary test; and at **long range**, beyond the listed range, only a **Solid** or **better** hits.

Weapon	Test	Damage	Range	Qualities	Price
Toxin Needler	Pistol	1d6 Toxic	Short (10 yd)	Poison, silent	5 s
Pocket Revolver	Pistol	1d8 Rending	Short (15 yd)	Five shots, concealable	1 Cr
Service Revolver	Pistol	1d10 Rending	Medium (25 yd)	Six shots	1 Cr 10 s
Muff Pistol	Pistol	1d6 Rending	Point-blank (5 yd)	Two shots, concealable	8 s
Flare Pistol	Pistol	1d4 Impact	Medium (25 yd)	One shot, lights a drift for a minute	6 s
Breech-loading Carbine	Long Gun	2d6 Rending	Long (100 yd)	One shot per round	2 Cr
Muzzle-loading Musket	Long Gun	2d6 Rending	Long (80 yd)	One shot, a round to reload	12 s
Fowling Piece	Long Gun	2d6 Rending	Medium (30 yd)	Scatter shot: Fortune at short range	15 s
Rail-guard Rifle	Long Gun	2d8 Rending	Long (150 yd)	Five shots	3 Cr
Blunderbuss	Long Gun	3d6 Rending	Short (10 yd)	One shot, Fortune at point-blank	10 s

The Musket takes a round to reload. For the other guns, most tables read **shots** as how many times the gun fires

before it must be reloaded, let the GM decide how long reloading takes, and count no ammunition unless the story is about running out of it. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

ARMOUR

Armour adds to your **Armour** while you wear it. Armour is taken off every physical hit before it reaches your Wounds, and does nothing against Warp. Pieces add together while worn: a Heavy Greatcoat and a Steel Helmet give Armour 2. The GM says what one person can sensibly wear at once.

Armour	Armour while worn	Covers	Qualities	Price
Heavy Greatcoat	+1	Body	Warm	4 s
Leather Jerkin	+1	Body	Quiet	3 s
Oilskins	+1	Body	Sheds ash	2 s
Padded Vest	+2	Body	Bulky	8 s
Banner Cuirass	+3	Body	Heavy, -10 to Stealth	1 Cr 10 s
Steel Helmet	+1	Head	Narrows hearing	6 s

KIT

Kit is the lamps, masks and tools an investigator carries beyond the boundary lights. Four pieces come with a test of their own.

Kit	Use	Test button	Price
Bull's-eye Lantern	Light: a narrow beam to 20 yd. Three hours to a flask of oil.	None	2 s
Flask of Lamp Oil	Three hours of light. Thrown and lit: 1d6 fire to whoever it breaks on.	None	4 p
Ash-mask and Goggles	Worn outdoors: no Corruption from breathing ordinary ash for a day.	None	3 s
Field-dressing Kit	Bandages and carbolic. A Field Dressing test closes 1 Wound; ten uses.	Dress a wound: a Field Dressing test	2 s
Set of Picks	Oiled picks and tension wrenches for a Locks test.	Pick a lock: a Locks test	4 s
Rope and Grapple	Fifteen yards of hemp and an iron hook.	Climb: a Climb test	2 s
Hearth Tinderbox	Flint, steel and a wick lit from a parish hearth. Hearth flame drives most Unlit back further than common light.	None	10 p
Salvage Sack and Shovel	For digging out what the drifts covered.	Search the drift: a Ruinlore test	1 s 8 p

CARRYING IT ALL

Ashfall does not count weight. Carry what makes sense for one person on foot in deep ash: a weapon or two, a lamp, oil, a mask, a few tools and a bag. The GM says when something is too much: a cuirass and a maul and a carbine and a salvage sack will slow anyone down. Qualities such as **Heavy**, **Bulky** and **-10 to Stealth** are there for exactly that.

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

Starting Gear shows the weapons, armour and kit with their prices; click an item to select it, and its price comes out of the purse when it is added. An item you can't pay for shows **Can't afford**. On the sheet, weapons are listed under **Inventory** on the **Items** page; turn on **Equipped** for armour to count. Later, more can be added from the sheet's **Items** panel (in the Form View, **Edit**, then **Items**) with + **From pack**.



Where the light stops

ADVERSARIES

Some of what the investigators face in the grey can be fought, after a fashion. This chapter gives a stat block for every creature that ships with Ashfall: the Unlit that walk where no lamp burns, the heralds of the Kindled, the Choir of Cinders, the ash-hounds and the Pale Physic. Then it shows you how to build your own, and how dangerous each kind is to a party of ordinary people with lamps.

READING A STAT BLOCK

A creature's stat block uses the same numbers as a character's sheet, cut down to what the GM needs at the table.

- **Characteristics** are the same eight as an investigator's. Test them the same way: a herald resisting being held tests Brawn, a cantor trying to outface a crowd tests Presence.
- **Max Wounds** is how many Wounds it can take, worked out the same way (a tenth of Vigour plus Frame, rounded down). Its Wounds count up from 0, and the same thresholds apply: a hit of half its Max Wounds or more makes it **Grievous** and it tests Vigour or falls **Unconscious**; at its maximum it is **Broken**, and the next hit kills it. The number in brackets is the hit that makes it Grievous.
- **Armour** comes off every physical hit, as it does for investigators.
- **Dodge** and **Melee** are its skills, as percentages. A creature answers a melee strike with Dodge or Fight back just as an investigator does; the GM chooses and rolls.
- **Initiative** is a tenth of its Reflex, rounded down. Roll d10 plus that, as for anyone.
- **Pace** is worked out from its Brawn, Reflex and Frame by the usual rule; some creatures move faster, as their traits say.

- **Dread** is what seeing it costs. Everyone who sees it makes a Sanity test.
- **Traits** are always true of it. **Actions** are what it does on its turn. "Melee 45%: 1d6 + 1d4 impact" means: test Melee against 45, and on a hit roll that damage, of that type. Most tables treat the damage in an action as complete as printed, and add no Heft to it. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

A creature's stat block carries no Sanity, Ember, Fate or Kindling. Most tables rule that creatures never press a test or spend luck. A Choir Cantor performs its rites "paying as an investigator does": if you need the numbers, give it Kindling of a fifth of its Resolve and Sanity equal to its Resolve, and keep the tally, and do the same for an Ash-tongued Elder. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

FOR THE GM

A Broken creature does not have to lie there waiting for the killing blow. Unlit collapse into ash and may stand up again on another night; heralds withdraw, smiling; cultists and orderlies are dragged away by their friends. Let a fight end when the story says it has, not when the last Wound goes on.

DREAD AND THE HORRORS

Every creature here carries a **Dread**. When the investigators see it, each of them tests Sanity, losing the first amount on a pass and the second on a fail. Some creatures say when their Dread is faced: the Grey Choir is faced when it is seen, not when it is first heard; a Gloved Herald's when the gloves come off.

Dread	Sanity lost on a pass	Sanity lost on a fail	Seen in
0/1	Nothing	1 Sanity	Rooftop Acolyte, Pale Physic Orderly
0/1d2	Nothing	1d2 Sanity	Choir Cantor
0/1d3	Nothing	1d3 Sanity	Ash-tongued Elder, Ash-hound
0/1d4	Nothing	1d4 Sanity	Drift-walker, Lamp-eater, Pale Physic Surgeon
0/1d6	Nothing	1d6 Sanity	Drowned Watch, Ash-hound Pack-mother
1/1d6	1 Sanity	1d6 Sanity	Hollow Mourner, Hearth-thief
1/1d8	1 Sanity	1d8 Sanity	The Grey Choir, Gloved Herald
1d4/1d10	1d4 Sanity	1d10 Sanity	Herald Unveiled

◆ IN ROLLQUEST

The eight horrors are items in the bestiary: the GM puts one on a sheet with + **From pack** and fires it at the witnesses with its **Target** button (see "Sanity and Dread" in Rules of play for the steps). Each witness rolls the Sanity test, then the loss, which lands as Warp. In an Ashfall game every creature below is ready to add as an enemy: on the **Enemies** panel click **Add**, choose **From the library**, click the creature and click **Create**.

THE UNLIT

The ash's memories, walking where the drifts are deep and no lamp burns. They are not people and never were, though some wear people's shapes. Most fights with them are really fights about light: keeping a lamp lit, getting hearth flame to the right place, getting out before the oil runs dry.

DRIFT-WALKER

Unlit. A human-shaped heap of ash that walks a fixed path, over and over, and pulls in whoever stands on it.



Characteristics Brawn 70, Vigour 80, Frame 75, Reflex 25, Presence 10, Wits 10, Resolve 50, Learning 0

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 15 (Grievous from a hit of 7); Armour 2

Skills Melee 45, Dodge 10

Initiative and Pace Initiative 2 (roll d10 + 2); Pace 7 yards

Dread 0/1d4: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d4 on a fail

Ash body. (trait). Cutting weapons do half damage (round down).

Light-shy. (trait). A lamp held toward it gives its tests Misfortune. Hearth flame drives it back for a full round.

Engulf. (action). Melee 45%: 1d6 + 1d4 impact, and the victim is pulled along its path. A Brawn test breaks free.

LAMP-EATER

Unlit. A low, quick thing that comes for the boundary posts.



Characteristics Brawn 35, Vigour 40, Frame 25, Reflex 85, Presence 5, Wits 40, Resolve 30, Learning 0

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 6 (Grievous from a hit of 3); Armour 0

Skills Melee 40, Dodge 60

Initiative and Pace Initiative 8 (roll d10 + 8); Pace 9 yards

Dread 0/1d4: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d4 on a fail

Quick.(trait). Moves twice in a round.

Snuff.(action). Puts out one lamp it can reach. No test: the glass is left unbroken and the wick cold.

Bite.(action). Melee 40%: 1d6 rending.

HOLLOW MOURNER

Unlit. The shape of someone you lost, standing at the edge of the light.



Characteristics Brawn 20, Vigour 50, Frame 50, Reflex 50, Presence 80, Wits 50, Resolve 70, Learning 50

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 10 (Grievous from a hit of 5); Armour 0

Skills Melee 30, Dodge 25

Initiative and Pace Initiative 5 (roll d10 + 5); Pace 8 yards

Dread 1/1d6: a Sanity test, losing 1 on a pass and 1d6 on a fail

Remembered.(trait). Only hearth flame, or speaking its true name (Name the Dead), harms it.

Call by name.(action). One listener makes a Resolve test or walks toward it, out of the light.

Cold touch.(action). Melee 30%: 1d4 warp, which is lost from Sanity.

THE GREY CHOIR

Unlit. A crowd that is not a crowd, singing a hymn with no words in it.



Characteristics Brawn 50, Vigour 90, Frame 100, Reflex 30, Presence 90, Wits 30, Resolve 90, Learning 0

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 19 (Grievous from a hit of 9); Armour 0

Skills Melee 50, Dodge 0

Initiative and Pace Initiative 3 (roll d10 + 3); Pace 7 yards

Dread 1/1d8: a Sanity test, losing 1 on a pass and 1d8 on a fail

A crowd.(trait). Only fire and blows that strike many at once hurt it; any other hit does 1.

Heard first.(trait). Its Dread is faced when it is seen, not when it is heard.

Hymn.(action). Everyone within earshot makes a Sanity test each round it sings; a failure loses 1 Sanity.

Press of bodies.(action). Melee 50% against everyone in its space: 1d6 impact.

DROWNED WATCH

Unlit. Unlit that rise from the harbour mud at Lantern Sound with the tide.



Characteristics Brawn 60, Vigour 70, Frame 65, Reflex 35, Presence 20, Wits 20, Resolve 50, Learning 0

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 13 (Grievous from a hit of 6); Armour 1

Skills Melee 45, Dodge 15

Initiative and Pace Initiative 3 (roll d10 + 3); Pace 7 yards

Dread 0/1d6: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d6 on a fail

Ferry crew.(trait). They come in fours, wearing the shapes of a ferry crew lost in the first winter.

Boathook.(action). Melee 45%: 1d8 + 1d4 rending, reach 3 yd.

THE HERALDS OF THE KINDLED

Things that look almost like people, carrying a warmth nobody should be able to feel through a coat. Heralds want something specific, and they are patient. Players who work out what a herald is for can stop it; doing so always costs.

GLOVED HERALD

Kindled herald. Almost a person, carrying a warmth no one should be able to feel through a coat.



Characteristics Brawn 60, Vigour 70, Frame 65, Reflex 60, Presence 85, Wits 80, Resolve 90, Learning 85

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 13 (Grievous from a hit of 6); Armour 1

Skills Melee 55, Dodge 40

Initiative and Pace Initiative 6 (roll d10 + 6); Pace 7 yards

Dread 1/1d8: a Sanity test, losing 1 on a pass and 1d8 on a fail

Fireproof. (trait). Fire does it no harm.

The gloves. (trait). Its Dread is faced when the gloves come off.

Warm grip. (action). Melee 55%: 1d8 rending, and the warmth spreads: a Vigour test, or 1 more Wound next round.

Bargain. (action). It offers what you most want. Refusing takes a Resolve test.

HERALD UNVEILED

Kindled herald. A herald that has stopped pretending.



Characteristics Brawn 90, Vigour 100, Frame 110, Reflex 70, Presence 100, Wits 90, Resolve 100, Learning 100

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 21 (Grievous from a hit of 10); Armour 4

Skills Melee 70, Dodge 35

Initiative and Pace Initiative 7 (roll d10 + 7); Pace 7 yards

Dread 1d4/1d10: a Sanity test, losing 1d4 on a pass and 1d10 on a fail

Fed by fire. (trait). Fire heals it instead of hurting it.

Burning reach. (action). Melee 70%: 2d6 + 1d4 rending, reach 3 yd.

Kindle. (action). One hearth or lamp in sight goes out, and its ash stands up as a Drift-walker.

HEARTH-THIEF

Kindled herald. A herald that looks like a lost child and asks to be let in out of the ash.



Characteristics Brawn 45, Vigour 55, Frame 50, Reflex 75, Presence 60, Wits 75, Resolve 80, Learning 70

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 10 (Grievous from a hit of 5); Armour 0

Skills Melee 45, Dodge 55

Initiative and Pace Initiative 7 (roll d10 + 7); Pace 8 yards

Dread 1/1d6: a Sanity test, losing 1 on a pass and 1d6 on a fail

Welcome. (trait). It is always let in. Noticing that it should not have been takes a Read People test.

Take the hearth. (action). Puts out a parish hearth it touches. The parish has no hearth flame until it is relit from another.

Cinder knife. (action). Melee 45%: 1d6 cutting.

THE CHOIR OF CINDERS

The rooftop faith that reads falling ash as scripture. Most of its members are kind, frightened people. These are the ones who are not.

CHOIR CANTOR

Choir of Cinders. A leader of the rooftop congregations.



Characteristics Brawn 45, Vigour 50, Frame 55, Reflex 50, Presence 70, Wits 60, Resolve 75, Learning 60

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 10 (Grievous from a hit of 5); Armour 1

Skills Melee 40, Dodge 30

Initiative and Pace Initiative 5 (roll d10 + 5); Pace 7 yards

Dread 0/1d2: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d2 on a fail

True reading .(trait). Its Dread is faced when the chant reads something that turns out to be true.

Chant .(action). Performs Circle of Embers or Summon a Herald, paying as an investigator does.

Ash knife .(action). Melee 40%: 1d4 cutting.

ROOFTOP ACOLYTE

Choir of Cinders. A believer who watches the ash fall and does what the Cantor says.



Characteristics Brawn 50, Vigour 50, Frame 55, Reflex 50, Presence 40, Wits 45, Resolve 50, Learning 40

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 10 (Grievous from a hit of 5); Armour 0

Skills Melee 45, Dodge 30

Initiative and Pace Initiative 5 (roll d10 + 5); Pace 7 yards

Dread 0/1: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1 on a fail

Ash-written .(trait). Their faces are written over in ash, and the words move.

Cudgel .(action). Melee 45%: 1d6 impact.

ASH-TONGUED ELDER

Choir of Cinders. An inner-circle elder who knows the Kindled are coming.



Characteristics Brawn 35, Vigour 40, Frame 50, Reflex 35, Presence 80, Wits 80, Resolve 90, Learning 85

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 9 (Grievous from a hit of 4); Armour 0

Skills Melee 25, Dodge 20

Initiative and Pace Initiative 3 (roll d10 + 3); Pace 7 yards

Dread 0/1d3: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d3 on a fail

Grey tongue .(trait). Its tongue is ash. It has not eaten in years.

Read the fall .(action). Performs any rite in the Psalter of the Choir of Cinders.

BEASTS OF THE DRIFT

Animals that slept in the ash and woke changed. They hunt in the grey between the lamps, and they are hungry in an ordinary way, which almost makes them a relief.

ASH-HOUND

Beast. A stray that slept in the drifts and woke changed: grey-coated and ember-eyed.



Characteristics Brawn 55, Vigour 60, Frame 45, Reflex 80, Presence 20, Wits 40, Resolve 40, Learning 0

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 10 (Grievous from a hit of 5); Armour 1

Skills Melee 50, Dodge 45

Initiative and Pace Initiative 8 (roll d10 + 8); Pace 9 yards

Dread 0/1d3: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d3 on a fail

Pack.(trait). +10 to Melee for each other hound on the same target.

Bite.(action). Melee 50%: 1d6 rending. On a Solid the victim is dragged down.

ASH-HOUND PACK-MOTHER

Beast. The old bitch the pack follows. She is the size of a pony.



Characteristics Brawn 80, Vigour 85, Frame 80, Reflex 70, Presence 40, Wits 50, Resolve 60, Learning 0

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 16 (Grievous from a hit of 8); Armour 2

Skills Melee 60, Dodge 35

Initiative and Pace Initiative 7 (roll d10 + 7); Pace 8 yards

Dread 0/1d6: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d6 on a fail

Howl.(trait). Every ash-hound that hears it gains Fortune on its next test.

Maul.(action). Melee 60%: 1d10 + 1d4 rending.

THE PALE PHYSIC

Clean, polite, generous and very good at what they do. The Physic's clinics save lives every day, and the back wards are where the price is kept.

PALE PHYSIC SURGEON

Pale Physic. A very polite doctor in white.



Characteristics Brawn 40, Vigour 50, Frame 50, Reflex 60, Presence 70, Wits 75, Resolve 70, Learning 85

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 10 (Grievous from a hit of 5); Armour 0

Skills Melee 50, Dodge 35

Initiative and Pace Initiative 6 (roll d10 + 6); Pace 8 yards

Dread 0/1d4: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1d4 on a fail

The back ward.(trait). Its Dread is faced in the ward where the patients whose dreams ran out are kept.

Bone saw.(action). Melee 50%: 1d6 rending.

Needler.(action). Pistol 55%: 1d6 toxic, silent.

Draw the dream.(action). On a sleeping or Unconscious patient: they lose 1d6 Sanity, and the surgeon has a vial.

PALE PHYSIC ORDERLY

Pale Physic. Big, quiet and gentle with the patients, until they are not.



Characteristics Brawn 65, Vigour 60, Frame 70, Reflex 45, Presence 30, Wits 35, Resolve 45, Learning 30

Wounds and Armour Max Wounds 13 (Grievous from a hit of 6); Armour 1

Skills Melee 55, Dodge 25

Initiative and Pace Initiative 4 (roll d10 + 4); Pace 7 yards

Dread 0/1: a Sanity test, losing nothing on a pass and 1 on a fail

Calm.(trait). Nothing alarms an orderly. That is the horror of it.

Restrain.(action). Melee 55%: no damage. The target is held until a Brawn test breaks free.

Cudgel.(action). Melee 55%: 1d6 impact.

THE BESTIARY AT A GLANCE

Creature	Kind	Max Wounds	Armour	Melee	Dread
Drift-walker	Unlit	15	2	45	0/1d4
Lamp-eater	Unlit	6	0	40	0/1d4
Hollow Mourner	Unlit	10	0	30	1/1d6
The Grey Choir	Unlit	19	0	50	1/1d8
Drowned Watch	Unlit	13	1	45	0/1d6
Gloved Herald	Kindled herald	13	1	55	1/1d8
Herald Unveiled	Kindled herald	21	4	70	1d4/1d10
Hearth-thief	Kindled herald	10	0	45	1/1d6
Choir Cantor	Choir of Cinders	10	1	40	0/1d2
Rooftop Acolyte	Choir of Cinders	10	0	45	0/1
Ash-tongued Elder	Choir of Cinders	9	0	25	0/1d3
Ash-hound	Beast	10	1	50	0/1d3
Ash-hound Pack-mother	Beast	16	2	60	0/1d6
Pale Physic Surgeon	Pale Physic	10	0	50	0/1d4
Pale Physic Orderly	Pale Physic	13	1	55	0/1

BUILDING YOUR OWN

You will want more: a Last Banner deserter, a ration-warrant forger, a drowned bell-ringer who still rings. Build them the same way the bestiary is built.

1. **Decide what it is for.** A creature in Ashfall is a problem to solve more than a sack of Wounds. Know what it wants, what it is afraid of and what puts it down: a lamp, a name, hearth flame, a closed door.
2. **Set its characteristics.** Use multiples of 5. An ordinary adult sits between 40 and 65 in most of them; a strong labourer has Brawn 65 to 70; something the size of a pony has Frame 80; a herald unveiled reaches 100 and more. Unlit and beasts have Learning 0.
3. **Work out its numbers.** Max Wounds is Vigour plus Frame, divided by 10 and rounded down. Initiative is Reflex divided by 10, rounded down. Pace comes from Brawn, Reflex and Frame as for investigators.
4. **Give it skills.** Most need only Melee and Dodge. Add Pistol, Stealth, Listen or anything else it really uses, as a percentage.

5. **Give it Armour.** Most people and beasts have 0 or 1. Thick hide, ash bodies or a cuirass give 2 or 3. Above 3 is rare, and frightening.

6. **Write its attacks.** For a person with a weapon, use the weapon's damage plus the creature's Heft from the Heft table, written out in full ("1d8 + 1d4 rending") so nobody has to add it at the table. For a beast, pick a die for the bite or the claw that feels right beside the bestiary's.

7. **Choose its Dread.** Match it to the eight horror steps, from 0/1 for something merely unsettling to 1d4/1d10 for something that should end careers. Say when the Dread is faced if it isn't simply on sight.

8. **Give it one or two traits.** One should be a weakness the investigators can find: light-shy, harmed only by hearth flame, held by its true name. One can be something it does that is not damage: puts out lamps, calls people by name, takes a hearth.

HOW DANGEROUS IS IT?

Compare a creature with the people it will meet. A new investigator usually has Max Wounds between 9 and 14

(it can be as low as 5 or as high as 18), Armour 0 to 2, Sanity around 50 and Melee or Dodge somewhere between 30 and 65.

- **Damage against Max Wounds.** An attack that averages half an investigator's Max Wounds will make someone Grievous most times it lands. The Pack-mother's maul (1d10 + 1d4, about 8) does that to most people. Use such attacks sparingly, and give the investigators a way to see them coming.
- **Numbers against skills.** A creature with Melee 60 or more hits most of the time, and its Solids beat most investigators' Dodges. One with Dodge 50 or more is hard to pin down in melee: bring guns, or bring light.
- **Dread across a session.** A party of investigators with Sanity around 50 can face two or three Dreads of 1/1d6 or 1/1d8 in a session and still be playable. A 1d4/1d10 is a climax: one a story is plenty.
- **Groups.** Ash-hounds get +10 Melee for each other hound on the same target, and four Drowned Watch arrive together. A pack of four is a real fight for four investigators; two packs is a slaughter.

FOR THE GM

The most dangerous adversary in Ashfall is usually a person: a polite surgeon, a patient Assessor, a cantor who believes every word. Give them stat blocks for when it comes to blows, but remember that most of their harm is done with ledgers, abandonment notices and a quiet word to the right constable.



Lantern Sound at low tide

RUNNING THE GAME

This chapter is for the GM. It covers how to run Ashfall well: the principles behind it, how a session and a story fit together, how to use the system's own tools (pressing, Ember, Dread, Corruption, the lamps), plot hooks to start from and a complete starter scenario.

FOUR PRINCIPLES

Every Ashfall story should honour these. When you are unsure what happens next, come back to them.

Knowledge always costs. Every true answer is paid for in Sanity, Kindling, Corruption, time, money or a friend. Never give one away free. That does not mean withholding clues; it means every clue has a price tag, and the players choose whether to pay. The diary is on the desk. Reading it is Dread 0/1d4.

The lamps are never enough. Light helps; it does not save. The oil runs low, the wick gutters and the posts are a long way apart. Let light be the thing the players plan around, and then let it fail at the worst moment, fairly.

People are the second horror. The Choir, the Physic, the Assessors and frightened neighbours do more harm than the Unlit do. Let the monsters be terrible and the people be worse. An Unlit is what it is; a clerk who signs an abandonment notice knowing what lives in that district has chosen.

Let the players solve it, then make them pay to stop it. Give them enough to work the mystery out. Stopping it is a separate problem, and it should hurt. The best Ashfall endings are bargains: the district is saved but the book is read; the herald is refused but the hearth goes cold for a night; the Assessor is exposed but the penny sheet that printed it is shut down.

STORIES AND SESSIONS

A **story** is one mystery from hook to aftermath: the lamps going out on one district, a dream a whole town shares, a book at an auction. Most stories take one to three sessions of three or four hours. Between stories, the investigators **Temper**, rest, spend their pay and deal with what they brought home.

A story usually moves through five parts. They are not scenes to play in order; they are a shape to steer towards.

1. **The hook.** Someone asks for help, or something goes wrong in front of the investigators. The Lamp-Ward is the easiest employer: it pays, it asks few questions and it has a lot of cold posts.
2. **The legwork.** Interviews, archives, ledgers, a walk round the scene. This is where Spot, Listen, Read People, Archives, Ledgers and Standing earn their keep. Keep it moving: every scene should end with a new question or a new place to go.
3. **The grey.** Sooner or later the trail leads beyond the lamps, under the bridges, into an abandoned district or onto a rooftop at dusk. The light runs low and the Dread starts.
4. **The confrontation.** The investigators understand what is happening and try to stop it. This is where rites are performed, books are read aloud or burned, and the fighting happens, if there is fighting.
5. **The aftermath.** What it cost, who knows, who is angry. Hand out pay and Standing; ask who is Haunted; call for Tempering.

PACING WITH ASHFALL'S CLOCKS

Ashfall has clocks built into its world. Use them, and say them out loud so the players feel them.

- **The oil.** A Bull's-eye Lantern burns three hours on a flask. Count the hours in the grey and tell the players when the second flask goes in.
- **The bell at dusk.** Every city rings its hearth bell when the boundary lamps are lit. Anyone outside the ring after the bell is on their own. A scene that has to finish "before the bell" is a scene with a deadline.
- **Thirty days.** An abandonment notice gives a district thirty days. The coal stops on the thirty-first. That is a story-long clock for any mystery set in a struck-off district.
- **The Long Dark.** One hour a year when every lamp in the city is out. Save it for a climax.
- **Sanity.** Each investigator's Sanity is a clock the players can see. When it gets low, they will start making careful choices. Let them.

YOUR TOOLS

CALLING FOR TESTS

Ask for a test only when failure would be interesting. When it would not be, say yes. When a job is long (searching an archive for a day, nursing a fever for a week), ask for one test to cover it.

Name the test from what the character is doing. When a skill fits, use it; when none does, use a characteristic. When the situation is unusually easy or hard, use **Fortune** or **Misfortune** first, a bonus or penalty to the number second, and a **Solid test** only when a plain success really would not be enough.

Never let a failed test stop the story. If the investigators need a fact to move on, a failure means they get it late, at a cost, or from a worse source; it does not mean they never get it.

PRESSING

When a player wants to press, ask how they push, and tell them what is at stake: "If you fail this one, you'll be on the floor of the stacks with a shelf on top of you." The cost of a failed press should be real and immediate: Wounds, a lost lamp, a guard who sees them, a door that locks behind them, something waking. It is

the one place in Ashfall where the dice explicitly hand you permission to be cruel. Use it fairly and the players will keep pressing, which is what you want.

EMBER AND FATE

Ember is the players' best tool for avoiding failure, and it does not come back with rest. Expect it to fall steadily across a campaign, and to recover a little at each Tempering. A character with low Ember has nothing left to fall back on; that is a story, too. Call for **Ember tests** when only luck could decide something: a cab on the street, a dry match, the right night porter.

Fate is rarer and refills on Recuperate. Let it be the moment the world blinks.

DREAD

Dread is the main way Sanity is spent. Put a Dread on the things that matter: the first sight of an Unlit, a herald with its gloves off, the last chapter of a cinderbook, a body in the back ward. Do not put one on every shadow: too many tests make horror routine. As a rough guide, two or three Dread tests in a session, and one big one at the climax of a story.

Remember that a loss of 5 or more asks for a Wits test, and that passing it is what makes someone Shaken. Describe a Shaken character's bout with care and some dignity: they are not comic relief.

HAUNTED AND THE LONG COST

When a fifth of a character's Sanity goes in a single day, they become **Haunted**. Roll on the Haunted table yourself and talk with the player about how it shows. A good Haunting comes up once a session, makes a scene harder and gives the player something to play. Lift it when a character has spent real time somewhere safe with someone who knows Mind-Mending; how long is yours to decide, but weeks, not hours. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

CORRUPTION

Raise Corruption when the story says so. Ashfall leaves

the amount to you. As a starting point:

- A day in the drifts without a mask, or a night sleeping in an ash-choked house: **1**.
- Being engulfed by a drift-walker, touched by a herald's warm grip, or eating grey bread for a month: **1d4**.
- Drinking the Pale Physic's distillate, or lying in a drift until you were dug out: **1d6**.
- Standing inside a Kindled working when it completes: **1d10**.

This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it. It raises Corruption only when you change the number on the sheet.

Hand out corruptions as Corruption climbs. The Tremors name 25 and Whispers 50; the Major corruptions name no number, and suit a character well past 50, often near 75. Talk with the player about which fits what the ash has done to them.

ASHLORE, RITES AND CINDERBOOKS

Cinderbooks are treasure and traps at once. Make them hard to get, dangerous to keep and tempting to read. Every rite the investigators learn should solve one problem and make another: a Threshold Ward keeps the Unlit out, and teaches the Choir that someone in the house can read.

Award Ashlore sparingly outside books: a point when a character understands something true about the ash first-hand.

TRIUMPH AND DISASTER

When a Triumph comes up, give something extra: a second clue, a door already open, a foe who loses their nerve. When a Disaster comes up, make the situation worse in a way the story can use: a broken lantern, a lost notebook, a wrong name said aloud. The rules give Triumph and Disaster no fixed effects, on purpose.

WHEN A CHARACTER FALLS

When an investigator dies or is Lost, give it weight (a funeral, a ward in the asylum, a name on the Ward's roll), then bring in the new one quickly, ideally someone connected to the old: a sister, an apprentice, the reporter who covered the death.

PEOPLE

Most of the people the investigators meet need only a name, a want and one number. For a quick NPC, use 50 in anything they would be ordinarily good at and 30 in anything they would not, Max Wounds 11 and Armour 0. A professional (a constable, a surgeon, a Last Banner sergeant) has 60 to 70 in their trade. Use the bestiary's stat blocks for anyone dangerous.

AGREEING THE HORROR

Ashfall can go to dark places: madness, abandonment, grief, the harvesting of dreams. Before the first session, agree with the players what they want in the game and what they don't, and keep to it.

PLOT HOOKS

1. **The Unlit Streets.** The lamps of a Vellmoor district are going out, one street a night, always just after the dusk bell. The Lamp-Ward relights them; by morning the glass is unbroken and the wicks are cold. The district has just received an abandonment notice. Somebody wants the streets dark before the thirtieth day, and the lamp-eaters are only the tool. (The starter scenario below.)
2. **Grisholt Dreams.** Everyone in a Grisholt rail town dreams the same house: three storeys, a red door, a staircase that goes down further than it should. Each night they get a little further inside. Ten have stopped waking up. The house is real, it is in Vellmoor, and an Assessor bought it last year.
3. **Lot 113.** A respectable Vellmoor auction lists, as Lot 113, "a field diary, author unknown, recovered from the northern survey of 991". The bidders include a Pale Physic doctor, a Choir elder, a Last Banner colonel and an Assessor's private secretary. The diary is a cinderbook, and one of its pages has started to be readable from across the room.

4. **Too Few Crew.** A barque comes into Lantern Sound with nine of its twenty-two crew. The nine say the others "stayed aboard", and the ship is empty. The harbour master wants it searched before the tide turns; the Drowned Watch rise with that tide.
5. **The Town That Does Not Sleep.** A Tallow Cross chandler writes to her sister in Vellmoor that she has not slept in eleven weeks and has never felt better. The letter is in a stranger's hand. The candles from her works are selling in every parish in the Concord.
6. **The Back Ward.** A Physician investigator's patient is transferred to a Pale Physic clinic for "rest". Visiting is not permitted. The patient's family has been paid, generously, and asked to sign a paper they cannot read.
7. **Station Twelve.** A telegraph station on the northern line, silent since 991 AE, starts answering. The messages are correct: the right codes, the right operator's name, the weather at the Crown. The Last Banner wants an escort to go and look.
8. **The Child at the Door.** In a parish on the east bank, a lost child has been taken in by the hearth-priest. The child is polite, quiet and warm to the touch. Since it came, the parish hearth has burned low every night.
9. **The Long Dark.** On the hour of the year when every lamp in Vellmoor goes out, the investigators are asked to stand watch over the Mother Hearth itself. Someone in the Assessors' Hall has arranged for it not to be relit.
10. **District Nine's Ledger.** An Assessor's Clerk investigator finds that the Ninth District's abandonment was
 - approved before the survey that recommended it was written. The ledger that proves it lists, beside each street, "what was found". Some of the entries are dated after the district went dark.

STARTER SCENARIO: POST FORTY-ONE

A short story for three to five new investigators, playable in one or two sessions. It is built on the first hook above. At least one investigator should be a

Lamplighter or have reason to work for the Lamp-Ward; the others can be hired, or can have their own reasons to care about the district.

THE TRUTH

The **Tanners' Steps** is a poor district on Vellmoor's west bank, nailed with an abandonment notice nine days ago. Its deeds have been quietly bought, house by house, by a company called **Grey Lantern Holdings**, whose papers are signed by **Ivo Tamsin**, private secretary to **Assessor Hollis Crane**.

Tamsin is a **Choir Cantor**. The Choir's inner circle has read in the falling ash that the Kindled will come into the Concord through a parish hearth put out "in a street with no lamps". Tamsin bought the streets to make sure nobody would be there to relight them. He feeds the **lamp-eaters** with ash carried from the dead Ninth District across the river, leaving it heaped at the foot of the next street's posts each dusk; they come for the ash and stay for the lamps.

On the thirtieth night, the last street of the Steps will be dark, and Tamsin will perform **Summon a Herald** on the chapel roof. The herald that answers is a **Hearth-thief**: a lost child who will knock at the parish chapel of Saint Wick and ask to be let in out of the ash.

Assessor Crane knows about the company and the cheap deeds. He does not know about the Choir, and would be horrified. That makes him useful, and dangerous.

SCENE I: THE COLD POSTS

Captain Marit Ashby of the Lamp-Ward hires the investigators (or gives the job to the Lamplighter among them). Seven streets of the Steps have gone dark on seven nights. Her lamplighters relight them; the next street goes the next night. Nobody has seen anything. Two of her people have asked to be moved. She pays a crown between them for a week's work, and oil.

Out on the Steps at dusk:

- **Spot** finds low grey smears on the cold posts, at knee height, as if something leaned against them. In thick ash it has Misfortune.
- **Track** finds prints in the drifted ash around the posts: small, many-toed, never more than a few yards from a post, then nothing.
- **Listen** after the bell hears a soft sound like spilled water moving the wrong way.
- **Occultism** or **Ashlore** names it: a lamp-eater.
- Anyone checking the foot of the next street's posts finds a heap of ash that is a slightly different grey from the rest: finer, darker, cold. **Ruinlore**, **Natural Philosophy** or **Ashlore** says it was carried here, from somewhere it has been lying a long time.

If they watch the next street that night, two **Lamp-eaters** come for the posts an hour after the bell (Dread 0/1d4). They snuff a lamp each turn rather than fight unless cornered. Hearth flame drives them off. Killing them stops nothing: two more come the next night.

SCENE 2: THE PAPER TRAIL

The abandonment notice is signed by Assessor Crane. Finding out who owns the Steps now takes legwork:

- **Law** or **Standing** gets the investigators into the registry at the Assessors' Hall; **Patter** gets them in without the right letter.
- **Ledgers** or **Archives** finds that forty-one houses on the Steps were sold in the last nine days to Grey Lantern Holdings, at prices that would not buy a coat.
- The company's papers are signed by Ivo Tamsin. **Read People** on the clerk who fetched them says she is frightened of him.
- Crane himself, if confronted, is evasive about the company and genuinely baffled by lamp-eaters. A Solid **Read People** test sees that he is ashamed, not guilty.

A **Penny Journalist** knows Tamsin is seen on rooftops in the Steps at dusk. Anyone who asks around the Choir's soup kitchen hears that "the cantor from the Hall" has been leading the rooftop congregation on the chapel of Saint Wick.

SCENE 3: THE ROOF OF SAINT WICK

At dusk, Tamsin and four **Rooftop Acolytes** watch the ash fall from the chapel roof and chant. A good look at the cantor's reading is a **Dread 0/1d2** when it turns out to be true: Tamsin reads aloud the name of the street that will go dark tonight, and minutes later it does.

The roof is steep, slick with ash and three storeys up (see "The chapel roof" in Art direction). A fight here is dangerous for everyone: a fall from the ridge is the GM's to price, and a Disaster on any Climb or Dodge test near the edge is a fall. In Tamsin's coat is a copy of the **Psalter of the Choir of Cinders**, with the page for Summon a Herald marked.

If the investigators expose Tamsin to Crane, Crane has him arrested, and the Choir's elders send someone else to finish the work: an **Ash-tongued Elder**, who knows the rite too.

SCENE 4: THE LAST STREET

On the thirtieth night only Chapel Row is lit, the street with the parish chapel and its hearth. Whoever is still trying to finish the work performs Summon a Herald on the roof at the bell. Within the hour, the **Hearth-thief** comes up Chapel Row: a child in a too-big coat, asking to be let in out of the ash (Dread 1/1d6 when someone sees what it is).

- It is always let in. Noticing that it should not have been takes **Read People**.
- If it touches the hearth, the hearth goes out, and the Steps have no hearth flame until someone carries one from another parish. Then the Kindled have their dark street.
- A **Threshold Ward** across the chapel door keeps the Unlit out, but a herald may cross it once. Two wards, or a ward and someone standing in the door, will do.
- Two **Lamp-eaters** come for Chapel Row's lamps as soon as the herald arrives. Keeping the lamps lit until dawn wins the night as surely as fighting does.

The herald can be refused, driven off with hearth flame or bargained with. It offers each investigator what they most want. Refusing takes a **Resolve** test.

AFTERMATH

If the hearth stays lit until dawn, the Hearth-thief is gone, the lamp-eaters lose interest in the Steps, and the Choir loses face. The district is still abandoned: the notice stands unless someone makes Crane withdraw it, which takes Standing, proof and a price. If the hearth went out, the Steps are dark for good, and something moves into Saint Wick's chapel that the Choir will be very glad to see.

Pay the investigators what Ashby promised, and Standing for anyone the penny sheets mention. Then call for **Tempering**.

FOR THE GM

Threat in Post Forty-One. Two lamp-eaters are a scare, not a slaughter: their bite is only 1d6, and they would rather snuff lamps than fight. Four acolytes and a cantor on a roof are a real fight, made worse by the height; let the investigators avoid it if they are clever. The Hearth-thief should be faced, not fought: its knife is small, but if the hearth goes out, the investigators have lost whatever their Wounds say.



The bridges of Vellmoor, under the seventh winter's ash

ART DIRECTION

This appendix is for anyone making Ashfall battle maps, tokens and pictures. It describes eight places worth a map, the palette and materials of the world, how light and weather should look, how people and creatures should read at a glance, and what to keep out.

The one idea to hold onto: **Ashfall is a grey world with islands of warm light in it.** Every picture should make the viewer feel how small the lit places are and how much grey there is between them.

SCALE AND CONVENTIONS FOR MAPS

- **One square is one yard.** Ashfall measures movement, ranges and lamp beams in yards, so an Ashfall board is gridded at one yard to a square. A person fills one square; a cart about two by three; a lamp-post sits on the corner of a square.
- **Light is drawn, not implied.** Show where each light source is and how far it reaches. A boundary lamp lights a pool about 4 yards across; a Bull's-eye Lantern throws a narrow beam to 20 yards; a hearth lights its whole room.
- **Mark the drifts.** Draw ash depth so the GM can see it: a dusting, knee-deep drifts, and deep drifts that only a fool wades into. Most tables halve Pace in knee-deep drift. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.
- **Cover.** Ashfall has no cover rules of its own. Most tables give Misfortune to a shot at someone half-hidden, and rule out a shot through solid cover. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it. Draw cover clearly enough that the table can tell the two apart. Light cover is a cart, a railing, a stack of crates; solid cover is a brick wall, a locomotive, a stone pier.
- **Elevation** matters in a world of roofs, bridges and pits. Mark heights in yards on every raised or sunken area.

EIGHT PLACES WORTH A BATTLE MAP

I. THE BOUNDARY POSTS

What it is. The edge of a city: the last lit street, the ring of lamp-posts, and the drift beyond. Every Lamplighter's working night ends here, and most Ashfall stories pass through it at least once. It is where the investigators meet their first lamp-eater.

Board. 32 by 20 squares.

Zone	Where	What is there
The last street	West 10 columns	Two terraces facing each other across a 6-yard cobbled street. Doors every 4 yards, a pump, a handcart, a few lit windows.
The boundary	Columns 11 to 14	A line of lamp-posts every 8 yards, a low iron railing with gaps, a Lamp-Ward hut (3 by 3) with an oil store.
The drift	East 18 columns	Knee-deep ash, a half-buried cart, a dead tree, a collapsed garden wall, the tops of a fence marking where the road used to be.

Entrances. Both ends of the street; the doors of the terraces; anywhere along the drift.

Cover. Light: the handcart, the railing, the fence tops. Solid: the terrace walls, the Ward hut, the collapsed wall.

Elevation. Flat; the drift is about half a yard higher than the street, rising to the east.

Hazards. Knee-deep drift east of the posts, deep drift in the hollow behind the dead tree, a ditch under the ash along the old road (unseen until someone falls in).

Light. Three post lamps (pools about 4 yards across), two lit windows, the Ward hut's lantern. The drift beyond the posts is dark.

Signature props. Hooked poles leaning on the hut, oil cans, a post with its glass whole and its wick cold, footprints in the ash that stop dead.

Variants. At dusk the bell is ringing and the posts are being lit one by one. At night, one post is out. In thick ashfall the drift half-hides everything past 10 yards.

Zone	Where	What is there
Stair and reading room	North-west, 8 by 8	Stone stair down from the bridge street; long oak desks with green-shaded gas lamps; the issue counter.
The stacks	Centre, 14 by 16	Rows of shelving a yard deep and 3 yards high, with aisles 2 yards wide; ladders on rails; a card catalogue at the end of each row.
The pump hall	East, 8 by 12	Two steam pumps, a boiler, pipes along the walls, an iron catwalk 2 yards up along three walls.
The closed stacks	South-west, 8 by 6	Behind an iron grille with a padlock: locked cases of the books the Archivists do not list.
The sump	South-east corner, 4 by 4	Black water a yard deep, where the river seeps in.

Entrances. The stair from the bridge; a service door in the pump hall to the river tunnel; the grille.

Cover. Solid: the shelving (it blocks sight completely), the pumps, the boiler. Light: desks, the catalogue cabinets.

Elevation. The catwalk is 2 yards up; the shelves can be climbed to 3 yards.

Hazards. Shelving that can be toppled into the next aisle; scalding pipes in the pump hall; the sump; and if the pumps stop, water rising across the floor a little every round.

Light. Gas lamps in the reading room only. The stacks are dark except for what readers carry. The boiler's firebox glows red in the pump hall.

Signature props. Brass call numbers, reading ladders, a trolley of returned books, white cotton gloves, a stopped clock, damp ledgers stacked to dry.

Encounters. Two lamp-eaters working down the line of posts; a drift-walker whose path crosses the boundary at the cold post; an ash-hound pack testing the light.

2. THE VELLMOOR STACKS

What it is. One of the great archive vaults under the bridges of Vellmoor, two levels below the river, kept dry by steam pumps. Investigators come here for the one page that matters, and sometimes find that someone else wants it too.

Board. 24 by 24 squares.

Variants. By day, a few readers and a tired Archivist. At night, locked and dark. In the flooding variant, the sump is overflowing and the stacks are ankle-deep.

Encounters. A hollow mourner standing at the end of an aisle; an Ash-tongued Elder and two acolytes looking for a cinderbook in the closed stacks; a Pale Physic Surgeon who got there first.

3. THE GRISHOLT ENGINE SHED

What it is. A roundhouse at the Grisholt junction, where engines are turned, coaled and mended all night. Rail Engineers know it; the dreamers of Grisholt walk through it in their sleep.

Board. 36 by 24 squares.

Zone	Where	What is there
Turntable	Centre, 16 across	A round pit a yard and a half deep, with the turning bridge across it and its hand capstan.
Stalls	Around the east half	Six engine stalls, each 4 wide and 14 deep, with an inspection pit between the rails. Three hold engines.
Coal stage	North-west	A raised platform 3 yards high with coal heaped on it and a chute down to the line.
Yard and sidings	South-west	Three lines of wagons, a water tower, a signal post.
Telegraph office	West edge, 4 by 4	A brick hut with a lit window and the clatter of the key.

Entrances. The tracks in from the yard; doors at the back of each stall; a ladder up the coal stage.

Cover. Solid: engines, wagons, the coal stage wall, the water tower legs. Light: tool benches, coal heaps, the capstan.

Elevation. Turntable pit and inspection pits a yard or more down; coal stage 3 yards up; engine footplates a yard up.

Hazards. The turntable moving; a live engine venting steam; the inspection pits; coal dust in the air near the stage.

Light. Firebox glow from live engines, lanterns hung on hooks in the stalls, the red and white signal lamps, the telegraph office window.

Signature props. Company clocks, oil cans, shovels, a chalked roster of engines, sleepers stacked by the wall, a foreman's whistle.

Zone	Where	What is there
The quay	North 8 rows	Stone quay 3 yards above the mud, with bollards, stacked crates, a hand crane and the harbour lamp on its tall post. Ladders and a slipway down.
The mud	Centre	Grey mud, sucking and cold, cut by two channels of water too deep to wade.
The hulks	South half	An old barque on its side (inside it is a slanting room 4 by 10), the ribs of a smaller wreck, a moored lighter.
The tideline	South edge	Open water, coming back in.

Entrances. The quay steps and ladders; the slipway; the water.

Cover. Solid: the quay wall, the barque's hull. Light: crates, bollards, the wreck's ribs.

Elevation. The quay is 3 yards above the mud; the barque's upper side is 4 yards up and climbable.

Hazards. Sucking mud (a Brawn test to pull free), the channels, and the tide: the GM moves the water's edge a few rows north each round once it turns.

Variants. At the night shift change, busy and loud. At three in the morning, silent except for the dreamers walking in step across the yard. In thick ash, the far side of the turntable is lost.

Encounters. A drift-walker whose path runs along the main line; a Gloved Herald meeting the night foreman in the telegraph office; an ash-hound pack sheltering in the coal stage.

4. LANTERN SOUND AT LOW TIDE

What it is. The harbour at the Vell's mouth when the water goes out: a stone quay above, a grey plain of mud below, and the hulks of old ships between. Ships come in here with too few crew; the Drowned Watch come in with the tide.

Board. 30 by 30 squares.

Light. The harbour lamp lights the whole quay brightly and almost none of the mud. Investigators below the quay are in the dark with what they carry.

Signature props. Coiled hawsers, gull-picked fish crates,

a boathook, a ship's bell, footprints in the mud that start out in the channel.

Variants. At dead low water, the whole mud plain is open. On the turn, water in the channels rises. At high water, the board is the quay and the tops of the hulks only.

Encounters. Four of the Drowned Watch coming up out of the channel with the tide; a hollow mourner on the deck of the barque; smugglers unloading some-

Zone	Where	What is there
The nave roof	Centre, 8 wide	A steep slate roof, ridge running north to south, sloping 4 yards down each side. Slick with ash.
The bell tower	North end, 4 by 4	Rising 8 yards above the ridge, with a louvred bell chamber and a ladder inside.
The aisle roofs	East and west, 5 wide	Lower, flatter lead roofs 3 yards below the nave eaves, with a knee-high parapet.
Chimneys and skylight	Along the ridge	Two chimney stacks and a glazed skylight over the nave.
Neighbouring roofs	Board edges	Terrace roofs across gaps of 2 to 3 yards.

Entrances. The tower ladder; a roof hatch on the west aisle; the gaps from the neighbouring terraces.

Cover. Solid: chimneys, the tower. Light: the parapet, the ridge itself (lie flat behind it).

Elevation. Street level is 10 yards below the aisle roofs; the nave ridge is 6 yards above them; the tower top 8 above that.

Hazards. Every square of the nave roof is slick: Climb or Reflex tests to move fast or fight on it. The skylight gives way under a person and drops them 10 yards into the nave. The gaps between roofs need a Jump.

Light. None of its own: the Choir's hand lanterns, the glow of the city, and, through the skylight, the red light of the parish hearth inside.

Signature props. A congregation's footprints in the ash along the ridge, a bell rope, a lectern carried up for the cantor, ash-written prayer cards weighted

Zone	Where	What is there
Reception hall	Ground floor, south	Benches, a long counter, white tiles, a coal stove, the door to the street.
Clean ward	Ground floor, north	Twelve beds in two rows behind curtains, a nurse's table.
Dispensary	Ground floor, east	Glass cabinets of labelled vials, a locked cupboard, a scale.

thing the Pale Physic ordered.

5. THE CHAPEL ROOF

What it is. The roof of a parish chapel in a poor district, where the Choir of Cinders gathers at dusk to watch the ash fall and chant what it says. The starter scenario's confrontation happens here.

Board. 20 by 28 squares.

with slate.

Variants. At dusk, the congregation is chanting. At night, empty, with the ash settling over the footprints. In heavy ashfall, the tower vanishes from the nave roof.

Encounters. A Choir Cantor and four Rooftop Acolytes at the ridge; a lamp-eater coming over the gutters for the hand lanterns; the Hearth-thief at the chapel door below (seen through the skylight).

6. A PALE PHYSIC CLINIC

What it is. A clean, warm, generous clinic of the Pale Physic, with a respectable front and a back ward below. Investigators come here because a patient vanished into it, or because a Physician among them is invited to see the work.

Board. 30 by 20 squares, in two floors drawn side by side (each 15 by 20).

Zone	Where	What is there
The back ward	Basement, most of it	A long low room with twenty beds, each patient asleep and linked by rubber tubes to a glass condenser beside the bed.
Still room	Basement, east	Copper stills, racks of grey vials, a ledger of doses.

Entrances. The street door; a coal chute; the stair between floors, behind a door marked as a linen store; a goods door from the yard into the still room.

Cover. Light: beds, curtains, the counter. Solid: the dispensary cabinets (but glass), the stills.

Elevation. Two floors; the basement is 3 yards below the ground floor.

Hazards. Glass everywhere; ether and alcohol in the still room (fire); sleeping patients who cannot move out of the way.

Light. Upstairs, bright gas and white walls, almost too clean. Downstairs, low lamps turned down to a glow, and the faint shine of the condensers.

Signature props. Starched aprons, enamel basins, the condensers with something grey and slow in them, a visitors' book with no visitors in it.

Variants. By day, a full, kind, busy clinic. At night, the clean ward sleeps and the back ward is busy.

Encounters. A Pale Physic Surgeon and two Orderlies; a patient whose dreams ran out, standing at the end of a bed; a Gloved Herald visiting as a benefactor.

7. THE TALLOW CROSS WORKS

What it is. A chandlery and rendering works in the factory town that never stops. Warm, loud, greasy and too busy. Investigators come here to find out why nobody in Tallow Cross sleeps.

Board. 32 by 24 squares.

Zone	Where	What is there
The rendering floor	Centre	Three round vats, 4 yards across with knee-high rims, full of hot tallow; stirring paddles; a floor slick with grease.
Dipping racks	North	Rows of wooden racks with thousands of candles hanging to set.
Furnace wall	East	Three furnace mouths feeding the vats, coal heaps, fire-irons.
Gantry	North and south walls	An iron walkway 4 yards up, with a stair at each end and the foreman's office in the northwest corner.
Loading dock	West	Carts, crates of candles, the big doors to the street.

Entrances. The loading doors; a door to the yard behind the furnaces; the office stair; a locked door under the gantry marked for no admittance.

Cover. Solid: the vats, the furnace wall, crates. Light: dipping racks (they hide you, they don't stop a shot).

Elevation. Gantry 4 yards up; the vats' rims knee-high.

Hazards. The vats (a fall into one is the end of most stories); furnace heat; the grease floor; hanging chains; candles that light like torches.

Light. Red furnace glow on everything, lamps along the gantry. It is the warmest, brightest place in the book, and that should feel wrong. No ash settles on the roof.

Signature props. Wax-white candles by the thousand, a clock nobody looks at, workers' shifts chalked on a board with no gaps for sleep, the owner's portrait.

Variants. At the day shift, crowded and loud. At midnight, exactly as crowded and loud. Behind the locked door: a small hearth that burns red without fuel.

Encounters. Workers who will not stop working and will not let anyone stop them (use the Pale Physic

Orderly's numbers); a Gloved Herald who owns the works; a Herald Unveiled at the end of a long story.

8. HARROW CUT

What it is. A village on the northern line that stopped answering the telegraph in the second winter, half-buried in drift, with a train stopped in its cutting. Ash-

Zone	Where	What is there
The church	North-east	The tower stands 10 yards clear of the drift; the nave roof is at drift level.
The buried street	Centre	Roofs and chimneys sticking out of deep drift; one street dug out as a trench 2 yards deep.
The station	South-west	A platform under an iron canopy, a ticket office, a signal box on stilts.
The cutting	South edge	A rail cutting 4 yards deep with a stopped train of an engine and three carriages, half-filled with ash.
The telegraph line	Along the cutting	Poles with snapped wire.

Entrances. The cutting from either end; anywhere over the drift.

Cover. Solid: the carriages, the church tower, the signal box. Light: chimney stacks, the platform canopy's pillars.

Elevation. Church tower 10 yards up; signal box 3 yards up; cutting 4 yards down; the dug-out trench 2 down.

Hazards. Deep drift almost everywhere; roofs at drift level that give way into the houses below; the cutting's steep sides.

Light. None except what the investigators bring, and one lamp in the church tower that someone keeps lit.

Signature props. A station clock stopped at the hour the telegraph went quiet, luggage still in the racks, a child's sled, a notice of abandonment that never arrived.

Variants. By grey day, eerie and still. At night, the tower lamp is the only point of light for miles. In heavy ashfall, the village is a set of shapes.

Encounters. A drift-walker walking the old high street on top of the drift; an ash-hound pack and their Packmother denned in the carriages; the Grey Choir singing in the buried church.

Walkers salvage it; the Last Banner passes through on the way north.

Board. 40 by 30 squares.

PALETTE

Colour	Hex	What it is for
Drift Grey	#8E8B85	Ground. Ash on roads, roofs, sills and fields; the sky by day.
Soot Brick	#3B302C	Structure. Brick, old timber, wet stone, coats.
Iron Black	#1D1F22	Structure and shadow. Ironwork, rails, lamp-posts, the dark beyond the light.
Lamp Amber	#E9A23B	Light. Lamp pools, lit windows, hearth flame, the investigators' marker.
Hearth Red	#B0412E	Danger. Embers, the Kindled's warmth, heralds, furnaces, blood.
Physic White	#E7E3D9	Accent. Paper, bone, clean linen, the Pale Physic's coats.
Verdigris	#5F7D72	Accent. Brass and copper gone green, Lamp-Ward badges, river water, telegraph fittings.

Most of any picture should be Drift Grey, Soot Brick and Iron Black. Amber should be precious: small, bright, warm pools. Hearth Red should be rarer still, and should always mean something is wrong, or something is burning that should not be.

MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

- **Ash** is fine and grey, not white. It lies in soft layers with wind ripples, piles on every ledge and sill, softens every edge and takes every footprint. Fresh ash is paler; trodden ash is darker and slick.
- **Brick** is soot-black with paler mortar, streaked where rain runs off the sills.
- **Cobbles and slates** show through the ash only where someone has swept or walked.
- **Iron** is black, cold and often frosted grey: lamp-posts, railings, rails, bridge girders.
- **Glass** is everywhere a light is, and always a little smoked.
- **Cloth** is heavy wool, waxed canvas and oilcloth, all of it greyed at the hems.
- **Brass and copper** are the only colour in most rooms, and most of it has gone green.

LIGHTING

- **The default is dim.** Daylight is a grey evening; night is real dark. Light comes from things: lamps, windows, fires.
- **Lamp light is warm and small.** Each lamp lights a pool with a clean edge; beyond the edge, the grey takes over fast. A Bull's-eye Lantern is a single narrow beam.
- **Hearth flame** is warmer and redder than lamp flame, and casts a steadier light.
- **The Kindled's light is wrong.** Heat without flame: a red glow on faces, heat shimmer in cold air, ash melting on a coat that should be cold.
- **The Unlit eat light.** Around them, light falls short; lamp pools have bites taken out of them; wicks are cold.

WEATHER AND ATMOSPHERE

- **Ashfall** is constant, from a light drift of grey flakes to a thick fall that hides everything past a few yards.
- **River mist** off the Vell turns the ash into one grey wall.

- **Rain** turns ash to grey slurry, running in the gutters and caking on boots.
- **Snow** mixes with ash into dirty grey drifts; frost (the Concord calls it greyime) coats everything.
- **Sound** carries strangely: footsteps muffled, bells sharp, the Choir's hymn heard from streets away.

TOKENS AND CHARACTERS

Investigators should read as people who work for a living, dressed against the ash. The silhouette tell is a **lamp held up**: every investigator token should have one, or have it at the hip. Then their trade:

- **Lamplighter**: long coat, Ward badge, hooked pole over the shoulder.
- **Banner-Sworn**: military greatcoat gone shabby, a carbine or a blade, straight back.
- **Ash-Walker**: goggles, ash-mask, rope and shovel, a salvage sack.
- **Cutpurse**: dark close coat, cap pulled low, empty hands.
- **Archivist**: spectacles, white cotton gloves, a reading lamp and a satchel of notes.
- **Physician**: doctor's bag, a clean collar, a stethoscope round the neck.
- **Rail Engineer**: oilskins, spanner, company watch chain.
- **Assessor's Clerk**: neat dark suit, a seal case, a sword cane.
- **Penny Journalist**: notebook, pencil behind the ear, a box camera.
- **Hearth-Priest**: a stole over a plain coat, a lantern lit from the hearth.

Commoners are greyer and smaller in the frame: rag masks, shawls and caps, a ration tin, a candle stub instead of a lamp, shoulders hunched against the fall.

Adversaries should be readable at once:

- **The Unlit** are made of ash and have no light of their own. Crumbling edges, no faces or the wrong ones, grey on grey. A drift-walker is a heap that is nearly a person; a lamp-eater is low, long and liquid.
- **Heralds** are too clean. No mask, no ash on their shoulders, gloves on, a warm glow on the face from no visible source. An unveiled herald is tall, burning at the edges and wrong in its proportions.
- **The Choir** wear grey robes over everyday clothes, faces written over in ash, eyes up.
- **The Pale Physic** wear starched white, immaculate, with polite faces.
- **Ash-hounds** are dogs gone grey, with ember-red eyes.
- **Borrowed looks.** Nothing that would make someone think of another published game's art, logos, monsters or character designs.

For token rings, use **amber** for investigators, **grey** for the Unlit, **red** for the Kindled and **plain soot** for people.

WHAT TO AVOID

- **Gadgetry and brass for its own sake.** No cogs on everything, no goggles worn as a fashion, no airships, no clockwork servants. This is a working gaslight world: rail, telegraph, powder and paper.
- **Fantasy furniture.** No castles, wizards' towers, robed spellcasters, glowing runes, dragons, elves or swords as the default weapon.
- **Tentacles and cosmic glow.** The horror here is ash, memory and fire, not sea creatures or purple-green light from the sky.
- **Gore.** Wounds are bandaged and grim, not splattered. The worst thing in the back ward is how peaceful it is.
- **Rotting dead.** The Unlit are ash, not flesh. Nothing in Ashfall should look like a corpse risen from a grave.
- **Bright colour and white snow.** Saturated colour breaks the world. Ash is grey; snow here is dirty.
- **Electric light.** The Concord has gas, oil, candles and fire.
- **The real world.** No recognisable real cities, landmarks, flags, uniforms or famous faces.

QUICK REFERENCE

THE TEST

Roll a d100. **At or under your number, you pass.**
Halves and fifths round down.

- **Triumph:** a 1, whatever the number.
- **Sharp:** a pass at a fifth of the number or under.
- **Solid:** a pass at half the number or under.
- **Success:** any other pass.
- **Failure:** over the number.
- **Disaster:** a 100; or 96 or more when the number is under 50.

Number	Sharp up to	Solid up to	Number	Sharp up to	Solid up to
5	none	2	55	11	27
10	2	5	60	12	30
15	3	7	65	13	32
20	4	10	70	14	35
25	5	12	75	15	37
30	6	15	80	16	40
35	7	17	85	17	42
40	8	20	90	18	45
45	9	22	95	19	47
50	10	25	100	20	50

HARDER AND EASIER

Fortune: roll two d100s and keep the lower.
Misfortune: keep the higher. **Fortune ×2** and **Misfortune ×2:** roll three.

Mist, heavy rain, heavy snow and thick ashfall give Misfortune on Spot. The GM may also set a bonus or penalty, or call for a **Solid test** (Solid or better passes) beyond the two the rules name. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it.

Tests	Press the test	Spend Ember	Ticked on a pass (Triumph, Sharp, Solid, Success)
A weapon's Strike or Shoot; Ashlore	No	Yes	No
Every other skill (37 of them)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dodge; Long Gun; Melee; Pistol	No	Yes	Yes

AFTER A FAILURE: ONE OF THESE

- **Press the test:** roll again, marked Pressed; fail again and the GM brings the cost in full.
- **Spend Ember:** pay the difference between roll and number; buys a plain Success.
- **Spend Fate to reroll:** 1 Fate, roll again, marked Fated. The only option after a Disaster.

Tests	Press the test	Spend Ember	Ticked on a pass (Triumph, Sharp, Solid, Success)
Every characteristic (Brawn, Vigour, Frame, Reflex, Presence, Wits, Resolve, Learning)	Yes	Yes	No
Ember; Sanity	No	No	No

CONTESTS (MELEE)

Attacker tests; on a pass the defender answers with **Dodge**, **Fight back** (Melee) or **Take the hit**. Better band wins (Triumph, Sharp, Solid, Success, Failure, Disaster). Equal bands: higher number wins. Still equal: Dodge holds, Fight back loses. Firearms can't be answered.

FIGHTS

Initiative d10 + Initiative, highest first. A round is 30 seconds; Pace is the yards you move in it (one square is one yard). Most tables allow one action besides the move, and answering blows is free. This is a table ruling: RollQuest does not enforce it. Melee damage adds Heft; firearms: point-blank Fortune, long range needs Solid. Armour comes off every physical hit; Warp goes to Sanity.

Button	Kind	What it does
Recuperate	Long rest	A night somewhere the ash cannot reach. Fate and Kindling return in full and 3 Wounds close. Sanity and Corruption never come back.
Catch Breath	Short rest	A few stolen minutes. 1 Wound closes and 1 Kindling returns.
Tempering	Not a rest: between stories	Between stories, take stock of what you learned the hard way. Roll d100 for each ticked skill: over the skill, or 96 and up, and it gains 1d10. Roll d100 against Ember: over it, and Ember gains 1d10. Every tick clears.

HEFT

Brawn + Frame	Heft (added to a melee weapon's damage)
Under 65	-2
65 to 84	-1
85 to 124	none
125 to 164	+1d4
165 to 204	+1d6
205 to 284	+2d6
285 and up	+3d6, and another d6 for every 80 more

HARM

When	What happens
Wounds reach Max Wounds	You are Broken.
One hit deals half your Max Wounds or more (rounded down)	You are Grievous. Test Vigour at once. On a fail you are Unconscious.
Wounds reach Max Wounds while Grievous	You are Dying.
A hit deals Wounds while you are Broken	You are Dead.
You lose 5 or more Sanity in one go	Test Wits at once. On a pass you are Shaken for 1d10 rounds; roll on the Shaken Bout table.
Sanity reaches 0	You are Lost.
Each round while Dying	Test Vigour at the end of your turn. On a fail you are Dead.

REST AND TEMPERING