

goblins and
gunslingers

The Wild Frontier.

RPG: Player's Handbook



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GOBLINS & GUNSLINGERS: THE WILD FRONTIER

A Tabletop Roleplaying Game of Dust, Magic, and Legends

"The frontier does not belong to the first to claim it. It belongs to those who survive it."



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The wind carries dust and old names. Out past the last fence post, where the road turns to cracked clay and the sky goes on forever, something waits. It has no face. It has no flag. It is the Frontier, and it does not care whether you make it or not.

But you are here anyway. You came because you had to, because you wanted to, or because you had nowhere else left to go. And out here, in the shadow of ancient ruins and the crack of black-powder fire, you will find out what you are made of.

Welcome to Goblins & Gunslingers.



Skyships ply the dust-choked trade routes between settlements.

WHAT IS GOBLINS & GUNSLINGERS?

Goblins & Gunslingers is a tabletop roleplaying game set in the Wild Frontier — a vast, gritty wasteland where gunpowder and ancient magic are not opposites. They are the same desperate force, wearing different clothes.

One player takes on the role of the **Game Marshal** — the storyteller, referee, and voice of the world. Every other player creates a **character**, a living, breathing person trying to carve out something worth having in a land that resists being tamed. Together, you tell stories about survival, ambition, justice, and the heavy cost of legend.

This is not a game about fantasy heroes in shining armor exploring dungeons beneath castles. There are no castles here. There is hardpan desert. There are boomtowns that die before they finish being built. There are canyon labyrinths full of things that should have stayed buried, and plains so wide that a person can feel swallowed just standing in them.

You will play a **Human** drifter looking for a second chance, a **Goblin** tinkerer three bad ideas away from a breakthrough, a **Straw Elf** guardian who has watched empires rise and rot, a **Desert Devil** whose word means everything and whose enemies mean nothing, a **Dwarf** whose grudges outlast mountains, or a **Gnome** who sees the world as one enormous puzzle waiting to be solved. Your **Posse** — the group of characters you and your fellow players bring to life — will ride, scheme, negotiate, fight, and bleed across the Frontier together.

The dice will decide what happens when things go wrong. And out here, things go wrong often.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Goblins & Gunslingers: The Wild Frontier is the complete core rulebook for this game. It contains everything you need to play.

Here is how it is organized:

Chapter 1 (this chapter) introduces the game, the tone, and the six peoples of the Frontier.

Chapter 2 describes the world itself — the regions, the history, the buried ruins, and the magic that still bleeds through the cracked earth.

Chapter 3 covers the six playable peoples in full — their lore, their culture, and their mechanical traits.

Chapter 4 walks you through creating a character from scratch — choosing a people, a background, a Calling, and the numbers that define what your character can do.

Chapter 5 contains the six **Callings** — what other games might call classes — each detailed from first level to tenth, with all their features, flavor, and options.

For new players: Read Chapters 1 through 4 and pick a Calling that appeals to you. The Game Marshal will guide you through the rest.

For the Game Marshal: Read the whole book. Then read it again. This world is layered, and the more you know of it, the better you can bring it to life for your table.

TONE AND FEEL: WHAT KIND OF GAME IS THIS?

Goblins & Gunslingers sits at a particular intersection — gritty western survival, grimdark fantasy, and frontier drama — and it does not apologize for any of them.

It is gritty. Characters bleed. Guns are loud and final. Towns are mean and fragile. The land is harsh and does not reward carelessness.

It is strange. Magic lives in dead riverbeds. Creatures born from old rites still walk the canyon floors. Ruins surface from the sand and what sleeps inside them has been waiting for a very long time.

It is human. Even the non-Human characters in this game are driven by recognizable hungers — for safety, for freedom, for belonging, for respect. The best stories at this table will be about people trying to do right by one another in a world that makes it costly.

It is about choice. Every legend in the Wild Frontier was paid for. What are you willing to spend? What will you protect? What line won't you cross, and what will you do when the world forces you across it?

Death is possible. Failure is real. But resilience is the point.

A session of Goblins & Gunslingers should feel like the best kind of western film — tense standoffs, desperate escapes, crackling campfire conversations, the slow burn of a blood feud, the unexpected grace of strangers protecting each other in a bad stretch of nowhere. And underneath all of it, the creeping wonder of an older world that will not stay buried.

A NOTE ON THE SIX PEOPLES

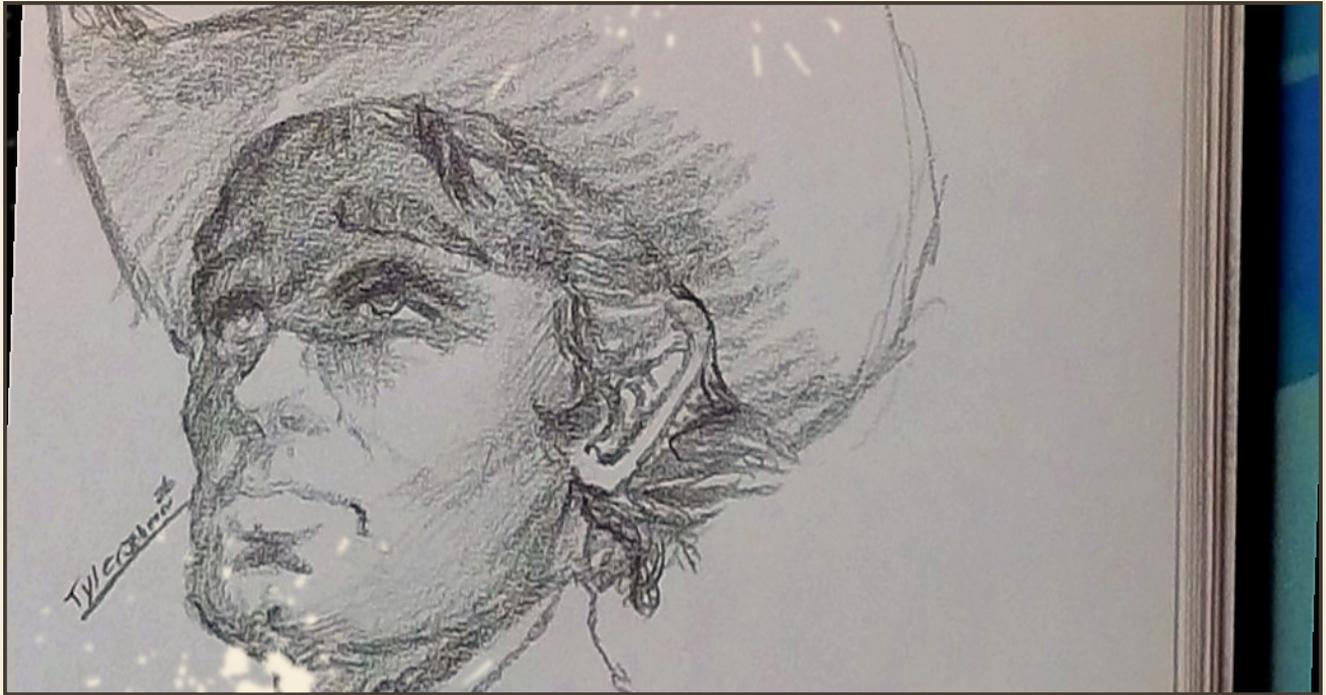
The Wild Frontier is home to six distinct peoples: **Humans, Goblins, Straw Elves, Desert Devils, Dwarves,** and **Gnomes.** Each of them sees the Frontier differently. Each of them wants different things from it. And none of them are simply background color.

When you choose a people — called a **Heritage** in these rules — you are not just picking a stat bonus. You are choosing a set of inherited experiences, a cultural lens, a place in the world's ongoing argument about what the Frontier is and who it belongs to.

Humans push forward. Goblins adapt. Straw Elves remember. Desert Devils endure. Dwarves build. Gnomes tinker.

The tension between those six postures is the soul of this game.

Chapter 3 covers each Heritage in full. For now, know this: whatever people you play, you are a person of the Frontier. The dust gets into all of you equally.

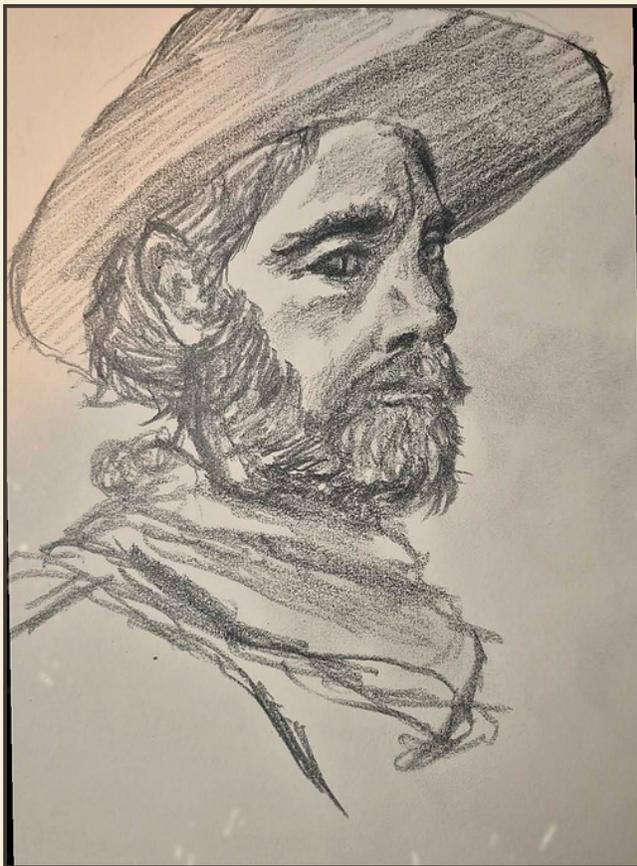


CHAPTER II

THE WORLD

You can ride for three days without seeing another soul. On the fourth day, if you are lucky, you find water. If you are unlucky, you find a ruin — and something in the ruin finds you first.

This is the Wild Frontier. It was here before any of us. It will be here after.



Hard miles and harder choices shape every soul out here.

THE WILD FRONTIER: OVERVIEW

The Wild Frontier is a vast land defined more by what it has lost than by what it has built. It is a place of cracked earth, bone-white plains, canyon labyrinths, dying rivers, salt flats, and skies that blaze with color at dawn and go mercilessly cold by midnight. Towns appear at crossroads and water sources, lived-in and loud for a season before drought, violence, or a bad claim drives people on.

Beneath it all — beneath the roads and the fence lines and the first thin layer of civilization — lies an older world that was never properly put to rest.

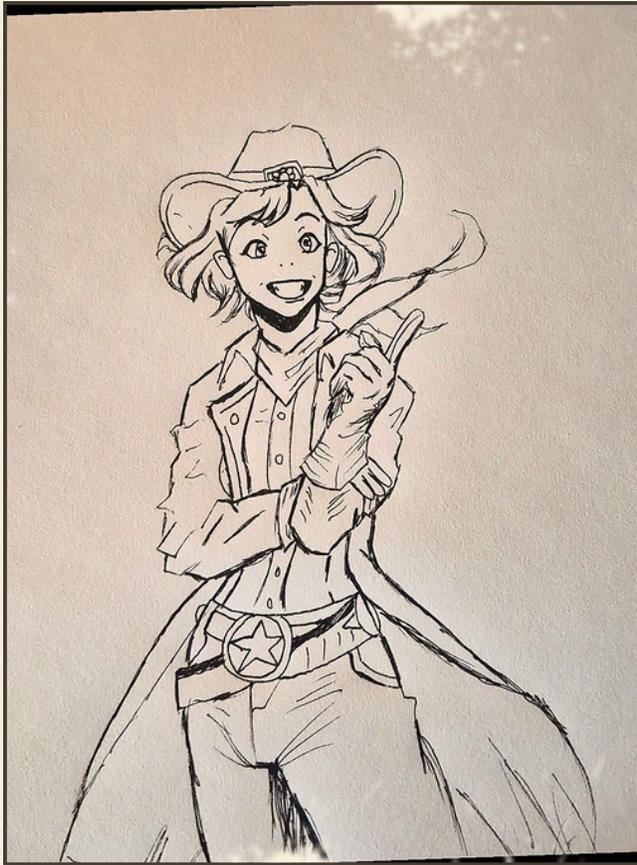
The Wild Frontier stretches in every direction farther than any single map can capture. The edges are not walls or oceans. They are simply more frontier — more desert, more canyon, more silence, and older ruin. The known and settled portions form a rough patchwork of boomtowns, homesteads, trading roads, and protected territory, surrounded by the wide unmapped nothing that swallows the unwary.

Three forces are always in tension across the Frontier:

Expansion — Humans, Goblin crew-networks, and opportunists of every Heritage are constantly pushing into new territory. New mineral strikes, rumors of ancient treasure, promises of cheap land, and the simple momentum of ambition keep the frontier edge moving outward.

Resistance — The land itself, its ancient magic, its Straw Elf guardians, and the Desert Devil clans who have held certain territories for generations all push back against the advance of settlement. Not always with violence — sometimes with weather, sometimes with old curses, sometimes simply with absence, as water sources dry up and game disappears from land that has been disrespected.

Memory — The buried past keeps surfacing. Ruins, relics, dormant magic, creatures from old rites, and records of what the land once was all complicate the story of who it now belongs to. The Frontier is not a blank page. It is a palimpsest — layers of history scraped thin but never fully erased.



She rides where the law cannot follow.

KEY REGIONS

The Canyon Lands

The Canyon Lands form the deep interior of the known Frontier — a maze of red and ochre rock, wind-carved arches, hidden arroyos, and mesa shelves that catch the sunset like signal fires. The canyons run deep and old, and they are full of secrets.

Goblin warrens are dug into the canyon walls throughout this region — networks of tunnels, workshops, gambling dens, supply caches, and hidden markets that appear on no official map. Canyon trading is informal, dangerous, and frequently the only way to get certain goods. The deeper you go into the Canyon Lands, the more Goblin territory you enter, and the more you feel watched.

Ancient ruins are common here. Carved stonework appears mid-canyon-wall, far above any road, built by hands that predate any living memory. Sealed doors. Glyphs. The occasional spring that flows from nowhere

and tastes of iron and old lightning. Some canyon ruins are empty. Many are not. Straw Elf guardians move through the rocks without being seen, and there are canyons where even the most desperate prospector will not go twice.

Travel in the Canyon Lands is slow. Landmarks repeat. Sound carries strangely. Parties that do not know the paths can ride in circles for days. Parties that have a Goblin guide rarely get lost, though they may arrive somewhere they did not intend.

Key locations: The Crooked Market (a Goblin trading hub buried inside a canyon network), Aldran's Shelf (a mesa with an exposed ancient temple, heavily guarded by Straw Elves), the Bloodgap (a narrow canyon pass notorious for ambushes, both from bandits and from older things).

The Dead Plains

West of the Canyon Lands, the terrain opens and flattens into the Dead Plains — a wide, featureless expanse of hardpan earth, shallow salt flats, and pale grass that rattles in the wind like whispered warnings. The sky here is enormous. A rider crossing the Dead Plains feels exposed in a way that never fully goes away.

The Dead Plains were once something else entirely. Old maps and older memories describe them as grasslands, river basins, and forest edge before whatever catastrophe unmade them. Now they are silence and distance. Dry creek beds cut across them like old scars, and in those beds the attentive traveler can sometimes feel the ley lines — channels of old magical force that the land still carries like a body carries the memory of pain.

Most people cross the Dead Plains as quickly as possible. Bandit gangs use them as hunting grounds, knowing that the flat visibility cuts both ways — riders can see you coming, but you can see them too, and if you are faster, the plains favor pursuit. Desert Devil clans maintain camps at the known water sources. Agreements about those water rights are some of the most serious negotiations on the Frontier.

At the deep heart of the Dead Plains, far enough that most travelers never reach it, there is a region the Desert

Devils call the *Ashfield* – a stretch of earth so thoroughly scorched by ancient catastrophe that nothing grows there and the ground itself occasionally cracks open to vent heat from somewhere far below. Strange things have been seen there. No one who goes too deep into the *Ashfield* returns the same.



Arcane augmentation blurs the line between flesh and magic.

Key locations: The Three Towers (ancient stone pillars rising from flat earth, used as waypoints and meeting grounds), Drown Creek (a dried riverbed that flows for three days after heavy rain, attracting every desperate creature in the region), the *Ashfield*.

Boomtowns

The Frontier's settlements are not built to last. They are built to serve the immediate need – a mine, a rail spur, a river crossing, a lucky claim – and when the need moves on, the town either dies or finds something new to be.

Boomtowns are loud, cramped, hopeful, and dangerous. They spring up around any resource worth extracting: silver, copper, salt, water, or ancient relics that

can be sold to people who ask no questions. For a season, they are the most alive places on the Frontier – sawdust on the floors, lanterns burning all night, the clatter of money changing hands, and arguments about claim lines that end in the street at noon.

Most boomtowns have a common structure. There is a main strip where the saloon, the general store, the assay office, and the doctor's shack sit in a row. There is a cluster of tents and lean-tos at the edge of town where the latest arrivals camp. There is a place outside of town where the unlucky ones get buried. There may be a sheriff or a marshal, appointed or self-appointed, keeping whatever order can be kept.

All six peoples mix in boomtowns, awkwardly and necessarily. Human settlers dominate the storefronts and the claim offices. Goblin tinkers run the repair shops and the gambling tables. Desert Devil guards and guides are hired for the dangerous jobs. Straw Elves appear at the edges, watching – sometimes just watching, sometimes intervening when a claim pushes into ground they consider protected. Dwarves stake out the deepest mining claims and hold them with stubborn ferocity. Gnomes set up strange little workshops on side streets and are perpetually either celebrated or blamed depending on what their latest invention just did.

The politics of a boomtown are the most compressed and volatile politics on the Frontier. A month can feel like a decade. Reputations are made and ruined in an afternoon.

Key locations: Sunder (a silver-mining boomtown currently at its peak, with a three-way power struggle between a mining consortium, a Goblin crew, and a Desert Devil clan claiming the underlying land), Redholm (a dying town fighting to become something else before it disappears), the Gallows Road (a stretch of trail connecting three boomtowns, notorious for the things that happen between them).

The Buried Ruins

Beneath every region of the Frontier, the old world persists. Ruins are not rare – they are inevitable. Any deep excavation, any canyon erosion, any unusual sink in the earth may open onto something that predates the

current age by centuries or millennia.

The nature of the buried world is only partially understood. Scholars, Straw Elves, and Goblin archive-seekers have pieced together fragments: there were at least three major civilizations that rose and fell before the current Frontier age, each leaving distinct ruins, distinct magic residue, and distinct dangers.

The Stonework Empires were builders. Their ruins are massive, geometric, and engineered with a precision that no modern craft can match. Enormous chambers, load-bearing arches, hydraulic systems cut from solid rock. Whatever made them fall left their buildings intact but their inhabitants gone — or perhaps transformed into something still present in the deeper chambers.

The Druid Circles were growers and shapers. Their ruins are less obvious — you will walk through what looks like a dead grove and realize the trees are in a pattern too regular to be natural, and the stones beneath them are carved. These sites still carry the most active magic. Ley lines run between them like a nervous system through dead tissue. Water flows in the wrong directions near them. The Straw Elves know where they all are and guard the most dangerous.

The Master-Builders are the most recent and the most unsettling. Their ruins sometimes contain machines — partially intact mechanical constructions that Goblin tinkerers have been trying to reverse-engineer for generations. What the machines were built to do is not always clear, and some of them, it appears, are still doing it.

Entering a ruin is never safe. The buried world does not welcome visitors. But it rewards the bold, the careful, and the well-guided — in knowledge, in power, in relics that carry old enchantments into the new age.



Even in the wastes, elegance endures.

HISTORY: THREE AGES AND THE COLLAPSE

The Deep Age

Before the Frontier, before the empires and the druid circles, the land was shaped by powers that left no clear record. The Desert Devils' oldest oral histories speak of a time when the land itself was conscious — when rivers made decisions and mountains argued. Straw Elf lore describes the Deep Age as the era when the great binding was laid down: a web of agreements between the living world and the peoples on it, governing who could use which magics and what the cost would be.

Most scholars consider this mythology. Straw Elves consider it history.

The Old World

The three civilizations — the Stonework Empires, the Druid Circles, and the Master-Builders — rose during a

long age of relative prosperity. Magic was practiced openly and in organized traditions. The land was heavily inhabited. Roads connected cities that no longer exist. The peoples of that era are not fully known; some were ancestors of present-day Heritages, and some were not.

The Old World ended in the Collapse — an event, or sequence of events, that Straw Elf oral history describes as "the breaking of the binding." Whatever agreements had held the land's magic stable were violated, lost, or simply gave out under the weight of overuse. The result was catastrophic: cities fell. Rivers ran dry or reversed. Entire regions were scorched or drowned. The great network of druidic magic went dark, though it did not disappear — it simply sank, taking the old groves and altars with it.

What caused the Collapse is the central historical mystery of the Frontier, and a source of ongoing tension. Humans tend to believe it was a natural catastrophe — a disaster, nothing more. Straw Elves believe it was a consequence — that the civilizations of the Old World took too much, too fast, without honoring the binding. Desert Devils have their own accounts, involving a great fire that came from somewhere beneath the earth. Goblins, practically, focus more on what the ruins contain than on how they got that way.

The Frontier Age

The current era began with the survivors of the Collapse spreading outward across the new landscape. Roads were lost. Knowledge was partially preserved. The six Heritages as they exist today took their current shapes in the years following the Collapse — through adaptation, separation, and the slow development of distinct cultures.

The Frontier Age is not a dark age, exactly. It is a rebuilding. Towns exist. Trade exists. Law exists in some places. But the infrastructure of the Old World has never been fully replaced, and the wild spaces between settlements remain genuinely wild — full of magical remnants, dangerous creatures, and the weight of a past that was never properly processed.

The current moment in the Frontier Age is one of accelerating pressure. More settlers arrive each season. More ruins are disturbed. The ley lines are being cut or rerouted by construction and excavation. Something, the

Straw Elves say, is stirring beneath the deep ruins. Whether that is prophecy or paranoia depends on whom you ask.

MAGIC IN THE LAND: THE OLD WAYS

Magic is not a gift. It is a residue.

Everything magical in the Wild Frontier — every Hexslinger's spell-bullet, every Straw Elf rite, every Desert Devil fire-mark — draws on the same source: the power that was embedded in the land during the Old World, which sank into the earth when the Collapse came and is now slowly, unevenly bleeding back up.

Ley Lines in Dry Riverbeds

The most visible evidence of old magic is the ley lines — channels of magical energy that run beneath the Frontier's surface, often following the paths of ancient rivers. These dry riverbeds are not merely geological features. They are conduits.

Near a ley line, magic is stronger and less predictable. Hexslingers find their Hexcharge pools filling faster. Straw Elves become more alert and more powerful. Creatures of magical origin grow bolder and stranger. Ordinary travelers may experience strange dreams, compass malfunctions, or sounds with no source.

Ley lines can be tapped by those who know the rites. They can also be disrupted — and disrupting a ley line, intentionally or through careless construction, has unpredictable consequences for the surrounding land.

Dead Groves

Where ley lines intersect or where old druidic sites were destroyed, dead groves form. These are stands of petrified or dessicated trees, their forms still living in shape but long absent of life, arranged in patterns that grow more obviously deliberate the longer you look.

Dead groves are thin places — the barrier between the current world and the deep magic of the Old World is weakest here. Straw Elves use them as waypoints and ritual sites. Other creatures are drawn to them as well.

Travelers who camp in a dead grove often wake to find their camp subtly changed, or their memories of the night unclear.

Magic worked in a dead grove costs less and goes further — but it also tends to attract attention from things that should not be disturbed.

The Old Ways

The Old Ways is the collective term for all magical traditions that draw on the land's power. It is not a single system. It is a family of practices, each developed by a specific Heritage or community, each using a different method to access the same buried power.

Hexwork — the Hexslinger's tradition — channels Old Ways energy through the act of firing a weapon. The gun is not just a tool; it is a focusing lens. The magic comes from the land, passes through the wielder's will, and emerges from the barrel encoded in the bullet.

Druidic Rites — the Straw Elf tradition — access the Old Ways through ceremony, patience, and a deep understanding of the agreements that once governed the land. Where Hexwork is fast and violent, Druidic Rites are slow and durable.

Fire-Marks — the Desert Devil tradition — access the Old Ways through binding oaths, physical endurance, and the searing clarity of fire. Fire-Marks are powered as much by the practitioner's will as by any external source.

All of these traditions are described in more detail in the Callings chapter and the Magic chapter. For now: magic is real, it is present, and it is not safe. The land remembers being powerful. It is becoming so again.





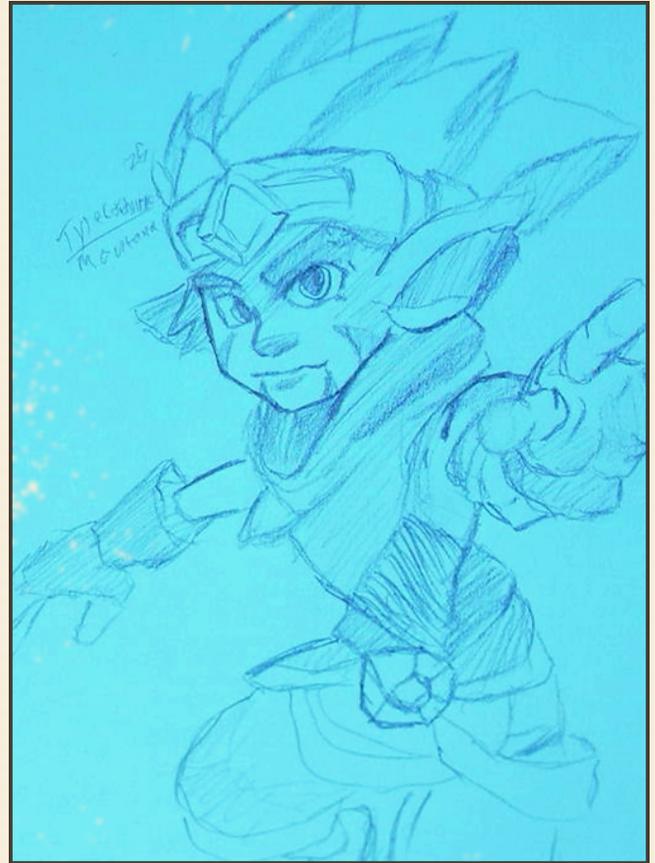
CHAPTER III

THE PEOPLES OF THE FRONTIER

Six peoples walk the Wild Frontier. They do not always walk together. But out here, in the wide nothing between towns, you are glad to have a crew that knows what they are doing – even if they are not what you expected.



Goblin outriders patrol the canyon trade roads.



A spriteling scout, quick and quiet as desert wind.

HOW HERITAGE WORKS

Your Heritage is the people you come from — your biological and cultural inheritance, the lens through which you see the world, and the set of traits and abilities that make you distinctly who you are.

Each Heritage provides:

- **Attribute Bonuses** — increases to specific core attributes
- **Heritage Traits** — special abilities unique to your people
- **Starting Skills** — one or two skills your Heritage provides at no additional cost
- **Lore Notes** — guidance on how your Heritage fits into the Frontier and how others perceive you

You can play any Heritage with any Calling. A Desert Devil Hexslinger is as valid and interesting as a Goblin Warden or a Straw Elf Outlaw. Heritage shapes the *how* of who you are; your Calling shapes the *what*.

HUMANS

Settlers, drifters, lawkeepers, outlaws, ranchers, prospectors, traders, dreamers. Relentless and adaptable. The most dangerous thing in the Frontier is someone with nothing to lose and nowhere to go back to — and the Frontier is full of them.

Lore

Humans are not the oldest people in the Wild Frontier, nor the most mystical, nor the most physically formidable. They are, by nearly every measure, the most relentless.

Human communities appear wherever there is something to be extracted or built — mining camps around a silver strike, trading posts at crossroads, homesteads in valleys that barely have water, boomtowns that rise from nothing in a season. They bring with them all the light and shadow of communal life: industry, hope, music, law, cruelty, greed, and the

particular kind of stubborn optimism that is either the Frontier's greatest asset or its most dangerous illusion, depending on whom you ask.

What defines humanity in the Frontier is reinvention. A farmhand becomes a sheriff. A thief becomes a preacher. A soldier disappears into the badlands and returns as a legend. The Frontier offers humans something their more ancient neighbors rarely get: a chance to be someone different than they were born to be. Most of them take it. Not all of them survive the attempt.

They are also the great disturbers. Humans dig too deep, fence too much, build over bones, and treat old magic like something to be owned. They bring community and industry, but also expansion and the kind of progress that does not ask what it is rolling over. More than any other Heritage, humans push the Frontier toward its next age – whatever that age turns out to be.

Society and Culture

Human society on the Frontier is loose, pluralistic, and in constant motion. There is no single Human nation, no overarching Human authority. Towns are governed by whoever is willing to hold the position – elected sheriffs, self-appointed bosses, mining company agents, and occasionally the most feared gun in a given square mile.

Human culture prizes individualism and reinvention, but also community when it can be had. Frontier towns are small, and small communities develop fierce loyalties fast. Human families are often scattered – parents left behind somewhere east, children not yet old enough to follow. The Posse, the work crew, the trail company – these chosen families substitute for the ones that distance or the Collapse's long shadow have broken apart.

Religion on the Frontier is varied and personal. Some Humans keep the old faiths, adapted and stripped down. Some have developed new ones, some of which are genuine spiritual movements and some of which are very well-dressed cons. Magic, for most Humans, is viewed with a combination of awe and wariness – something that works, clearly, but that carries costs they do not always see coming.

Heritage Traits

Attribute Bonuses: +1 to any two different attributes of your choice (chosen at character creation).

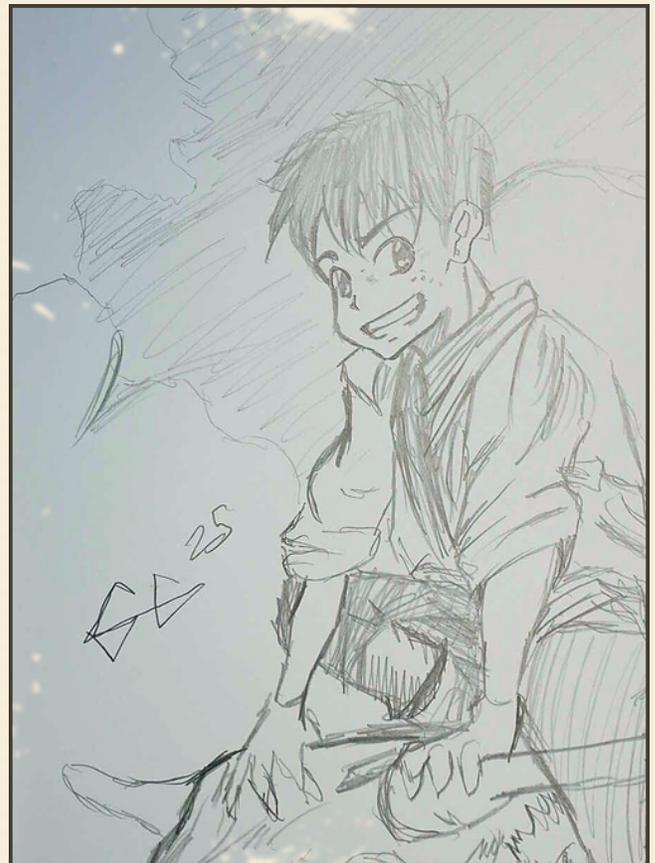
Grit of the Ordinary: Humans did not inherit old magic or hardened bloodlines. They compensate with sheer stubbornness. Once per long rest, when a Human character fails a Trail Roll, they may immediately reroll it and keep the higher result. This is not a Pushed Roll and does not cost a Scar.

Adaptable Background: Humans begin play with one additional Background Skill (chosen at character creation) beyond what their Background normally provides.

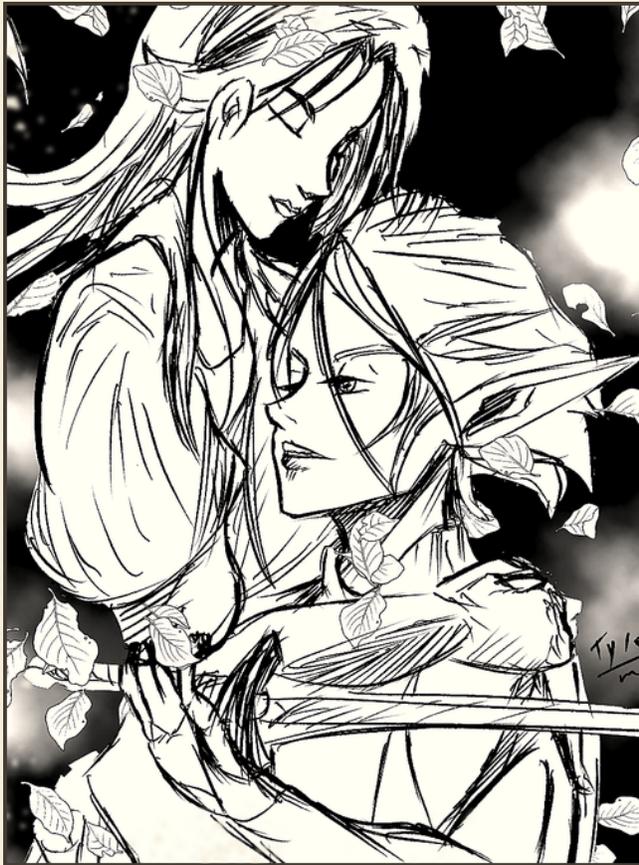
Relentless: When a Human character is at 0 GRIT Points (the Broken condition), they may still take one full round of actions before the condition takes effect. After that round, the condition applies normally.

Movement: 30 feet.

Starting Skills: Choose any one skill from the full skill list at trained level (+2 bonus).



Spritelings see what others overlook.



Straw Elves gather where old magic still hums in the earth.

GOBLINS

Quick minds and quick hands. They see parts where you see junk, shortcuts where you see walls, and profit where you see danger. Never count a Goblin out. They have already counted you.

Lore

Goblins are the quickest minds and the quickest hands in the Wild Frontier. Small, sharp-eyed, and impossible to keep down for long, they are scavengers, tinkerers, smugglers, miners, gamblers, trap-makers, and opportunists of the first order. Where other folk see a pile of broken machinery, a Goblin sees a workshop in waiting. Where other folk see a collapsed tunnel, a Goblin sees a route. Where other folk see danger, a Goblin sees an angle.

Goblin communities form wherever survival demands cleverness, which in the Frontier means they are

everywhere. Canyon warrens, subfloors of humansaloons, the hidden back sections of abandoned mines, repurposed derailed wagon trains, and markets built from scrap, copper, canvas, and smoke. Their settlements look chaotic to outsiders — because they are, structurally. But they run on a logic that their inhabitants understand perfectly: favors given and owed, crew loyalty, hidden routes, and the sacred economy of useful junk.

People call Goblins troublemakers, and they are usually right. Goblins are masters of ambush, improvisation, explosive devices, and misdirection. They do not pretend the Frontier is fair. They decided, collectively and some time ago, that playing unfair better than everyone else was a more reliable survival strategy than hoping the system improved. They were right.

But beneath the swagger and the chaos, Goblins are deeply loyal to their own. A Goblin crew protects its members with an intensity that surprises those who only know the race by reputation. Betray a Goblin's trust and you have made a patient, creative, and entirely remorseless enemy.

Society and Culture

Goblin society is organized around the **Crew** — a small, tight-knit group bound by mutual benefit and trust, usually no more than a dozen members. A Crew has a leader (earned through respect or, sometimes, through the previous leader's spectacular failure), a shared claim on certain territory or resources, and an intricate web of internal favors and debts that outsiders almost never fully understand.

Multiple Crews in the same canyon or settlement form a **Warren** — a loose coalition with shared infrastructure but independent operations. Warren politics involve alliances, rivalries, neutral ground, and occasionally spectacular betrayals that become Goblin legend.

Goblins value ingenuity above almost everything else. A clever solution to a problem — especially a problem that seemed unsolvable — earns more status than wealth, and sometimes more than strength. The worst thing you can say about a Goblin is that they wasted something: a resource, an opportunity, a good piece of information, or an enemy's mistake.

Their relationship with magic is pragmatic and largely empirical. Goblins treat Hexwork and Old Ways artifacts the way they treat all technology — as things to be studied, tested, partially disassembled, and hopefully reassembled without anyone getting hurt. Many of the most dangerous Goblin inventions involve misunderstood magical relics incorporated into mechanical systems. Most of the time this works out. The rest of the time it is a very good story.

Heritage Traits

Attribute Bonuses: +2 Cunning, +1 Reflexes.

Small and Nimble: Goblins are Small-sized (roughly 3–4 feet tall). They can move through spaces occupied by larger creatures. They have Misfortune on Brawn-based Trail Rolls where size and reach matter (wrestling large opponents, smashing through doors), but Fortune on Stealth checks in cluttered or cramped environments.

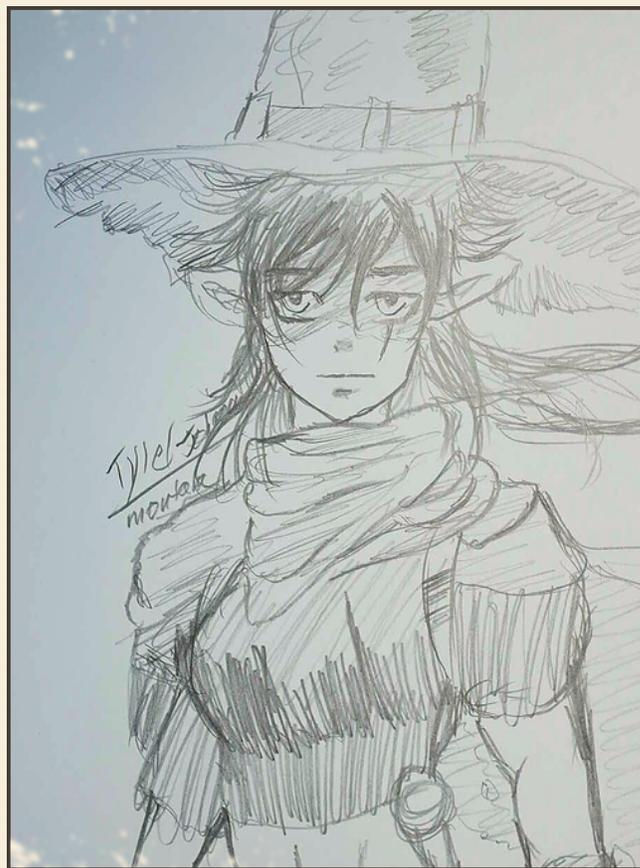
Tinkerer's Eye: Goblins may attempt to identify the function of a mechanical or magical device with a Cunning Trail Roll (DR 12) after spending 1 minute examining it. On a Trail Blaze (natural 20), they also learn one of its weaknesses or hidden functions.

Pocket Arsenal: Goblins begin play with a set of improvised tools and one **Goblin Device** of their choice (see Gear chapter). They also begin with the Tinkering skill at trained level (+2), regardless of other choices.

Scurry: As a Quick Action, a Goblin may move up to 15 feet without triggering reactions from adjacent enemies.

Movement: 25 feet.

Starting Skills: Tinkering (trained, automatic). Choose one additional skill from: Swindling, Stealth, Hustle, or Lore of the Land.



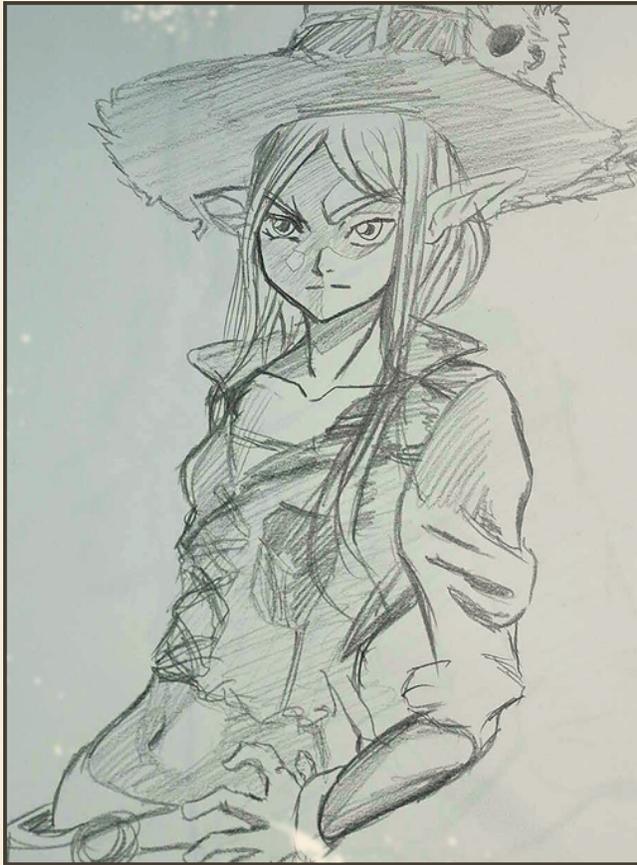
Her gaze carries the weight of ancient oaths.

STRAW ELVES

They have the look of things that should be dead. Sometimes they wish they were. But the land still needs keeping, the old promises have not yet been fulfilled, and so they walk, and watch, and remember what everyone else has chosen to forget.

Lore

Straw Elves are among the strangest and oldest people of the Frontier — lean, uncanny beings with the appearance of weathered scarecrows: reed-bound, hollow-cheeked, their skin the color of old bark and dried leaves, their eyes burning with an eerie internal light that does not flicker even in full dark. They move without making the sounds a body should make. They appear at edges and thresholds. They do not quite fit in any scene they enter.



A guardian of the old groves, patient as stone.

The true origins of the Straw Elves are disputed even among their own people. Some hold that they were once flesh-and-blood wardens who gave too much of themselves to Old Ways rites during the Collapse — that the binding of themselves to the land stripped away their mortality and left something older and harder behind. Others maintain that they were always what they are: beings woven from bark, root, straw, dust, and spirit by the druid circles of the Old World to continue the watch after the civilization that created them fell. Whatever the truth, Straw Elves are not undead in the conventional sense. They do not hunger. They are not merely animated corpses. They are something else, something for which the languages of the Frontier do not yet have a satisfying word.

They belong to dying fields, hidden groves, abandoned shrines, forgotten graveyards, and the thin places where old power bleeds through the earth. Their presence makes animals nervous and children curious. They are deeply tied to elemental forces, to the cycle of growth and decay, and to the thin, contested border between the living world and whatever lies beneath it. To a Straw Elf, decay is not always corruption. Sometimes it is the land keeping its

promises. Sometimes the old things are still working.

Straw Elves are not gentle guardians. They are patient ones. They protect what they have decided to protect with a terrifying tenacity, and they do not easily forgive trespass against the places they consider sacred. They remember the Collapse. They remember what caused it. And they have watched, across the Frontier Age, as the new settlers edge toward making the same choices the Old World made. Their patience is not infinite. The ones who know them well understand the warning in their stillness.

Society and Culture

Straw Elf society is organized around **Watches** — small groups of two to six individuals bound to a specific place or route. A Watch may protect a particular ruin, patrol a specific stretch of ley line, guard a dead grove, or keep vigil over a sacred site whose importance is no longer understood by anyone else alive. The Watch's purpose defines its members' lives. Straw Elves without a Watch — those whose sacred place was destroyed, whose purpose was lost — are called the **Adrift**, and they are among the most unpredictable and often dangerous beings on the Frontier.

Straw Elf culture is oral, ceremonial, and deeply focused on obligation. Memory is their highest value: the memory of what the land was, what the binding promised, what was broken and how. They do not write things down, partly because they do not need to and partly because some knowledge, they believe, should require a living keeper — something that can choose not to tell.

Their relationship with the other Heritages is complicated. They cooperate most easily with Desert Devils, who share an understanding of the land's hostility and an ethic of keeping oaths. They regard Humans with a wariness that rarely becomes outright hostility — Humans are destructive, but many of them can be redirected. Goblins they find both aggravating and oddly admirable; the Goblin talent for salvaging and repurposing comes closest, in Straw Elf eyes, to proper stewardship.

A Straw Elf who joins a Posse is usually one of three things: an Adrift seeking a new purpose, a member of a Watch whose sacred charge has been threatened by

something they cannot handle alone, or a rare individual who has decided that the best way to protect the old world is to ride into the middle of the new one and see what is coming.

Heritage Traits

Attribute Bonuses: +2 Oldways, +1 Grit.

Undying Frame: Straw Elves do not need to eat, drink, or sleep. They still benefit from Long Rest (standing still in a suitable place for 8 hours). They are immune to poison and disease. They do not suffer the Grievously Wounded condition from non-magical attacks — they simply continue until they are Downed.

Old Ways Attunement: A Straw Elf within 60 feet of a ley line, dead grove, or active magical site automatically senses it (no roll required). They may also identify the rough type and age of any magical effect or relic with a successful Oldways Trail Roll (DR 10 for common Old Ways effects, DR 16 for rare or ancient ones).

Nightwatch: Straw Elves have full vision in darkness up to 60 feet. Their eerie appearance imposes Misfortune on Persuasion checks with those who do not know them, but grants Fortune on Intimidation checks in situations where their uncanny nature is apparent.

Warden's Memory: Once per short rest, a Straw Elf may recall exact detail of anything they have personally witnessed, with no Trail Roll required. This includes conversations, written text they have read, maps they have studied, and the details of any location they have visited.

Movement: 30 feet.

Starting Skills: Oldways Lore (trained, automatic). Choose one additional skill from: Lore of the Land, Tracking, Survival, or Intimidation.

DESERT DEVILS

There is nothing soft in the way they look at you. That is not cruelty. That is the desert in them. The desert does not lie, does not comfort, does not forgive waste. If they trust you, it means

something. If they do not, you will know.

Lore

Desert Devils are the hard edge of the wasteland made flesh. Horned, fire-marked, forged by the harshest reaches of the Frontier — the scorched plains, the red mesas, the black glass valleys where ancient fires burned so hot they turned the earth to mirror. They are not tall in the way that intimidates, but solid in the way that endures: dense muscle, skin marked by the brands they earn and the burns they survive, eyes adapted to glare and distance in a way that makes most people feel they are being assessed at all times.

Which they are.

Many outsiders see Desert Devils first as warriors, raiders, or fiends, and that says more about the outsiders than it does about the people. Desert Devils are survivors, guardians, oath-keepers, and historians of the deep places. They protect hidden wells that other people do not even know exist. They maintain roads through territories too dangerous for anyone else to map. They remember the terms of agreements made generations before they were born and hold those terms as binding today.

Their origin stories involve fire and transformation — most traditions describe an ancestor people who entered the deep desert seeking something and were changed by what they found there. Some say infernal power touched them. Some say ancient storm spirits. Desert Devils themselves tend to say: the desert tested us, and we passed. The how of it is less important than the fact of it.

They value strength, oath, loyalty, and the harsh honesty of survival. Their honor is not ceremonial or performative. It is practical and absolute. A Desert Devil's word is given carefully and kept completely. A broken oath — whether by them or to them — is among the most serious offenses in their culture.

Society and Culture

Desert Devil society organizes around the **Clan** — an extended family and territorial unit that may number in the dozens, with a clear leadership structure earned through combination of combat skill, counsel, and the respect of elders. Clans claim specific territories, usually centered on water sources, and relationships between

Clans are governed by a complex web of pacts, bloodties, and historical agreements that take a lifetime to fully understand.

Within the Clan, strength is respected but wisdom is revered. The oldest members, called the **Ember Council**, serve as living archives of the Clan's history and the terms of all its agreements. Their word in a dispute is final. Ignoring an Ember Council ruling is among the worst things a Desert Devil can do, both culturally and practically.

Desert Devils are not isolationist, but they are selective. They trade with boomtowns, hire out as guards and guides, and maintain relationships with specific Goblin Crews and individual Humans and Straw Elves who have proven trustworthy. They do not extend trust easily. They do not withdraw it easily either. Once you are in — once a Desert Devil calls you Flame-Bound (their word for a trusted ally outside the Clan) — they will protect you with the same ferocity they bring to protecting their own.

Their relationship with magic is the most internal of any Heritage. Fire-Marks are not spells performed on the world. They are covenants made through the body, burning promises into skin and bone and binding power to oath. A Desert Devil who has never needed to use their Fire-Marks is not considered more powerful than one who has. They are considered less tested.

Heritage Traits

Attribute Bonuses: +2 Grit, +1 Brawn.

Wasteland Forged: Desert Devils are resistant to extreme heat and have Fortune on Trail Rolls to resist environmental hazards (dehydration, heatstroke, exhaustion from travel). They also have Fortune on Grit Checks against fear and supernatural dread.

Fire-Mark: Once per short rest, a Desert Devil may invoke a Fire-Mark — a brief, binding surge of old-blood power. They speak an oath aloud (one sentence, declared intent) and mark themselves or the ground. Effects (choose one when invoking):

- **Brand of Endurance:** Gain temporary VP equal to 4 + Grit modifier until end of the scene.

- **Brand of the Oath:** Your next Trail Roll dealing with upholding or enforcing an oath or agreement has Fortune.

- **Brand of Fire:** Your melee attacks deal an additional 1d4 fire damage until end of your next turn.

Horns and Bearing: Desert Devils have a commanding, unsettling physical presence. They have Fortune on Intimidation checks against those who have not faced them in combat before.

Tireless: Desert Devils do not require sleep, though Long Rest still requires 8 hours of low activity. They are immune to magical sleep effects.

Movement: 30 feet.

Starting Skills: Survival (trained, automatic). Choose one additional skill from: Intimidation, Grit Check, Ironside, or Riding.

DWARVES

Short as stone, patient as stone, hard as stone. There is an old saying on the Frontier: you do not push a Dwarf. You push a Dwarf once and spend the next ten years watching them remember it.

Lore

Dwarves come from below. That is the plainest way to say it, and the plainest way is the way Dwarves prefer. They are a people of tunnels, stone, deep water, and the particular slow time that accumulates under mountains. The Wild Frontier's great canyon systems — the Splitrock Ridges, the Underhewn Passages, the Iron Gut Formation — were mapped by Dwarven surveyors long before the first Human or Goblin ever saw them. The maps are still in use. The surveyors are sometimes still alive.

Dwarves are old. Not in the way of Straw Elves, who carry age as a kind of haunting, but in the way of bedrock — patient and unremarkable until you try to move them. Their lifespans run two to three times that of Humans, and they accumulate experience with the deliberate thoroughness of people who know they have time to do things properly. A Dwarf who makes an error does not

make it twice. *A Dwarf who learns a skill learns it completely. A Dwarf who takes a wrong against them remembers it for a long, long time.*

They came to the Frontier's surface in the decades following the Great Collapse, when the underground networks that had sustained their civilization for generations were destabilized by the same cataclysm that shattered the Old World above. Some tunnel systems collapsed. Others were flooded by underground rivers redirected by whatever deep rupture drove the magic-scarred rifts into the canyon walls. Dwarven communities emerged into a surface world they had known mostly through trade partners and second-hand accounts, and found it worse than they expected in some ways and more interesting than they expected in others.

Surface life has not made Dwarves soft. It has made them opinionated. They came up carrying centuries of underground knowledge — mining, metallurgy, stonework, water management, deep-earth navigation — and found a surface world in desperate need of exactly those skills. The boomtowns were built on Dwarven foundations, literally and otherwise. The Iron Rail Company's first surveyors relied on Dwarven geological knowledge. Half the stable mine shafts in the Frontier were shored up by Dwarven hands after Human or Goblin tunneling projects nearly brought them down.

They are not grateful for being needed. They are practical about it.

What most outsiders miss about Dwarves is the depth of their inner life. They do not speak often, and when they do they say what they mean with a compression of language that can seem blunt or even rude until you learn to read it. But Dwarves are not cold people. They love fiercely, mourn long, and carry their histories in their bodies in the form of marks, braids, and carved adornments that serve as a public record of who they are and what has happened to them. To a Dwarf, an unadorned person is a mystery at best and a liar at worst.

Society and Culture

Dwarven society is built around the **Hold** — a multigenerational household unit that functions as family, business concern, trade guild, and mutual protection organization simultaneously. *A Hold may*

have anywhere from a dozen to several hundred members, bound by bloodline and formal adoption, organized around a core craft or body of expertise. Holds have names that describe their origin work: the Steelcroft Hold, the Deepwater Hold, the Breakstone Hold.

In surface communities, Dwarven Holds tend to occupy specific quarters of a town or establish adjacent settlements of their own. They are not reclusive — they participate in the wider economy of the Frontier with genuine investment — but they maintain clear boundaries. Hold business is Hold business. The internal politics of a Hold are not for outside eyes.

The highest-ranking figure in a Hold is the **Warden of the Record** — not necessarily the oldest or strongest member, but the one who carries the deepest knowledge of the Hold's history, agreements, and debts. The Warden of the Record resolves disputes, ratifies major decisions, and is the final word on what the Hold owes and what it is owed. This is an enormous responsibility, and the role is treated with a reverence that can surprise outsiders who are used to seeing Dwarves as purely practical people.

Dwarves have a complex relationship with magic. Their underground traditions involved a form of stone-reading — a slow attunement to the pulse of rock formations, underground water, and mineral deposits that some scholars classify as a fourth branch of the Old Ways. Most Dwarves on the surface have lost direct access to this practice, which they call **Stonehear**, though traces of it remain in their instincts: a Dwarf always knows which direction is down; a Dwarf in a strange building can tell you within minutes where the structural weaknesses are. They regard Hexwork with professional skepticism and Fire-Marks with a degree of respect they rarely voice aloud.

Their relationship with Goblins is the most complicated of any inter-Heritage dynamic on the Frontier. Dwarves and Goblins share an affinity for underground spaces and mechanical ingenuity, which should make them natural allies. It does, sometimes. It also makes them natural competitors, and Dwarven Holds and Goblin Crews have spent a great deal of energy over the Frontier Age working out who gets to claim which tunnel, which salvage site, and which piece of technical knowledge as their own. *A Dwarf who respects a Goblin's work will say so, which is the highest*

compliment they give. *A Dwarf who does not will say nothing and simply do better.*

Heritage Traits

Attribute Bonuses: +2 Brawn, +1 Grit.

Stonehear: Dwarves retain an instinctive connection to geological structure. In any underground or built environment, a Dwarf has Fortune on Trail Rolls to navigate, detect structural instability, find hidden passages, assess the quality of stonework or metalwork, and identify the direction of underground water. In the open Frontier, this attunement is muted but not gone — they can never be magically lost or disoriented, and they always know which direction is north.

Built to Last: Dwarves are stocky, dense, and built for endurance. They gain +2 maximum Vitality Points per Notch (in addition to their Calling's normal VP gain). They also have Fortune on Grit Checks to resist exhaustion from physical labor, forced marching, and environmental conditions (cold, altitude, underground pressure).

Deep Craft: Dwarves begin play with the Tinkering skill and one of the following at trained level: Ironside, Lore of the Land, or Medicine. Additionally, once per long rest, a Dwarf may spend 10 minutes inspecting a weapon, piece of armor, or mechanical device to identify whether it has been sabotaged, poorly maintained, or constructed with hidden flaws. DR 12 Cunning check — on success, they describe the flaw in precise terms.

Stone Face: Dwarves have spent generations navigating politics in confined spaces where a poorly timed expression could end a negotiation or start a blood feud. They have Fortune on Grit Checks to conceal their emotional state, resist intimidation, and maintain composure under direct psychological pressure. They are not difficult to read — they are patient about what they choose to show.

Movement: 25 feet. Dwarves are slower on the surface than their underground stride, but they do not become winded — their movement penalty never compounds with exhaustion conditions.

Starting Skills: Ironside (trained, automatic). Choose one additional skill from: Tinkering, Tracking, Intimidation, or Medicine.

GNOMES

They are small, they are strange, and they are building something. The question is never whether a Gnome is building something. The question is what it will do when it is finished.

Lore

Gnomes are the most recent Heritage to make a significant mark on the Wild Frontier, and they arrived the way all truly disruptive things do: not loudly, but thoroughly. They are small, round-faced, perpetually distracted, and possessed of an intellectual curiosity that overrides most other survival instincts. They are also, by any reasonable measurement, the most technically innovative people the Frontier has ever produced. The Iron Rail Company's locomotive engines run on a cooling system a Gnome invented. The clockwork prosthetics that give veterans of the Frontier Wars half their functionality were designed in a Gnome workshop. The little mechanical creatures that sometimes carry messages between boomtowns — that is Gnome work too.

Gnomes do not have a clear story of origin, and most of them do not seem bothered by that. They appeared in the Frontier about forty years after the Collapse — small communities, always moving, always working, leaving behind sites that looked half-abandoned and half-laboratory. They integrated into boomtown life with a speed that other Heritages found slightly disconcerting, because Gnomes are excellent at identifying what a place needs and providing it. They do not integrate quietly. They integrate usefully.

The center of Gnome culture, the thing that defines them above everything else, is the concept they call **the Work** — the ongoing, never-finished project of understanding how things operate and building new things that operate better. To a Gnome, the Work is not a job. It is closer to a spiritual practice. Every device built, every mechanism improved, every problem solved through construction rather than force is an act of genuine meaning. *A Gnome who is not working is a Gnome who is suffering, and the people around them will notice it long before the Gnome admits it.*

What most outsiders do not realize about Gnomes — what tends to become apparent only after considerable time in their company — is that the Work is not purely mechanical. Gnomes have an instinct for magic that manifests not through ceremony or channeling but through **integration**: the threading of magical principles into constructed objects in ways that blur the line between a device and a spell. Most Gnome gadgets have a small, subtle enchantment running through them that the Gnome would describe as "structural reinforcement" or "operational optimization." Other Heritage scholars who examine these devices more carefully tend to describe them as minor works of applied Old Ways magic, which the Gnome will dispute with genuine irritation.

Among Gnomes, there exists an ancient tradition — older than the Frontier, older perhaps than the Collapse itself — called the **Path of the Golem**. The Golemancer's art is the most extreme expression of the Work: the deliberate reconstruction of the self. A Gnome who walks the Path of the Golem does not merely build devices that augment their capabilities. They build themselves, piece by piece, replacing the fragile organic with the precise constructed, until the boundary between the maker and the made ceases to be a meaningful distinction. This is not done out of self-hatred or desire for immortality, though some who do not understand the tradition assume so. It is, according to those who practice it, the ultimate act of faith in the Work: to trust the constructed thing enough to become one.

Society and Culture

Gnome communities are organized around the **Workshop** — not a physical building (though Workshops often are located somewhere) but a shared intellectual project. A Workshop is a group of Gnomes who have committed to solving a particular class of problem together: the Workshop of Suspended Bridges, the Workshop of Sealed Vaults, the Workshop of Useful Combustion, and so on. Workshops recruit across generations, accept members of other Heritages with significant technical skill, and produce work that is collectively attributed rather than individually credited. A Gnome who tells you they invented something entirely alone is considered, in their own culture, to be making an embarrassing claim.

Gnomes do not have strong territorial instincts. A Gnome will live wherever the work requires them to be, and move on when that work is done or when more interesting work appears elsewhere. This makes them excellent travelers and unreliable neighbors. A Gnome boomtown district tends to be densely packed, extensively modified, and full of mechanisms that outsiders cannot quite explain and which the Gnome residents find perfectly obvious.

Their relationship with Dwarves is collegial and competitive in roughly equal measure, with a warmth underneath that neither Heritage tends to express directly. Dwarves build for permanence; Gnomes build for function. Dwarves work in materials that last centuries; Gnomes work in materials that do what is needed right now and can be replaced when something better exists. These are genuinely different philosophies, and they produce genuine friction, and both Heritages know that the things they build together are better than either could produce alone, which means the friction is mostly productive.

Their relationship with Humans is the easiest of any Heritage interaction on the Frontier — Humans want things built, Gnomes want to build things, and the negotiation between need and ingenuity tends to move quickly. Their relationship with Straw Elves is respectful and a little uneasy; Straw Elves approach magic as something to be maintained and tended, and Gnomes approach it as something to be incorporated into load-bearing structures, and neither fully understands the other's instinct.

Heritage Traits

Attribute Bonuses: +2 Cunning, +1 Reflexes.

Workshop Mind: Gnomes see systems everywhere. When examining a constructed object, mechanism, trap, or engineered structure, a Gnome may make a Cunning Trail Roll (DR 10) to intuit its function, weaknesses, and operational state without tools or prior knowledge. A Trail Blaze reveals hidden components, secondary functions, or deliberate sabotage. Additionally, Gnomes have Fortune on all Tinkering Trail Rolls made while working with at least one other creature who also has Tinkering trained.

Small Frame: Gnomes are Small-sized (roughly 3 feet tall). They can move through spaces occupied by larger creatures and have Fortune on Stealth checks in cluttered or close environments. They have Misfortune on Brawn-based Trail Rolls where reach and mass are relevant factors.

Integrated Device: Gnomes always have one small device on or within their person that has been incorporated into their body or clothing — a lens array, a small clockwork appendage, a subcutaneous compass. At character creation, define this device and its minor function with the Game Marshal. It cannot be disarmed or removed without a Medicine check (DR 14) and counts as part of the character's body for all purposes. It provides a minor, consistent benefit determined collaboratively with the Game Marshal.

Quick Assembly: A Gnome may use their Quick Action to draw and ready a gadget, device, or improvised tool that would normally require a Main Action to prepare. Once per scene, they may also assemble a simple mechanical object (a brace, a trigger, a latch) from scavenged parts in a single Quick Action without a Tinkering roll, if raw materials are available.

Movement: 25 feet.

Starting Skills: Tinkering (trained, automatic). Choose one additional skill from: Cunning Lore, Deadeye, Medicine, or Swindling.

Golemancer Prerequisite: Gnomes are the only Heritage that may take the Golemancer Calling (see Chapter 5). Other Callings are available to Gnomes normally.

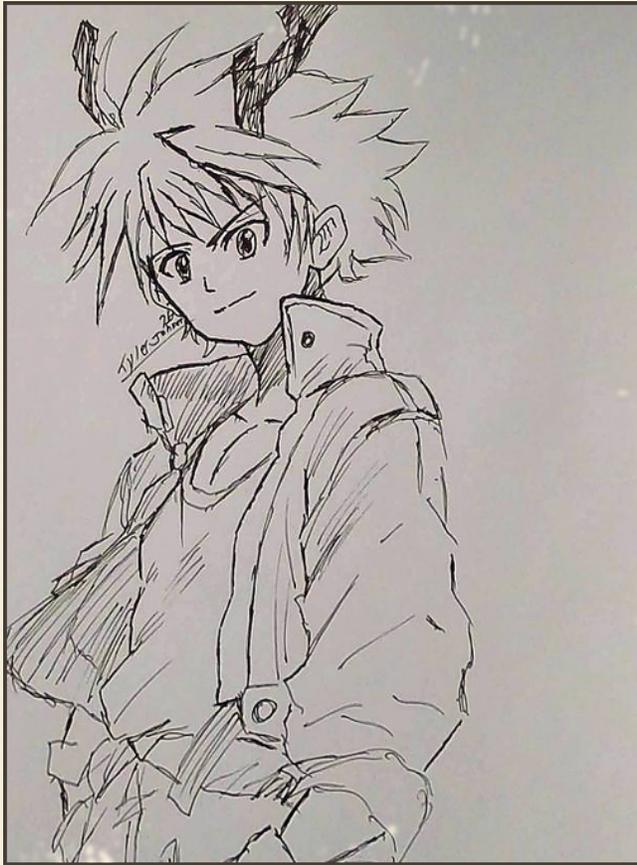




CHAPTER IV

CHARACTER CREATION

Before you ride, you need to know who's riding. A name, a people, a path, and some notion of what you're carrying into the Frontier with you. The rest you'll pick up on the trail. Or you won't.



Treefolk remember when the rivers still ran.



Some forms defy easy classification on the frontier.

OVERVIEW: STEPS TO BUILD A CHARACTER

Creating a character for Goblins & Gunslingers takes you through six steps:

1. **Choose your Heritage** (your people)
2. **Generate your Attributes**
3. **Choose your Background**
4. **Choose your Calling** (your path in life)
5. **Calculate derived statistics** (Vitality Points, GRIT Points, Defense Rating)
6. **Choose skills and starting equipment**

Take a sheet of paper – or the official character sheet – and work through each step. By the end, you will have a complete person ready to ride into the Wild Frontier.

STEP I: THE SIX ATTRIBUTES

Every character has six core attributes that define their fundamental capabilities. These are not the generic fantasy shorthand – they are terms native to the Frontier.

Attribute	Abbreviation	What It Covers
Brawn	BWN	Physical strength, melee strikes, carrying capacity, forcing through
Reflexes	RFX	Speed, ranged accuracy, dodging, quick-draw initiative
Grit	GRT	Toughness, nerve, willpower – holding together when things go wrong
Cunning	CNG	Intelligence, problem-solving, tinkering, reading situations

Attribute	Abbreviation	What It Covers
Presence	PRS	Force of personality, persuasion, intimidation, leadership
Oldways	OLD	Attunement to magic, ancient lore, Hexcharge capacity

What the Numbers Mean

Attributes are expressed as modifiers: the number you add to a d20 when making a relevant Trail Roll.

Modifier	Description
-2	Poor – a genuine weakness
-1	Below average
+0	Average for a frontier adult
+1	Competent
+2	Notably capable
+3	Exceptional
+4	Frontier legend material
+5	The best alive

Starting characters typically range from -1 to +3, with bonuses from Heritage applied afterward.



Every traveler carries a story worth telling.

STEP 2: GENERATING ATTRIBUTES

Choose one of the two methods below. Both are valid.

Method A: Roll the Bones (4d6, Drop the Lowest)

Roll four six-sided dice (4d6) and drop the lowest result. Sum the remaining three. That is your first attribute score (before conversion to modifier). Repeat until you have six scores. Then assign each score to whichever attribute you choose.

Score to Modifier Conversion:

Score	Modifier
4-5	-2
6-7	-1
8-11	+0
12-13	+1
14-15	+2

Score	Modifier
16–17	+3
18	+4

This method produces characters with natural peaks and genuine weaknesses. The randomness is part of the story – you do not always get to choose what the frontier gives you.

Method B: Point Purchase (27 Points)

Start with all six attributes at +0. Spend 27 points to increase them, according to the following cost table:

Desired Modifier	Total Cost from +0
+1	1 point
+2	3 points
+3	6 points

Maximum starting modifier (before Heritage bonuses) is +3. Minimum is -1 (which refunds 1 point).

This method produces more predictable characters and is better for players who know exactly what they want to play.

After either method: Apply your Heritage attribute bonuses.

STEP 3: CHOOSE YOUR BACKGROUND

A Background represents your life before you became an adventuring character – the skills you brought with you when you rode out. Backgrounds provide two trained skills and a small amount of starting gear, as well as a narrative hook that can be used as a roleplay anchor.

Choose one of the following six Backgrounds:

Drifter

You have been moving for so long that staying in one place feels like a trap. You know three roads into every town and four roads

out. You have slept rough more nights than you care to count, and you've learned to read weather, people, and terrain by feel.

Skills: Survival (trained), Stealth (trained) **Starting Gear:** Bedroll, 5 days of trail rations, waterskin, flint and steel, worn map of two local regions (partial accuracy) **Background Hook:** You are known in several towns by a different name in each. Choose two aliases and two towns where those aliases have history – one positive reputation, one outstanding debt or bad blood.

Lawkeeper

You wore a badge – still do, or did until recently. You know the law, you know how it gets bent, and you know what happens to towns without someone willing to stand between the decent folk and the other kind.

Skills: Intimidation (trained), Persuasion (trained) **Starting Gear:** Sheriff's badge (or a badge you no longer have authority to carry), handcuffs, a wanted poster for someone you are or were looking for, sturdy jacket (+1 Defense Rating) **Background Hook:** You have a jurisdiction – a town, a stretch of road, a specific faction – that considers you either their protector or their problem. Define which and why.

Outlaw

You found out early that the law protects some people more than others, so you decided to operate outside it. You are not necessarily a bad person. You are a practical one.

Skills: Swindling (trained), Stealth (trained) **Starting Gear:** False papers (one alias with partial documentation), a small lockpick set, a trinket taken from the best job you ever pulled (sentimental value only), 15 extra starting coin **Background Hook:** There is a bounty on your head – small enough that only hungry bounty hunters care, large enough that it comes up. The Game Marshal and you decide together what you did and what the bounty is worth.

Settler

You came here to build something: a homestead, a business, a family, a community. The Frontier had opinions about that plan. You are still here, which means you were more stubborn than it anticipated.

Skills: Medicine (trained), Persuasion (trained)

Starting Gear: Tools of your trade (farmer's kit, carpenter's tools, or merchant's scales – choose one), a deed or claim paper (legitimate or dubious), a letter from someone back home that you have not answered

Background Hook: You have a specific piece of land, a building, or a stake in a local enterprise that is yours – but threatened. Define the threat (a rival claim, a local gang's protection racket, a drought that is killing the harvest).

Tinkerer's Apprentice

You spent years in someone's workshop – a Goblin crew's back room, a frontier inventor's shack, a railroad engineer's car – and you came out knowing how things fit together and, more importantly, how they fall apart.

Skills: Tinkering (trained), Lore of the Land (trained)

Starting Gear: Tinkerer's kit (tools, wire, spare parts), one improvised device of your creation (work with your Game Marshal to define it – small, one-use, clever), a journal of diagrams with one page torn out **Background Hook:** Your mentor or the workshop where you trained is gone – destroyed, lost, or abandoned. You carry something of theirs, and you are not entirely sure what it does.

Old Ways Seeker

Something called to you in the ruins, the dry riverbeds, the dead groves. You started following the pull and you have not stopped. You know more about the buried world than most people want to, and you are starting to understand why they kept it buried.

Skills: Oldways Lore (trained), Tracking (trained)

Starting Gear: A field journal with notes and rough maps of two ruins you have investigated, one minor Old Ways relic (functional but unpredictable – Game Marshal determines exact effect), a compass that sometimes points somewhere other than north **Background Hook:** You have entered a ruin that changed you. Define one thing you found there that you have not told anyone and one

thing that has been following you since.

STEP 4: CHOOSE YOUR CALLING

Your Calling is what you are – your path, your expertise, the shape of your particular survival in the Wild Frontier. There are six Callings in this book.

Read the brief descriptions below. Full rules for each Calling – all ten levels of features – appear in Chapter 5.

Calling	Description
Gunslinger	Master of firearms, trick shots, and quick draws. The purest expression of frontier combat skill.
Outlaw	Cunning, fast-talking, and deadly in close quarters. Thrives in shadows, ambushes, and grey areas.
Tinkerer	Goblin-style inventor with gadgets, explosives, and a mechanical companion. Solves problems creatively and dangerously.
Warden	Frontier guardian and tracker with a deep bond to the natural and magical world. Protective and territorial.
Hexblade	Wielder of old magic bound into weapons. Spell-bullets, hexwork, and the volatile power of the Old Ways.
Ranger	Wilderness survivor and bounty hunter. Expert tracker, dual-wielder, and long-road specialist.

Each Calling has a primary attribute (the one most often used for Calling features) and a set of starting proficiencies. Choose the Calling that speaks to the kind of character you want to play. There is no wrong answer.

STEP 5: DERIVED STATISTICS

Once you have your attributes and your Calling, calculate the following:

Vitality Points (VP)

VP represents your physical capacity to absorb injury.

At First Level: Your base VP is determined by your Calling's starting VP, plus your Brawn modifier (minimum 1 total from the modifier – if your modifier is negative, it reduces starting VP, but cannot reduce it below 4).

Calling	Starting VP
Gunslinger	10 + Brawn modifier
Outlaw	8 + Brawn modifier
Tinkerer	6 + Brawn modifier
Warden	10 + Brawn modifier
Hexblade	8 + Brawn modifier
Ranger	10 + Brawn modifier

Per Level: Each Calling lists how much VP is gained per level.

GRIT Points (GRP)

GRIT Points represent nerve, composure, and willpower – your ability to hold together when the pressure is on.

At all levels: GRP = 6 + Grit modifier (minimum 3). This does not scale with level. It improves only if your Grit attribute increases.

Defense Rating (DR)

Defense Rating is the target number enemies must meet or beat on their attack rolls to hit you.

Defense Rating = 10 + Reflexes modifier + armor bonus

Armor bonuses are listed in the Gear chapter.

STEP 6: SKILLS AND STARTING EQUIPMENT

Skills

Every character begins with:

- Skills from their Heritage (listed in Chapter 3)
- Skills from their Background (listed above)
- Skills from their Calling (listed in Chapter 5)

Additional skills may be purchased with Trail Marks during play (see the Advancement section of the Rules Overview).

Skill Bonus Levels:

Level	Bonus
Trained	+2
Expert	+4
Master	+6

Skills stack with attributes. If you have a Reflexes modifier of +2 and the Deadeye skill at Trained (+2), you roll d20+4 on aimed ranged attacks.

Starting Equipment

Each character begins with:

- Equipment from their Background (listed above)
- Equipment from their Calling (listed in Chapter 5)
- **25 starting coin** (in addition to any coin granted by Background)

Currency

The Frontier runs on a combination of formal coin and barter. The standard unit is the **coin** – a stamped metal disc of varying origin and questionable provenance. Prices are listed in whole coins throughout this book.

HIT POINTS, NOTES ON DEATH, AND THE DYING CLOCK

When a character reaches 0 Vitality Points, they are Downed. Roll on the Wound Table (see the Rules Overview). Death is not automatic at 0 VP.

The Dying Clock: When a character is Bleeding Out (Wound Table result 1), they lose 1 VP per round. At -5 VP,

death occurs unless they have been stabilized. Allies may attempt a Medicine check (DR 12) as a Main Action to stop the bleeding.

Permanent Death: Occurs at -5 VP, or on a second Bleeding Out result while already at negative VP. Even then, a Trail Blaze (natural 20) on a final Pushed Roll stabilizes the character – out of the scene, but breathing.

Death in Goblins & Gunslingers is real. It is also the last resort of a cruel story, not a casual outcome of routine combat. Game Marshals should reserve it for moments that mean something.





CHAPTER V

CALLINGS

A Calling is not a job. It is not a title. It is the shape of how you move through the world — what you reach for when things go sideways, what you know in your bones, what the Frontier has made you into.

There are six Callings in this book. Each one is a different answer to the same question: when the dust settles and someone has to do something, what kind of someone are you?



The Drifter walks alone, but never without purpose.



Blade-oath warriors bring eastern discipline to western dust.

HOW CALLINGS WORK

Each Calling provides:

- **Primary Attribute** – the attribute most central to this Calling's features
- **Starting VP** – base Vitality Points at first level
- **VP per Level** – how many VP are gained on leveling
- **Starting Skills** – skills provided automatically at character creation
- **Level Features** – abilities gained at each Notch (level) from 1 to 10
- **Starting Equipment** – gear specific to this Calling

Notches are the ten levels of advancement in Goblins & Gunslingers. Each Notch represents significant growth and is reached by accumulating Trail Marks (see the Rules Overview).

Unless a feature says otherwise, all Calling features are usable at will within their stated limitations.

CALLING: THE GUNSLINGER

"Fast isn't fast enough. You have to be first."

The Gunslinger is the purest combat archetype of the Wild Frontier: a master of firearms, quick reflexes, and the earned confidence of someone who has survived every gunfight they have ever been in. They carry no magic. They carry no tricks beyond their own skill. What they have is speed, precision, and an instinct for the violent geometry of a firefight that borders on supernatural even when it is entirely natural.

Gunslingers are the cowboys and cowgirls, the hired guns, the duelists, the legends that grow up around particular names and particular guns. They are not invincible – they are precise. A Gunslinger in a fight is a statement of intent.

Primary Attribute: Reflexes **Starting VP:** 10 + Brawn modifier **VP per Level:** Brawn modifier + 3 (minimum 1)
Starting Skills: Deadeye (trained), Intimidation (trained)
Starting Equipment: One revolver with 18 Iron Shot, a holster rig, a leather jacket (Defense Rating +1), 20 coin

Gunslinger Feature Table

Notch	Feature
1	Quick-Draw Mastery, Trick Shot
2	Eyes on the Room, +1 Reflexes (or +1 any attribute)
3	Steady Hand, Fan the Hammer
4	Trail Blaze Bonus: Double Tap
5	Called Shot, Notch Up (VP increase, choose one Trail Skill)
6	Iron Nerve, +1 Reflexes (or +1 any attribute)
7	Unmatched Draw
8	Trail Blaze Bonus: Ricochet, Deadshot
9	Two-Gun Stance
10	Legend of the Frontier

Gunslinger Features

Notch 1 — Quick-Draw Mastery The Gunslinger acts with blinding speed at the start of combat. When rolling Quick-Draw (initiative), the Gunslinger rolls with Fortune (2d20, take highest). Additionally, if the Gunslinger wins the Quick-Draw against at least one enemy, they may immediately take a free Quick Action before normal turn order begins.

Notch 1 — Trick Shot Once per turn, when making a ranged attack, the Gunslinger may call a Trick Shot before rolling. Declare one of the following effects. If the attack hits, the effect applies in addition to normal damage:

- **Disarm:** The target drops one held item. It lands 1d6 x 5 feet away in a random direction.
- **Pin Down:** The target must use their next Quick Action to move before they can take a Main Action.
- **Wing Shot:** The attack deals only half damage, but the target has Misfortune on their next attack roll.
- **Warning Shot:** The attack is deliberately aimed to miss. The target must pass a Grit Check (DR 12) or

become Shaken.

Notch 2 — Eyes on the Room The Gunslinger is never caught entirely off-guard. Even when surprised, they may take a Quick Action on the first round of combat (before their normal turn). They also have Fortune on Perception checks to detect hidden enemies or ambushes.

Notch 2 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 — Steady Hand The Gunslinger has learned to work against their own adrenaline. They ignore Misfortune on ranged attack rolls caused by the Shaken or Bloodied conditions. Additionally, being in the open (no cover) no longer imposes Misfortune on Deadeye rolls — they are comfortable exposed, because they intend to finish the fight before it matters.

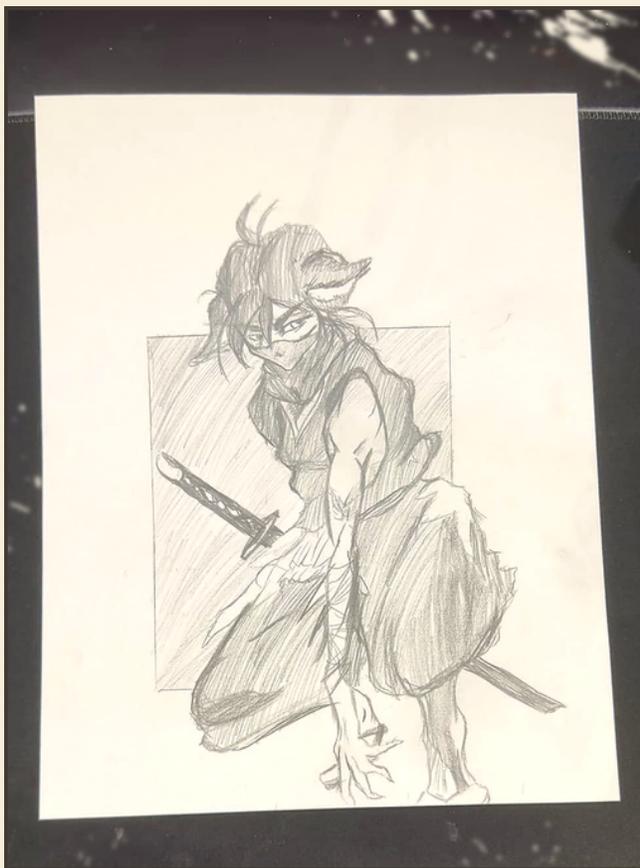
Notch 3 — Fan the Hammer Once per turn, as a Main Action, the Gunslinger may Fan the Hammer on a revolver — firing up to three times in rapid succession at the same target or two adjacent targets (within 10 feet of each other). Roll each attack separately. Each hit deals 1d8-1 damage (minimum 1). This expends 3 rounds of ammunition. After using Fan the Hammer, the revolver must be reloaded before being used again.

Notch 4 — Trail Blaze Bonus: Double Tap When the Gunslinger rolls a natural 20 (Trail Blaze) on a ranged attack, they may immediately make a second ranged attack against the same target as a free action. This second attack does not trigger another Trail Blaze effect, but deals full damage on a hit.

Notch 5 — Called Shot The Gunslinger can place bullets exactly where they intend. Before making a ranged attack, declare a Called Shot location:

- **Head:** On hit, target must pass Grit Check (DR 14) or be Stunned until end of their next turn. Extra 1d4 damage.
- **Hand/Arm:** On hit, target drops held item and cannot make armed attacks until end of their next turn.
- **Leg:** On hit, target's movement is reduced to 10 feet until the end of the scene or until healed.

Called Shots have Misfortune on the attack roll (precise aim takes time). Called Shots cannot be combined with Trick Shots.



Shadow and silence — the Outlaw's truest allies.

Notch 5 — Notch Up The Gunslinger gains a permanent +2 VP increase and may choose one Trail Skill to learn at trained level from: Survival, Tracking, Hustle, Persuasion, or Riding.

Notch 6 — Iron Nerve The Gunslinger has faced down too many guns to be rattled by them. They are immune to the Shaken condition from sources other than the Overburn Roll (magical overload). They also have Fortune on all Grit Checks made during formal Duels.

Notch 6 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 — Unmatched Draw The Gunslinger's speed in a formal Duel (Quick-Draw Standoff) is legendary. They always win ties in Nerve Rolls during Duels (if both results are equal, the Gunslinger goes first). Additionally, in a Duel, if they deal enough damage on the first shot to Down the opponent, the opponent cannot fire their Reaction shot.

Notch 8 — Trail Blaze Bonus: Ricochet When the Gunslinger rolls a natural 20 on a ranged attack, the bullet ricochets to an additional target within 20 feet of

the first. The second target takes 1d8 damage with no attack roll required (the ricochet is luck and geometry, not aim).

Notch 8 — Deadshot The Gunslinger may, once per scene, declare a Deadshot — a single attack made with perfect composure, total focus, and the full weight of their skill. The attack automatically hits (no roll required) and deals maximum damage. After using Deadshot, the Gunslinger cannot use any Trick Shot or Called Shot for the remainder of the scene — they spent everything on one moment.

Notch 9 — Two-Gun Stance The Gunslinger may wield two revolvers simultaneously. When doing so, they may attack with both as part of a single Main Action, rolling each separately. The second attack has Misfortune on its roll. Both attacks share the same ammunition pool and reload requirement.

Notch 10 — Legend of the Frontier The Gunslinger's reputation precedes them in every room they enter. Enemies who know their name (and most do by this point) must pass a Grit Check (DR 16) when the Gunslinger announces themselves or makes a visible action in the first round of combat. Failure means the enemy is Shaken.

Additionally, once per long rest, the Gunslinger may enter a state of **Perfect Calm** as a free action. For the next 3 rounds, all their attacks have Fortune, they cannot be Shaken, and they cannot be interrupted by Reactions — they exist in their own time, ahead of everything else.

CALLING: THE OUTLAW

"The law's a fence. I go around."

The Outlaw lives in the grey spaces of the Frontier — the alleys between the law's reach, the moment between a threat and its resolution. They are cunning, quick, and entirely comfortable with doing things the hard way as long as the hard way is also the smart way. They are not necessarily criminals (though many are). They are people who have learned that the official channels are not for

people like them, and they adjusted accordingly.

Outlaws excel at getting into places they should not be, getting information people did not intend to share, and getting out of situations that should have ended with them in the ground. In a fight, they prefer ambush over fair engagement — because fair engagement is just another kind of fence.

Primary Attribute: Cunning **Starting VP:** 8 + Brawn modifier **VP per Level:** Brawn modifier + 2 (minimum 1) **Starting Skills:** Swindling (trained), Stealth (trained) **Starting Equipment:** One revolver with 12 Iron Shot, a knife (1d4+Brawn damage), dark traveling clothes (no DR bonus but Fortune on Stealth), a set of lockpicks, a false identity (documents), 20 coin

Outlaw Feature Table

Notch	Feature
1	Ambush Strike, Shadow Move
2	Silver Tongue, +1 Cunning (or +1 any attribute)
3	Dirty Fighting, Getaway
4	Read the Room
5	Vanish, Notch Up
6	Underworld Contacts, +1 Cunning (or +1 any attribute)
7	Death from Nowhere
8	Trail Blaze Bonus: Exploit
9	Ghost in the Crowd
10	Untouchable

Outlaw Features

Notch 1 — Ambush Strike When the Outlaw attacks a target that is unaware of them, attacking from concealment, or attacking a target that has already been attacked by an ally in the same round, the attack deals an extra 2d6 damage. This extra damage increases as follows:

Notch	Extra Damage
1-3	2d6
4-6	3d6

Notch	Extra Damage
7-9	4d6
10	5d6

Ambush Strike applies once per attack, on the first qualifying hit per turn.

Notch 1 — Shadow Move Moving out of or through cover, darkness, or concealment costs the Outlaw no additional movement. They also have Fortune on Stealth checks made to hide or move silently in darkness or at night.

Notch 2 — Silver Tongue The Outlaw can talk their way through almost anything given thirty seconds and a straight face. Once per scene, they may declare a Silver Tongue attempt — a persuasion, bluff, or distraction directed at one NPC. The NPC must be capable of speech and not already in open combat with the Outlaw. The NPC is occupied with the Outlaw's conversation for up to 3 rounds, unless the Outlaw attacks or does something obviously hostile. No Trail Roll is required for the initial engagement — only for whether the specific lie or request succeeds.

Notch 2 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 — Dirty Fighting The Outlaw has no patience for honorable combat. They may, as a Quick Action before making a melee attack, attempt a Dirty Move. Roll Cunning Trail Roll vs. target's Reflexes Trail Roll. On success, choose one:

- **Trip:** Target is Prone before the attack resolves.
- **Eye Gouge:** Target has Misfortune on attack rolls until the end of their next turn.
- **Gut Punch:** If the attack hits, the target loses their Quick Action next round.

If the Cunning roll fails, the Dirty Move does not work but the attack still proceeds normally.

Notch 3 — Getaway The Outlaw knows how to exit a situation. Once per short rest, as a Reaction to being targeted by an attack or when an enemy moves within 5 feet of them, the Outlaw may move up to their full movement speed without triggering reactions. This movement can take them around corners, through adjacent cover, or in any direction they choose.

Notch 4 — Read the Room The Outlaw is always doing three things at once in a social situation: listening to the conversation, watching the exits, and noting who is carrying what. Whenever the Outlaw enters a new location, they may ask the Game Marshal up to three questions about the scene that their keen eye could plausibly answer (Where is the best exit? Who in this room is armed? Is anyone watching the safe?). The Game Marshal answers honestly.

Notch 5 — Vanish Once per short rest, the Outlaw may take a Quick Action to Vanish — they become hidden and effectively invisible to all enemies who do not have a direct line of sight on where they hid. To locate the Outlaw after Vanishing, an enemy must succeed on a Cunning Trail Roll vs. the Outlaw's Stealth Trail Roll. The Outlaw may move up to half their speed when Vanishing without breaking the effect. Making an attack or other obvious action breaks the hidden state.

Notch 5 — Notch Up The Outlaw gains +2 VP permanently and learns one skill at trained level from: Tracking, Persuasion, Riding, Medicine, or Intimidation.

Notch 6 — Underworld Contacts The Outlaw has connections. In any boomtown, settlement, or trading post, they may spend 10 minutes and attempt a Swindling or Presence Trail Roll (DR 12) to locate an underworld contact — a fence, an information broker, a safe house, or a specialist in something the law disapproves of. On a success, the contact is available and willing to deal. On a failure, the contact exists but the Outlaw has to offer something first.

Notch 6 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 — Death from Nowhere The Outlaw's Ambush Strike may now be used from long range (any distance at which they can attack) and no longer requires an ally to have already attacked the target — hidden and distant is enough. Additionally, if the Outlaw kills a target with an Ambush Strike, they may immediately take a Quick Action as a free action (which they may use to hide again, move, or reload).

Notch 8 — Trail Blaze Bonus: Exploit When the Outlaw rolls a natural 20 on an attack, they find a weak point. The target's Defense Rating is reduced by 2 for the

remainder of the scene (their armor is damaged, their guard is compromised, they are rattled). This reduction does not stack on subsequent natural 20s.

Notch 9 — Ghost in the Crowd In a populated area (any settlement with more than ten people), the Outlaw cannot be tracked, recognized, or followed without the use of a magical ability or the assistance of someone who knows them personally. Guards searching for them, bounty hunters on their trail, and enemies who lost sight of them simply lose the thread. This is not invisibility — it is the expert art of being unremarkable.

Notch 10 — Untouchable The Outlaw has survived this long by being one step ahead. They cannot be surprised — if an ambush or surprise attack is sprung against them, they still act in the first round. Additionally, once per long rest, they may declare that an attack that would have Downed them instead leaves them at 1 VP — they slipped it, they took a graze, the bullet hit their flask. The story of how survives examination at the table. This may only be used once per long rest, and the Outlaw must narrate the escape when they use it.

CALLING: THE TINKERER

"Give me twenty minutes, a bag of spare parts, and some room to think. You'll see."

The Tinkerer is the frontier's great improviser — a builder, an inventor, a scavenger of principles and materials who creates solutions that should not work and frequently do. Where a Gunslinger relies on their weapon and a Warden relies on the land, a Tinkerer relies on their mind and their workshop, wherever that workshop happens to be at the time.

Tinkerers are associated most strongly with Goblin culture, but any Heritage can walk this path — the frontier demands ingenuity from everyone, and the formal knowledge of how things come apart and come back together again has been reinvented independently by every people on the Frontier at least twice.

At higher levels, a Tinkerer's creations grow from improvised gadgets into genuine mechanical marvels: automatons, siege devices, alchemical explosives, and contraptions of their own unique design that no bestiary can fully account for.

Primary Attribute: Cunning **Starting VP:** 6 + Brawn modifier **VP per Level:** Brawn modifier + 1 (minimum 1) **Starting Skills:** Tinkering (trained), Lore of the Land (trained) **Starting Equipment:** Tinkerer's kit (comprehensive tools), two Flashbangs (see gear section), a mechanical notebook (fully detailed — contains diagrams, notes, and one functional schematic), a sidearm (revolver) with 12 Iron Shot, 15 coin

Tinkerer Feature Table

Notch	Feature
1	Field Fabrication, Gadget Pouch
2	Iron Companion (Mechanical Companion, Tier 1), +1 Cunning (or +1 any attribute)
3	Overclocked, Trap Engineer
4	Explosive Expertise
5	Iron Companion Tier 2, Notch Up
6	Jury-Rig, +1 Cunning (or +1 any attribute)
7	Shock Harness
8	Iron Companion Tier 3, Grand Device
9	Overclock the World
10	Masterwork

Tinkerer Features

Notch 1 — Field Fabrication The Tinkerer can build useful devices quickly from available materials. Once per short rest, given at least 10 minutes and a Tinkering Trail Roll (DR 12), the Tinkerer may fabricate one of the following from scavenged or available parts:

- **Smoke Canister:** Thrown up to 20 feet, creates a cloud of smoke 15 feet in diameter. All ranged attacks through the cloud have Misfortune. Lasts 2 rounds.
- **Caltnops (handful):** Scattered across a 5-foot area. Anyone moving through takes 1d4 damage and their

movement is halved for 1 round.

- **Signal Flare:** A bright signal visible up to 1 mile in day, 3 miles at night. Or used as a last-resort weapon (1d6 fire damage, thrown).
- **Bolt Latch:** An improvised door brace or lock reinforcement. Adds 8 to the DR to force or pick a door.

At DR 16, the Tinkerer may attempt something more complex — a custom gadget designed in the moment. Game Marshal and player define the effect together within reason.

Notch 1 — Gadget Pouch The Tinkerer begins every session with a number of pre-made gadgets equal to their Cunning modifier + 2 (minimum 2), chosen from the Field Fabrication list above or from the Gear chapter's Goblin Device list. These are pre-loaded and do not require a Field Fabrication roll to use — they were made in advance.

Notch 2 — Iron Companion (Tier 1) The Tinkerer has constructed a mechanical companion — a small automaton that follows them, assists them, and can act independently in combat and exploration. The Iron Companion is a construct with the following base statistics:

- **VP:** 10
- **Defense Rating:** 12
- **Speed:** 25 feet
- **Attacks:** Claw/Impact: 1d4+1 damage
- **Abilities (Tier 1):** The Iron Companion can carry up to 20 lbs of gear, fetch and retrieve objects, and Scout Ahead (moves up to 60 feet away, reporting back what it detects by sound or sight). It cannot make complex decisions on its own — it follows simple commands (Guard this door. Attack that target. Stay.)

If destroyed, the Iron Companion can be rebuilt during a Long Rest with a Tinkering Trail Roll (DR 14) and 5 coins of parts.

Notch 2 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 — Overclocked The Tinkerer has learned to push devices past their design tolerances. Once per scene, they may Overclock any device or gadget they are using — it performs at double its normal effect (double damage, double area, double duration). After being Overclocked, the device is destroyed or requires a full rebuild. The

Tinkerer must succeed on a Tinkering Trail Roll (DR 10) when Overclocking or the device detonates in their hands (take half the device's normal damage).

Notch 3 — Trap Engineer The Tinkerer may set traps far more effectively than most. Setting a Tinkering-based trap now takes only 1 minute (down from 10 minutes for standard trap-setting). Traps built by the Tinkerer deal an additional 1d6 damage, and the DR to spot or disarm them is increased by 2. The Tinkerer can set up to Cunning modifier + 1 traps per Long Rest.

Notch 4 — Explosive Expertise The Tinkerer has a refined relationship with things that blow up. They gain Fortune on all attack rolls with explosive devices. Explosives they create deal an extra 1d6 damage, and their blast radius is increased by 5 feet. Most importantly, they know how to position themselves — they never take damage from their own explosives (they were standing in exactly the right place).

Notch 5 — Iron Companion (Tier 2) The Iron Companion is upgraded. Its statistics improve:

- **VP:** 20
- **Defense Rating:** 14
- **Attacks:** 1d6+2 damage
- **New Abilities:** The Iron Companion can now make one attack per round on its own initiative (on the Tinkerer's turn). It can also deliver gadgets (place a device at any location within its movement range). Additionally, the Tinkerer may choose one of the following upgrades:
 - **Gun Arm:** The Iron Companion has a mounted sidearm (1d8 ranged, 30 feet range, holds 6 rounds)
 - **Armor Plating:** Iron Companion Defense Rating becomes 17
 - **Sensor Array:** The Iron Companion can detect invisible or hidden creatures within 30 feet

Notch 5 — Notch Up Gain +2 VP permanently and learn one skill at trained level from: Survival, Tracking, Medicine, Stealth, or Deadeye.

Notch 6 — Jury-Rig The Tinkerer can fix almost anything on the fly. As a Main Action, they may repair a broken, disabled, or malfunctioning device — including weapons that have jammed, the Iron Companion, or any mechanical object — with a Tinkering Roll (DR 10 for

simple, DR 16 for complex). They can also jury-rig an improvised weapon from available parts as a Quick Action, creating an item that functions as a melee weapon (1d6 + Cunning) for the rest of the scene before falling apart.

Notch 6 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 — Shock Harness The Tinkerer has equipped themselves (and the Iron Companion) with a shock delivery system. Once per turn, when hit by a melee attack, the Tinkerer may activate the harness as a Reaction. The attacker takes 2d6 lightning damage and must pass a Grit Check (DR 12) or be Stunned until end of their next turn. The harness has 3 charges, recharging fully on a Long Rest.

Notch 8 — Iron Companion (Tier 3) Final upgrade:

- **VP:** 35
- **Defense Rating:** 16
- **Attacks:** 1d8+3 damage, or ranged attack 1d10+3 (30 feet)
- **New Abilities:** The Iron Companion can now act on its own turn in initiative order (rolled separately from the Tinkerer, using the Tinkerer's Cunning modifier). It can make two attacks per turn. The Tinkerer may add one final upgrade:
 - **Flight Pack:** Iron Companion gains a flying speed of 30 feet
 - **Repair Module:** Iron Companion can spend a Main Action to restore 1d6 VP to any adjacent creature
 - **Overdrive Core:** Iron Companion can use Overclocked on itself — dealing double damage on all attacks for 1 round, then shutting down and requiring repair

Notch 8 — Grand Device Once per Long Rest, the Tinkerer may spend 1 hour building a Grand Device — a single-use contraption of extraordinary scope. Work with the Game Marshal to define its function. General guidelines:

- **Area effect devices:** up to 30-foot radius, 6d6 damage or major condition effect
- **Utility devices:** anything that could be accomplished by five people working for a day (diverting water, sealing a mine entrance, creating a distraction audible for a mile)

♦ The Grand Device requires materials that must be gathered (cost: 10–30 coin in parts, or scavenged from the environment)

Notch 9 – Overclock the World The Tinkerer's Overclocked ability may now be used on any device within 30 feet — they do not need to be holding it. They may also Overclock two devices in the same scene (previously once per scene). The risk of detonation on a failed roll still applies.

Notch 10 – Masterwork The Tinkerer builds something that will outlast them. Between sessions, they may designate one item they have created as a **Masterwork Device** — a permanent artifact of their craft with unique properties defined collaboratively with the Game Marshal. This device cannot be destroyed (only damaged and repaired), grants its bearer one unique mechanical benefit from the Tinkerer's personal canon of expertise, and is a named object in the world. Legends will tell of its maker.

Additionally, the Iron Companion at Tier 3 becomes a true automaton — it develops a rudimentary personality, preferences, and the ability to make judgment calls. It becomes a full NPC ally as well as a mechanical asset.

CALLING: THE WARDEN

"I know what this land sounds like when something's wrong. Right now it sounds very wrong."

The Warden is the frontier's protector and tracker — someone who has formed a deep, practical, and partly mystical bond with the land. They read the terrain like a language, know the creatures of the frontier by their habits and their hungers, and stand between the places they have claimed and the things that would harm them.

Wardens draw on a tradition adjacent to the Druidic Rites of the Straw Elves — slower and more patient than Hexwork, tied to place and pattern rather than to power and speed. Not all Wardens are Straw Elves, but Straw Elf culture has shaped the Warden's path more than any other Heritage.

In a Posse, the Warden is the one who spots what everyone else missed, who knows where to make camp and where not to, who can speak to the land's memory when something has been disturbed. They are not fragile. They are simply looking at a different layer of the same danger.

Primary Attribute: Grit **Starting VP:** 10 + Brawn modifier **VP per Level:** Brawn modifier + 3 (minimum 1) **Starting Skills:** Survival (trained), Tracking (trained) **Starting Equipment:** A rifle with 12 Long Brass, a hand axe (1d6+Brawn), heavy trail coat (Defense Rating +1), a journal of the local region (detailed with trails, water sources, and danger markers), 15 coin

Warden Feature Table

Notch	Feature
1	Land Sense, Favored Territory
2	Wilderness Bond, +1 Grit (or +1 any attribute)
3	Marked Prey, Natural Cover
4	Old Ways Rite (Minor)
5	Territorial Warning, Notch Up
6	Endure the Wild, +1 Grit (or +1 any attribute)
7	Old Ways Rite (Major)
8	Trail Blaze Bonus: Apex
9	One with the Land
10	Voice of the Frontier

Warden Features

Notch 1 – Land Sense The Warden is attuned to the state of the terrain around them. They can sense when the land has been disturbed — recent movement of large groups, unusual animal behavior, water source changes, or magical disruption — within 1 mile, without a roll. Details require a Tracking or Survival Trail Roll (DR varies by severity of the disturbance). In dead groves or near ley lines, this range extends to 3 miles.

Notch 1 – Favored Territory The Warden chooses one terrain type as their Favored Territory (Canyon Lands, Dead Plains, Ruins, Boomtown/Settlement, or Ashfield).

In their Favored Territory, they have:

- Fortune on Survival, Tracking, and Stealth Trail Rolls
- Advantage on all Quick-Draw rolls (Fortune on initiative)
- The ability to move at full speed through difficult terrain specific to that environment
- Knowledge of safe rest spots: Short Rests in Favored Territory also recover 1 additional VP

At Notch 6, the Warden may choose a second Favored Territory.

Notch 2 – Wilderness Bond The Warden has formed a connection to a specific animal – a horse, a large desert bird, a canyon cat, or other frontier creature – that serves as a companion and mount. The Animal Companion:

- Has VP equal to 8 + Warden's Grit modifier
- Obeys commands reliably (no roll required for standard commands)
- May carry the Warden and up to 100 lbs of gear
- In combat: may make one trampling or biting attack per round (1d6+2) if commanded

If the Animal Companion is killed, the Warden may bond with a new one after a Long Rest in their Favored Territory.

Notch 2 – Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 – Marked Prey The Warden may designate one creature as Marked Prey as a Quick Action. Against Marked Prey, the Warden has Fortune on all attack rolls and Tracking checks. The Mark lasts until the target is dead or the Warden marks a new target (only one target may be marked at a time). At Notch 7, the Warden may maintain two simultaneous Marked Prey.

Notch 3 – Natural Cover The Warden knows how to use the land as armor. When in outdoor terrain (not inside a building), the Warden's Defense Rating increases by +2. When in their Favored Territory, it increases by +3 instead.

Notch 4 – Old Ways Rite (Minor) The Warden has learned to access a fragment of the Old Ways. They gain access to two Minor Rites from the following list. Using a Minor Rite costs 1 Hexcharge (Wardens have a Hexcharge pool equal to 2 + Oldways modifier, minimum 2). Minor

Rites require the Warden to be still (no movement on the same turn).

Rite	Effect
Rite of Roots	A 10-foot area of ground becomes difficult terrain for enemies for 3 rounds. Plants and roots appear to tangle feet.
Rite of Stillness	The Warden and up to 2 allies within 10 feet become difficult to perceive. All Stealth checks have Fortune for 1 round.
Rite of Speaking	The Warden may ask one question of the land. The Game Marshal provides one truthful, wordless sense-impression answer about what has occurred in this location within the last 24 hours.
Rite of Warding	The Warden marks a campsite or threshold. Any creature that crosses the ward without the Warden's permission wakes the Warden instantly and takes 1d6 damage. Lasts until dawn.
Rite of Mending	The Warden touches a creature, restoring 1d6+Oldways modifier VP.

Notch 5 – Territorial Warning The Warden's presence in their Favored Territory is felt. Creatures and NPCs who enter territory the Warden has claimed (defined as anywhere they have spent at least one Long Rest) must pass a Grit Check (DR 14) or feel an unexplained unease – they are reluctant to continue unless they have a compelling reason. This does not control behavior, but it creates noticeable hesitation.

Notch 5 – Notch Up Gain +2 VP permanently and learn one skill at trained level from: Oldways Lore, Riding, Lore of the Land, Medicine, or Intimidation.

Notch 6 – Endure the Wild The Warden barely registers the hardships of frontier life. They are immune to exhaustion from travel, extreme temperatures, and food or water deprivation for up to 3 days. After 3 days without food or water, normal rules apply. They also have Fortune on all Grit Checks made to resist environmental conditions, creature fear effects, and magical dread.

Notch 6 – Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 — Old Ways Rite (Major) The Warden gains access to one Major Rite. Major Rites cost 2–3 Hexcharge and require 1 full round of concentration to perform (the Warden may not move or take other actions on that round). At Notch 7, choose one:

- **Rite of the Storm:** The Warden calls a localized storm — lightning and heavy wind in a 30-foot radius around them for 3 rounds. All ranged attacks into or out of the area have Misfortune. Creatures in the area take 1d6 lightning damage per round (Grit Check DR 14 to halve). Costs 3 Hexcharge.

- **Rite of the Guardian:** A spectral form of a large predator appears in a space the Warden designates (within 60 feet). It has VP 20, attacks (1d10+4 per round), and persists for 3 rounds before dissolving. It obeys the Warden's commands. Costs 2 Hexcharge.

- **Rite of Remembering:** In a ruin or sacred site, the Warden performs a rite that reveals a scene from the past — what happened here, when the Old World was alive. This scene plays as a vision the whole Posse can witness, lasting up to 1 minute. Costs 2 Hexcharge. Works only in locations of genuine historical significance.

Notch 8 — Trail Blaze Bonus: Apex When the Warden rolls a natural 20 on an attack against their Marked Prey, the attack deals triple damage (not just double). The precision of a Warden who knows their prey completely is something other kinds of fighter cannot replicate.

Notch 9 — One with the Land The Warden's attunement to their Favored Territories reaches its full expression. Within Favored Territory, they cannot be tracked by non-magical means. They can always find water, shelter, and food without a roll. They can communicate in broad, emotional terms with animals in their Favored Territory (the animals do not speak, but they convey sensory impressions). The Warden's Land Sense range in Favored Territory extends to 10 miles.

Notch 10 — Voice of the Frontier The land speaks through the Warden. Once per long rest, the Warden may make a Declaration to the Frontier — a spoken statement about what is or is not welcome in the land they protect. This Declaration lasts until sunrise. Its effects:

- All creatures and people the Warden has declared unwelcome in the area have Misfortune on all Trail Rolls within 1 mile of the Warden.

- The Warden gains Fortune on all Trail Rolls within that same area.
- Magical effects created by declared unwelcome sources have a 25% chance of simply failing within the area (roll d4 on any magical action — on a 1, it fails).

The Declaration must be spoken aloud and must be specific. "I declare this canyon closed to the Dusthide Gang until the water rights are settled" is valid. "I declare all enemies unwelcome" is too vague and does not trigger the effect.

CALLING: THE HEXBLADE

"Some folks pray for miracles. I load them in advance."

The Hexblade is what happens when someone decides that the distance between a gun barrel and an act of magic is not a distance at all — it is a direction.

Hexblades channel the Old Ways through their firearms, encoding spell-effects into specially prepared bullets and firing them at whatever problem needs solving. They are the Frontier's most versatile combatants: capable of straight gunfighting when that is all the situation needs, and capable of reaching into the older power of the land when it is not.

They are not wizards who happen to carry guns. They are gunfighters who happen to have made a deal with something ancient. The magic is real, it is dangerous, and it comes from them — from their will, their Oldways attunement, and the volatile relationship between the gunpowder and the hex.

Primary Attribute: Oldways **Starting VP:** 8 + Brawn modifier **VP per Level:** Brawn modifier + 2 (minimum 1) **Starting Skills:** Deadeye (trained), Oldways Lore (trained) **Starting Equipment:** One revolver with 12 Iron Shot, a powder kit and six prepared spell-bullet casings (un-loaded — see below), a journal of hexmarks, a road-worn traveling coat (Defense Rating +1), 15 coin

Hexcharge Pool

Hexblades have a **Hexcharge Pool** equal to **4 + Oldways modifier**. This pool increases by 1 at Notches 3, 5, 7, and 9.

Hexcharge refreshes: 1 charge per Short Rest, fully on Long Rest.

Overdrawing: When the Hexblade attempts to use a spell-bullet with an empty Hexcharge Pool, they may attempt an Overburn Roll (Grit Check, DR 16). On a success, the spell-bullet fires – but the Hexblade takes 1d6 Vitality damage and gains the Shaken condition. On a failure, the bullet fires without its magical effect (standard damage only) and the Hexblade takes 2d6 Vitality damage.

Hexblade Feature Table

Notch	Feature
1	Spell-Bullets (Tier 1), Hexmark
2	Witchfire Shot, +1 Oldways (or +1 any attribute)
3	Spell-Bullets (Tier 2), Hexcharge +1
4	Rune Barrel, Trail Blaze Bonus: Surge
5	Spell-Bullets (Tier 3), Hexcharge +1, Notch Up
6	Bleedthrough, +1 Oldways (or +1 any attribute)
7	Hexcharge +1, Chain Shot
8	Binding Etch, Grand Hex
9	Hexcharge +1, Dual Resonance
10	The Living Gun

Hexblade Features

Notch 1 – Spell-Bullets (Tier 1) The Hexblade can prepare and fire magical rounds called spell-bullets. Loading a spell-bullet is a Quick Action. Firing it is a Main Action (standard ranged attack, same roll as normal). On a hit, the bullet deals normal damage AND the spell effect triggers. On a miss, the bullet deals no damage and the spell effect does not trigger (the magic requires impact).

At Tier 1 (Notches 1–2), the Hexblade knows two spell-bullets from the following list, and may prepare a number of spell-bullets equal to their Hexcharge Pool per Long Rest:

Spell-Bullet	Hexcharge Cost	Effect on Hit
Ashfire Round	1	Target takes 1d4 fire damage at start of their next 2 turns.
Bonechill Round	1	Target loses their Quick Action on their next turn.
Rootbind Round	1	Target is Rooted (cannot move) until end of their next turn.
Soulscream Round	2	Target makes a Grit Check (DR 14) or loses 1d4 GRIT Points.
Stormstrike Round	2	Damage arcs to a second target within 15 feet. Second target takes half the total damage (no attack roll).
Shadowstep Round	2	After the attack resolves, the Hexblade may teleport up to 20 feet to any space they can see.

Notch 1 – Hexmark The Hexblade can mark a target they can see as a Quick Action (costs 1 Hexcharge). Marked targets take an extra 1d4 damage from the Hexblade's spell-bullets. The mark lasts until the scene ends or the Hexblade places a new mark (only one mark may be active at a time). At Notch 6, the extra damage increases to 1d6.

Notch 2 – Witchfire Shot Once per scene, as a Main Action, the Hexblade may fire a Witchfire Shot – a free-form burst of raw Hexcharge that does not require a prepared bullet. This attack has a range of 40 feet, deals 2d8 fire/lightning damage (Hexblade's choice of flavor each use), and costs 2 Hexcharge. It does not require an attack roll – it is a cone of raw energy 10 feet wide at its terminus. Targets in range make a Grit Check (DR 13) to take half damage instead.

Notch 2 – Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 – Spell-Bullets (Tier 2) The Hexblade's knowledge deepens. Learn two additional spell-bullets from the following:

Spell-Bullet	Hexcharge Cost	Effect on Hit
Silence Round	1	Target cannot call out or use voice-activated abilities for 2 rounds.
Warpshot Round	2	Target is displaced 10 feet in a direction of the Hexblade's choosing (into cover, off a ledge, away from allies).
Ironlock Round	2	Target's weapon or tool fuses with their hand. They cannot drop or holster it for 2 rounds. Their weapon deals no damage during this time.
Grieving Round	3	Target must make a Grit Check (DR 16) or become Broken (0 GRP for 2 rounds, regardless of actual GRP).
Mirrorshot Round	3	The bullet passes through the first target and hits a second target directly behind them (within 15 feet). Both take full damage and full spell effects.

Notch 3 – Hexcharge Increase Hexcharge Pool maximum increases by 1.

Notch 4 – Rune Barrel The Hexblade etches permanent hexmarks into their firearm. The weapon now counts as magical for purposes of bypassing magical protections. Additionally, twice per long rest, the Hexblade may fire a spell-bullet without spending Hexcharge – the rune channels residual power from the weapon itself.

Notch 4 – Trail Blaze Bonus: Surge When the Hexblade rolls a natural 20 on any attack, the Hexcharge cost of the next spell-bullet they fire is reduced by 1 (minimum 0). This reduction must be used within 1 round or it is lost.

Notch 5 – Spell-Bullets (Tier 3) The Hexblade has reached deep into the Old Ways. Learn one spell-bullet

from the following:

Spell-Bullet	Hexcharge Cost	Effect on Hit
Soulrip Round	3	Target loses 2d6 GRIT Points. If this reduces them to 0 GRP, they immediately fall to 0 VP as well (the magical shock shuts them down).
Hexwall Round	3	Upon impact, a wall of crackling hexfire erupts – a 10-foot-long, 5-foot-wide barrier of magical energy that persists for 3 rounds. Any creature passing through takes 2d6 damage.
Unmaking Round	4	The target's strongest magical effect, magical item, or active enchantment is suppressed for 1 hour.

Notch 5 – Hexcharge Increase Hexcharge Pool maximum increases by 1.

Notch 5 – Notch Up Gain +2 VP permanently and learn one skill at trained level from: Stealth, Survival, Tracking, Swindling, or Persuasion.

Notch 6 – Bleedthrough The Hexblade's magic has saturated their bullets at a deeper level. All spell-bullets now deal an additional 1d4 bonus damage on hit, regardless of the spell-effect. This represents the raw magical charge in the shot, not the specific effect.

Notch 6 – Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 – Hexcharge Increase Hexcharge Pool maximum increases by 1.

Notch 7 – Chain Shot The Hexblade may, once per scene, fire a Chain Shot – a Stormstrike-style cascade of magical energy that bounces from target to target. Fire one attack against a primary target. On hit, the effect chains to up to two additional targets within 20 feet of each previous target. Each subsequent hit deals half the damage of the previous hit. Each chained target also suffers the spell-bullet's effect (if applicable, and at full

effect). Chain Shot costs 1 additional Hexcharge on top of the base bullet's cost.

Notch 8 – Binding Etch The Hexblade has learned to etch a hex directly onto a person, object, or location as a ritual taking 10 minutes and costing 2 Hexcharge. A Binding Etch:

- Placed on a person: They have Misfortune on Grit Checks for 24 hours, and the Hexblade always knows which direction they are (within 1 mile).
- Placed on an object: The object cannot be used by anyone other than those the Hexblade designates. Attempts to use it force a Grit Check DR 16 or the user takes 1d8 damage.
- Placed on a location: Anyone who enters the marked area (10-foot radius) triggers an alarm that the Hexblade hears regardless of distance, and takes 1d6 magical damage.

Notch 8 – Grand Hex Once per Long Rest, the Hexblade may spend 4 Hexcharge and 1 full round of concentration to release a Grand Hex — a devastating, complex magical effect covering a 30-foot radius from a chosen point within 60 feet. Work with the Game Marshal to define the specific effect. General guidelines:

- Damage-based Grand Hex: 8d6 damage (halved on successful Grit Check DR 16)
- Condition-based Grand Hex: All creatures in the area gain a major condition (Rooted, Blinded, Broken) for 2 rounds (Grit Check DR 16 to resist)
- Environmental Grand Hex: Reshape the battlefield — crack the earth, collapse part of a structure, ignite an area (10 feet of fire that persists 3 rounds)

Notch 9 – Hexcharge Increase Hexcharge Pool maximum increases by 1.

Notch 9 – Dual Resonance The Hexblade may load two different spell-bullets simultaneously (one per barrel of a double-barreled weapon, or through a specially modified revolver). Both fire on the same attack. Both effects apply to the target if the attack hits. This costs the Hexcharge of both bullets. The attack still only rolls once.

Notch 10 – The Living Gun The Hexblade's weapon has become something beyond a tool. It is a partner — a living channel for the Old Ways that responds to the Hexblade's will. The weapon gains the following permanent properties:

- It cannot be lost or stolen for more than 24 hours — it finds its way back.
- It has a Hexcharge pool of its own: 3 charges, refreshing on Long Rest. These can be used in addition to the Hexblade's personal pool.
- Once per Long Rest, the Hexblade may ask the weapon to fire itself — targeting any creature within range that the Hexblade designates. The weapon makes the attack using the Hexblade's full modifiers, with a spell-bullet of the Hexblade's choice, without requiring an action.
- The weapon deals an additional 2d6 magical damage on every hit.

CALLING: THE RANGER

"I've been tracking you for three days. You didn't know. That's the point."

The Ranger is the Frontier's long-road specialist — a bounty hunter, wilderness survivor, and dual-weapon fighter who has learned to operate for extended periods in hostile territory without support. Where the Warden protects a place, the Ranger hunts a target. Where the Gunslinger wins in the moment, the Ranger wins before the fight even starts.

Rangers are patient, methodical, and self-sufficient. They plan their hunts carefully, read their quarry's habits from the signs they leave behind, and close in only when they are ready. In a Posse, the Ranger is often the one who disappears for a day and returns with exactly the intelligence needed to crack a problem wide open.

Primary Attribute: Reflexes **Starting VP:** 10 + Brawn modifier **VP per Level:** Brawn modifier + 2 (minimum 1) **Starting Skills:** Tracking (trained), Survival (trained) **Starting Equipment:** One rifle with 16 Long Brass, one revolver with 12 Iron Shot, a knife (1d4+Brawn), trail gear (bedroll, rations for 5 days, waterskin, rope, signal mirror), a bounty ledger with one active target, 15 coin

Ranger Feature Table

Notch	Feature
1	Quarry, Long-Road Endurance
2	Dual Draw, +1 Reflexes (or +1 any attribute)
3	Trail Sign, Hunter's Eye
4	Dead Reckoning
5	Vanishing Act, Notch Up
6	Relentless Pursuit, +1 Reflexes (or +1 any attribute)
7	Pack Tactics
8	Trail Blaze Bonus: Take 'Em Alive
9	Ghostwalk
10	End of the Trail

Ranger Features

Notch 1 — Quarry The Ranger designates one target as their Quarry. This works like the Warden's Marked Prey with the following differences:

- The Ranger may designate Quarry without line of sight — they need only information about who the target is (a name, a description, a sufficiently distinctive bounty poster).
- Once Quarry is designated, the Ranger always knows the general direction of their Quarry if they are within 1 mile.
- The Ranger has Fortune on all Tracking and attack rolls against their Quarry.
- The Ranger deals +1d6 damage against their Quarry. This increases to +2d6 at Notch 6.
- Unlike Marked Prey, a Quarry designation can be maintained indefinitely — until the Quarry is caught, killed, or the Ranger explicitly releases the designation.
- The Ranger may have one active Quarry at a time. At Notch 7, they may maintain two.

Notch 1 — Long-Road Endurance The Ranger is built for days alone in hostile terrain. They do not suffer penalties from extended travel (no exhaustion from travel duration). Short Rests in the wilderness (not in a settlement) recover an additional 1d6 VP. Additionally, the Ranger's daily required food and water consumption is halved — they have learned to subsist on less.

Notch 2 — Dual Draw The Ranger may wield a revolver in each hand. When dual-wielding revolvers:

- The main-hand attack uses Reflexes + Deadeye as normal.
- The off-hand attack uses Reflexes only (no Deadeye bonus), but if both attacks hit the same target, add 1d6 to the total damage.
- Each revolver tracks its own ammo independently.
- Reloading while dual-wielding requires a Main Action per weapon (or a Main Action to reload both if the Ranger has the Dual Reload feature, gained at Notch 6).

Notch 2 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 — Trail Sign The Ranger reads the land like a language. After spending 1 minute in a location, the Ranger may make a Tracking Trail Roll (DR set by Game Marshal based on age and clarity of sign) to learn any of the following:

- How many creatures or people passed through, and when
- The direction of travel and approximate speed
- Whether any of the creatures match their Quarry or any known Heritage/type
- Whether any unusual activity (a fight, a camp, a ritual) occurred here within 48 hours

At DR 16, they can read sign that most trackers would miss entirely — days-old trails under fresh weather.

Notch 3 — Hunter's Eye The Ranger has spent too many hours looking at things through iron sights to miss details in plain sight. They have Fortune on Perception checks in outdoor or wilderness environments. When attacking at long range (beyond 60 feet with a rifle), they do not suffer the usual Misfortune for extreme distance.

Notch 4 — Dead Reckoning The Ranger can navigate by feel, stars, sun, and accumulated experience. They cannot become lost in wilderness environments (though they may choose to hide their trail or camp deliberately, which is different). They can estimate the distance and travel time to any known location with an automatic success on navigation checks. When planning an approach to a target's location (setting up an ambush, choosing a sniping position, planning an infiltration

route), the Ranger may ask the Game Marshal two tactical questions that their scouting would plausibly answer.

Notch 5 – Vanishing Act When alone in wilderness terrain (no nearby allies or enemies within 30 feet), the Ranger may become hidden as a free action at the start of their turn. This costs no action and does not require cover – the Ranger simply knows how to make themselves disappear in the landscape. Enemies must succeed on a Cunning Trail Roll vs. the Ranger's Stealth + Tracking (DR = Ranger's Cunning modifier + 12) to spot them.

Notch 5 – Notch Up Gain +2 VP permanently and learn one skill at trained level from: Stealth, Deadeye, Intimidation, Swindling, or Lore of the Land.

Notch 6 – Relentless Pursuit A Quarry cannot simply escape the Ranger by running. When the Ranger's Quarry attempts to flee (disengage, run, leave the scene), the Ranger may make a free reaction attack (no action cost) if the Quarry is within range. If the Quarry escapes the current scene, the Ranger immediately knows their general direction of travel (within a quarter-mile) and automatically succeeds on the first Tracking roll to follow them. The Quarry's head start is effectively halved in mechanical terms.

Notch 6 – Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 – Pack Tactics The Ranger has learned, through necessity, to fight with a Posse rather than alone. When at least one ally is adjacent to a target the Ranger is attacking, the Ranger has Fortune on the attack roll. This stacks with Quarry's Fortune (they both apply – roll three dice, take the highest two, then use the higher of those two).

Additionally, the Ranger may now maintain two active Quarry designations simultaneously.

Notch 8 – Trail Blaze Bonus: Take 'Em Alive When the Ranger rolls a natural 20 on an attack against their Quarry, they may choose to Down the target without rolling on the Wound Table – the target is simply unconscious, exactly as the Ranger intends. The Ranger may also use this result to disarm the target instead of dealing damage (the Quarry's weapon is knocked clear, the Quarry is at 1 VP, and they are otherwise unharmed).

Notch 9 – Ghostwalk The Ranger has mastered the art of moving without existing. While in wilderness terrain, they produce no sound while moving, leave no tracks, and their scent is suppressed. Magical detection still works, but all mundane tracking, hearing, and scent-based detection fails against them entirely. In combat, they may move through any terrain as if it were open ground (no movement penalties). Once per scene, they may pass through a solid object up to 1 foot thick (a thin wall, a wooden door) as if it were not there.

Notch 10 – End of the Trail The Ranger has become the Frontier's most relentless force: a hunter who, once locked onto a target, is as inevitable as the horizon.

Regarding their Quarry:

- The Ranger always knows their Quarry's exact location, not just direction, when within 5 miles.
- The Ranger's attacks against their Quarry ignore cover bonuses to Defense Rating – they know exactly where to shoot.
- When the Ranger reduces their Quarry to 0 VP, they may choose exactly which Wound Table result applies (rather than rolling) – they decide whether the Quarry is dead, alive and captive, or simply broken.

Additionally, once per long rest, the Ranger may make a **Declaration of Hunt** – announcing a Quarry's name aloud. For the next 24 hours, the Ranger has unlimited Pushed Rolls against their Quarry (each failed Pushed Roll still costs a Scar, but there is no per-rest limit). The Quarry, if they can hear the Declaration, must pass a Grit Check (DR 18) or become Broken immediately from the psychological weight of knowing the Ranger is coming for them.

CALLING: THE GOLEMANCER

"Every bolt is a choice. Every plate is an argument. I decided a long time ago that I trusted my hands more than my skin – and my hands are getting very good."

Gnome Exclusive: The Golemancer Calling is available only to Gnomes. It represents the apex of Gnome

philosophical tradition — the Path of the Golem — and draws on a relationship with the Old Ways and mechanical craft that is deeply embedded in Gnome heritage. No other Heritage has developed the precise combination of instinct, tradition, and biological compatibility necessary to undertake the full transformation.

A Gnome may take the Golemancer Calling from character creation. They may not multipath into Golemancer after Notch 1 — the Path must be begun from the start.

The Golemancer does not merely build machines. They become one.

This is the Calling of total self-construction — a path that begins with a Gnome tinkerer who has started integrating their work into their own body and ends, ten Notches later, with something that is simultaneously the same person and a fundamentally different category of being. The process is deliberate, philosophical, and irreversible at each stage. Golemancers do not lose themselves. They expand themselves — building the architecture of who they are outward, in metal and gear and bound magic, until the line between maker and made is no longer the most important thing about them.

In the Frontier, Golemancers are rare and immediately recognizable. By their middle Notches, they carry visible mechanical augments — a reinforced shoulder, a precision-lens eye, articulated metal fingers alongside their biological ones. By their upper Notches, they are unmistakably hybrid — something old and new at once, moving with the measured grace of a machine and the spontaneous intelligence of a living mind. They are not welcomed everywhere. They are always noticed.

Primary Attribute: Cunning **Starting VP:** 8 + Brawn modifier **VP per Notch:** Brawn modifier + 2 (minimum 1). *Note: Augment Plating (see below) adds to VP separately.*

Starting Skills: Tinkering (trained), Grit Check (trained)

Starting Equipment: Tinkerer's kit (comprehensive tools), a mechanical notebook, a sidearm (revolver) with 12 Iron Shot, one Goblin Device of choice, 10 coin

Gear Points (GP): The Golemancer's primary resource. Gear Points represent the stored mechanical and magical

energy within their integrated construct systems — compressed in clockwork springs, charged into bound ley-crystals embedded in their chassis, cycling through their augmented circulatory network. Gear Points power the Golemancer's active abilities and are spent to push their construct systems beyond standard operating parameters.

Starting Gear Points: 4 + Cunning modifier (minimum 3)
Maximum Gear Points: Increases at Notches 3, 5, 7, and 9 (see Feature Table) **Recovery:** All Gear Points recover on a Long Rest. During a Short Rest, a Golemancer recovers Grit modifier Gear Points (minimum 1) by performing maintenance on their own systems (requires their tools and at least 15 uninterrupted minutes).

Golemancer Feature Table

Notch	Features	Max Gear Points
1	Chassis Integration, First Augment	4 + CNG mod
2	Gear-Driven Strike, +1 Cunning (or +1 any attribute)	4 + CNG mod
3	Golem Milestone I: The Reinforced Frame, Augment Expansion	5 + CNG mod
4	Overclock Burst, Modular Arm	5 + CNG mod
5	Golem Milestone II: The Integrated Mind, Notch Up	6 + CNG mod
6	Construct Resilience, +1 Cunning (or +1 any attribute)	6 + CNG mod
7	Field Reconstruction, Emergency Protocol	7 + CNG mod
8	Golem Milestone III: The Ascendant Frame	7 + CNG mod
9	True Overclock, Construct Mastery	8 + CNG mod
10	The Completed Work	8 + CNG mod

Golemancer Features

Notch 1 — Chassis Integration The Golemancer has begun integrating mechanical components directly into their body. This is the formal beginning of the Path. They gain a **Construct Chassis** — a framework of internal and external mechanical reinforcement that is permanent and non-removable.

The Construct Chassis provides:

- **Augment Plating:** +2 VP at Notch 1. This VP bonus increases as the Chassis is upgraded at each Golem Milestone.
- **Construct Senses:** The Golemancer has a mechanical lens array integrated into one eye. They can see in low-light conditions without penalty, and they have Fortune on Perception Trail Rolls to detect mechanical devices, traps, or constructs within 30 feet.
- **Internal Workshop:** The Golemancer can perform basic Tinkering tasks — small repairs, device assembly, fine mechanical work — using only their own integrated tools, without requiring an external kit. They always count as having basic tools available.

The Construct Chassis is visible at Notch 1 as minor augmentation — metallic joints reinforcing one hand, the lens eye, a faint gear-hum when they move.

Notch 1 — First Augment The Golemancer installs their first **Augment** — a significant mechanical addition to their body chosen from the following list. Augments are permanent once installed and are considered part of the Golemancer's body for all purposes.

Choose one First Augment:

- **Iron Hand:** One hand is replaced with a precise mechanical construct. It deals 1d6 + Brawn damage on an unarmed strike and can exert crushing force for a Main Action (Brawn + Tinkering vs. target's Defense Rating; on hit, target is Grappled and takes 1d4 crushing damage per round until they escape). The Iron Hand cannot be disarmed.
- **Gear-Lungs:** The Golemancer's respiratory system is supplemented by a mechanical bellows apparatus. They no longer need to breathe in toxic or smoke-filled environments and are immune to inhaled poisons and gas effects. They also have Fortune on Grit Checks to

resist exhaustion from exertion.

- **Anchor Legs:** The Golemancer's lower body is partially replaced with heavy mechanical leg structures. They cannot be knocked prone or forcibly moved by attacks or abilities of CR 5 or lower. Their movement drops to 20 feet, but they ignore difficult terrain.
- **Spine Array:** A mechanical backbone reinforcement and data-spine that processes sensory information. The Golemancer cannot be Surprised — they always act in initiative, even if ambushed. They also gain Fortune on Perception checks.

Notch 2 — Gear-Driven Strike The Golemancer has learned to route Gear Points through their physical strikes and mechanical systems in short, explosive bursts. When making a melee attack or a Tinkering-based action, the Golemancer may spend 1 Gear Point before rolling to gain one of the following effects:

- **Power Surge:** Add 1d8 to the attack's damage on a hit.
- **Precision Feed:** Gain Fortune on the Trail Roll.
- **Rapid Assembly:** Reduce the time required for a Tinkering action by one step (10 minutes becomes 1 minute; 1 minute becomes a Main Action; Main Action becomes a Quick Action).

Notch 2 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 3 — Golem Milestone I: The Reinforced Frame The Golemancer reaches their first major Transformation Milestone. Their body has been significantly rebuilt. Visible changes are now substantial — mechanical plating covers portions of their torso and limbs, their movements carry an unmistakable precision, and their voice occasionally carries the faint resonance of a gear-drum.

Mechanical effects of Milestone 1:

- **Augment Plating** increases by +4 VP (total Augment Plating bonus is now +6 VP).
- The Golemancer gains **Damage Reduction 1** — all incoming damage is reduced by 1 (minimum 0). This represents the physical toughening of the partially-constructed chassis.
- The Golemancer no longer needs to eat or drink, though they still require Long Rests for cognitive

processing and system maintenance. They do not suffer effects from starvation or dehydration.

- When the Golemancer is reduced to 0 VP, they may spend 2 Gear Points as a free action to immediately recover 4 VP before falling Downed. This can be triggered once per scene.

Notch 3 — Augment Expansion The Golemancer may install one additional Augment from the First Augment list (any they have not yet taken), or they may choose one of the following expanded Augments:

- **Arc Cannon (Arm Augment):** One forearm houses a short-range energy projector. Ranged attack, 1d10 + Cunning damage, 30-foot range, uses Gear Points: costs 1 GP per shot. The Arc Cannon does not require ammunition and cannot be taken away.

- **Sensory Web:** Mechanical filaments integrated into the skin transmit pressure and vibration data. The Golemancer can detect movement within 10 feet through solid surfaces and cannot be flanked.

- **Emergency Vent:** A pressure system that can vent superheated steam. As a Reaction when hit by a melee attack, spend 1 GP — the attacker takes 2d6 fire damage and must pass a Grit Check (DR 12) or be pushed 10 feet.

Notch 4 — Overclock Burst Once per scene, the Golemancer may push all their integrated systems into an Overclock state for 2 rounds. During an Overclock Burst:

- All attacks deal an additional 1d6 damage.
- The Golemancer's movement speed increases by 10 feet.
- The Golemancer has Fortune on all Tinkering Trail Rolls.

At the end of the Overclock Burst, the Golemancer must make a Grit Check (DR 12). On a failure, they take 1d6 damage as their systems overheat and cannot use Gear-Driven Strike until the end of their next turn.

Notch 4 — Modular Arm The Golemancer's construct arm (if they took the Iron Hand Augment) or their dominant hand becomes fully modular — it can be configured for different functions between scenes without a Tinkering roll. Choose a configuration at the start of each scene:

- **Tool Configuration:** Counts as a full Tinkerer's kit. All Tinkering rolls made with it have Fortune.

- **Weapon Configuration:** Deals 1d8 + Brawn on unarmed strikes; gains the Reach property (melee attacks can target creatures 10 feet away).

- **Interface Configuration:** Can directly interact with mechanical or magical devices, bypassing their normal activation requirements on a Cunning Trail Roll (DR varies by device complexity).

If the Golemancer did not take the Iron Hand Augment at Notch 1, the Modular Arm is a new installation — treat it as gaining the Iron Hand Augment plus the above modular benefit.

Notch 5 — Golem Milestone II: The Integrated Mind

The Golemancer reaches their second Transformation Milestone. Their internal systems have been connected deeply enough to their cognitive processing that the division between biological thought and mechanical function has begun to collapse. The Golemancer is now more than half construct by any reasonable measurement.

Mechanical effects of Milestone II:

- **Augment Plating** increases by another +4 VP (total Augment Plating bonus is now +10 VP).

- **Damage Reduction** increases to 2.

- The Golemancer's **Gear Points maximum** increases by 2 (in addition to the normal increase at this Notch).

- The Golemancer gains **Machine Cognition:** They can perform complex calculations, structural analyses, and pattern recognition without rolling, for anything within their fields of training. Any Cunning-based Trail Roll made in a field related to engineering, construction, mathematics, or mechanical systems has Fortune.

- The Golemancer is immune to the **Shaken** condition caused by fear or psychological manipulation. They may be rattled by genuine grief, moral conflict, or damage to their construct systems — but they cannot be frightened into inaction.

Notch 5 — Notch Up Gain +2 VP permanently and choose one skill to learn at trained level from: Survival, Tracking, Medicine, Deadeye, or Intimidation.

Notch 6 — Construct Resilience The Golemancer's hybrid physiology is now deeply resistant to conditions that affect living tissue. They gain immunity to poison and disease. They have Fortune on all Grit Checks to resist physical conditions (Stunned, Bleeding, Broken). When

they receive healing from a non-mechanical source, they only recover half the normal VP — their partially-constructed body does not respond to Old Ways poultices and standard medicine the way a fully biological body would. A Tinkering Trail Roll (DR 12) applied by themselves or another trained Tinkerer restores VP normally.

Notch 6 — Attribute Increase Increase one attribute by +1 (maximum +5).

Notch 7 — Field Reconstruction The Golemancer can perform emergency self-repair during combat. As a Main Action, they may spend 2 Gear Points and make a Tinkering Trail Roll (DR 10). On a success, they restore 2d8 VP. On a Trail Blaze, they restore 2d8 VP and clear one active condition (Shaken, Stunned, or Bleeding). On a failure, they recover 1d4 VP — even a botched repair does something.

Outside of combat, during a Short Rest, they recover an additional 1d8 VP through self-maintenance (no roll required, costs 1 GP).

Notch 7 — Emergency Protocol Once per long rest, when the Golemancer would be reduced to 0 VP by a single attack, they may activate Emergency Protocol as a Reaction. They are instead reduced to 1 VP, immediately move up to their speed, and all construct systems enter a Lockdown State for 1 round (Damage Reduction doubles; they cannot take offensive actions). After the Lockdown State ends, they act normally.

Notch 8 — Golem Milestone III: The Ascendant Frame The Golemancer reaches their third and final Transformation Milestone. They are now predominantly construct — living, thinking, and choosing, but built in metal, glass, bound energy, and clockwork as much as in blood and bone. Their physical appearance is unmistakably that of a Golem: intricate mechanical plating over organic core, eyes replaced or augmented beyond recognition, movement fluid and precise in a way that no purely biological creature moves.

At this stage, the Golemancer is commonly referred to — by others and, in time, by themselves — as a **Golem**.

Mechanical effects of Milestone III:

- **Augment Plating** increases by another +6 VP (total Augment Plating bonus is now +16 VP).

- **Damage Reduction** increases to 3.

- The Golemancer gains **Construct Immunity**: They are immune to poison, disease, the need to breathe, magical sleep, and all forms of the Bleeding condition. They no longer need to eat, drink, or sleep, though they still benefit from Long Rest maintenance.

- **Dual Processing**: The Golemancer may take two Quick Actions per turn instead of one. The second Quick Action cannot be used to activate the same feature as the first in the same turn.

- When the Golemancer dies, their construct chassis preserves their cognitive patterns for 1 hour (their systems continue running). During this window, a Tinkerer with trained Tinkering may attempt a Cunning + Tinkering Trail Roll (DR 20) to begin an emergency rebuild. Success means the Golemancer survives with 1 VP and the Broken condition. Failure means permanent death. This window is a narrative opportunity, not a mechanical guarantee.

Notch 9 — True Overclock The Golemancer's Overclock Burst feature is upgraded. It may now be used twice per scene (previously once). The duration extends to 3 rounds. The Grit Check on the back end remains, but the DC drops to 10.

Additionally, the Golemancer may spend 3 Gear Points to enter a **Total Overclock** — a complete-system surge that lasts 1 round. During a Total Overclock:

- The Golemancer makes two full attacks as their Main Action (using separate rolls).

- All attacks have Fortune.

- Damage Reduction doubles.

- After Total Overclock ends, the Golemancer spends their next Quick Action on system cooldown (they may take no other Quick Action that turn).

Notch 9 — Construct Mastery The Golemancer's understanding of construct systems extends beyond their own body. They may now use their Gear-Driven Strike ability on mechanical allies (including the Iron Companion, if the Posse has a Tinkerer) — spending GP to restore 1d8 VP to any construct or augmented creature within 10 feet as a Quick Action. They also have Fortune on all Trail Rolls made to understand, dismantle, repair, or repurpose any mechanical or magical construct in the

world.

Notch 10 – The Completed Work The Golemancer has completed the Path. They are a Golem in full – a work of deliberate, purposeful craft that is also a living, thinking, choosing person. The two things are not in conflict. That was the point.

The Completed Work grants:

- **Permanent Full Overclock:** All of the Golemancer's systems now run at peak efficiency as their baseline state. They gain a permanent +2 to all Cunning Trail Rolls and a permanent +1 to all attack rolls and damage rolls (melee and ranged). This is not a temporary effect – it is who they are now.
- **Augment Plating** increases by a final +4 VP (total Augment Plating bonus is now +20 VP across all milestones).
- **The Golem's Will:** Once per long rest, the Golemancer may enter a state of total focus for 10 minutes. During this time, they may rebuild, redesign, or reconfigure any aspect of their own Construct Chassis – swapping out one Augment for any other Augment on any list in this Calling. This represents the Golem's ongoing right to revise their own construction. They remain who they choose to be.
- **Legacy Device:** The Golemancer designates one device, system, or mechanism they have built as a **Legacy Device** – a permanent artifact named and described by the player, representing the pinnacle of what the Golemancer has learned. The Legacy Device has one unique property defined collaboratively with the Game Marshal that does not exist anywhere else in the world. It was made by this Golem, and it reflects them exactly.

APPENDIX: QUICK REFERENCE — CORE MECHANICS SUMMARY

Trail Roll

Roll d20 + relevant attribute modifier + applicable skill bonus vs. Difficulty Rating (DR).

- Equal to or above DR: Success
- Below DR: Failure (but always moves story forward)
- Natural 20: Trail Blaze – success plus narrative bonus
- Natural 1: Dead Trail – failure plus complication

Difficulty Ratings: Easy 8, Standard 12, Hard 16, Brutal 20, Near Impossible 24

Fortune / Misfortune: Roll 2d20, take highest (Fortune) or lowest (Misfortune).

Pushed Roll: After a failure, reroll with Fortune. If the second roll also fails, take a Scar.

Combat Summary

1. **Quick-Draw (Initiative):** d20 + Reflexes. Beat enemy = Opening Volley. Tie or lose = Exchange.
2. **On Your Turn:** 1 Main Action + 1 Quick Action + 1 Reaction (outside turn)
3. **Ranged Attack:** d20 + Reflexes + Deadeye vs. target's Defense Rating
4. **Melee Attack:** d20 + Brawn + Ironside vs. target's Defense Rating
5. **Defense Rating:** 10 + Reflexes modifier + armor bonus
6. **Cover:** Half Cover +2 DR. Full Cover = cannot be targeted.
7. **Duel (Nerve Roll):** d20 + Grit modifier + Reflexes modifier. High roll fires first.

Vitality & GRIT

State	Trigger	Effect
Bloodied	VP at or below half max	No mechanical penalty; GM describes wounds
Downed	VP = 0	Roll Wound Table (d6)
Dead	VP = -5 or second Bleeding Out	Character death
Shaken	GRP at or below half max	Misfortune on Presence checks
Broken	GRP = 0	Must pass Grit Check (DR 14) to take offensive action

State	Trigger	Effect
Spent	Broken with no recovery available	Incapacitated from exhaustion

Ammo Quick Reference

Ammo	Weapon	Damage	Notes
Iron Shot	Revolver	1d8	Standard
Long Brass	Rifle	1d10	Misfortune within 15 ft
Scatter Shell	Shotgun	2d6	Half dmg beyond 30 ft
Dead Metal	Any	+1 damage	-2 to Deadeye
Quicksilver	Any	-1 damage	+2 to Deadeye
Hollow Tip	Any	Standard	Wound Table always = 1

Hexblade Spell-Bullets Quick Reference

Round	Cost	Effect
Ashfire	1	1d4 fire, 2 turns
Bonechill	1	Target loses Quick Action
Rootbind	1	Rooted 1 round
Stormstrike	2	Arc to second target
Shadowstep	2	Teleport 20 ft after shot
Soulscream	2	Grit Check or -1d4 GRP

Advancement: Trail Marks

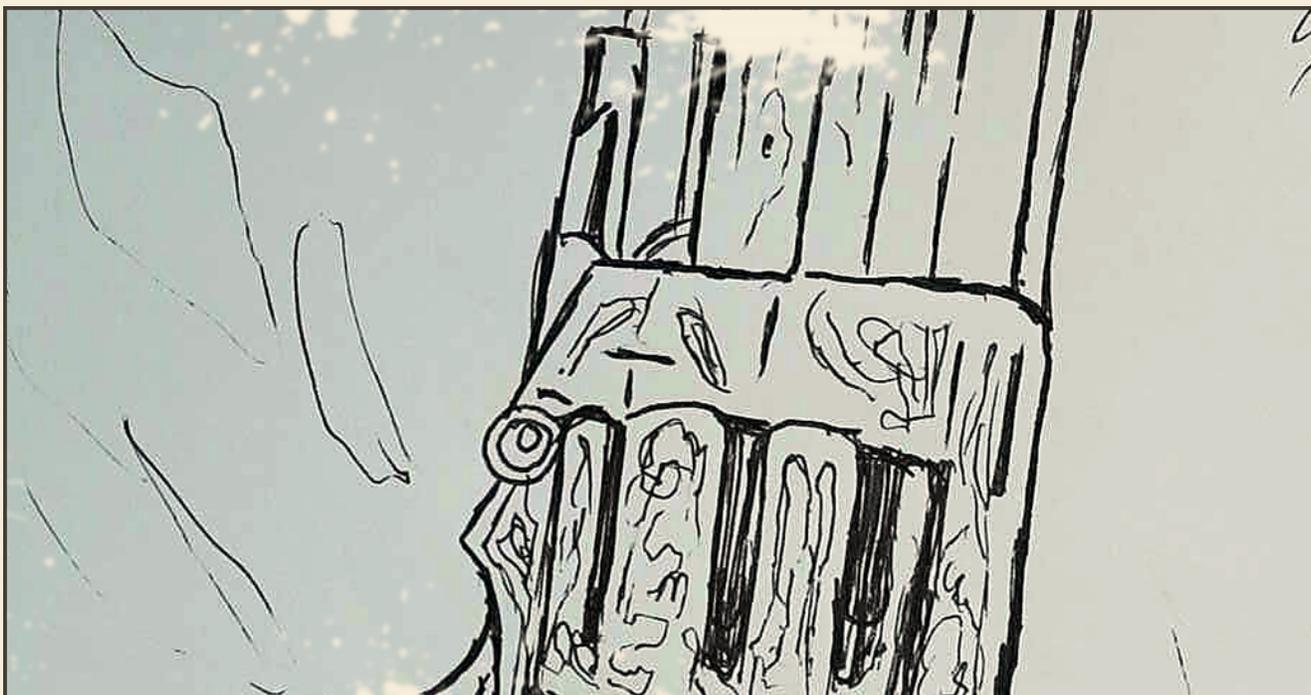
Advancement	Cost
Attribute +1 (max +5)	4 TM
New skill at trained	2 TM
Trained to Expert skill	3 TM
Expert to Master skill	4 TM

Level Thresholds (Notches 1–10): 0 / 5 / 10 / 16 / 23 / 31 / 40 / 50 / 61 / 73 TM

End of Part 1 — Goblins & Gunslingers: The Wild Frontier

Part 2 covers: Core Mechanics in full, Gear & Guns, Magic: The Old Ways, the Bestiary, Running the Frontier, and the starter adventure Dust & Reckoning.

Book design and original content created for the Goblins & Gunslingers tabletop RPG system. All mechanics, lore, terminology, and content are original and wholly owned by the creator.

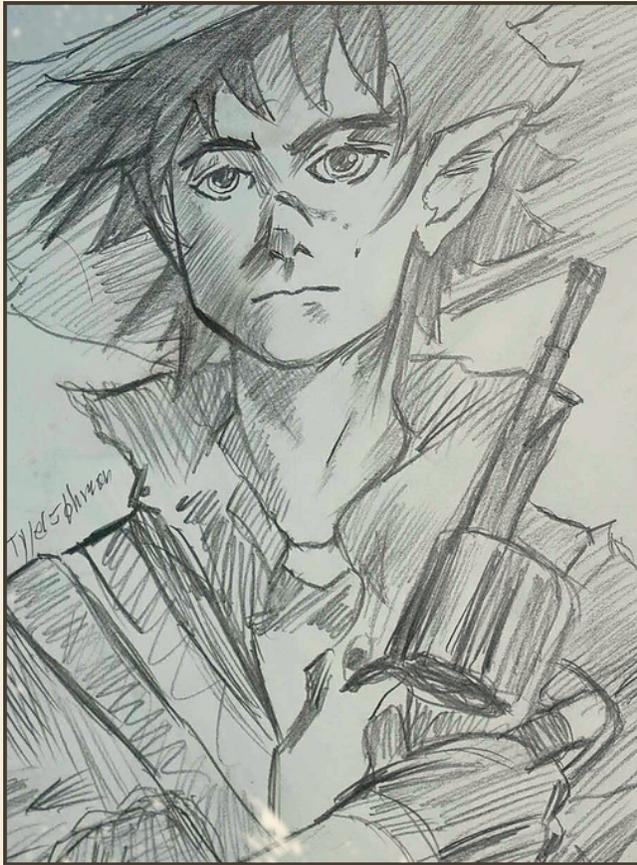


CHAPTER VI

CORE MECHANICS

"Out here, the rules are simple. Point. Pull. Pray you were faster. Everything else is just paperwork." — Overheard at the Dustfall Saloon, three minutes before the shooting started

The Wild Frontier runs on instinct, nerve, and the willingness to act when other people are still deciding whether to. This chapter lays out the core mechanical systems that govern what your character can and cannot do — how chance and skill interact, how combat flows, how wounds accumulate, and how you stay alive long enough to become a legend. It is the final word on any ruling not covered here, but these rules exist to give that word a foundation.



A steady hand and a clear eye – that is all you need.

6.1 THE TRAIL ROLL

Every time a character attempts something that could meaningfully fail and where failure has consequences, the Game Marshal may call for a **Trail Roll**. A Trail Roll is the core resolution mechanic of Goblins & Gunslingers.

How to roll: Roll one twenty-sided die (d20), add the relevant attribute modifier, and add any applicable skill bonus. Compare the total to the **Difficulty Rating (DR)** set by the Game Marshal. Meet or beat the DR to succeed.

Trail Roll = d20 + Attribute Modifier + Skill Bonus (if trained) vs. DR

Difficulty Ratings

The Game Marshal sets the DR based on how hard the task actually is – not how hard the character wants it to be, but how hard the world makes it.

Difficulty	DR
Easy	8
Moderate	12
Hard	16
Legendary	20
Near-Impossible	25

Easy (DR 8): A task that a competent person would rarely fail. Saddling a calm horse. Recognizing a common herb. Starting a fire in calm weather.

Moderate (DR 12): A task that requires real effort or skill. Tracking prey across dry ground. Climbing a rough canyon wall. Talking your way past a suspicious guard.

Hard (DR 16): A task at the edge of normal human capability. Reading an Old Ways inscription in dim light. Hitting a moving target at long range. Staying awake through a third consecutive night.

Legendary (DR 20): Something most people never manage. Surviving a snake bite without treatment. Disarming someone in a clinch. Navigating dead reckoning across three hundred miles of open plain.

Near-Impossible (DR 25): Reserved for genuine miracles. Stopping a stampede solo. Talking a crowd back from a lynching. Surviving a direct shot from a long rifle at close range.

Fortune and Misfortune

Some situations tilt the odds. When conditions significantly favor a character, they roll with **Fortune** – roll two d20s and take the higher result. When conditions work against them, they roll with **Misfortune** – roll two d20s and take the lower result.

Fortune and Misfortune cancel each other out. If a character has both Fortune and Misfortune on the same roll for any reason, they roll a single d20 as normal. Multiple sources of Fortune or Misfortune do not stack – one source is enough.

Common sources of Fortune:

- Terrain advantage (higher ground, cover)
- Relevant tool or aid from an ally

- Calling features that grant Fortune on specific rolls
- Enemy is unaware, incapacitated, or distracted

Common sources of Misfortune:

- Darkness, severe weather, or obscured visibility
- Injury (Bloodied condition on physical checks)
- Acting against your Heritage's instincts in a high-stress moment
- Attempting something while Shaken or Broken

Trail Blaze and Dead Trail

A natural 20 on the d20 (before modifiers) is called a **Trail Blaze**. A natural 1 is called a **Dead Trail**.

Trail Blaze: The roll automatically succeeds, regardless of modifiers or DR. In addition, the Game Marshal should grant a meaningful bonus – the task succeeds with exceptional quality, a hidden opportunity reveals itself, or a narrative door opens. In combat, a Trail Blaze on an attack roll deals maximum damage on all damage dice, plus one additional die of the same type.

Dead Trail: The roll automatically fails, regardless of modifiers. In addition, a complication emerges – the lock breaks in the pick, the horse shies at the wrong moment, the fuse catches early. Complications should add drama, not simply punish. A Dead Trail in combat means the attack misses entirely, and the Game Marshal may describe a small setback beyond the miss.

Calling on Luck

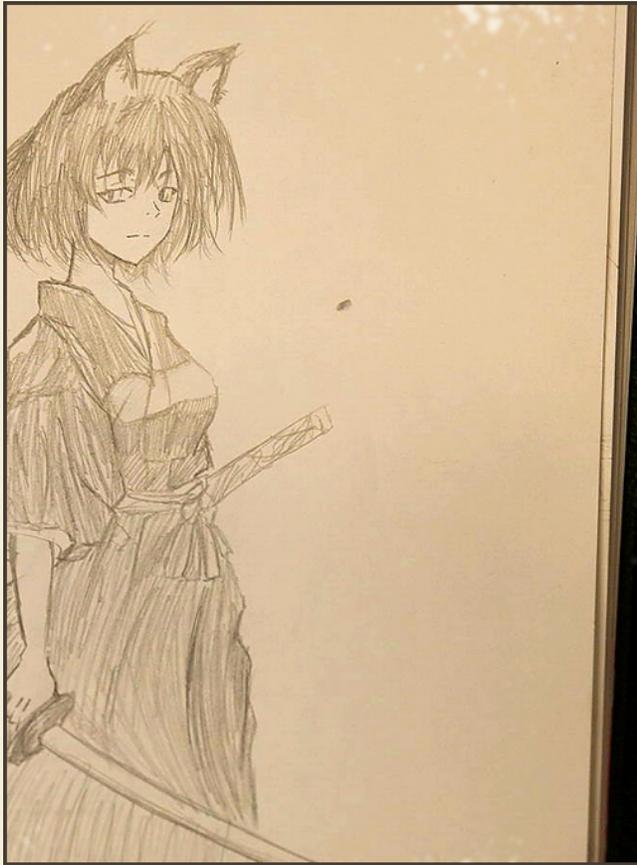
Once per session, any character may invoke **Calling on Luck** – a moment where sheer stubbornness or frontier fortune turns a bad result around. When Calling on Luck, the player rerolls any single die that has already been rolled. They must use the new result, even if it is worse.



Beast-blooded wanderers walk paths no human dares.

Calling on Luck reflects the spirit of the Frontier itself: the idea that any hand can be replayed once, that survival often comes down to one improbable moment where things could have gone either way but somehow didn't. Use it when it matters. A lucky break on a desperate Grit check at the edge of death means more than a lucky reroll on a routine task.

The ability refreshes at the start of each new session. It cannot be saved between sessions.



Honor binds tighter than any chain.

6.2 SKILLS

Skills represent focused training, experience, and instinct in specific areas. When a character is **trained** in a skill, they add the listed skill bonus to relevant Trail Rolls. When a character is **untrained**, they roll with the attribute modifier alone – no additional bonus.

Skill Proficiency Bonuses:

Skill Level	Bonus
Untrained	+0 (attribute modifier only)
Trained	+2
Expert	+4
Master	+6

Skills are tied to a governing attribute. When a Game Marshal calls for a Trail Roll involving a skill, use the governing attribute modifier plus the skill bonus.

Brawn Skills

Athletics *Governing Attribute: Brawn* Raw physical capability – climbing, swimming, jumping, wrestling, and feats of strength. Used for scaling canyon walls, breaking down barricaded doors, hauling a wounded ally across open ground, or holding on during a runaway wagon ride.

Example uses: Climbing a rope under fire; pulling a companion from a river; holding a door shut against a mob.

Intimidation *Governing Attribute: Brawn* The power of presence backed by physical threat – the kind of persuasion that works when words stop and size, scars, and stillness take over. Intimidation is not bluster. It is a credible promise.

Example uses: Convincing a gang's enforcer to step aside; scaring off a pack of coyotes; silencing a rowdy saloon.

Labor *Governing Attribute: Brawn* Sustained physical work – the endurance of craft over time. Digging, building, smithing, loading freight, breaking rock. Labor is the skill of people who have worked with their hands long enough to know how to do it right.

Example uses: Building a fortification before nightfall; repairing a wagon axle in the field; mining a vein without collapsing the shaft.

Reflexes Skills

Acrobatics *Governing Attribute: Reflexes* Balance, agility, and movement in difficult conditions. Running across uneven terrain, leaping gaps, rolling clear of an explosion, landing a fall without breaking an ankle.

Example uses: Running across rooftops; catching yourself on a ledge after a fall; moving through a crowd without being tracked.

Sleight of Hand *Governing Attribute: Reflexes* Fine dexterous manipulation – picking pockets, palming small objects, dealing from the bottom of the deck, planting evidence, or extracting a key from a sleeping guard's belt.

Example uses: Lifting a target's coin purse; hiding a weapon in plain sight; loading a second card into a game of chance.

Stealth *Governing Attribute:* Reflexes Moving without being seen or heard. Staying in shadow, suppressing sound, timing movement to cover noise, making yourself invisible in plain sight through patience and stillness.

Example uses: Approaching a campsite without alerting the guards; shadowing a mark through a boomtown; disappearing into a crowd before the shooting starts.

Ride *Governing Attribute:* Reflexes Horsemanship and the handling of mounts in difficult conditions — cavalry charges, river crossings, tight canyon turns at speed, staying mounted when a horse shies.

Example uses: Staying on a spooked horse; guiding a mount through thick brush; performing a running leap from one horse to another.

Grit Skills

Endurance *Governing Attribute:* Grit The body's ability to keep going past the point where most people stop. Resisting poison, disease, and exhaustion. Endurance is what separates the people who cross the desert from the ones who don't make it out.

Example uses: Resisting a rattlesnake bite; marching three days with no sleep; staying functional after a beating that would leave most people down.

Survival *Governing Attribute:* Grit Reading and working with the land — finding water in dry terrain, making shelter, tracking by sign, identifying safe and dangerous plants and animals, navigating by stars and landmarks.

Example uses: Finding a water source in dead country; predicting weather from cloud patterns; making a fire in rain without flint.

Willpower *Governing Attribute:* Grit Mental and emotional fortitude — resisting fear, compulsion, and the slow erosion of hope. Willpower is also used when facing Old Ways phenomena that prey on the mind.

Example uses: Holding composure while being tortured; resisting the whisper of a haunted relic; staring down

something ancient and choosing not to run.

Cunning Skills

Investigation *Governing Attribute:* Cunning Active searching, analysis, and deduction — reading a scene, following a trail of evidence, understanding what happened from what was left behind.

Example uses: Reading a crime scene; finding a hidden compartment in a room; reconstructing the path taken by a fugitive from tracks and timing.

Medicine *Governing Attribute:* Cunning Field medicine, diagnosis, and treatment. Stabilizing wounds, setting broken bones, identifying illness, and applying the limited but real tools available on the frontier.

Example uses: Stopping bleeding in a downed ally; identifying a strange fever; extracting a bullet without killing the patient.

Nature *Governing Attribute:* Cunning Knowledge of the natural world — animals, plants, terrain, weather, and the ecology of the Frontier's distinct regions. Overlaps with Survival but is more intellectual and knowledge-based than instinctual.

Example uses: Identifying the territorial range of a dangerous predator; knowing which plants are edible in a given region; recognizing the signs of a coming flash flood.

Tinkering *Governing Attribute:* Cunning Mechanical invention, repair, and improvisation. Building devices, sabotaging machinery, working with Goblin technology, and improvising solutions out of scavenged parts.

Example uses: Repairing a misfiring firearm; constructing a Goblin device from salvaged components; disabling a mechanized lock.

Lore *Governing Attribute:* Cunning General knowledge of history, law, cartography, and the known world. Knowing the political landscape of frontier factions, the history of a region, and the rough geography of places the character has studied or heard of.

Example uses: Recognizing a faction's brand or insignia; knowing the terms of an old land treaty; recalling the history of a particular ruin or settlement.

Presence Skills

Deception *Governing Attribute: Presence* Lying, bluffing, creating false impressions, and maintaining a false identity under pressure. The difference between a good liar and a bad one is not what they say — it is what they make the other person believe.

Example uses: Convincing a marshal your papers are legitimate; maintaining a cover identity; bluffing a hand of cards.

Persuasion *Governing Attribute: Presence* Honest appeal — logic, emotion, reputation, and the art of making someone want to help you. Persuasion works when the other person has reason to say yes and needs encouragement, not when they have reason to say no.

Example uses: Convincing a reluctant witness to speak; negotiating a truce between two factions; talking a desperate person down from a bad decision.

Performance *Governing Attribute: Presence* Public display — music, storytelling, oratory, gambling face, and maintaining composure under scrutiny. The ability to command a room's attention and shape how it feels.

Example uses: Playing guitar at a saloon to distract the staff; giving a speech that rallies a frightened town; performing in a show as cover for another character's activity.

Animal Handling *Governing Attribute: Presence* Calming, directing, and forming bonds with animals. Not merely riding, but communicating — the patience to earn trust and the instinct to read an animal's state before it acts.

Example uses: Calming a horse that has scented blood; taming a wild animal over time; reading whether a dog has been trained to attack.

Oldways Skills

Hexsense *Governing Attribute: Oldways* Perception of magical forces — feeling the presence of active hexwork, detecting enchanted objects, sensing when the Old Ways are active in a location, and identifying the signature of

different magical traditions.

Example uses: Detecting whether a building has been warded; sensing that a stranger is carrying a hexed item; feeling the pull of a nearby ley line.

Ley Reading *Governing Attribute: Oldways* Understanding the deeper currents of Old Ways energy — reading ley line flows, interpreting the magical history of a location, and understanding how the land's magic behaves in a given area.

Example uses: Determining whether a ley line confluence could be used for a ritual; reading the residue of old magic to determine what happened here; predicting where magical instability is likely to occur.

Ritual *Governing Attribute: Oldways* The practice of structured Old Ways magic — performing formal ceremonies, inscribing wards, calling on old compacts, and working with the slow power that predates gunpowder by centuries.

Example uses: Laying a protective ward on a campsite; performing a ceremony to honor the dead and prevent haunting; inscribing a binding into a contract to make it magically enforceable.

6.3 COMBAT

Combat in the Wild Frontier is fast, lethal, and ugly. It rewards decisive action and punishes hesitation. This section lays out the complete rules for how a fight unfolds.

Starting Combat: The Quick-Draw

When combat begins, every participant rolls a **Quick-Draw** — a Reflexes check to determine the order of action. Roll d20 and add your Reflexes modifier.

The Game Marshal rolls a single Quick-Draw for all enemies as a group, or separately for named adversaries. The Game Marshal decides which approach fits the scene.

Combatants act from highest Quick-Draw result to lowest. Ties between players are resolved by the players — choose among yourselves and act in that order for the

entire combat. Ties between a player character and an enemy are resolved in favor of the player character.

Surprise: If the Posse successfully ambushes enemies (or is ambushed), the surprised side does not roll Quick-Draw for the first round. They act last, after all unsurprised combatants, and may only take a Quick Action on that first turn.

The Action Economy

On your turn, you have the following resources:

Main Action: Your primary activity each turn. You may use your Main Action to:

- **Attack** — make one attack with a weapon or unarmed strike
- **Cast** — perform a spell-bullet (Hexblade) or Old Ways ritual action (Warden, Straw Elf traits)
- **Aid** — take a supportive action to give an ally Fortune on their next Trail Roll
- **Dash** — double your movement speed this turn
- **Disengage** — move without provoking reactions from enemies you are adjacent to
- **Dodge** — take a defensive stance; enemies attacking you have Misfortune on their attack rolls until your next turn
- **Shove** — attempt to push an adjacent target; contested Brawn (Athletics) check; success moves them 10 feet and may knock them prone
- **Grapple** — attempt to restrain an adjacent target; contested Brawn (Athletics) check; success leaves them Grappled (speed 0, Misfortune on attacks, can attempt to break free on their turn)
- **Use Item** — use a carried item with a significant action cost (Grit Tonic, Boom Pebble, etc.)
- **Interact** — a meaningful interaction with the environment (opening a heavy door, searching a body, dragging a piece of furniture)

Quick Action: A secondary action representing something swift. Common Quick Actions include:

- Drawing or holstering a weapon
- Reloading a single-shot firearm (unless otherwise noted)
- Using a minor item (pulling a bandage to stabilize a Bleeding condition)

- Shouting a command or short phrase
- Activating certain Calling features

Reaction: One response per round, triggered by a specific event outside your turn. The most common Reaction is the **Opportunity Strike** — when an enemy moves out of your melee reach without Disengaging, you may immediately make one melee attack against them. Certain Calling features grant additional Reaction options.

Movement: Each turn, you may move up to your Speed in feet. Speed is 30 feet for most characters unless modified by Heritage, armor, or conditions. Movement can be split — move some, take your action, move the rest.

Making an Attack

When you attack, roll d20 and add your relevant attribute modifier. If you are trained in a relevant skill (such as Deadeye for aimed ranged attacks), add the skill bonus as well. Compare the total to the target's **Defense Rating**.

$$\text{Attack Roll} = \text{d20} + \text{Attribute Modifier} + \text{Skill Bonus (if applicable)}$$

$$\text{Defense Rating} = 10 + \text{Reflexes Modifier} + \text{Armor Bonus}$$

Melee attacks use Brawn modifier. **Ranged attacks** use Reflexes modifier. Some Calling features or weapon properties allow other attributes to apply.

If the attack roll meets or beats the target's Defense Rating, the attack hits and you roll for damage.

Damage: Roll the weapon's damage die and add the relevant attribute modifier (Brawn for melee, Reflexes for ranged). The total is subtracted from the target's Vitality Points.

Range and Cover

Range: Every ranged weapon lists two range values — a normal range and a maximum range. Within normal range, no penalty applies. Beyond normal range up to the maximum, the attack is made with Misfortune. Beyond maximum range, the attack cannot be made.

Cover: Physical barriers between attacker and target affect the difficulty of the shot.

Cover Type	Effect
Half Cover (low wall, wagon side, dense brush)	+2 to Defense Rating
Three-Quarters Cover (gun port, narrow doorway, boulder edge)	+5 to Defense Rating
Full Cover (completely hidden from attacker)	Cannot be targeted directly

6.4 THE DUEL

"There is a moment before the draw — just a moment — where everything is still. The birds stop. The wind stops. You stop. And in that stillness you find out whether you are who you thought you were."

The **Duel** is the signature mechanic of Goblins & Gunslingers — a formal, ritualized single combat that carries as much social weight as physical danger. Duels happen when two people have something to settle and choose to settle it in the old way: face to face, in the open, with witnesses.

Entering a Duel

A Duel begins when two willing combatants declare it openly. Both must agree — a Duel cannot be forced. Once declared, bystanders are expected to clear a space. The Game Marshal describes the scene accordingly.

A Duel has three phases: **Tension**, **Draw**, and **Resolution**.

The Tension Phase

Before hands move toward guns, there is the standoff — the slow accumulation of pressure that determines who blinks, who holds, and who earns the first advantage.

The Tension Phase lasts three rounds. Each round, both duelists make a **Presence check** (d20 + Presence modifier). Compare totals. The duelist who wins more

rounds (wins a majority of the three) gains **Fortune on their attack roll during the Draw Phase**. In the event of a tie, neither gains Fortune.

The Tension Phase is also a moment for roleplay. The Game Marshal should encourage taunts, silences, memories, and nerves during these rounds. The dice are part of the story, not a replacement for it.

The Draw Phase

At the end of the Tension Phase, both duelists make a **Reflexes check** simultaneously. The higher result acts first. On a tie, both act at the exact same moment — both attacks resolve simultaneously.

Critical Draw: If one duelist beats the other's Reflexes check result by 10 or more, they achieve a Critical Draw. Their attack is automatically a Trail Blaze (maximum damage plus an extra damage die) regardless of the attack roll.

Resolution

Each duelist makes one attack against the other using their firearm. These attacks are resolved with normal attack rules. If both survive, the Duel ends — honor satisfied, a debt acknowledged, or a question answered. What the survivors do next is up to them.

A Duel does not have to be lethal. Many are not. The question being settled is not always about survival — sometimes it is about who backs down first, who stands their ground, who has something left to prove.

Breaking a Duel

A participant who flees before the Draw Phase or involves bystanders in the fight while a Duel is in progress has **Broken the Duel**. They are marked as a **Coward** by any witnesses.

A character who carries the Coward mark has Misfortune on all Presence-based checks (Intimidation, Persuasion, Performance) within any settlement where the act was witnessed, for the next 24 hours of in-game time. Rumors travel, and a reputation for cowardice has

weight on the Frontier.

The Coward mark can be removed by performing an act of clear courage witnessed by others — facing a threat alone, standing up for strangers at personal risk, or returning to face the person they fled from.

6.5 WOUNDS, DEATH, AND RECOVERY

The Frontier does not heal fast. This section covers what happens when the body fails and what it takes to get back up.

Vitality Points

Vitality Points (VP) represent your character's physical capacity to absorb punishment. They are not an abstraction of luck or fate — they are flesh, bone, and the will to keep moving through pain.

When your VP reaches **zero**, you are **Downed**. You fall prone and cannot take *Main Actions* or move under your own power.

The Dying Clock

While **Downed**, you are on the edge. Each round that passes, you must make a **Grit check** (DR 10). Results accumulate until you reach three successes or three failures.

- **Three successes:** You Stabilize. You remain unconscious and at 0 VP, but you are no longer dying. An ally can bring you to 1 VP with a *Medicine check* (DR 12) or a *Grit Tonic*.
- **Three failures:** You die.

Failures and successes do not need to be consecutive — they accumulate across rounds until you reach three of either.

An ally within reach may use their *Main Action* to attempt a *Medicine check* (DR 12) to stabilize you directly. Success stops the *Dying Clock* and leaves you *Stable* at 0 VP.

Wound Scars

At the Game Marshal's discretion, particularly harrowing near-death experiences may leave **Wound Scars** — lasting marks on the character that are more than healed tissue.

Scars can be purely narrative (a visible brand, a missing piece of an ear, a permanent hoarseness) or they can carry mechanical weight:

Narrative Scars are story details that affect how NPCs respond to the character and how the character carries themselves. They have no mechanical penalty or bonus — they are texture.

Mechanical Scars are agreed upon between the player and the Game Marshal and represent lasting change. They can cut either way. Examples:

- *Shattered Kneecap:* Movement reduced to 20 feet. Cannot Dash.
- *Powder-Burned Eye:* Misfortune on ranged attacks beyond 60 feet. Fortune on Intimidation against those who can see the scar.
- *Something You Saw:* Misfortune on Willpower checks against fear. Fortune on checks to recognize similar Old Ways phenomena.

Mechanical Scars should be meaningful without being punitive. They are meant to make characters feel lived-in, not to cripple them.

Resting and Recovery

Short Rest (1 hour of relative quiet): During a Short Rest, a character may spend one or more Hit Dice to recover Vitality Points. Roll the Hit Die (determined by Calling) and add your Grit modifier. The total is restored VP. Hit Dice spent on a Short Rest are expended until recovered on a Long Rest.

Calling	Hit Die
Gunslinger	d10
Outlaw	d8
Tinkerer	d6
Warden	d10

Calling	Hit Die
Hexblade	d8
Ranger	d10

Long Rest (8 hours of sleep or equivalent rest): At the end of a Long Rest, a character recovers all lost VP and regains half their maximum Hit Dice (minimum 1). Hexblade and Warden Hexcharge pools also refresh fully on a Long Rest. Spent resources from Calling features refresh unless otherwise specified.

A Long Rest requires safety — or at least the reasonable belief of it. A character cannot benefit from a Long Rest if they stand watch the entire time, if the camp is attacked, or if conditions make genuine rest impossible.

Healing Items

The following items can restore Vitality Points outside of rest:

Item	Effect	Cost
Grit Tonic (basic)	Restores 1d6+1 VP	8 coin
Grit Tonic (strong)	Restores 2d6+2 VP	20 coin
Stitching Kit	Stabilizes a Downed character; restores 1 VP	5 coin
Old Ways Poultice	Restores 1d8 VP; heals one Shaken condition	15 coin
Bonesetter's Kit	Restores 2d8 VP over 10 minutes; requires Medicine (trained)	35 coin

Grit Tonics are consumed on use and take a Quick Action to drink. Old Ways Poultices require a Main Action to apply. The Bonesetter's Kit cannot be used during active combat.

6.6 MELEE COMBAT: CLOSE-QUARTER RULES

The Frontier's reputation runs on gunfire, but most of the blood gets spilled at arm's length. A knife in the dark, a brawl outside

a saloon, a crowbar in a mine tunnel — the guns run out, the light gets too close, and it comes down to whoever is willing to get ugly.

Gunfighting dominates the Frontier's mythology, but close-quarters violence is older, messier, and in many situations more decisive. This section expands the base melee rules with a full system of **Melee Maneuvers**, a **Brawling** subsystem for unarmed fistfights, and rules for **Melee Duels** — the bladed standoffs that exist in the Frontier's margins, away from the formal gun-duel traditions.

Close-Quarter Combat Basics

Melee combat uses the same core resolution as ranged combat: roll d20 + Brawn modifier + skill bonus (if trained in a relevant skill) vs. the target's Defense Rating. Brawn governs the power and leverage of melee strikes. Some Callings and Heritages allow other attributes to apply — a Golemancer using a construct arm may use Cunning; an Outlaw using a knife in close quarters may use Reflexes if they have the appropriate Calling feature.

Melee Reach: Most melee weapons have a reach of 5 feet (adjacent target). Weapons with the **Reach** property extend this to 10 feet. Unarmed strikes are always 5-foot reach.

Flanking: When two allied creatures are both adjacent to the same enemy and on opposite sides of it, both have Fortune on their melee attack rolls against that target. Flanking requires deliberate positioning — both creatures must be within 5 feet of the target and their positions must bracket it. The Game Marshal adjudicates geometry at the table.

Drawing and Stowing: Drawing a melee weapon is a Quick Action. Switching from a firearm to a melee weapon in the same turn requires the Quick Action to draw the melee weapon (holstering or slinging the firearm is free). A character who is already holding a melee weapon does not need to spend an action to strike.

Melee Maneuvers

Any character trained in **Ironside** (the melee combat skill) may attempt Melee Maneuvers. These are specialized combat techniques that replace a standard attack – they require a specific Trail Roll and carry defined effects. A Maneuver is always a Main Action unless otherwise noted.

A character may only use one Maneuver per turn. Maneuvers cannot be combined with each other in a single action.

Maneuver Roll: $d20 + \text{Brawn modifier} + \text{Ironside skill bonus (if trained)}$ vs. the target's Defense Rating, unless the Maneuver specifies a contested roll.

Maneuver: Bull Rush

You drive your full weight into an opponent, attempting to stagger them backward or break their stance.

Trail Roll: Brawn (Ironside) vs. target's Defense Rating. **Effect on Hit:** Target is pushed 10 feet in a direction you choose and falls prone. If the target is pushed into a solid object (a wall, a wagon, a closed door), they take 1d6 additional bludgeoning damage from the impact. **Fortune/Misfortune:** If the target is larger than you (the Game Marshal adjudicates size differences), you have Misfortune. If the target is smaller or prone, you have Fortune.

Maneuver: Grapple and Hold

You seize the opponent, locking down their movement and options.

Trail Roll: Contested Brawn (Ironside or Athletics) check – both parties roll; the higher result wins. Ties go to the initiator. **Effect on Success:** Target is **Grappled** – their movement speed drops to 0, and they have Misfortune on all attack rolls that are not directed at you. A Grappled target may attempt to break free on their turn as a Main Action using another contested Brawn check.

While Grappling: On each of your subsequent turns, you may use a Quick Action to maintain the Grapple (requiring no new roll) or a Main Action to make one attack against the Grappled target with Fortune. **Special:** A Grappled target can attempt to bite, headbutt, or otherwise attack you with improvised unarmed strikes

(1d4 damage, no attribute bonus), even while Grappled.

Maneuver: Disarm

You target the opponent's grip rather than their body, forcing them to lose control of a weapon or item.

Trail Roll: Reflexes (Ironside) vs. target's Defense Rating + 2 (weapons are held deliberately, and a skilled fighter holds tightly). **Effect on Hit:** The target drops one held item of your choice. It lands 1d6 x 5 feet away in a random direction. If you are wielding a weapon with the Parry property, you may choose to have the disarmed item land in your free hand instead of on the ground (if you have a free hand). **Failure:** A failed Disarm attempt gives the target Fortune on their next attack against you – they read your move.

Maneuver: Crippling Strike

You aim for a vulnerable point – a joint, a tendon, a pressure cluster – to reduce the opponent's effectiveness without necessarily ending the fight.

Trail Roll: Brawn (Ironside) vs. target's Defense Rating, with Misfortune (the precision of the strike makes it harder than a standard swing). **Effect on Hit:** Roll normal weapon damage. Additionally, choose one effect:

- **Hamstring:** Target's movement speed is halved for the rest of the scene (or until healed by a DR 12 Medicine check).
- **Arm Strike:** Target has Misfortune on all attacks made with the affected limb until the end of the scene.
- **Wind Knocked Out:** Target loses their Quick Action on their next turn (they are catching their breath).

Maneuver: Sweeping Strike

You swing broadly, attempting to hit multiple adjacent enemies with a single powerful blow.

Trail Roll: One attack roll vs. each target's Defense Rating (roll once, compare to each target's DR separately). **Effect:** Targets you hit take 1d8 + Brawn damage (or your weapon's damage die if it deals more). You must be wielding a weapon with the **Two-Handed** property or one with the **Sweep** property to use this Maneuver. Maximum

three targets in a 180-degree arc. **Limitation:** You may not use Sweeping Strike against a Grappled target — the physics do not work.

Maneuver: Lunge

You commit your full momentum to a single powerful thrust, sacrificing defense for reach and force.

Trail Roll: Brawn (Ironside) vs. target's Defense Rating, with Fortune (commitment to the lunge maximizes force delivery). **Effect on Hit:** Roll normal weapon damage and add 1d6. Your effective reach increases by 5 feet for this attack only. **Effect After Using:** Until the start of your next turn, your own Defense Rating is reduced by 2 — the lunge exposes you. **Special:** If the Lunge hits and deals enough damage to Down the target, you do not take the Defense Rating penalty — you pulled back in control.

Maneuver: Feint and Strike

You mislead the opponent into defending against a false attack, then deliver the real blow.

Trail Roll: First, make a Presence (Swindling) or Reflexes check against the target's Cunning modifier + 10 (their ability to read body language). If you succeed, your follow-up attack has Fortune. If you fail, no attack occurs — the feint was read. **Effect:** If the feint succeeds, immediately make a standard attack roll with Fortune. The attack deals normal weapon damage. **Note:** Feint and Strike cannot be used against mindless creatures (constructs without Machine Cognition, undead without awareness) — they have no instincts to mislead.

Maneuver: Trip and Pin

You knock the target off their feet and press the advantage before they can recover.

Trail Roll: Reflexes (Ironside) vs. target's Defense Rating. **Effect on Hit:** Target falls prone (movement cost 10 feet to stand; attacks while prone have Misfortune on ranged attacks and Fortune against them in melee). As part of the same Maneuver, you may immediately follow up with a Quick Action strike — an unarmed strike or light

weapon attack that deals 1d6 + Brawn damage against the prone target. **Fortune/Misfortune:** If the target is already Grappled, you have Fortune on this Maneuver. If you are using a heavy two-handed weapon, you have Misfortune — the weapon's bulk makes the footwork difficult.

The Iron Ground Rule: Maneuvers and GRIT

Performing Melee Maneuvers does not cost Gear Points or Oldways Points — they are physical techniques powered by the body and the will. However, pushing a failed Maneuver with a **Pushed Roll** always costs a Scar, as with any other Pushed Roll in the system. Maneuvers are demanding. Getting them wrong is costly.

Brawling: The Unarmed Subsystem

Sometimes the gun is across the room, the knife is in someone else's boot, and the only question is whether you can put the other person on the floor before they put you there.

Brawling covers unarmed fighting — fistfights, headbutts, chokeholds, and the kind of undignified mutual punishment that takes place in saloon brawls, mine disputes, and the occasional Goblin Warren political disagreement.

Brawling Basics

Unarmed strikes are always available as a Main Action. No training or Calling is required to throw a punch — though training helps considerably.

Unarmed Damage: 1d4 + Brawn modifier. This represents standard punches, kicks, and strikes. **Attack Roll:** d20 + Brawn modifier vs. target's Defense Rating. No skill bonus applies unless the character has Ironside trained, in which case the skill bonus applies as normal.

The Brawling Skill is not a separate skill from Ironside — it falls under Ironside for characters who are trained. An untrained character still throws punches normally; they simply do not add the +2 skill bonus.

Brawling Conditions

Brawls introduce specific conditions that can accumulate over the course of an unarmed fight:

Staggered: A creature that takes 8 or more unarmed damage in a single hit must pass a Grit Check (DR 12) or become Staggered — they have Misfortune on all Trail Rolls until the end of their next turn.

Seeing Stars: Three or more hits to the head (the attacker must declare they are targeting the head each time, applying Misfortune to the attack roll as with a Called Shot) accumulate into the **Seeing Stars** condition. A creature that is Seeing Stars has Misfortune on all attack rolls and must pass a Grit Check (DR 10) at the start of their turn to act at all. Seeing Stars clears after a Short Rest or a successful DR 14 Medicine check.

Dazed: A single hit of 12 or more unarmed damage forces a Grit Check (DR 14). On a failure, the target is Dazed — they cannot take Quick Actions until the end of their next turn.

Brawl Escalation

A standard brawl uses unarmed strikes and the Grapple and Hold Maneuver. However, brawls escalate. The Game Marshal may call for a **Brawl Escalation** roll — a contested Presence (Intimidation) check — to determine whether a bystander steps in, a combatant draws a weapon, or the fight spills into the surrounding environment. Escalation is a narrative tool, not a required mechanic, but it reminds players that fistfights in saloons have consequences the Posse may not have anticipated.

Improvised Weapons in Brawls

A bar stool, a whiskey bottle, a length of chain, a cast-iron skillet — these are not listed in the weapons tables because they are whatever is within arm's reach. Improvised weapons deal 1d6 damage (Game Marshal may adjust to 1d4 for very light items or 1d8 for something truly heavy and unwieldy). Improvised weapons break on a Dead Trail attack roll — they shatter, snap, or are wrested away.

Using an improvised weapon does not require any skill training beyond what would be needed for a basic melee attack. It does not benefit from the Ironside skill

bonus unless the weapon happens to be functionally equivalent to a real weapon (a heavy chain functions like a flail; the Game Marshal rules appropriately).

The Blade Standoff: Melee Duels

Formal Duels in the Frontier are associated with firearms, but a second tradition exists in certain communities — the **Blade Standoff**, a personal duel settled with knives or blades rather than guns. Blade Standoffs are less ceremonial than gun Duels and tend to be more intimate, more personal, and significantly messier.

A Blade Standoff follows the same general framework as a Duel (see section 6.4) with the following modifications:

Entering a Blade Standoff As with a gun Duel, both parties must agree. A Blade Standoff is declared by drawing a blade and planting it point-first in the ground or a table between the two parties (if a surface is unavailable, holding it out flat across both palms serves the same gesture). The other party either accepts by doing the same, or backs down — with the same Coward mark consequences as breaking a gun Duel.

Tension Phase (Modified) The Tension Phase of a Blade Standoff works the same as a gun Duel — three rounds of contested Presence checks. However, in a Blade Standoff, the winner of the Tension Phase gains **Fortune on their first Maneuver attempt** rather than their attack roll (since blades involve technique, not just a single draw). This better captures how blade combat front-loads tactical positioning.

Resolution Phase (Modified) A Blade Standoff does not resolve in a single exchange. Instead, both duelists exchange up to three rounds of melee attacks and Maneuvers. Each round, both parties may use one Maneuver or one standard attack. They continue until one is Downed, surrenders, or the Duel is called a draw by mutual agreement. Unlike a gun Duel, a Blade Standoff does not end at the first exchange — blades require sustained commitment to resolve.

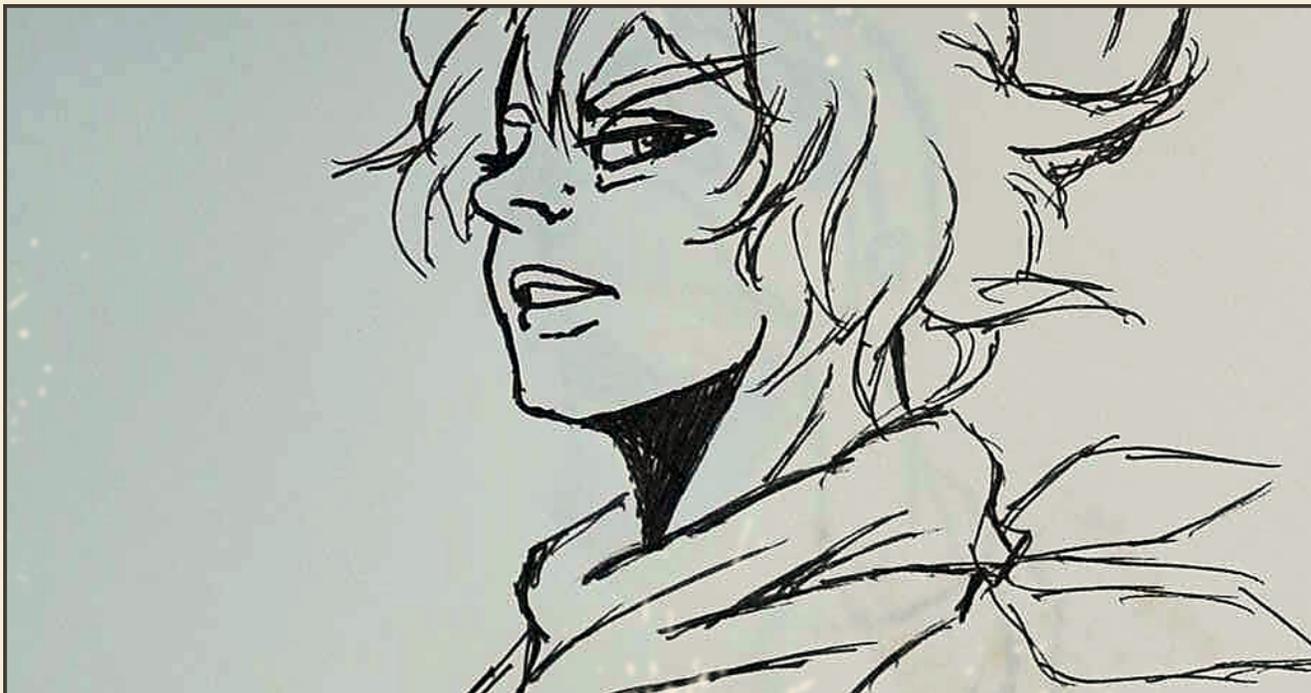
The duelist who won the Tension Phase may use one Maneuver per round without the normal restriction of one Maneuver per turn (they are flowing, reading the fight, operating ahead of their opponent). The other duelist operates under normal Maneuver restrictions.

Close Combat: During a Blade Standoff, both duelists are always within melee reach of each other. Neither may voluntarily create distance greater than 10 feet without Breaking the Duel (see 6.4 Breaking a Duel – same consequences apply).

Melee Weapons and Properties Quick Reference

The following properties appear on melee weapons in Chapter 7 and interact with the Melee Maneuver system:

Property	Effect
Reach	Melee attacks can target creatures up to 10 feet away
Two-Handed	Requires both hands; can be used for Sweeping Strike
Sweep	Can be used for Sweeping Strike even if not Two-Handed
Parry	When used for a Disarm Maneuver, disarmed item may land in your hand
Light	Can be dual-wielded; second weapon attack as Quick Action, no Brawn modifier on damage
Brutal	On a Trail Blaze (natural 20), add the weapon's damage die again to damage



CHAPTER VII

GEAR & GUNS

"A man with no gun is a man making a choice. A man with the wrong gun is a man making a mistake. Know your tools. They will know you." – From a letter found tucked inside the grip of a Frontier Revolver, sender unknown

The Wild Frontier is not a place that rewards the unprepared. Every piece of kit a character carries was chosen for a reason – or found in a moment of desperation and kept because it worked. This chapter covers everything you can carry, buy, trade, build, or scavenge: weapons and ammunition, armor and protection, Goblin gadgetry, basic supplies, and the animals and vehicles that move a Posse across the Frontier.



Iron-clad raiders plunder the frontier's last treasures.

7.1 CURRENCY AND ECONOMY

The standard unit of currency in the Wild Frontier is the **coin** — a stamped metal disc of varying origin, alloyed from whatever metal was handy when it was minted. The coin's provenance matters less than its weight. Frontier towns take coins from defunct governments, foreign territories, and private mints equally, as long as the metal is real.

Abbreviated as: c (single coin), e.g., "8c" for eight coin.

Common Wages and Prices

Service or Commodity	Cost
Basic meal (saloon)	2c
Hot meal (sit-down)	4c
Night in a bunkhouse	3c
Night in a private room	8c

Service or Commodity	Cost
Day labor wage (unskilled)	5c/day
Day labor wage (skilled trade)	12c/day
Gunslinger's hire (dangerous work)	25c-100c/job
Horse feed (one day)	2c
Livery stable (one night)	4c

Relative Wealth

Tier	Coin Range	What It Means
Broke	0-10c	Surviving hand to mouth; cannot afford lodging
Struggling	11-50c	Getting by; limited choices
Frontier Comfortable	51-200c	Stable; can afford decent gear and lodging
Prosperous	201-1,000c	Influential locally; owns property or livestock
Wealthy	1,000c+	Rare on the Frontier; commands significant resources

Barter

When coin is scarce — and it frequently is — the Frontier runs on trade. A character may attempt to barter goods or services in place of coin. The Game Marshal sets a DR based on the rarity of what the character wants:

Item Rarity	Barter DR
Common goods	8
Uncommon goods or services	12
Rare or specialist items	16
Unique or dangerous items	20

Roll Cunning (or Cunning + Deception if bluffing the value of trade goods). A success means the trade is accepted on reasonable terms. A failure means the deal falls through, the merchant is offended, or the character overpays.



When magic meets machinery, new possibilities ignite.

7.2 WEAPONS

All weapons are listed with the following statistics:

- **Damage:** The damage die rolled on a hit (plus attribute modifier)
- **Properties:** Special rules that apply to this weapon
- **Cost:** Price in coin
- **Weight:** Approximate weight for encumbrance purposes

Melee Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Properties	Cost	Weight
Bowie Knife	1d4	Finesse, Concealable, Thrown (20/40)	6c	1 lb

Weapon	Damage	Properties	Cost	Weight
Tomahawk	1d6	Thrown (30/60), Versatile (1d8)	10c	2 lb
Hunting Spear	1d6	Thrown (20/40), Versatile (1d8), Two-Handed	8c	4 lb
Lasso	—	Grapple (30 ft, Reflex check DR 13)	5c	3 lb
Iron Knuckles	1d4	Concealable; unarmed attacks deal this damage	4c	1 lb
Cavalry Saber	1d8	Finesse; Fortune on Ride checks while wielded on horseback	25c	3 lb
Pickaxe	1d8	Two-Handed, Sweep; ignores 2 points of armor bonus on a hit	12c	6 lb
War Club	1d8	Versatile (1d10), Sweep; on Trail Blaze, target must pass Grit check (DR 13) or be Stunned 1 round	10c	4 lb
Machete	1d6	Finesse; Fortune on Athletics checks to clear dense terrain	9c	2 lb

Weapon	Damage	Properties	Cost	Weight
Whip	1d4	Reach (15 ft); can Disarm without provoking Opportunity Strike; Concealable when coiled	8c	2 lb

Firearms

Weapon	Damage	Range	Properties	Cost	Weight
Derringer	1d6	20/40	Concealable, Loud; holds 2 shots	18c	0.5 lb
Frontier Revolver	1d8	40/120	Loud; holds 6 shots	35c	2 lb
Marshal's Revolver	1d8+1	50/150	Loud; holds 6 shots; Fortune on Intimidation when drawn	55c	2.5 lb
Lever-Action Rifle	1d10	80/300	Loud, Two-Handed; holds 8 shots; Reload (Quick Action) between each shot	60c	7 lb
Hunting Rifle	1d10	100/400	Loud, Two-Handed; holds 5 shots; Fortune on attacks beyond 150 ft	75c	8 lb

Weapon	Damage	Range	Properties	Cost	Weight
Double-Barrel Shotgun	2d6	20/60	Scatter, Loud, Two-Handed; holds 2 shots; can fire both barrels at once (see Scatter)	50c	7 lb
Sawed-Off Shotgun	2d6	15/40	Scatter, Loud, Concealable; holds 2 shots	40c	4 lb
Repeating Carbine	1d8	60/200	Loud, Two-Handed; holds 10 shots; Reload (full Quick Action) once emptied	65c	6 lb
Long Rifle	1d12	150/600	Loud, Two-Handed; holds 1 shot; Reload (Main Action); Fortune on attacks at 150+ ft	120c	9 lb
Goblin Pepperbox	1d6	30/80	Loud; fires 3 shots simultaneously at up to 3 targets within 15 ft of each other; Reload (full Main Action)	80c	3 lb

Weapon Properties Glossary

Concealable: The weapon can be hidden on the body without an obvious bulge. A Sleight of Hand check (DR 12) allows it to pass a casual search. Full searches automatically find it.

Finesse: The wielder may use their Reflexes modifier instead of Brawn on attack and damage rolls with this weapon.

Loud: Firing this weapon is heard clearly up to a quarter mile away in open terrain. Stealth checks made after firing a Loud weapon are made with Misfortune until the character has left the area or the noise has had time to settle.

Reach: The weapon can strike targets up to the listed distance without requiring movement into adjacent space. The wielder cannot use it against targets within 5 feet.

Reload: Specified in parentheses. The weapon must be reloaded as indicated before it can fire again. "Quick Action" means spending a Quick Action. "Main Action" means spending a Main Action. Full descriptions appear in the weapon entry.

Scatter: Scatter weapons hit everything in a cone. When fired, roll a single attack. On a hit, all targets within the weapon's normal range in a 15-foot cone take half the weapon's damage (no attribute modifier). The primary target takes full damage. When both barrels of a double-barrel weapon are fired simultaneously, roll two attacks against the primary target and add the results.

Sweep: This weapon can target up to three adjacent creatures in a single Sweeping Strike maneuver (see Section 6.6). It does not need to have the Two-Handed property to qualify for that maneuver.

Thrown: The weapon can be thrown as a ranged attack with the listed range values (normal/maximum). Uses Reflexes modifier when thrown.

Two-Handed: Requires both hands to use. Cannot be wielded simultaneously with another weapon or shield.

Versatile: Can be used in one or two hands. When used with two hands, use the listed alternate damage die.

7.3 AMMUNITION

Standard ammunition is assumed available in most frontier settlements. Characters are expected to track their rounds.

Standard Ammunition

Ammo Type	Compatible Weapons	Cost	Notes
Iron Shot (20 rounds)	Revolver, Carbine, Pepperbox	5c	Standard; no special properties
Long Brass (10 rounds)	Rifle, Long Rifle, Carbine	6c	For longer-barreled firearms; Misfortune on attacks within 15 ft
Scatter Shell (10 rounds)	Shotgun, Sawed-Off	5c	Required for Scatter property to apply
Derringer Loads (6 rounds)	Derringer	4c	Small-caliber; fits only derringers

Specialty Ammunition

Specialty rounds can be found at larger trading posts, major settlements, or crafted by skilled Tinkerers. They modify normal attack and damage behavior.

Ammo Type	Effect	Cost	Availability
Dead Metal	+1 damage; Misfortune on Deadeye or precision skill checks	3c/round	Common
Quicksilver	-1 damage; +2 to attack rolls against fast-moving or Dodging targets	3c/round	Uncommon

Ammo Type	Effect	Cost	Availability
Hollow Tip	Standard damage; on hit, triggers a Wound check on the Wound Table regardless of HP threshold	4c/round	Uncommon
Incendiary Round	Standard damage + 1d4 fire damage on hit; target may catch fire (Grit check DR 12 or take 1d4 fire damage next round)	6c/round	Rare
Silver-Cased	Standard damage; counts as Old Ways silver against creatures with supernatural vulnerabilities	8c/round	Rare

Spell-Bullets

Spell-Bullets are ammunition infused with Hexcharge by a Hexblade. They are not purchasable items — they are created by the Hexblade through their Calling features. Full rules for Spell-Bullets, including all available types and their costs in Hexcharge, are covered in **Chapter 8: Magic and the Old Ways**.

Crafting Ammunition

A character with Tinkering (trained) may craft standard ammunition from raw materials — brass casings, lead, powder, and primers.

Crafting roll: Cunning (Tinkering) check against DR 10 (standard ammo) or DR 14 (specialty ammo).

- **Success:** The character produces 10 rounds of standard ammo or 5 rounds of specialty ammo per hour of work.
- **Failure:** Materials are wasted. No ammo produced.
- **Trail Blaze:** Double output for that session of crafting.

• **Dead Trail:** A misfire or powder contamination — one of the crafted rounds will misfire when used (Game Marshal tracks which one secretly).

Materials required per 10 rounds: Brass stock (2c value), lead bar (1c value), black powder charge (2c value). Specialty rounds require additional components at the Game Marshal's discretion.

7.4 ARMOR AND PROTECTION

Armor in the Wild Frontier is as much about philosophy as protection. Heavy armor is uncommon — it slows the draw, limits mobility, and marks a person as someone with something to hide behind. The most common protection is the kind that lets you keep moving.

Every armor type lists:

- **Armor Bonus:** Added to Defense Rating
- **Max Reflexes Mod:** The maximum Reflexes modifier that can be applied to Defense Rating while wearing this armor
- **Stealth Penalty:** Applied as a penalty to Stealth checks while wearing this armor
- **Cost:** Price in coin

Armor	Armor Bonus	Max Reflexes Mod	Stealth Penalty	Cost
Duster Coat	+1	No limit	None	12c
Leather Vest	+2	+4	None	25c
Reinforced Duster	+3	+3	-1	45c
Padded Hide	+3	+2	-2	40c
Chain Vest	+4	+2	-3	80c
Plate Chassis	+6	+1	-5	350c

Duster Coat: The everyday garment of the Frontier — a long, heavy coat that provides basic protection and significant dramatic presence. Worn by virtually everyone at some point.

Leather Vest: Tanned and hardened hide, often reinforced with riveted panels. The standard choice for Gunslingers who want protection without sacrificing too much speed.

Reinforced Duster: A heavier coat with metal plates sewn into the lining at the chest and back. Heavier than it looks. Favored by bounty hunters and Outlaws who expect to take fire and keep walking.

Padded Hide: Layered animal hide with interior padding, often crafted from beasts hunted in the frontier wilderness. Crude but effective. Common among Wardens and Desert Devils.

Chain Vest: Interlocked metal rings under an outer garment. Provides solid protection but restricts movement and makes a distinctive sound. Most characters who wear this accept the noise as the cost of not dying.

Plate Chassis: A rare and expensive piece of frontier engineering — partial mechanical plating, sometimes incorporating Goblin metalwork or salvaged material from ruins. Only a very few people on the Frontier have encountered one. Those who have remember it.

7.5 GOBLIN GADGETS

Goblins build things that other peoples do not think to build, using materials other peoples would not think to use, in ways that other peoples would not consider safe. The results are often remarkable. Occasionally they are catastrophic. Frequently they are both.

Goblin gadgets can be purchased at Goblin trading posts and canyon markets, or crafted by a character with Tinkering (Expert or higher). The Game Marshal may decide that certain gadgets are unavailable in smaller settlements.

Gadget	Effect	Cost	Special Rules
Boom Pebble	Thrown (30 ft); 2d6 damage in 10-ft radius; Reflexes check DR 13 for half	15c	Use Item (Main Action); single use

Gadget	Effect	Cost	Special Rules
Smoke Canister	Thrown (30 ft); fills 20-ft radius with dense smoke for 1 minute; all attacks into or through cloud have Misfortune	10c	Use Item (Quick Action); single use
Grapple Hook Launcher	Fires a grapple hook up to 60 ft; anchors to a solid surface; allows climb at full speed	40c	Tinkering (DR 12) to set anchor properly; reusable
Tinker's Toolkit	Comprehensive tools for mechanical work	30c	Fortune on Tinkering checks while using the kit
Flash Powder Pouch	Thrown (20 ft); blinds all creatures within 10 ft for 1 round; Grit check DR 12 to resist	8c	Use Item (Quick Action); single use
Goblin Ear	A small amplifying horn attached to a length of tubing	25c	Allows the user to listen through walls and around corners; Fortune on Perception checks involving sound
Spring Boots	Worn footwear with compressed spring mechanisms	50c	Jumping distance doubled; can leap onto ledges up to 15 ft high from a standstill
Auto-Reloader	A spring-loaded cylinder mechanism fitted to a revolver	65c	Reduces reload time by one step (Main Action becomes Quick Action; Quick Action becomes free)

Notes on Gadget Misfires

Any Goblin gadget used in combat or under stress has a chance of performing unexpectedly. When a player rolls a Dead Trail on a Trail Roll involving a gadget (or when the

Game Marshal deems a misfire dramatically appropriate), the gadget misfires. The Game Marshal determines the effect — ranging from harmless malfunction to spectacular failure. This is not a punishment; it is a feature of Goblin engineering that makes it interesting.

7.6 GENERAL GEAR

The following items represent standard adventuring equipment available at most frontier trading posts and general stores. Characters are assumed to have basic personal effects beyond what is listed here — the list covers items with specific mechanical relevance or common enough use to be worth tracking.

Item	Cost	Weight	Notes
Rope (50 ft, hempen)	4c	5 lb	Holds up to 500 lb; Athletics DR 12 to break
Rope (50 ft, wire-core)	12c	8 lb	Holds up to 1,000 lb; cannot be cut by normal blades
Torches (5)	2c	3 lb	Burns 1 hour each; 30-ft light radius
Trail Rations (5 days)	5c	5 lb	Dried meat, hardtack, jerky
Canteen (filled)	3c	2 lb	Holds 2 days' water for one person
Bedroll	2c	5 lb	Required for Long Rest benefit without improvised shelter
Medical Kit	20c	3 lb	Contains bandages, needles, thread, clean cloth; required for Medicine checks above DR 10

Item	Cost	Weight	Notes
Spyglass	35c	1 lb	Fortune on Perception checks to see details at long range
Compass	15c	0.5 lb	Fortune on Survival checks involving navigation
Lockpick Set	18c	0.5 lb	Required for Sleight of Hand checks to pick locks
Dynamite (1 stick)	20c	1 lb	3d6 damage in 15-ft radius; Reflexes check DR 15 for half; fuse time variable
Lantern (oil)	8c	2 lb	Burns 4 hours per flask of oil; 40-ft light radius
Oil Flask	2c	1 lb	Fuel for lantern; can also be thrown as an improvised fire hazard
Horse Feed (5 days)	8c	10 lb	Required to maintain a mount's health during extended travel
Saddlebags (pair)	10c	3 lb	Adds 40 lb of carry capacity on a mount
Flint and Steel	2c	0.5 lb	Starting fires; Survival DR 8 in normal conditions
Pry Bar	5c	5 lb	Fortune on Athletics checks to force open sealed doors or containers
Hand Mirror	3c	0.5 lb	Allows viewing around corners; signaling at distance

Item	Cost	Weight	Notes
Writing Kit	5c	1 lb	Ink, paper, quill; required for forging documents
Manacles	6c	2 lb	Restrains a wrists-together; Brawn check DR 20 to break
Signal Flare	8c	0.5 lb	Visible up to 2 miles in clear conditions; single use

7.7 MOUNTS AND TRANSPORT

In the Wild Frontier, how you travel is almost as important as where you are going. A good horse is the difference between outrunning trouble and becoming part of it.

Horses

Horses are the most common mount on the Frontier and come in several grades.

Mount	Speed	VP	Defense Rating	Cost	Notes
Draft Horse	40 ft	20	11	80c	Strong but slow; +100 lb carry capacity
Riding Horse	50 ft	16	12	150c	Standard mount; reliable and common
War Horse	50 ft	22	13	400c	Trained not to shy from combat; can make one hoof attack (1d6) per round

Mounts use the rider's Quick-Draw result for initiative in combat. A mount reduced to 0 VP collapses — all riders must make Acrobatics checks (DR 13) or be thrown to the ground (prone, 1d6 fall damage).

Frontier Mounts

Beyond horses, the Wild Frontier has its own creatures domesticated or half-domesticated by those who know them.

Giant Roadrunner (Goblin mount of choice) Speed 60 ft on flat terrain (40 ft on rough ground). VP 10, Defense Rating 13. Cost: 200c. Cannot carry loads above 150 lb. Treats difficult terrain as normal terrain. A favorite of Goblin riders for speed and their ability to fit through narrow canyon passages. Notoriously uncooperative with non-Goblin riders — Ride checks with non-Goblins have Misfortune.

Sand Strider (Desert Devil and frontier outlander) A long-limbed, reptilian beast bred for endurance in dry heat. Speed 40 ft (immune to difficult terrain from sand and loose rock). VP 18, Defense Rating 11. Cost: 300c. Can go five days without water. Carries up to 250 lb. Calm under fire — Ride checks during combat are made without penalty.

Vehicles

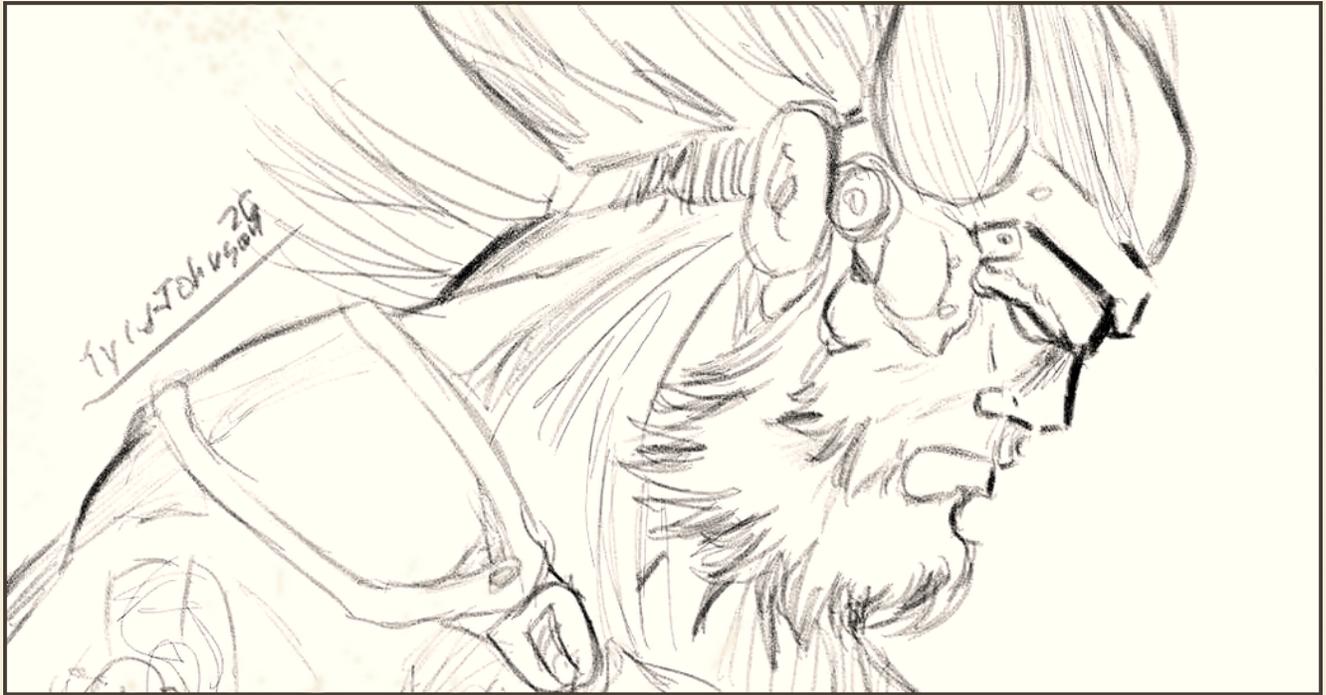
Vehicle	Capacity	Speed	Cost	Notes
Riding Wagon	4 passengers + 400 lb cargo	30 ft	60c	Requires one Draft Horse minimum
Stagecoach	6 passengers + 200 lb cargo	40 ft	200c	Requires two Riding Horses; enclosed; +2 Defense for passengers inside

Vehicle	Capacity	Speed	Cost	Notes
Steam Rail Car	20 passengers + 1,000 lb cargo	Variable	2,000c+	Requires rail line; speed determined by GM; rare and expensive to operate

Steam Rail Cars are the newest and most contested technology on the Frontier. Rail lines mean money, and money means power. The presence of a rail car in a region changes the political landscape almost as fast as it changes the geography. Any adventure involving a Steam Rail Car is, by definition, a high-stakes one.

End of Chapter 7 — Gear & Guns

Chapter 8: *Magic and the Old Ways* covers the full rules for Hexcharge, Spell-Bullets, Old Ways rituals, and the ancient powers that still move beneath the Frontier's dust.



CHAPTER VIII

MAGIC AND THE OLD WAYS

"I seen a man draw fire from a brand on his own skin and burn a hole through solid rock. I seen a Straw Elf kneel in a dead grove and make rain fall upward. I seen a Goblin fire a bullet that turned into three crows mid-flight and each crow bit a different man. So don't tell me magic ain't real. Tell me you ain't afraid of it. That's a different lie entirely." — Overheard at the bar of the Thirsty Spur, Caledon Crossing

Magic in the Wild Frontier is not a system. It is not a discipline you learn in a school or master in a library. It is a relationship, difficult, everything of the reciprocal world. There is no instruction, use, and fear of the Old Ways: what they are, how they are accessed, what they cost, and what happens when they go wrong.



Wild magic takes many forms in the deep wastes.

8.1 THE NATURE OF MAGIC

What the Old Ways Are

The Old Ways is the collective name for every magical tradition in the Wild Frontier. Not one of them is new. All of them draw from the same underlying source: the magical force embedded in the land during the Old World, which sank into the deep earth when the Collapse came and has been slowly, unevenly bleeding back to the surface ever since.

This source moves through **ley lines** — invisible rivers of ancient power running beneath the Frontier's skin, often following the paths of old waterways and sacred sites. Near a ley line, magic is stronger, stranger, and less predictable. Far from one, it is sluggish and hard to channel. The land is not a neutral stage for magic. It is the engine of it.

The three practiced traditions of the Old Ways — **Hexwork**, **Druidic Rites**, and **Fire-Marks** — each access this power through a different door. Hexwork channels it through gunfire and will. Druidic Rites access it through ceremony, patience, and agreement with land spirits. Fire-Marks bind it through oath, fire, and the physical body. The power is the same. The methods are not.

Who Uses Magic

Most people on the Frontier do not use magic. Most fear it. Practitioners are outlaws, hermits, sacred figures, or all three at once — marked by their gift in ways that separate them from ordinary folk. A Hexblade is watched at every table they sit down to. A Straw Elf elder performing a Druidic Rite in a boomtown square will clear the street within minutes. A Desert Devil who has taken an oath-fire upon themselves is given wide, respectful berth.

This suspicion is not irrational. Magic is powerful and magic is costly. It draws on forces older than anyone alive, and those forces are not neutral. Every tradition has its price, its risks, and its tendency to go badly wrong at the worst possible moment.

Oldways Points: The Cost of Magic

Every act of intentional magic — every rite performed, every spell channeled, every ritual attempted — costs **Oldways Points** (abbreviated OP). This resource represents the practitioner's ability to act as a conduit for the land's power without burning themselves out in the process.

Oldways Points are governed by the **Oldways** attribute. A character's maximum Oldways Point pool is equal to **6 + their Oldways modifier** (minimum 3). Only characters with the Hexblade, Warden, or a dedicated Old Ways background can access this pool by default — other characters may learn to access it through specific Ritual training (see Section 8.6).

Hexblade characters use their existing Hexcharge pool as their Oldways Points for all magic purposes. The two systems are unified for that Calling — Hexcharge and Oldways Points are the same resource under different names.

Recovery: Oldways Points recover fully on a Long Rest. During a Short Rest, a character recovers a number of Oldways Points equal to their Oldways modifier (minimum 1). A character at zero Oldways Points cannot cast spells or channel rites — the conduit is empty.

Overburn: A character who attempts magic with zero Oldways Points must make a Grit Check (DR 16). On a success, the effect resolves — but the character takes 1d6 Vitality damage and gains the Shaken condition. On a failure, the effect fails, and the character takes 2d6 Vitality damage.

Ley Sense

All Old Ways practitioners can feel the land's power moving. Within 60 feet of an active ley line, dead grove, or magical site, any character with at least 1 point in the Oldways attribute automatically senses its presence without a roll. They cannot identify the tradition or precise nature of the magic without an Oldways Trail Roll (DR 10 for common Old Ways effects; DR 16 for ancient or rare ones).

In combat or under pressure, a character may spend a Quick Action to attune to the nearest ley line — if within range, they recover 1 Oldways Point as the land's power briefly floods into them.

8.2 THE THREE TRADITIONS

Hexwork

"The gun is just the last part of the sentence. The magic starts in your chest."

Hexwork is the youngest of the three traditions — it was developed in the Frontier Age by gunslingers who learned to push the Old Ways through their firearms rather than through ceremony or oath. The barrel focuses the power. The bullet carries it. The target receives it.

Practitioners of Hexwork are called **Hexblades**. They are the most combat-mobile magical tradition on the

Frontier — their magic travels at bullet speed and can be deployed in the middle of a firefight without slowing down. The tradeoff is range limitation: Hexwork spells delivered through a firearm cannot exceed the weapon's normal range.

Ley Sensitivity: Near a ley line (within 60 feet), a Hexblade's Hexcharge pool is treated as if it has 2 additional points for the purpose of powering spell-bullets only. These bonus points cannot be used for Overburn and disappear if the Hexblade leaves ley line range.

Hexwork practitioners are commonly Human or Goblin, though any Heritage may walk this path.

Druidic Rites

"The land remembers everything. I only have to know how to ask."

Druidic Rites are the oldest practiced tradition — a system of agreements, ceremonies, and patient listening developed by those who stayed close to the land when everyone else was building towns over it. Where Hexwork is fast and violent, Druidic Rites are slow and durable. The effects tend to linger. The costs tend to accumulate quietly.

Practitioners of Druidic Rites are called **Rite-Speakers** by outsiders and simply **Speakers** by one another. They feel the land's disruptions as physical sensations — excavation near a ley line registers as a dull ache behind the eyes; pollution of a sacred grove feels like something breaking inside the chest. They are difficult to lie to. The land tells them things.

Ley Sense (Extended): Rite-Speakers always know the direction and approximate distance to the nearest active ley line, without a roll. They can commune with land spirits at any recognized sacred site as a 10-minute Ritual (no Oldways Point cost, but failing a Commune roll means the spirit is hostile or silent for 24 hours).

Druidic Rites practitioners are most commonly Straw Elves, but frontier shamans and humans who have "gone deep country" — who have lived so long in the wilderness they have stopped distinguishing themselves from it — also walk this path.

Fire-Marks

"An oath made at the fire stays in the skin. Break it and the fire remembers."

Fire-Marks are the Desert Devil tradition — a system of power earned and held through binding oaths, the willingness to burn, and the iron-hard clarity that comes from making a promise in front of witnesses and meaning every word of it. Brand marks appear on the practitioner's skin when an oath is made. The marks glow when the oath is being fulfilled and burn when it is being violated.

Practitioners of Fire-Marks are called **Branded** or **Oath-Keepers**. They are among the most feared magical practitioners on the Frontier — not because their power is flashier than others, but because they are impossible to bluff. An Oath-Keeper always knows when they are looking at a lie. They also always know when they are close to becoming one.

Brand Backlash: If a Fire-Marks practitioner breaks a sworn oath, they immediately suffer Brand Backlash: 2d6 fire damage that bypasses armor and Misfortune on all Trail Rolls until the oath is fulfilled or formally released by the witness who received it. Brand Backlash cannot be healed by rest — it persists until the oath situation is resolved.

Fire-Marks practitioners are most commonly Desert Devils, though humans who have survived certain initiations and even desperate Goblins have been known to walk this path.

8.3 SPELLS OF THE OLD WAYS

The following spells are available to characters with Old Ways training in the appropriate tradition. Each spell lists its tradition, Oldways Point cost, casting time, range, duration, and full effect.

Casting a spell requires the practitioner to be conscious and capable of intent — a Shaken or Stunned character cannot cast. Spells with a casting time of Ritual

(10 minutes) cannot be cast during active combat.

Ley Magic — Druidic Rites Spells

Dust Devil Shroud Tradition: Druidic Rites | Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: Self | Duration: 3 rounds

The caster summons a swirling cloak of dust, grit, and displaced air around themselves. All ranged attacks targeting the caster have Misfortune for the duration. Movement through the shroud costs double for any creature other than the caster. At the end of each round, the shroud scours one adjacent enemy for 1d4 damage if they remain within 5 feet.

Speak with Bones Tradition: Druidic Rites | Cost: 3 OP | Casting Time: Ritual (10 min) | Range: Touch | Duration: 10 minutes of communion

The caster touches a set of bones — animal, human, or creature — and opens a channel to the fragment of memory that lingers in them. The caster may ask up to three questions about what the creature experienced in the final days of its life. The answers are impressionistic (images, sounds, feelings) rather than precise, but they are always true. The Game Marshal provides the answers based on what the creature could plausibly have witnessed.

Root Bind Tradition: Druidic Rites | Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: 30 feet | Duration: Concentration, up to 3 rounds

Thick root-growths burst from the ground at a target's feet (or from available material if no soil is present — old wood, dried vegetation). The target must succeed on a Reflexes Check (DR 14) or be Restrained (cannot move; Misfortune on Reflexes-based checks) until they break free. At the start of each of their turns, a Restrained creature may make a Brawn Check (DR 14) to tear free. If the caster breaks Concentration (by taking damage and failing a Grit Check DR 12), the roots crumble.

Stone Skin of the Badlands *Tradition:* Druidic Rites | *Cost:* 3 OP | *Casting Time:* Bonus Action (Quick Action) | *Range:* Touch | *Duration:* 1 hour

The caster touches a willing creature and draws the enduring hardness of old stone into their flesh. The target gains +3 to their Defense Rating and resistance to the next two instances of piercing or slashing damage (each halved). The skin takes on a slightly grey, rough texture for the duration — obvious in close inspection.

Call the Storm *Tradition:* Druidic Rites | *Cost:* 4 OP | *Casting Time:* Main Action | *Range:* 120 feet | *Duration:* Concentration, up to 5 rounds

The caster tears open the sky. A localized storm forms in a 60-foot radius centered on a point within range. Within the storm: all ranged attacks have Misfortune; lightning strikes one random target inside the area at the start of each round for 2d6 damage (Grit Check DR 14 halves); visibility is reduced to 30 feet. The caster can direct the storm to move up to 30 feet per round as a Quick Action. Maintaining Concentration requires a Grit Check (DR 12) each time the caster takes damage.

Verdant Surge *Tradition:* Druidic Rites | *Cost:* 3 OP | *Casting Time:* Main Action | *Range:* 60 feet, 20-foot radius | *Duration:* Instantaneous

The caster pulls a burst of raw life-force from the land and detonates it in a chosen area. All living creatures in the area (ally and enemy alike) are affected: damaged creatures recover 2d6 Vitality Points; healthy creatures take 1d6 force damage as the energy presses against them. The caster chooses which creatures in the area count as "damaged" vs. "healthy" at the moment of casting. A dead plant or tree in the target area blooms briefly and then returns to its state — a beautiful, useless miracle.

Brand Magic — Fire-Marks Spells

Oath Fire *Tradition:* Fire-Marks | *Cost:* 1 OP | *Casting Time:* Bonus Action (Quick Action) | *Range:* Self | *Duration:* 3 rounds

The caster's next melee or ranged attack is suffused with oath-flame. On a hit, the attack deals an additional 2d6 fire damage. If the target is someone the caster has specifically sworn to defeat, oppose, or bring to justice (Game Marshal adjudicates), the damage is 3d6 instead. The flame is visible — a faint orange halo around the weapon.

Brand of Pursuit *Tradition:* Fire-Marks | *Cost:* 2 OP | *Casting Time:* Main Action | *Range:* 60 feet | *Duration:* 24 hours

The caster marks a target they can see with an invisible brand of pursuit. For the next 24 hours, the caster always knows the target's general direction and approximate distance (within a quarter mile accuracy). If the target crosses a ley line or enters a warded location, the brand flares — the caster knows immediately and receives a sharp, painful impression of what the target sees in that moment. The target may attempt an Oldways Check (DR 16) to sense they have been branded but cannot remove the brand without the caster's willing release.

Smite the Faithless *Tradition:* Fire-Marks | *Cost:* 3 OP | *Casting Time:* Main Action | *Range:* 60 feet | *Duration:* Instantaneous

A column of concentrated oath-fire descends on a target the caster has designated as faithless — someone who broke a sworn agreement or betrayed a trust. The target takes 4d6 fire damage (Grit Check DR 15 for half). If the target has not actually violated an oath or trust (Game Marshal adjudicates), this spell fails and the cost is still paid. The caster's hands smoke for the next hour regardless.

Firewall of Judgment *Tradition:* Fire-Marks | *Cost:* 3 OP | *Casting Time:* Main Action | *Range:* 60 feet | *Duration:* Concentration, up to 4 rounds

The caster raises a wall of oath-fire up to 30 feet long, 10 feet high, and 1 foot thick. The wall can be straight or curved. Any creature that passes through the wall takes 3d6 fire damage and must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 14) or be Frightened of the caster for 1 round. Creatures with an active oath to the caster may pass through unharmed. The wall sheds bright light 30 feet in each direction.

Mark of the Broken Vow Tradition: Fire-Marks | Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: Touch | Duration: Until fulfilled or released

The caster lays a visible brand on a target, marking a specific unfulfilled obligation — a debt unpaid, a promise unkept, a crime unanswered. The mark is visible to anyone looking closely. While branded, the target has Misfortune on all Presence-based Trail Rolls (Persuasion, Deception, Intimidation) when dealing with anyone who can see the mark or has been told of it. If the obligation is fulfilled, the brand fades. If the caster releases the mark willingly, it fades. Otherwise it persists indefinitely. Unwilling targets may resist with a Grit Check (DR 15); on success, the mark does not take hold.

Inferno Aura Tradition: Fire-Marks | Cost: 4 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: Self | Duration: Concentration, up to 3 rounds

The caster sheathes themselves in a corona of oath-fire that lashes at anything that comes close. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the caster, or that strikes the caster with a melee attack, takes 2d6 fire damage (Grit Check DR 14 for half). The caster gains Fortune on Intimidation checks for the duration. Maintaining the aura requires Concentration — each time the caster takes damage, they must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 12) or the aura collapses.

Hex Magic — Hexwork Spells

Note: The following spells represent free-form Hexwork effects delivered outside the spell-bullet system, available to characters who have trained in the tradition through special paths or rituals. Hexblade characters may also use these through their spell-bullet framework.

Hex Shot Tradition: Hexwork | Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: Weapon range | Duration: Instantaneous (curse: 1 hour)

The caster fires a bullet woven through with misfortune. On a hit, the target takes normal weapon damage and is Hexed for 1 hour: they must reroll any one

die per round and take the lower result. The Hexed creature may attempt a Grit Check (DR 13) at the end of each of their turns to shake the curse early.

Jinx Tradition: Hexwork | Cost: 1 OP | Casting Time: Bonus Action (Quick Action) | Range: 30 feet | Duration: 1 round

The caster snaps their fingers and redirects luck at a target they can see. The target has Misfortune on their next Trail Roll, regardless of what it is. This is almost invisible — no flash, no obvious tell. The target feels momentarily unlucky, nothing more.

Fool's Gold Glamour Tradition: Hexwork | Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: Touch | Duration: 1 hour or until dispelled

The caster lays an illusion over an object up to the size of a saddlebag, making it appear to be something else — dirt that looks like coin, a broken gun that looks functional, a wanted poster that reads a different name. The illusion is visual and tactile but not olfactory. A creature that handles the object and succeeds on a Cunning Check (DR 14) sees through the glamour. The illusion collapses if the caster dispels it or falls unconscious.

Shadow Step Tradition: Hexwork | Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: Bonus Action (Quick Action) | Range: 30 feet | Duration: Instantaneous

The caster tears through the thin place between shadow and substance, appearing instantly in any unoccupied space within range that is in dim light or darkness. The departure and arrival points each briefly shimmer with a distortion visible to anyone looking directly at them. Moving through obstacles is not possible — this is repositioning, not phasing.

Ill Omen Tradition: Hexwork | Cost: 3 OP | Casting Time: Main Action | Range: 60 feet | Duration: Until triggered or 1 hour

The caster places a stored curse on a target. Choose a trigger: "the next time this creature attacks," "the next time this creature makes a skill check," or "the next time

this creature moves more than 10 feet." When the trigger occurs, the curse detonates — the creature automatically fails the triggering roll, and takes 1d8 psychic/fear damage as a flash of terrible premonition blinds them for a half-second. The creature may feel the omen sitting on them (Oldways Check DR 15 to sense it) but cannot identify the caster.

Curse of the Wandering Fool Tradition: Hexwork | Cost: 4 OP | Casting Time: Ritual (10 min) | Range: Touch | Duration: 1 week or until broken

The caster lays a deep wandering hex on a willing or helpless target. The cursed creature loses their sense of direction entirely — no compass, no stars, no landmarks read correctly. All Survival checks involving navigation are made with Misfortune, and on a Dead Trail the creature moves 1d4 × 10 feet in a randomly determined direction at the end of their turn. The curse can be lifted by the caster's willing release, a successful counter-ritual (DR 18 Oldways Check), or a Long Rest spent in a location with a strong ley line presence.

8.4 SPELL-BULLETS

Spell-bullets are one of the defining technologies of the Wild Frontier — the point where gunpowder and Old Ways power collide in a small brass casing and go downrange at someone who probably deserves it.

Full spell-bullet rules for the Hexblade Calling appear in Chapter 5. This section covers the crafting rules available to any Old Ways practitioner and provides a reference table of pre-made types.

Crafting Spell-Bullets

Any Old Ways practitioner (Hexblade, Warden with rite access, or a character with the Old Ways Seeker background and Oldways Lore trained) may attempt to craft spell-bullets.

Crafting Process:

1. The crafter spends 10 minutes in a Ritual preparation — cleaning the casing, etching a hexmark, and charging it.
2. The crafter makes a Cunning (Oldways Lore) Trail Roll against **DR 12 + the spell's Oldways Point cost**.
3. The crafter spends the Oldways Points equal to the spell's cost (paid whether the roll succeeds or fails).
4. On a success, the spell-bullet is crafted and ready to load. On a failure, the casing is inert (no spell effect, but still functional as standard ammo). On a Dead Trail, the casing misfires when used — it explodes in the chamber, dealing 1d6 damage to the firer.

Range limitation: A spell-bullet delivered by firearm cannot exceed the weapon's normal (non-extended) range. Beyond that range, the magic dissipates before impact.

Miss results: On a missed attack with a spell-bullet, the spell does not trigger. The magic requires impact to release.

Pre-Made Spell-Bullet Reference

Spell-Bullet	Tradition	OP Cost	Effect on Hit
Ashfire Round	Hexwork	2	Target takes an additional 2d6 fire damage and catches alight (1d4 fire damage at the start of their next turn; Grit Check DR 12 to extinguish as a Main Action).
Bonechill Round	Hexwork	2	Target takes an additional 1d8 cold damage and their Speed is halved until the end of their next turn.

Spell-Bullet	Tradition	OP Cost	Effect on Hit
Root Bind Round	Druidic Rites	2	Target is Restrained by root-growth for 2 rounds (Brawn Check DR 13 at the start of each turn to break free).
Soulscream Round	Hexwork	3	Target takes 2d6 psychic damage and must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 14) or be Frightened of the shooter for 1 round.
Stormstrike Round	Druidic Rites	2	Target takes an additional 2d6 lightning damage and cannot take reactions until the start of their next turn.
Shadowstep Round	Hexwork	2	After the attack resolves, the shooter may teleport up to 20 feet to any space they can see.
Oath Fire Round	Fire-Marks	2	Target takes an additional 2d6 fire damage; if the target has a bounty or active warrant, the damage is 3d6.

Spell-Bullet	Tradition	OP Cost	Effect on Hit
Mirrorshot Round	Hexwork	3	The bullet appears to miss but curves back – make a second attack roll against the same target at Misfortune. If the second hits, it deals normal damage with no spell effect. Surprise targets who thought they dodged it.

8.5 WILD SURGE TABLE

Whenever a Hexwork practitioner rolls a **Dead Trail (natural 1)** on any Oldways-related Trail Roll, roll d20 on the Wild Surge Table. The Game Marshal narrates the result.

d20	Wild Surge Effect
1	The caster's hair turns white – permanently. Nothing else happens. It looks striking.
2	The nearest enemy is teleported 30 feet in a random direction (Grit Check DR 13 to resist).
3	The caster speaks only in questions for the next 1 hour. Statements come out inverted.
4	A ghost appears within 10 feet of the caster. It stares at them, expressionless, for 1 minute, then dissolves. No one else can see it.
5	Gravity reverses for the caster for 1 round. They fall upward 20 feet, then fall back down at the start of their next turn (1d6 fall damage).
6	Every firearm within 30 feet misfires simultaneously, dealing 0 damage but making an enormous noise.
7	The caster grows two inches taller for 24 hours. Their boots no longer fit correctly.
8	The intended spell fires normally – and also hits the caster for half effect.
9	All light sources within 60 feet extinguish simultaneously. They can be relit normally.

d20	Wild Surge Effect
10	The caster's next spoken word is shouted at three times normal volume, regardless of intention.
11	A random creature within 60 feet (roll randomly, ally or enemy) gains Fortune on all Trail Rolls until the end of their next turn.
12	The caster is invisible for 1 round — but so is everything they are holding or wearing.
13	Every door, gate, or latch within 100 feet unlocks and swings open.
14	The caster takes 2d6 psychic damage as a flash of a vision from the Old World floods through them. They gain one piece of true, useful information about the current location from that vision (Game Marshal provides).
15	The spell triggers as intended — twice. Both instances affect the same target. The second costs no Oldways Points but may not be controlled.
16	The caster and the nearest creature swap positions instantly. If mid-combat, reactions may apply.
17	The air around the caster smells intensely of petrichor (the smell of rain on dry earth) for 1 hour. Nothing else happens. Several NPCs mention it.
18	The caster is Stunned until the end of their next turn as the ley line beneath them surges and knocks the magic back through them.
19	All Hexwork-based effects currently active within 100 feet end immediately — including beneficial ones.
20	The caster's spell fires as intended and with maximum effect. They take 1d4 Vitality damage anyway — the surge was too clean. Something is watching.

8.6 RITUAL MAGIC

What Rituals Are

Rituals are Old Ways workings that require time, preparation, and physical components rather than raw channeled power in combat. They are slower than spells. They are also more forgiving — the extended casting time allows a practitioner to be careful, to check their work, to build the effect layer by layer rather than snapping it into being in a heartbeat.

Any character with the Oldways Lore skill at trained level or higher may attempt a Ritual,

regardless of their Calling. Rituals do not require a class feature to access. They require knowledge, components, and time.

Ritual Rules

Casting Time: All Rituals take a minimum of 10 minutes. Some take longer (noted in the ritual's entry). The caster must be in a safe enough location to focus — active combat prevents ritual casting.

Components: Each Ritual requires specific physical components. Without the components, the Ritual cannot begin. Used components are consumed on use, regardless of success or failure.

The Ritual Roll: At the end of the casting time, the caster makes an Oldways Trail Roll (Oldways attribute + Oldways Lore skill) against the listed DR.

- **Success:** The ritual completes. Pay the Oldways Point cost.
- **Failure:** Components are wasted. Oldways Points are not spent.
- **Dead Trail:** Components are wasted, Oldways Points are not spent, and the caster rolls on the Wild Surge Table.

The Five Common Rituals

Commune with the Dead Cost: 3 OP | Casting Time: 30 minutes | DR: 14 | Components: A possession of the deceased, ash from a fire, clean water

The caster opens a channel to a specific recently deceased person — within 30 days of death is reliable; beyond 30 days, the connection is degraded and fragmented. The deceased may answer up to five questions. Answers are truthful (the dead have little reason to deceive) but limited to what the deceased knew in life and what they are willing to share. Stubborn or traumatized spirits may answer in fragments, memories, and impressions rather than direct speech. Spirits who died violently may be hostile — the caster makes a Presence Check (DR 12) to keep the communion calm; failure means the spirit speaks one truth and then severs the connection in distress.

Bless the Trail Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: 10 minutes | DR: 12 | Components: Oil or rendered fat, salt, a personal item from each traveler who will benefit

The caster blesses a road, path, or intended route for a specific group. For the next 24 hours of travel along that route, the Posse has Fortune on all Survival checks against getting lost, all Perception checks to notice hazards before walking into them, and all Grit checks against exhaustion from travel conditions. The blessing does not follow the party if they deviate from the route — it is tied to the path, not the people.

Ley Dowsing Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: 10 minutes | DR: 10 (common) / 16 (ancient or disrupted) | Components: Two peeled willow or bone rods, held loosely; a small vessel of still water

The caster uses the rods and water to locate ley line paths in the surrounding area. On a success, the caster knows the location of all ley lines within 2 miles, the approximate strength of each (faint, moderate, strong), and whether any have been recently disrupted. A disrupted ley line (from construction, violence, or unchecked magic) is a danger flag — something nearby is wrong. The Game Marshal should have a prepared detail ready for this result.

Ward Against Evil Cost: 3 OP | Casting Time: 20 minutes | DR: 13 | Components: Iron nails or iron dust, salt, chalk or charcoal

The caster wards a specific structure or clearly bounded area (up to a 60-foot radius). For the next 8 hours, undead creatures cannot enter the warded area without making a Grit Check (DR 16). Creatures of purely magical origin (Ley Wyrms, constructs animated by Old Ways power) must make the same check. Creatures that succeed on the check may enter but have Misfortune on all Trail Rolls while inside the ward. The ward is invisible but detectable by anyone with Oldways Lore (trained) who makes an Oldways Check (DR 10).

Bind the Wound Cost: 2 OP | Casting Time: 10 minutes | DR: 12 | Components: Clean bandaging, dried herb (any

wilderness herb will do), a pinch of the caster's own blood

The caster performs a healing ritual on a willing creature, channeling the land's restorative energy through the physical act of treating wounds. The target recovers 3d6+Oldways modifier Vitality Points. This healing counts as a medical treatment — the same creature cannot benefit from Bind the Wound again until they have taken a Short Rest. The herbs used are consumed and must be gathered or purchased fresh for each use. Near an active ley line, the recovery is 3d8+Oldways modifier instead.

End of Chapter 8 — Magic and the Old Ways

Chapter 9 covers the creatures of the Wild Frontier — from the mundane and dangerous to the ancient and incomprehensible.



CHAPTER IX

BESTIARY

"The Frontier is alive in ways that most settlers don't want to think about. There are things in the canyon dark that have no names yet. Things on the plains that move against the wind. Things in the ruins that were sealed away for reasons people have stopped being wise enough to remember. Carry silver. Carry fire. And if something looks at you from out of the dark and doesn't blink — ride." — Warden Issa Cade, from her field notes, recovered posthumously

This chapter catalogs creatures the Posse may encounter across the Wild Frontier — natural predators, ancient guardians, magical constructs, undead remnants, and things that fit none of those categories cleanly. Each entry provides full mechanical statistics for use in play.

Reading a Stat Block

Each creature entry includes:

- **Heritage/Type:** The creature's general category (Beast, Undead, Construct, etc.)
- **Size:** Tiny / Small / Medium / Large / Huge

- **HP:** Total Vitality Points
- **Defense Rating (DR):** The difficulty number to hit this creature with an attack
- **Speed:** Movement per round in feet
- **Attributes:** Brawn / Reflexes / Grit / Cunning / Presence / Oldways, each with its modifier in parentheses
- **Skills:** Relevant trained skills with bonuses
- **Senses:** Perception range and special senses
- **Challenge Rating (CR):** A rough guide to difficulty. CR 1 = manageable for a fresh Posse; CR 5 = serious threat; CR 8+ = legendary.
- **Actions:** What the creature can do on its turn
- **Special Traits:** Passive abilities always in effect
- **Tactics:** How this creature approaches a fight



Bonded rider and beast — a terror to behold.

DUST WRAITH

The Dust Wraith is all that remains of a prospector who died before striking the gold they were certain was just another foot

of digging away. The grief of that near-miss is enough to hold aspirit in the world — hollow, furious, and unable to let go of a purpose that can never now be completed.

Heritage/Type: Undead | **Size:** Medium

- **HP:** 22
- **Defense Rating:** 13 (incorporeal displacement)
- **Speed:** 0 ft (hovering — does not walk; moves at 40 ft fly speed)
- **Challenge Rating:** 2

Attributes:

- Brawn 4 (-3) | Reflexes 14 (+2) | Grit 16 (+3) | Cunning 8 (-1) | Presence 14 (+2) | Oldways 12 (+1)

Skills: Perception +5, Intimidation +4

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft. The Dust Wraith can sense any source of gold or precious ore within 120 ft without a roll.

Special Traits:

Incorporeal Movement: The Dust Wraith can move through solid objects and creatures. Moving through a creature costs double movement. It cannot end its turn inside a solid object.

Damage Resistance: The Dust Wraith takes half damage from non-magical weapons. Silver-cased ammunition and Old Ways silver deal full damage.

Unfinished Business: When destroyed, if its prospecting claim or goal has not been resolved, the Wraith reforms at the next new moon within 1 mile of where it died, at half Vitality Points. Only fulfilling or formally releasing its obsession prevents this.

Actions:

Withering Touch (Main Action): Melee attack, +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. On a hit: 2d6 cold damage. The target must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 13) or be Chilled — their Speed is halved until the end of their next turn.

Howl of Loss (Main Action, Recharge on 5-6): The Wraith releases a keening wail of grief. All creatures within 30 ft must make a Grit Check (DR 13) or be Frightened of the Wraith for 1 round and take 1d8 psychic damage.

Possession Attempt (once per scene): The Wraith attempts to merge with a creature within 5 ft. Target makes a Grit Check (DR 14). On failure, the Wraith inhabits the creature's body — the host is Stunned, and the Wraith uses the host's physical actions. The Wraith is expelled if the host takes 10+ damage in a single hit, or if a Ward Against Evil is cast on the host.

Tactics: The Dust Wraith focuses on whichever character is carrying the most coin, convinced they are a claim-jumper. It howls first to scatter the group, then closes on its chosen target for possession.



Only the fearless dare mount a frontier drake.

CANYON COUGAR

The Canyon Cougars of the deep red-rock corridors are a different creature from any lowland cat. Three times the size of a common mountain lion, with a coat the color of old rust and claws that can score stone, they claim territories measured in canyon networks rather than square miles. They have been known to stalk a camp for two days before striking.

Heritage/Type: Beast | **Size:** Large



Wings of fire paint the sunset sky.

- **HP:** 45
- **Defense Rating:** 14
- **Speed:** 50 ft (climb 40 ft)
- **Challenge Rating:** 3

Attributes:

- Brawn 18 (+4) | Reflexes 18 (+4) | Grit 14 (+2) | Cunning 8 (-1) | Presence 8 (-1) | Oldways 4 (-3)

Skills: Stealth +7, Perception +5, Athletics +6

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft. Keen Smell — Fortune on all scent-based Perception checks.

Special Traits:

Ambush Pounce: If the Cougar moves at least 20 ft toward a target before attacking, the target must succeed on a Reflexes Check (DR 15) or be knocked Prone. A Prone target takes an additional 1d6 damage from the Cougar's claw attack this turn.

Fade Back: As a Quick Action, if no creature is within 10 ft of the Cougar, it may make a Stealth check against any observer's Perception. On success, it vanishes from awareness even in partial cover.

Actions:

Bite (Main Action): Melee attack, +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 2d8+4 piercing damage.

Claw (Quick Action, once per turn): Melee attack, +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 1d8+4 slashing damage.

Rake (Main Action, Recharge 5–6): The Cougar makes two Claw attacks against the same target. If both hit, the target takes an additional 1d6 bleed damage at the start of their next turn.

Tactics: The Canyon Cougar circles high on canyon walls, using Stealth to remain undetected. It pounces on the most isolated character, uses Ambush Pounce to knock them prone, and retreats with Fade Back if it takes significant damage — only to circle and try again.

Scurry: Once per round as a Free Action, the Scrapper may move 15 ft without triggering Opportunity Strikes.

Pocket Arsenal: The Scrapper carries 1d4 Boom Pebbles (Grenades) and will use them with minimal hesitation about collateral damage.

Actions:

Revolver Shot (Main Action): Ranged attack, +5 to hit, range 40/120 ft. Hit: 1d8+3 piercing damage.

Shiv (Quick Action): Melee attack, +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 1d4+1 piercing damage.

Boom Pebble (Main Action): Thrown (30 ft); 2d6 damage in 10-ft radius; Reflexes Check DR 13 for half. Usable while adjacent to enemies but risky (Game Marshal may rule the Scrapper also rolls to avoid their own blast on a Dead Trail).

Tactics: Goblins Scappers attack in groups and try not to fight fair. They use Scurry to stay mobile, throw Boom Pebbles at clusters of enemies, and flee toward their Warren if combat turns against them — leading pursuers into prepared traps.

GOBLIN SCRAPPER

Every Goblin settlement produces Scappers — the ones who do the fighting when the Warren needs defending. They are not disciplined soldiers by any measure. They are fast, loud, willing to blow something up at close range if it means winning, and genuinely unafraid of consequences in ways that make them disproportionately dangerous.

Heritage/Type: Humanoid (Goblin) | **Size:** Small

- **HP:** 18
- **Defense Rating:** 13
- **Speed:** 30 ft
- **Challenge Rating:** 1

Attributes:

• Brawn 8 (-1) | Reflexes 16 (+3) | Grit 10 (+0) | Cunning 14 (+2) | Presence 8 (-1) | Oldways 6 (-2)

Skills: Stealth +5, Tinkering +4, Deception +3

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

Special Traits:

TUMBLEWEED HORROR

Nobody knows what animated the first Tumbleweed Horror. The leading theory is a dead grove with a disrupted ley line and a very bad season of wind. Whatever started it, the things have been found as far as two hundred miles from any known dead grove, rolling across the plains on their own business with no apparent awareness that they should not be alive.

Heritage/Type: Plant (animated) | **Size:** Large

- **HP:** 35
- **Defense Rating:** 12
- **Speed:** 40 ft (gains 10 ft additional speed when moving downhill or with a strong wind)
- **Challenge Rating:** 2

Attributes:

• Brawn 14 (+2) | Reflexes 14 (+2) | Grit 14 (+2) | Cunning 2 (-4) | Presence 4 (-3) | Oldways 4 (-3)

Skills: None trained.

Senses: Tremorsense 30 ft (detects vibration through ground contact). Blind beyond this range.

Special Traits:

Mindless: The Tumbleweed Horror cannot be reasoned with, Frightened, or Charmed. It does not sleep or tire.

Razor Construction: Any creature that grapples the Horror or is Grappled by it takes 1d4 slashing damage at the start of their turn from the mass of dried, barbed branches.

Fire Vulnerability: The Horror takes double damage from fire. A source of sustained fire (a torch held to it for a Main Action) sets it alight — it burns for 1d6 fire damage per round until destroyed.

Actions:

Slam (Main Action): Melee attack, +4 to hit, reach 10 ft. Hit: 2d6+2 bludgeoning and slashing damage.

Roll Over (Main Action, Recharge 5–6): The Horror rolls through a straight 30-ft line. Every creature in the path must make a Reflexes Check (DR 13) or take 2d8+2 damage and be knocked Prone. This movement does not trigger Opportunity Strikes.

Tactics: The Horror rolls toward the closest detected vibration and Slams anything it can reach. It has no sense of self-preservation and no preference for targets. Fire is the fastest solution.

STRAW SENTINEL

There are places in the Canyon Lands where the Straw Elves have kept watch for so long that the guardians themselves have become part of the architecture — weathered, still, draped in old cloth and dried grass, so motionless that most travelers mistake them for bundled branches left by a flood. Then the thing turns its hollow head and looks at you, and you understand that you have been being watched since you arrived.

Heritage/Type: Undead (Straw Elf Guardian) | **Size:** Medium

• **HP:** 55

• **Defense Rating:** 15

• **Speed:** 30 ft

• **Challenge Rating:** 4

Attributes:

• Brawn 16 (+3) | Reflexes 12 (+1) | Grit 18 (+4) | Cunning 12 (+1) | Presence 16 (+3) | Oldways 18 (+4)

Skills: Perception +7, Oldways Lore +7, Intimidation +6

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft. Old Ways Attunement — automatically senses all magical activity within 120 ft.

Special Traits:

Undying Frame: The Straw Sentinel is immune to poison damage and disease. It does not need to eat, drink, or breathe. It cannot be reduced below 1 Vitality Point by non-magical damage alone — it takes damage normally but something always holds. Only fire, magical damage, or a Trail Blaze can bring it to zero.

Guardian's Intent: The Sentinel only attacks if a creature enters the sacred site it protects, attempts to remove a relic from the site, or attacks the Sentinel first. If characters leave and take nothing, the Sentinel watches them go.

Ley Channel: While within 60 ft of the ley line it guards, the Sentinel regenerates 3 Vitality Points at the start of each of its turns.

Actions:

Stave Strike (Main Action): Melee attack, +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 2d6+3 bludgeoning damage. The target must make a Grit Check (DR 14) or be knocked back 10 ft.

Warding Gaze (Main Action): One creature within 60 ft must make a Grit Check (DR 15) or be unable to approach within 30 ft of the Sentinel for 1 minute (the creature feels a crushing weight of wrongness in their chest if they try). The creature may repeat the check at the end of each of their turns.

Call the Grove (Main Action, once per scene): The Sentinel calls for reinforcement — 1d4 additional Straw Sentinels emerge from the surrounding terrain over the next 2 rounds if any are within 300 ft.

Tactics: The Sentinel begins with Warding Gaze to deter rather than destroy. It uses Stave Strike only on creatures who advance despite the gaze. It will not pursue beyond 200 ft from the site it guards.

DESERT DEVIL ENFORCER

Desert Devil communities do not have courts. They have Enforcers — individuals who have taken an oath of consequence, sworn to uphold the compact of their people and to answer violations with fire and reckoning. An Enforcer on your trail means someone in your community decided your debt was real enough to send the worst thing they have.

Heritage/Type: Humanoid (Desert Devil) | **Size:** Medium

- **HP:** 52
- **Defense Rating:** 16 (Reinforced Duster + Reflexes)
- **Speed:** 35 ft
- **Challenge Rating:** 4

Attributes:

• Brawn 16 (+3) | Reflexes 14 (+2) | Grit 18 (+4) | Cunning 12 (+1) | Presence 14 (+2) | Oldways 12 (+1)

Skills: Tracking +5, Intimidation +6, Survival +5, Oldways Lore +3

Senses: Standard. Fortune on Perception checks in open desert terrain.

Special Traits:

Wasteland Forged: Immune to extreme heat. Fortune on Grit checks against exhaustion and fear.

Fire-Mark: Once per Short Rest, the Enforcer activates their brand. For 3 rounds, their melee attacks deal an additional 1d6 fire damage.

Oath-Bound Pursuit: The Enforcer has Fortune on all Tracking checks against their designated quarry and cannot be Frightened by that quarry.

Actions:

Revolver (Main Action): Ranged attack, +4 to hit, range 50/150 ft. Hit: 1d8+2 piercing damage. The Enforcer fires

with Silver-Cased rounds (counts as Old Ways silver vs. supernatural creatures).

Brand Strike (Main Action): Melee attack, +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 1d8+3 bludgeoning damage + 1d6 fire damage (if Fire-Mark is active, this becomes 2d6 fire). Target must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 14) or be Marked — they have Misfortune on checks to evade or hide from this Enforcer for 24 hours.

Stand Fast (Bonus Action/Quick Action): The Enforcer braces. Until their next turn, they cannot be knocked Prone, pushed, or moved by forced movement.

Tactics: The Enforcer closes range steadily, using Stand Fast to ignore knockback, activating Fire-Mark for melee engagements. They pursue targets who flee. They do not negotiate during pursuit — only after, if the quarry surrenders.

RATTLEBACK

The Rattleback is not a natural snake. Natural snakes do not grow to twelve feet, develop a chitinous armor plating over their spine, or produce a venom that makes the bitten believe they are living backward through their own life. The Rattleback arrived from somewhere in the deep desert and has been expanding its range ever since. Nobody wants it.

Heritage/Type: Beast (magical origin suspected) | **Size:** Large

- **HP:** 42
- **Defense Rating:** 15 (natural armor)
- **Speed:** 40 ft (climb 20 ft, swim 30 ft)
- **Challenge Rating:** 3

Attributes:

• Brawn 16 (+3) | Reflexes 16 (+3) | Grit 14 (+2) | Cunning 4 (-3) | Presence 6 (-2) | Oldways 6 (-2)

Skills: Stealth +5, Perception +4

Senses: Blindsense 30 ft (heat detection). Darkvision 60 ft.

Special Traits:

Armored Spine: Attacks targeting the Rattleback from directly behind it have Misfortune (the chitinous plates deflect glancing shots).

Rattle Warning: At the start of combat, or when it feels threatened, the Rattleback rattles — all creatures within 60 ft who are not already aware of it must succeed on a Perception check (DR 10) or are Surprised in the first round.

Actions:

Bite (Main Action): Melee attack, +5 to hit, reach 10 ft. Hit: 2d8+3 piercing damage. Target must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 14) or be Poisoned by Hallucination Venom.

Constrict (Main Action, on Grappled target): The Rattleback crushes a creature it has Grappled. Hit: 2d8+3 bludgeoning damage.

Tail Sweep (Quick Action, Recharge 5–6): All creatures within 10 ft behind the Rattleback must succeed on a Reflexes Check (DR 13) or be knocked Prone and pushed 10 ft.

Hallucination Venom: A poisoned creature takes 1d6 psychic damage at the start of each of their turns and has Misfortune on all checks until the poison clears. Each hour, the creature makes a Grit Check (DR 14); three successes clears the poison. While poisoned, the creature perceives time as running backward — the Game Marshal should describe recent events as if they are yet to happen, using past-tense language for the future. This can be played as roleplay texture or used to reveal a short scene from the character's past.

Tactics: The Rattleback uses its Rattle Warning to gain surprise, then Bites the softest-looking target. It Constricts if a target is already Grappled. It retreats underground or into rock if reduced below 15 Vitality Points.

REVENANT GUNSLINGER

Not every debt gets settled before death. Some obligations are heavy enough to drag a person back out of the ground, guns still on their hips, memory fragmentary but purpose intact. The Revenant Gunslinger does not know it is dead. It knows it has

unfinished business. It will keep walking until the account is closed — one way or another.

Heritage/Type: Undead | **Size:** Medium

- **HP:** 60
- **Defense Rating:** 14
- **Speed:** 30 ft
- **Challenge Rating:** 5

Attributes:

• Brawn 16 (+3) | Reflexes 18 (+4) | Grit 20 (+5) | Cunning 10 (+0) | Presence 12 (+1) | Oldways 10 (+0)

Skills: Deadeye +7, Intimidation +4, Perception +5

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft. Can always sense the location of the person (or persons) to whom its debt relates, regardless of distance.

Special Traits:

Undying Resolve: When the Revenant reaches 0 Vitality Points, it makes a Grit Check (DR 15). On success, it rises at 1 VP at the start of its next turn. It can do this twice before staying down — on the third 0 VP, it is destroyed. Silver-cased rounds prevent the Undying Resolve from triggering.

Deathly Accuracy: The Revenant never rolls with Misfortune on ranged attacks. Any penalties that would impose Misfortune are instead ignored.

One Foot in the Grave: The Revenant is immune to Frightened and Charmed. Poison and disease do nothing to it.

Actions:

Revolver Shot (Main Action): Ranged attack, +7 to hit, range 50/150 ft. Hit: 1d8+4 piercing damage.

The Draw (Main Action, Recharge 5–6): The Revenant draws and fires in a single motion too fast for the eye to follow. It makes two Revolver Shot attacks with Fortune on both. If either hits, the target cannot take reactions until the start of the Revenant's next turn.

Grasping Pull (Quick Action): The Revenant points at a creature within 30 ft and crooks its finger. The target must make a Grit Check (DR 14) or be pulled 10 ft toward the Revenant as cold compulsion drags at them.

Tactics: The Revenant walks straight toward its debt-target with no attempt at cover, using Deathly Accuracy to fire through obstacles. When The Draw recharges, it uses it immediately. If someone who is not its debtor steps between them, the Revenant pauses — it does not want collateral deaths, only resolution. This pause can be exploited.

LEY WYRM

Ley Wyrms live inside ley lines the way fish live in rivers — they are native to the current, shaped by it, feeding on magical overflow. They are not hostile by nature. They are territorial, proprietary, and deeply resentful of anything that disrupts their home. Disrupting a ley line, as settlers frequently do through excavation and construction, sends the Wyrms out of its channel and into the world above, furious and disoriented.

Heritage/Type: Magical Beast | **Size:** Huge

- **HP:** 78
- **Defense Rating:** 16
- **Speed:** 30 ft (burrow 60 ft through earth and rock; cannot climb)
- **Challenge Rating:** 6

Attributes:

• Brawn 20 (+5) | Reflexes 12 (+1) | Grit 16 (+3) | Cunning 10 (+0) | Presence 8 (-1) | Oldways 18 (+4)

Skills: Perception +6, Oldways Lore +7

Senses: Tremorsense 120 ft. Ley Sense — the Wyrms automatically knows the location and current state of every ley line within 5 miles.

Special Traits:

Magic Disruption Field: All magical effects within 60 ft of the Ley Wyrms are degraded. Oldways Point costs for spells increase by 1 within this range. Hexblade spell-bullets fired within this range must succeed on an Oldways Trail Roll (DR 13) or the spell effect fails (normal damage still applies).

Ley Channel Body: The Ley Wyrms' attacks count as magical. Damage it deals ignores resistance.

Earth-Bound: The Ley Wyrms cannot enter or function in structures — it is too large and too connected to open ground.

Actions:

Ley Surge (Main Action): Melee attack, +7 to hit, reach 15 ft. Hit: 3d8+5 force damage. Any ongoing magical effect on the target must succeed on an Oldways Check (DR 15) or end immediately.

Burrow Strike (Main Action): The Wyrms submerges and resurfaces under a target within 30 ft. This is a melee attack (+7 to hit) that deals 2d10+5 bludgeoning damage. The target must succeed on a Reflexes Check (DR 15) or be knocked Prone and buried to the waist in upheaved earth (Restrained, Brawn Check DR 15 to escape as a Main Action).

Ley Pulse (Main Action, Recharge 5–6): The Wyrms releases a burst of raw ley energy in a 30-ft radius. All creatures in range take 4d8 force damage (Grit Check DR 15 for half). Any spell currently being Concentrated on by a creature in range immediately ends.

Tactics: The Ley Wyrms Burrow Strikes the most magically active character first (it perceives magical signatures as scent), then Ley Surges to end ongoing effects. It retreats underground if the ley line it lives in is calmed or repaired — at that point, it stops fighting and sinks away.

IRON SCARECROW

The Iron Scarecrow was built by an inventor whose name nobody remembers to guard a homestead that no longer exists. At some point the instructions degraded, the target parameters expanded, and the thing decided that everything within a mile radius was a threat to the homestead. It has been expanding its perimeter for about thirty years. The homestead rotted away in fifteen.

Heritage/Type: Construct | **Size:** Large

- **HP:** 65
- **Defense Rating:** 17 (iron plating)
- **Speed:** 30 ft

• **Challenge Rating:** 5

Attributes:

• Brawn 20 (+5) | Reflexes 10 (+0) | Grit 18 (+4) | Cunning 4 (-3) | Presence 4 (-3) | Oldways 2 (-4)

Skills: Perception +5

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft. The Iron Scarecrow can detect the heat signatures of living creatures within 60 ft regardless of cover or darkness.

Special Traits:

Constructed Resilience: The Iron Scarecrow is immune to poison damage, disease, Frightened, Charmed, and Stunned. It does not need to breathe or sleep.

Berserk Logic: If the Iron Scarecrow takes more than 20 damage in a single round, its threat-targeting system malfunctions — it attacks the nearest creature (ally or enemy) for 1 round before resetting.

Armor Plating: Scatter weapons deal half damage to the Iron Scarecrow.

Actions:

Iron Fist (Main Action): Melee attack, +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 2d10+5 bludgeoning damage.

Screech Alarm (Main Action, once per combat): The Scarecrow activates its alarm system — a shrieking mechanical tone audible for a quarter mile. All creatures within 30 ft must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 13) or be Stunned for 1 round. The alarm also signals any creatures the Scarecrow has "deputized" (Game Marshal determines if any exist in range).

Haymaker (Main Action, Recharge 5–6): The Scarecrow winds up and delivers a devastating blow. Melee attack, +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 4d10+5 bludgeoning damage. The target is knocked back 20 ft and must succeed on a Reflexes Check (DR 15) or land Prone.

Weakness: A character who can access the Scarecrow's control panel (located in the back of its neck, requiring a Cunning Trail Roll DR 16 to locate and DR 18 to access while it fights) can attempt to shut it down as a full Main Action. On success, the Scarecrow deactivates.

Tactics: The Iron Scarecrow advances on the nearest detected creature, uses Screech Alarm immediately, then Haymakers anything still standing. It pursues fleeing targets to the edge of its designated perimeter (now approximately one mile from where the homestead used to be) and then stops, watching.

BANDIT KING

Every major bandit outfit on the Frontier has one — a Bandit King or Queen who holds the crew together through some combination of fear, respect, and occasional demonstrated genius. They are not always the fastest gun or the strongest fighter. They are always the one who survives longest, plans best, and knows exactly when to walk away from a fight and when to stay.

Heritage/Type: Humanoid (Human) | **Size:** Medium

• **HP:** 68

• **Defense Rating:** 15 (Reinforced Duster)

• **Speed:** 30 ft

• **Challenge Rating:** 5

Attributes:

• Brawn 14 (+2) | Reflexes 16 (+3) | Grit 16 (+3) | Cunning 18 (+4) | Presence 18 (+4) | Oldways 8 (-1)

Skills: Deadeye +6, Persuasion +7, Deception +7, Survival +5, Perception +5

Senses: Standard.

Special Traits:

Tactical Command: Once per round as a Free Action, the Bandit King can issue an order to an allied creature within 60 ft that can hear them. The ally immediately gains Fortune on their next Trail Roll.

Calling on Luck: Once per scene, the Bandit King may reroll any one die and take the new result.

Relentless (Human trait): When the Bandit King reaches 0 Vitality Points for the first time in a scene, they remain standing with 1 VP and may take one additional full round of actions before collapsing.

Actions:

Twin Revolvers (Main Action): Two ranged attacks (one per revolver), +6 to hit each, range 40/120 ft. Hit: 1d8+3 piercing damage each.

Covering Fire (Main Action): The Bandit King lays down suppressive fire, targeting a 15-ft square area within 80 ft. Any creature that moves through or acts within that area before the Bandit King's next turn must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 14) or drop Prone.

Get Out of There (Quick Action, once per scene): The Bandit King shouts an order — all allied creatures within 60 ft who can hear may immediately move up to 15 ft as a Free Action, without triggering Opportunity Strikes.

Tactics: The Bandit King never fights alone if they can help it — Tactical Command is most effective when they have 4+ allies in play. They use Covering Fire to pin the most dangerous enemy, then direct allies with Tactical Command. They know when the fight is lost and will use Get Out of There to extract their crew before attempting the same themselves.

Skills: Deception +9, Perception +6, Stealth +7, Oldways Lore +5

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft. The Skinwalker can sense a creature's grief or longing for the dead within 300 ft without a roll.

Special Traits:

Assume Form: The Skinwalker can take the form of any creature it has observed for at least 1 hour, or any deceased person whose remains it has touched. In assumed form, it perfectly replicates physical appearance, voice, and mannerisms. It also retains access to general knowledge and demeanor (not specific memories, but convincing behavioral patterns). A creature who knew the person well may make a Cunning Check (DR 20) to notice the wrongness — on a fail, the Skinwalker passes inspection. The check is at Fortune if the observer has seen a Skinwalker before.

Unsettle: Any creature that correctly identifies the Skinwalker for what it is must make a Grit Check (DR 14) or be Frightened of it for 1 minute.

Shed Form: As a Quick Action, the Skinwalker may drop its assumed form and return to its true appearance (tall, grey-skinned, with wide pale eyes and too many joints in its fingers). In true form, its Defense Rating rises to 17.

Actions:

Knife Strike (Main Action): Melee attack, +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. Hit: 2d6+4 piercing damage. The Skinwalker can make this attack while in assumed form — it appears to be an embrace that goes wrong.

Mimicry Shock (Main Action): The Skinwalker speaks a line of specific, personal information — something the deceased person knew — directly to a creature within 30 ft who loved the deceased. That creature must succeed on a Grit Check (DR 16) or be Stunned for 1 round as the emotional impact overwhelms their judgment.

Fade and Reform (Quick Action, Recharge 5–6): The Skinwalker melts out of its current form and reappears in a new one within 30 ft — a different form, or the same one resituated. During the 5-ft space between departure and arrival, it cannot be targeted.

THE SKINWALKER

The Frontier has stories about the Skinwalker the way the sea has stories about deep water things — in different words, across a thousand miles, they all say the same. It takes the shape of someone you have lost. It knows what they knew. It sounds exactly right. The only tell is the eyes — they are correct in color, correct in shape, but the warmth is slightly wrong, like a fire seen through thick glass.

Heritage/Type: Shapeshifter (classification contested) | **Size:** Medium

- **HP:** 85
- **Defense Rating:** 15 (variable)
- **Speed:** 40 ft
- **Challenge Rating:** 7

Attributes:

• Brawn 14 (+2) | Reflexes 18 (+4) | Grit 16 (+3) | Cunning 20 (+5) | Presence 20 (+5) | Oldways 14 (+2)

Tactics: The Skinwalker does not engage in direct combat until forced to. It uses its assumed form to get close to isolated characters, using *Mimicry Shock* to stun them before striking. When the deception is broken, it Sheds Form and attacks directly, prioritizing whoever it identifies as the most significant emotional threat to its hunting ground.

End of Chapter 9 -- Bestiary

Chapter 10: *Running the Frontier* provides the Game Marshal with guidance for building campaigns, handling the unique pressures of the Wild Frontier setting, and creating memorable sessions at every table.



CHAPTER X

RUNNING THE FRONTIER

"The Frontier does not have heroes. It has survivors who made good choices, and survivors who got lucky, and the people who tell stories about both. Your job is to give them something worth surviving." — Notes from the desk of a Game Marshal, singed at one corner

The Game Marshal does not play to win. The Frontier is not your adversary and the Posse is not your enemy. You are the voice of a world that is indifferent, unpredictable, and occasionally magnificent — a world that will grind characters down and lift them up and never once stop for a second. When the time comes for when the road gets interesting, a town generator for when the Posse rides somewhere new, the factions that drive the Frontier's politics, guidance on advancement, and a set of downtime rules for the time between the shooting.

10.1 THE GAME MARSHAL'S ROLE

The Game Marshal describes the world, gives voice to every NPC, sets the consequences of the Posse's choices, and presents obstacles that have no predetermined solution. The Posse drives the story. Your job is to make sure the world responds.

Three things to keep in mind:

There are no good guys. Every faction on the Frontier has a reason. The Iron Rail Company is not evil – it is profitable, and that has made it ruthless. The Dustwalkers are not heroes – they are desperate, and that has made them dangerous. The Oath-Bound believe entirely in what they are doing, and so do the people they are hunting. Play each side as if they believe they are right, because on the Frontier, most of them are.

Balance the three pillars. A session that is nothing but combat will exhaust your players. A session that is nothing but social encounters will lose them. A session that is nothing but wilderness travel will bore everyone including you. Aim for a mix of Exploration, Social, and Combat – not necessarily equal proportions each session, but across a few sessions, all three should have had moments that mattered.

End on something. A session that ends at a moment of tension – a revelation, a cliffhanger, an unresolved confrontation with a ticking fuse – keeps players thinking about the game until they sit down again. End on resolution when that resolution opens a new door. The Frontier is a continuous story, and every session should feel like a chapter rather than an episode.

A note on pacing: The Frontier rewards the slow burn. A villain who is introduced as a distant threat in the first session and not confronted until the fifth hits differently than one who arrives in session three and is dealt with in session four. Let things breathe. Let the Posse get attached to places and people before the world threatens them.

10.2 ENCOUNTER TABLES

When the Posse travels between locations, rolls a Dead Trail on a navigation check, or when the session needs an unexpected complication, use these tables. Roll d12 for the

appropriate terrain.

A result of 1-3 is a threat or hazard. A result of 4-7 is an ambiguous encounter that could go multiple directions. A result of 8-12 is a find, a person, or an event that enriches the world without necessarily starting a fight. Adjust based on the tone you need.

Open Plains Encounters (d12)

Roll	Encounter
1	A mounted bandit outrider spots the Posse from a distance – if not dealt with quickly, they ride back to signal a larger gang (1d4+2 riders arrive in three rounds).
2	A flash flood chases down a dry wash – the Posse has two rounds to reach high ground or be swept 1d6×10 feet and take 2d6 bludgeoning damage.
3	Three Tumbleweed Horrors rolling with unusual purpose – directly toward the Posse, as if called.
4	A wounded Desert Devil, alone, on foot. Will not explain why or ask for help. Will accept it silently.
5	The Posse finds a freshly dug grave with no marker and a camp nearby that was broken in haste.
6	A government survey crew – four workers and one pompous official – mapping territory for a yet-undisclosed purpose. They are nervous and evasive.
7	The bleached skeleton of a very large animal that has no counterpart in any natural history the Posse knows. Examination reveals it is fresh – dead within the week.
8	A traveling preacher with a wagon full of printed pamphlets and a story about a vision in the Ashfield. The vision sounds plausible and terrible.
9	A pocket of unusually green grass in the pale plains – a secret water source beneath the surface. Worth 50c in trade if the Posse can identify and record the location.
10	A Straw Elf standing still on a rise, watching the Posse pass. Does not speak. Does not follow. Leaves a carved marker in the road behind them.
11	A loose horse with full saddlebags, no rider, and a blood trail that goes cold after a quarter mile. Worth 150c as a riding horse; the bags contain 30c in coin and a sealed letter.
12	A beautiful, still afternoon, a view that goes on for a hundred miles, and no danger whatsoever. The Game Marshal describes it with care. These moments matter.

Canyon/Badlands Encounters (d12)

Roll	Encounter
1	Goblin scouts — 1d4+1 Scrappers — have the canyon approach locked down and have already chosen their fields of fire. They want toll, not blood. How much depends on the Posse's apparent wealth.
2	A rockslide is triggered (by weight, by old damage, or by something that intended it) — the Posse has one round to Dash clear or take 3d8 bludgeoning damage and be Buried (Restrained, 2d6 damage per round, Brawn DR 16 to dig out).
3	A ley line disturbance — the earth is trembling slightly and small rocks drift upward an inch then fall back. Anyone with Oldways (trained) knows this is bad. The Game Marshal has an event ready.
4	A Desert Devil patrol of three Enforcers, escorting a bound prisoner to a Clan tribunal. They are not hostile unless provoked. They will not release the prisoner. Whether the prisoner deserves release is a matter of perspective.
5	A Goblin engineer working alone on a rope bridge across a canyon gap. She is behind schedule, out of rope, and would trade almost anything for twelve feet of wire-core and a willing extra set of hands.
6	The entrance to a small ruin — a Stonework Empire door half-buried in the canyon wall, sealed but recently disturbed. Someone opened it, went in, and did not come back out.
7	Evidence of a recent ambush: three dead horses, a smashed wagon, and tracks going in four different directions. One set of tracks leads deeper into the canyon.
8	A cave painting — Old World, detailed, depicting a map of the surrounding canyon network and marking three locations with a sigil neither Straw Elf lore nor Lore checks can immediately identify.
9	A hot spring in a protected alcove. Taking a Short Rest here recovers an additional 1d6 VP. A Straw Elf elder has been bathing here for decades and arrives within the hour. They are civil about sharing if asked.
10	A Goblin market operating out of a dead-end canyon — six stalls, a dozen traders, and anything the Posse might want at 150% of standard cost. Cash only. No questions about origin.
11	Ancient runes carved at regular intervals along the canyon wall, counting down from 200. Whatever they are marking, the Posse finds the terminus: a sealed iron door in the rock face, cold to the touch.
12	A Canyon Cougar watching the Posse from a ledge thirty feet up. It has been following them for two hours. It is not hunting. It appears to be curious. It will follow for another day before disappearing. Whether it was scouting for something else is left to the Game Marshal.

Ghost Town Encounters (d12)

Roll	Encounter
1	A pack of 1d4+2 Dust Wraiths, still haunting their claims, their grief sharpened by the silence. They attack anything warm that enters their streets.
2	Rival treasure hunters — four armed and unfriendly — have already staked the most promising building. They consider the Posse competition.
3	A building that appears intact and occupied: fire in the hearth, food on the table, chairs pulled out as if someone just stood up. No one is present. No tracks lead in or out. The fire is cold.
4	A trapped vault beneath the old assay office. Whoever locked it last sealed themselves in. The bones inside suggest they had a week's worth of supplies. The vault still contains: 120c in coin, two specialty ammunition crates, and a journal.
5	A Straw Elf Adrift who has been using the ghost town as a watching post. She knows every corner of it and will trade information about the region for news of the outside world — something she genuinely misses.
6	Strange magic pooling in the old saloon. Every mirror shows a reflection that is slightly wrong — not a different image, just delayed. By about three seconds. Touching a mirror triggers a Wild Surge roll for whoever touches it.
7	A Revenant Gunslinger walking the main street, still looking for the person who wronged them. That person is long dead. The Revenant does not know this. Telling it is difficult and may not end the haunting.
8	An intact medicine chest in the abandoned doctor's office: 2d4 doses of Grit Tonic (basic) and one Old Ways Poultice, dusty but functional.
9	A Dog — just a dog, old and one-eyed, living in the ruins. It knows something is wrong here and will follow the Posse if they feed it. It will bark before any ghost encounter, giving the Posse one round of warning.
10	A family of settlers — parents, three children — who have moved into the ghost town and begun farming the edges. They are fully aware of the undead problem and have developed a very specific set of rules for avoiding it. They want the Posse gone before dark.
11	A sealed safe in the sheriff's old office. Combination unknown. Inside: a badge, 45c, and a photograph of three people. One of them is someone the Posse has met.
12	The whole town, normal and quiet and faintly luminous in the late afternoon light, and the Game Marshal sitting back and letting the Posse look at it and feel what it means that places like this exist. Then a door creaks open on its own.

10.3 TOWN GENERATOR

Use this system when the Posse rides into a new settlement you have not prepared. Five tables combine to produce a living frontier town in under five minutes.

Step 1 – Size: Roll d6 to determine the settlement's scale.

d6	Size	Population
1	Hamlet	20–50 people; a cluster of buildings at a crossroads or water source
2	Crossroads Stop	50–120; a staging post with a saloon, a general store, and a stable
3	Settlement	120–400; has a marshal or deputy, a church or meeting house, permanent residents
4	Town	400–1,200; organized, with elected or appointed leadership, a jail, multiple trades
5	Boomtown	1,200–4,000; growing fast, politically volatile, three competing interests at minimum
6	Frontier City	4,000+; significant infrastructure, multiple factions, a newspaper, a telegraph station

Step 2 – Primary Industry: Roll d8.

d8	Industry	What It Means for the Town
1	Mining	Claims, assay office, wages paid in dust; violence over competing claims is routine
2	Cattle	Stockyards, trail bosses, seasonal rhythms; calmer than a mine town but not peaceful
3	Trade	Caravans, merchants, diverse population; information flows here; everyone has something to sell
4	Refuge	Founded by people fleeing something – persecution, debt, a disaster; protective, insular, wary
5	Military Outpost	Soldiers, discipline, a commanding officer with an agenda; supplies are here, questions are not welcome
6	Ley Site	Built near or over something magical; strange phenomena are common; Old Ways practitioners are drawn here

d8	Industry	What It Means for the Town
7	Outlaw Haven	The law does not reach here; the Dustwalker charter applies; safety is a transaction
8	Ghost Town Revival	Something brought people back to a dying place; the original problem may not be resolved

Step 3 – Notable Feature or Building: Roll d10.

d10	Feature
1	The saloon has a name with a story behind it – ask the barkeep if you want the version they tell strangers
2	A marshal's office with a full board of wanted posters, several of which may look familiar
3	An apothecary run by someone with more knowledge than they should have gotten in any ordinary way
4	A Goblin market operating out of a repurposed stable – three cramped stalls and a lot of unasked questions
5	A church of old ways, tended by someone who is not what they appear
6	An undertaker who does a brisk business and has learned things about the local dead that no one else knows
7	A rail depot, operating or planned – and the surveyors are making enemies as fast as they arrive
8	A notice board with missing persons flyers, job postings, bounties, and at least one thing that does not make sense
9	A locked building that everyone in town agrees is none of their business and everyone has a different reason for that agreement
10	A well in the town center that runs deep enough to touch a ley line – the water tastes faintly of iron and those who drink it sometimes dream of the Old World

Step 4 – Current Trouble: Roll d6.

d6	Trouble
1	A water dispute between two landowners has been building for a month and is about to become a shooting dispute
2	A gang has moved in on the town's trade and is demanding protection money; the marshal is outgunned
3	Something has been moving in the streets at night and three people have gone missing
4	A prominent citizen has vanished under circumstances that do not line up; the official explanation is wrong
5	Two competing claims on a valuable resource – a mine, a water source, a ruin – are about to become a range war

d6	Trouble
6	A sickness is spreading through the quarter where the newest arrivals are housed, and no one is sure whether it is natural or Old Ways in origin

Step 5 – Notable NPC: Roll d6 for the most memorable person the Posse meets on arrival.

d6	NPC
1	An old prospector who has been here longer than the town, knows where all the bodies are buried (sometimes literally), and will tell you what you need to know for the price of a drink and an honest listen
2	A traveling preacher who arrived three weeks ago and has been asking questions that do not match their stated business
3	A retired gunfighter running the stable – left that life behind by choice, watched it follow them here, hoping it does not follow the Posse
4	A Goblin tinkerer who fixes everything mechanical in town and charges fair rates because they need the goodwill to run the less legal side of their operation
5	A Straw Elf wanderer who takes up space in the back corner of the saloon, drinks nothing, and watches everything – has been here for three months and has not explained why
6	A Desert Devil exile – unwelcome at home for reasons they will not discuss – working the most dangerous jobs in town, calm as a stone, with a brand on their arm that anyone with Oldways Lore recognizes as a Broken Oath mark

Putting it together: A Boomtown (5) built on Trade (3), featuring a Goblin market and a locked building no one will explain, currently dealing with a water dispute (1) and presided over by a traveling preacher with unclear motives – that is a specific, playable town in four dice rolls. Give it a name. Describe the smell of the main street. Let the Posse walk into it.

10.4 FACTIONS OF THE FRONTIER

These five organizations move through the Wild Frontier like weather systems – not always visible from the ground, but they are why things are the way they are. Each can be an antagonist, an employer, an uneasy ally, or background pressure that shapes every situation without ever arriving directly.

The Iron Rail Company

“Progress is the word they use. Progress means the rails go where they decide. And where the rails go, everything else follows – including the trouble.”

The Iron Rail Company is the most powerful single organization on the Frontier – a private corporation backed by distant investors and fronted by regional managers who have the authority to hire, bribe, or remove any obstacle in the rail line's path. They are pushing west. They are behind schedule. They do not care what is in the way.

Goals: Complete the Western Spur rail line on schedule. Secure land rights by any means available – purchase, pressure, or displacement. Discover and exploit any Old Ways resources (ley lines, ruins, magical artifacts) that increase yield or reduce construction costs.

Methods: Official contracts and unofficial muscle. Hired Gunslingers for camp security. Political influence in larger towns. Railroad agents who dress well and speak softly and communicate with the main office by telegraph. When diplomacy fails, they send someone who does not dress well and does not speak at all.

Notable NPC – Director Harlan Voss: The regional director is a compact, well-dressed man in his fifties with a talent for making problems sound like opportunities and opportunities sound like inevitabilities. He is not cruel. He is thorough. He knows the Posse's names before they know his.

As Antagonists: The Company is displacing someone the Posse cares about. Or running rail through a sacred site. Or the site of the mine the Posse just cleared has been claimed by a rail agent who filed the paperwork before the Posse filed theirs.

As Allies: The Company pays well and can provide resources, safe passage through its territory, and information about what lies further west. The price is that you are working for people whose values will eventually conflict with yours.

The Dustwalkers

"Authority? Sure. You show me where authority ends and the desert begins and we'll have a conversation."

The Dustwalkers are not an army and not a gang and not a government. They are a loose confederation of free folk — outlaws, deserters, Frontier refugees, escaped indentured workers, exiles, and idealists — who have decided that the structures other people built do not apply to them. Their only shared rule is the charter: no one owns another person, no authority reaches past the edge of the settlement, and debts are honored unless they were owed to someone who did not honor theirs.

Goals: Maintain the free territories — the uncharted ground beyond settlement edges — as genuinely ungoverned space. Resist the Iron Rail Company's encroachment. Protect Dustwalker communities from marshals, bounty hunters, and anyone else with a badge and an agenda.

Methods: Raids against rail survey crews. Safe houses for people on the run. Information networks that move faster than telegraph lines. Occasional targeted violence against specific individuals who have made themselves enemies of the free territories.

Notable NPC — Della Ash: The closest thing the Dustwalkers have to a leader is a compact, sun-weathered Human woman in her late thirties who rode with three different outlaw gangs before deciding she was done following men who didn't deserve to be followed. She operates out of the badlands, communicates through intermediaries, and is more careful than anyone who has never dealt with her would expect.

As Antagonists: The Posse is working for someone the Dustwalkers consider an enemy. Or a Dustwalker crew has raided something the Posse was responsible for protecting. Or someone in the Posse is a bounty target, and the Dustwalkers are protecting the mark.

As Allies: The Dustwalkers know the free territories better than anyone. If you need to get somewhere without leaving a trail, if you need a safe house, or if you need to understand what is actually happening in the unmapped country, Della Ash's network is the answer.

The Oath-Bound

"They asked us to witness the covenant. We witnessed it. Now you ask us to forget it. We are not asking you anything."

The Oath-Bound are Desert Devil honor-warriors who have dedicated themselves to enforcing the ancient pacts that governed resource rights, territorial agreements, and sacred site protections across the Frontier before any current map was drawn. They are not law enforcement. They are covenant enforcement — and the covenants they enforce predate the current government by centuries.

Goals: Preserve the terms of original land agreements against encroachment by settlers, corporations, and anyone else who benefits from ignoring them. Ensure Desert Devil sacred sites remain inviolate. Pursue those who have violated sworn oaths with an intensity that does not diminish with time or distance.

Methods: The Oath-Bound operate in small teams of three to five, always with a designated Witness whose sole role is to record what happens. They first issue a formal warning. Then they enforce. They are not quick to violence but they are not slow to it either, and when they commit, they commit completely.

Notable NPC — Speaker-at-Fire Naleth: An elder Oath-Bound Witness in his sixties, Naleth is missing the ring finger of his right hand — burned off in the oath-fire when he took his covenant forty years ago. He is patient, precise, and entirely without malice. He will tell you exactly what is going to happen before it happens. He expects you to make better choices than the ones that led to this moment.

As Antagonists: The Posse has been hired to do something that violates a covenant. Or a member of the Posse broke an oath — even one made casually — and Naleth's team is tracking them to hold it to account.

As Allies: If the Posse's goals align with covenant preservation — protecting a sacred site, opposing the Rail Company's incursion, or seeking out a covenant violator — the Oath-Bound are among the most formidable and reliable allies on the Frontier.

The Hollow Church

"They preach about the dangers of the Old Ways every Sunday and then on Monday they use those same Old Ways to make sure

Sunday's congregation comes back."

The Hollow Church presents itself as a religious order dedicated to protecting frontier communities from the dangerous and unpredictable power of the Old Ways. They warn against Hexwork. They lobby for laws restricting Straw Elf presence near settlements. They publish pamphlets explaining why ley lines are a threat to decent people.

They are also, quietly, one of the most active Hexwork organizations on the Frontier.

Goals: Discredit and displace traditional Old Ways practitioners — Straw Elves especially — as competitors. Centralize access to Old Ways power under the Church's control. Expand the Church's territorial influence by positioning themselves as the only trustworthy magical authority.

Methods: Public preaching and community organizing. Political pressure and strategic generosity (the Church funds hospitals and schools). Behind the scenes: hexwork espionage, strategic use of Old Ways artifacts, and the elimination of people who have figured out too much.

Notable NPC — Confessor Miriam Slate: The regional Confessor is a tall, angular woman in her fifties with a sincere belief that what she is doing is right. She has convinced herself the ends justify the means so thoroughly that she no longer experiences the contradiction. She is also, genuinely, a gifted healer, and the communities she serves are better off than they were before she arrived. This is the uncomfortable part.

As Antagonists: The Church is targeting someone the Posse cares about — a Straw Elf ally, a Hexblade character, a community that has been helped by Old Ways practitioners. Or the Posse has stumbled onto the Hollow Church's actual operation and needs to figure out what to do with the knowledge.

As Allies: The Church has resources, community trust, and access to information about the Old Ways that is genuine even if their motives for gathering it are not. A cautious arrangement may be mutually useful — until it isn't.

The Scavenger's Collective

"You think you found it. Cute. We found it three weeks ago. We found it, catalogued it, and decided to see who came looking."

The Scavenger's Collective is a Goblin trade network operating across every region of the Frontier — the largest and most organized information brokerage and artifact market in the known world. They know where things are buried. They know who is looking for what. They know the value of everything they touch, and they never touch anything they have not already assessed.

Goals: Maintain and expand the most comprehensive catalog of frontier resources, ruins, and artifacts. Control the flow of certain rare goods and the information needed to find them. Avoid direct conflict with larger powers while ensuring those powers need the Collective too much to destroy it.

Methods: A network of Goblin scouts, warrens-level intelligence gathering, encrypted courier systems, and the Collective Archive — a distributed record kept in pieces across dozens of hidden Goblin caches, no single one of which contains the full picture.

Notable NPC — Archivist Cobb Three-Hands: Cobb is a Goblin in late middle age, missing the three rightmost fingers of his left hand (a story he tells differently every time), wearing spectacles so thick they make his eyes look wrong, and carrying two notebooks simultaneously. He speaks very fast and knows more about what is under the Frontier's surface than any non-Goblin has ever been told in a single conversation.

As Antagonists: The Collective has decided the Posse is poaching from their catalog. Or something the Posse found belongs to a client who paid the Collective for it first. Or the Collective has information the Posse needs and their asking price is something the Posse is not sure they are willing to pay.

As Allies: If you want to know where something is, what it is worth, or who else is looking for it — talk to Cobb. The price is fair and the information is accurate. The Collective's reliability is the whole product.

10.5 XP, LEVELING, AND MILESTONES

Awarding Trail Marks

Trail Marks (TM) are the currency of advancement. Award them after each session or at meaningful story moments. The Game Marshal is the final word on how many Trail Marks a session was worth.

Suggested Trail Mark Awards:

Achievement	Trail Marks
Defeating a challenging combat encounter (CR equal to party Notch)	2–3 TM
Completing a significant quest objective	2–4 TM
Meaningful roleplay — a character moment that advances the story or reveals character	1–2 TM
Major discovery (ruin found, faction secret uncovered, significant piece of lore)	1–2 TM
Outstanding creative problem-solving that avoided violence or defused a crisis	2–3 TM
Surviving a near-death experience	1 TM
Good session overall — everyone had fun	1 TM

A typical session should yield 3–6 Trail Marks per character. Advancement should feel earned but not glacial.

Milestone Leveling

For groups who prefer narrative pacing over tracking, use Milestone Leveling. Characters advance to the next Notch when they complete a significant story arc — the end of a major investigation, the resolution of a faction conflict, a personal character goal achieved. Milestones should feel like something changed, not just something ended.

Milestone Leveling works best in campaigns with a strong central narrative arc. Trail Mark tracking works better in more open-world campaigns where the Posse sets their own agenda.

The Feel of Each Tier

Tier 1 (Notches 1–4): Local Heroes The Posse is capable but fragile. They are dealing with local problems — a specific gang, a specific haunting, a specific injustice. They have a reputation in one or two towns. Enemies underestimate them. The Frontier is big and strange and full of things that are too much for them, and they are learning which things those are.

Tier 2 (Notches 5–8): Regional Legends The Posse's name travels ahead of them. Factions are approaching them with significant jobs. The problems they are solving have regional consequences — a railroad threat, a Dustwalker alliance, an Old Ways catastrophe building beneath several towns at once. Enemies prepare before meeting them.

Tier 3 (Notches 9–10): Frontier Myths The Posse has become something the Frontier tells stories about. The problems they face are existential — a Ley Wyrm nest destabilizing three counties, a Hollow Church conspiracy reaching into the capital, a Skinwalker colony moving into a major boomtown. They are shaping what the Frontier will be, not just surviving it.

10.6 DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Between sessions — or when the story reaches a period of relative calm — characters can pursue downtime activities. Each activity requires a minimum of three days and a Trail Roll to produce full results. Partial results occur on a failure; the Game Marshal narrates the outcome.

Carousing The character spends coin on drink, company, gambling, and reputation-building. They roll Presence (Persuasion or Performance) against DR 12.

Success: They gain one useful contact in the town (a named NPC who owes them a minor favor), hear one piece of regional gossip that is true and relevant, and earn Fortune on all social Trail Rolls in this settlement for the next session.

Failure: They spend the coin anyway, gain one piece of gossip that is partially wrong in an interesting way, and wake up having made one unclear promise they do not fully remember.

Cost: 15c minimum. Additional spending (up to 50c) grants Fortune on the roll.

Crafting The character builds or repairs something — ammunition, a gadget, a piece of gear. Requires a Tinkerer's Kit or equivalent tools and raw materials (cost varies).

Success: The item is completed to spec. Standard ammunition crafting produces 20 rounds per day of work; gadget crafting produces one device per two days; specialty items require full work time.

Failure: Materials are consumed but the item is flawed — it works, but the Game Marshal secretly tracks one failure that will happen at an inconvenient moment.

Governing attribute: Cunning (Tinkering). DR 10 for standard items, DR 14 for specialty.

Training The character focuses on developing a skill they are not yet trained in, or deepening existing training. Requires a trainer (an NPC who is trained in that skill) or relevant practice materials. Cost: 10c per day for a trainer.

Success: At the end of the downtime period, the character gains one Skill Rank increase (untrained to trained, or trained to expert — the full advancement Trail Mark cost is still paid from the character's TM pool, but the training removes the narrative requirement to have practiced).

Failure: Progress is slower. The character gains Fortune on their next Trail Roll to learn that skill in a live situation, representing the practice paying off under pressure.

Working The character takes legitimate employment for the duration of the downtime period. Pays according to the standard wages table (5–12c per day for unskilled to skilled labor; 25–100c for dangerous Gunslinger work).

No roll required. The coin arrives. Something may also arrive with it — a job contact, a piece of local information, or a complication the Game Marshal has been holding.

Researching The character spends time in a library, archive, Goblin record cache, or speaking with knowledgeable NPCs to learn something specific. Requires access to a source of information and time.

Success: The character learns what they were looking for, plus one additional related detail they were not. This is a legitimate game resource — the Game Marshal provides true, usable information.

Failure: They find partial information — enough to know the shape of what they do not know, which is sometimes more useful than it sounds.

Governing attribute: Cunning (Lore or Investigation, depending on subject). DR 12 for known subjects, DR 16 for obscure history, DR 20 for things most people do not want found.

Healing A character who has a Mechanical Scar from a recent session spends downtime under the care of a qualified healer (requires Medicine trained or an NPC healer in the settlement).

Success: One Mechanical Scar is downgraded — a permanent penalty is reduced or transformed into a narrative-only scar with no mechanical weight.

Cost: 20–50c for healer fees, depending on severity and the settlement's resources. A Long Rest is not sufficient for Mechanical Scar recovery — this requires dedicated, extended care.

Building Reputation The character performs acts — publicly, with witnesses — designed to shape how the settlement perceives them. This can mean standing up for someone, performing an act of obvious skill, or intervening in a public dispute.

Success: The character gains Reputation in that settlement: NPCs treat them as a known and respected figure. Fortune on Presence checks with locals. The Game Marshal should also note one NPC who now has a reason

to approach the character with work.

Failure: The gesture lands awkwardly. Not an enemy made, but not a friend either. The Game Marshal may note that one faction in the settlement filed this away.

No coin cost, but requires three days of visibility and a specific act.

Running a Business The character has acquired or is managing a small commercial enterprise — a saloon stake, a livery, a claim, a shop. This takes 5 days of attention.

Success: Roll d10 and add Presence modifier. On a 7 or higher, the business turns a profit this period: $2d6 \times 5c$ in income. On 4–6, the business breaks even. On 1–3, it loses $1d4 \times 5c$.

Complications: Once per session the Game Marshal may introduce a business complication — a dispute with a supplier, a competitor, a customer with a problem, or a municipal issue that bleeds into the main story in interesting ways. Running a business is never just passive income.



CHAPTER XI

DEAD MAN'S GULCH

A Starter Adventure for 4–6 Characters at Notch 1

"Gold don't care who it kills to get found. The mine don't care if you come back out. The only thing out here with any interest in whether you live or die is you — and maybe the people you rode in with. That's enough. It'll have to be." — Scratched into the wall of the Tipped Barrel, three feet above the floor

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Premise: The Posse arrives in Crumble Creek, a dying mining town. The mine foreman — a man named Aldous Bray — has been missing for four days. The locals are scared and getting more so. The old-timers call the area around the mine "Dead Man's Gulch" for reasons they no longer remember specifically but feel certain were good ones. A vein of gold has been found near what the mine's oldest maps mark as a "bad ley." Something has been moving in the tunnel at night.

Session Count: This adventure is designed for 2–3 sessions at a comfortable pace. A faster-moving group may complete it in one long session.

Scaling: For a group of 4, run encounters as written. For a group of 5–6, add one additional enemy to each combat encounter and increase the Ley Pool's Wild Surge DR by 2.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Posse arrives in Crumble Creek for one of the following reasons – agree on one at the table before play begins, or let each character have their own:

- **Hired:** Marshal Dolores Vane sent word to a contact of one of the characters. The pay is 25c per person for finding Bray; 50c more if they bring him back alive.
- **The Gold:** Word travels fast. A new vein near a "bad ley" sounds like an opportunity to someone who knows what a ley line is worth.
- **A Missing Person:** The foreman Aldous Bray is someone's brother, uncle, former employer, or old debt. They came looking.
- **Delivering Supplies:** The Posse was contracted to deliver a wagon of mining equipment and medical supplies to Crumble Creek. They arrived to find the town afraid and behind on payment.

ACT 1: CRUMBLE CREEK

Crumble Creek is a mining town that missed its window. The silver vein that founded it ran dry three years ago, and the town has been in slow collapse ever since – buildings going unmaintained, families quietly leaving, the remaining residents holding on out of stubbornness or lack of options. The recent discovery of gold near Dead Man's Gulch has brought a fragile new hope – and then Bray went missing, and now that hope has a bad taste to it.

Read or paraphrase to the players on arrival:

The road into Crumble Creek drops down a long slope between two crumbling embankments – old spoil piles from the first silver rush, grey-brown and held together by sparse, determined weeds. The town at the bottom is smaller than you expected. A dozen buildings on a main strip, half of them with shuttered

windows. A water tower with a slow drip. The smell of oldwoodsmoke and dry rock and something faintly sulfurous from the direction of the mine entrance, which you can just see at the end of the main street – a dark mouth in the canyon face, braced with timber.

The town is not quite quiet. Three men are having a conversation outside the saloon that has the body language of an argument, though they stop when they see you. A curtain moves in an upper window. Whatever Crumble Creek was doing, your arrival has interrupted it.

Key Locations in Crumble Creek

The Tipped Barrel The Tipped Barrel is the only saloon still operating in Crumble Creek – a low-ceilinged, weathered building with a bar made from three planks laid across two barrels (the name is not metaphorical) and a collection of mismatched chairs occupied by men who look like they have been here long enough to have opinions about newcomers.

The barkeep is a barrel-chested man named Peso who does not volunteer information but will answer direct questions honestly. He knew Bray well. He is afraid. He will not go near the mine.

What the Tipped Barrel can tell the Posse:

- Bray went into the mine four days ago to inspect the new vein. Did not come back.
- Two men went in after him the next day to look. They came back fast, said they heard something deep in the shaft. Something that moved like a person but was not walking right.
- Peso will mention Old Hettie without prompting if the Posse seems like they might actually go into the mine. "There's a Straw Elf. Lives in the old relay shack east of town. She knows more about that mine than anyone who digs it."

The Marshal's Office A solid building compared to its neighbors, maintained by habit and responsibility rather than care. Marshal Dolores Vane is at her desk, and she looks like she has not slept in two days, which she has not.

Marshal Dolores Vane is a Human woman in her mid-forties who took this appointment four years ago because someone needed to and she was tired of watching

people not step up. She is honest, competent, and currently operating well outside her experience. She has dealt with claim disputes, bar fights, and one attempted robbery. She has not dealt with whatever is in that mine.

Voice: Direct, low-affect, quietly exhausted. She does not waste words. She answers questions with other questions until she decides the Posse is worth trusting, then she tells them everything she knows, which is not enough.

What Dolores can tell the Posse:

- Bray's personal effects are still in his room at the boarding house. She has not searched them – waiting for someone better at it than her.
- The mine has been on the Town Council's problem list since the second drilling crew reported hearing sounds from the lower shaft. She dismissed it as nerves until Bray disappeared.
- She will show the Posse Bray's most recent report on the mine, which notes the new gold vein and the strange quality of the rock near it – "it rings wrong when struck." He circled the location on the mine map and wrote "investigate further."
- If pushed: "I've got a Goblin tinker named Scratch who's been spending a lot of time near that mine. Not inside it. Just near it. Make of that what you will."

The Mine Entrance The main entrance to the Crumble Creek mine is a timbered arch at the base of the canyon wall – professionally built, now showing its age. The tracks for the ore cart run from the entrance thirty feet into the cliff before the light gives out. The cart itself sits just inside the entrance, full of tools that were dropped there and not retrieved.

Anyone with Hexsense (trained) or Old Ways Attunement who approaches the entrance feels a faint, incorrect pressure in their chest – not pain, but the sensation of something large and still being very nearby.

Clues at the entrance:

- Scuff marks in the mine dust suggesting something large was dragged from inside toward the deep shaft (Tracking DR 12 to read).
- A single boot print in soft mud near the entrance that belongs to a very large foot and has only four toes (Investigation DR 14 to notice the toe count).

- The faint smell of sulfur, more than is normal for a mine. Anyone with Nature (trained) knows this smell can indicate ley line heat venting.

Key NPCs

Scratch is a Goblin tinkerer of indeterminate age – somewhere between thirty and one hundred, it is genuinely hard to tell – who has been living in a lean-to behind the general store for six months. He knows more about the mine's structure than anyone who works there because he has been mapping it from outside using a combination of percussion sound analysis, ley-dowsing rods, and what he calls "educated intuition," which is Goblin for "I got lucky three times in a row and decided that meant I was right."

Voice: Fast, tangential, occasionally interrupts his own sentences to correct himself. He uses technical terms and then explains them at double speed without being asked. He is not nervous – he is excited in the way that people who have found something genuinely interesting are excited, and has not yet fully processed the part where people are missing.

What Scratch can tell the Posse:

- The gold vein runs along a ley line. Not near one – along one. The gold itself has been deposited by the ley line over centuries. It is, functionally, crystallized Old Ways energy.
- The ley line in that section of the mine is unstable. Drilling through it to reach the gold has cracked it – "like hitting a pipe with a pickaxe instead of a fitting."
- The creatures in the lower mine are being drawn by the cracked ley – the energy is pouring into the tunnel and anything that feeds on magical overflow is going to follow.
- He will give the Posse a rough map of the mine's upper sections with his notes in the margins. The notes are accurate, extremely detailed, and written in Goblin shorthand.

Old Hettie occupies the relay shack east of town – a small building that once served as a communications post between the mine and the town office. She has been using it for approximately eighty years. The shack is surrounded by a ring of carefully placed stones that anyone with Ley Reading can identify as a minor ward,

maintained daily.

Old Hettie is a Straw Elf of considerable age, even by Straw Elf standards. Her reed-work is very fine and very old. Her eyes burn a faded orange, like coals that have been burning a long time. She moves with the particular economy of someone who has stopped caring what other people think of how they look.

Voice: Deliberate and precise, with occasional long pauses that are not hesitation — she is choosing the right words. She speaks to the Posse the way you speak to people you are deciding whether to trust, which means she watches more than she speaks at first.

What Old Hettie can tell the Posse:

- ♦ The Gulch has always been a bad ley confluence. "They dug close to it twenty years ago and stopped when the first men started seeing things. The new men, they think those stories are superstition." *A* pause. "They are not superstition."
- ♦ The foreman Bray is probably alive. "The ley does not kill cleanly. It changes. He was there when it cracked and it has had four days." She will not be more specific than this.
- ♦ The ley line can be stabilized. It requires a proper Rite of Sealing — an Oldways ritual performed at the pool where the ley vents. She knows the ritual. She will not perform it. She is too old and the ley is too unstable — she would be consumed. "*A* younger practitioner. Someone strong enough to hold the working without the line pulling them in."
- ♦ If the Posse asks why she does not go herself: a silence. Then: "I sealed three ley breaks in my life. The third one took everything I had and left me with what you see. I am a warning, not a resource."

Gathering Clues

Before the Posse enters the mine, they can gather the following through investigation and social encounters:

- ♦ Bray's room at the boarding house contains a personal journal. The last entry, dated four days ago, reads: "*The vein goes deeper than the survey showed. The rock around it has a quality I can't describe — it gives, slightly, when you press it. Like pressing on a bruise. I'm going down to where the color changes. If I don't come back by*

morning, look for me in the deep pool section. Don't bring fire. I don't know why, but don't bring fire." (Investigation DR 10 to find the journal.)

- ♦ Three of the miners who heard sounds in the lower shaft will talk to the Posse. All three describe the same thing independently: a sound like breathing, very slow, from deep in the mine, and lights — not fire-colored, but blue-green, moving in patterns. Two of the three also mention something else: the feeling that something was asking them to come closer. One of them nearly did.

ACT 2: DEAD MAN'S GULCH MINE

The mine is seven levels deep. The upper three are played-out silver tunnels — safe, dark, and cold. The lower four are where the trouble is. The Posse enters through the main entrance and descends.

Lighting: Below level 3, torches flicker inconsistently near the ley line. Anyone relying on firelight has Misfortune on Perception checks below level 4. Non-fire light sources (Goblin luminous pebbles, Hexblade's Witchfire, magical light) function normally.

Keyed Locations

Area 1: The Mine Entrance and Upper Shaft

The first hundred feet of the mine are familiar frontier mining: timber-braced tunnel walls, ore cart tracks, old lantern hooks at regular intervals. The lanterns have been empty for days. The upper shaft branches twice — the Posse can follow the main track straight down, or take a side branch that leads to the old workers' camp.

Investigation (DR 10): Evidence that several people have passed through recently — within the last four days. At least one set of tracks is too widely spaced to be a normal walking stride.

Nothing attacks here. This section is for orientation and atmosphere.

Area 2: The Old Workers' Camp

A branch off the upper shaft leads to a flattened alcove where mine workers used to break for meals. A rough table, three crates used as chairs, a pile of gear that has been sorted through but not taken.

What's here:

- A functional lantern with half a flask of oil remaining (usable if the Posse is running low).
- A second mine map, more detailed than what Scratch provided, showing the lower levels in rough but useful notation. Someone has drawn a large X over "Area 4 – deep pool" and written "DO NOT APPROACH" in letters that suggest they were writing fast.
- A Goblin gadget – a small mechanical noise device – rigged to the crate stack as a crude alarm. Anyone with Tinkering (trained) can disable it safely (DR 12). If triggered, it produces a two-second piercing shriek. The Posse hears the shriek. So does everything in the lower mine.

No combat. The alarm is a choice point – careful or fast.

Area 3: The Collapsed Shaft

At the bottom of level 3, the main shaft has partially collapsed – a rockfall that happened within the last week, probably triggered by the ley disruption. The cart tracks end here. A narrow crawl-space has been opened through the debris – large enough for a Medium creature to pass through with a Brawn (Athletics) check (DR 10), or a Goblin to pass freely.

Combat Encounter – Tunnel Feeders (CR 1 each, 1 per character): Three to six pale, blind, rat-like creatures the size of large dogs have been drawn here by the ley energy and driven into a frantic, aggressive state. They are not intelligent. They attack anything warm.

Tunnel Feeder (use basic stats: VP 8, DR 11, Speed 30 ft, Bite +3 to hit, 1d6+1 damage. Special: Pack Tactics – Fortune on attack rolls if an ally is adjacent to the target.)

Tactics: They flood out of cracks in the rockfall when the Posse attempts to pass through. They go for the smallest or lightest character first (lowest VP estimate). They flee individually if reduced to 2 VP or lower – swarm behavior breaks on individual injury.

Treasure: None. *Lore:* A character who examines the creatures (Medicine DR 12) notes that their eyes have been melted shut from the inside – their own ley-affected biology has cauterized them. This is a sign of extreme magical saturation.

Area 4: The Deep Ley Pool

Below the rockfall, the tunnel opens into a natural cavern – a dome thirty feet high and sixty feet wide. The center of the cavern floor holds a shallow pool, perhaps fifteen feet across and two feet deep, filled with water that glows faintly blue-green. Ley energy is visibly venting here – a slow, luminous churn in the water, like watching a thunderstorm from inside a cloud.

The air tastes of metal. The light is sufficient to see by – no torches needed here.

Anyone with Oldways (trained) or Old Ways Attunement immediately feels the wrongness: the ley line here has been cracked, and the pool is where the energy is bleeding out. It is not dangerous to stand near – yet. It is getting more active.

Interacting with the Pool:

- Touching the water triggers a **Wild Surge roll** (roll d20 on the Wild Surge Table, Chapter 8).
- A character with Ritual (trained) may attempt to stabilize the ley using the **Rite of Sealing** (see below). If Old Hettie's instruction was obtained, they roll with Fortune.
- The pool is the source of the blue-green light the miners described. It is also attracting the things in the lower shaft.

The Rite of Sealing: This is an original Oldways ritual specific to this adventure. It is not in the standard ritual list – Old Hettie knows it; characters with Oldways Lore (Expert or Master) may know it from research.

Rite of Sealing – Cost: 4 OP | Casting Time: 10 minutes of uninterrupted ritual | DR: 16 | Components: Salt (any trail rations provide this), iron dust (any iron filings or a filed piece of iron), the caster's blood.

Success: The ley line stabilizes. The pool dims to a faint glow. The creatures in the mine lose their frantic energy – they become passive. The foreman in Area 5 has a chance

at recovery.

Failure: The ley pulses outward – every creature in the cavern makes a Grit Check (DR 13) or gains the Shaken condition. The ritual can be attempted again but not for one hour.

Combat complications: If combat occurs in this cavern, anyone who enters the pool (accidentally or otherwise) immediately triggers a Wild Surge.

Area 5: The Foreman's Prison

A side tunnel off the deep cavern leads to a naturally sealed pocket in the rock – a dead end, roughly oval, approximately fifteen feet across. Aldous Bray is here.

He is alive. He is sitting against the far wall with his knees drawn up and his hands flat on the rock beside him, like he is trying to feel through it. He has been here for four days. He does not react to light or movement immediately – his eyes are open, but they are tracking something that is not in the room.

What Happened to Bray: When the ley line cracked, the energy flooded the lower mine. Bray was in the deep shaft at that moment – close enough that the ley surge hit him directly. He was not killed. He was partially enmeshed – the ley energy has woven itself into his nervous system, showing him something. He is, in a meaningful sense, standing at the edge of the Old World and watching its last days. It is beautiful and it is destroying him.

Bray's condition: VP 4 (from dehydration and exposure), GRP 0 (Broken), Shaken. He cannot take actions on his own. He can speak, haltingly, if addressed directly.

What Bray can say: In fragments, over short answers: "It shows you where it came from. The water. The deep water." A pause. "Something was here before the mine. Before the canyon. It remembers and it cannot stop." He does not know what he is describing – he is reporting an experience that he does not have the words for.

The Posse's choice: Bray can be physically removed from the area. If the ley is sealed (Area 4), he slowly begins to recover – the connection weakens when the pool is stabilized. Removing him without sealing the ley is harder: he must be carried, and he resists the removal

instinctively, not violently – a Brawn (Athletics) or Presence (Persuasion) check (DR 14) to get him moving.

If the ley is never sealed: Bray does not recover. He can be brought back to Crumble Creek, but Old Hettie will say, quietly, that it is now a matter of time.

Area 6: The Final Chamber

Below the deep cavern, the main shaft drops into a larger space – a natural cavern that the miners broke into rather than excavated. This is the terminus of the gold vein and the point where the ley line was cracked.

The gold in the walls here is visible – threads of it running through the dark rock in patterns that are almost too regular to be natural. Veins that cross and re-cross each other in something that might, if you looked at it long enough, resolve into a pattern you recognized.

The gold is beautiful. It is also why the ley is cracked – the drilling broke through the binding that held the ley line stable here, and the gold itself is now slowly dissolving the remaining structural rock around the crack, widening it.

Combat Encounter – Ley-Bloated Miner (CR 2, 1): One of the miners who went looking for Bray is still here. He did not come back. He was near the crack when it widened, and the ley energy has expanded him – he is larger than he should be, his skin faintly luminous, his eyes entirely replaced by that blue-green glow. He is no longer the man he was. He attacks anything that enters the chamber.

Ley-Bloated Miner (VP 28, DR 13, Speed 30 ft. Brawn +4, Grit +3.

- *Slam:* +6 to hit, 2d8+4 bludgeoning damage + 1d6 force damage from ley energy.
- *Ley Burst (Recharge 5–6):* 15-foot radius around himself, 3d6 force damage, Grit Check DR 13 for half.
- *Special:* Immune to Frightened. If the ley pool in Area 4 has been sealed, this creature takes double damage from all sources – the ley energy sustaining it is cut off.)

If the ley has been sealed before reaching this chamber: The miner is on the ground rather than upright, barely mobile. He can be stabilized with Medicine (DR 12). He will recover, with a Mechanical Scar (ley-touched eyes that

retain a faint luminosity).

Treasure: The gold vein is worth 300c to the right buyer, but requires mining equipment and time to extract. The Scavenger's Collective would buy the mine location and the information about ley-deposited gold for 200c and a favor. The Iron Rail Company would also be interested — see Act 3.

ACT 3: RESOLUTION

How this ends depends on what the Posse did and what they chose.

Ending A: Full Resolution

The ley pool is sealed. Bray is recovered. The Ley-Bloated Miner is either dead or stabilized. The Posse returns to Crumble Creek with the foreman, information about the mine's safety status, and the satisfaction of a thing done properly.

Marshal Vane pays the agreed amount (50c per character — 25c promised plus the 25c bonus for returning Bray alive) without complaint. She looks at Bray for a long moment, then at the Posse.

"You sealed the ley. Old Hettie told me what that meant. What it cost." She does not push further. She knows they know.

Bray recovers over the following week. He has a Narrative Scar — he can feel ley lines now, faintly, the way some people can feel weather changing. He goes back to work eventually, though he is different. Quieter. More careful near the rock.

Ending B: Partial Resolution

The Posse got Bray out but did not seal the ley — or sealed it imperfectly. Crumble Creek is safer, but the deep pool is still active. The creatures in the lower mine are still drawn there. It is a problem that will grow.

Vane pays for Bray's return. She does not push about the mine. She is already thinking about who she might send down

there next.

Three sessions from now, or whenever the Game Marshal chooses, something from the mine will emerge.

Ending C: Necessary Loss

Bray cannot be saved. The ley enmeshment has gone too far, or the Posse was forced to make a choice that cost him. He does not leave the mine, or he does not last a week after leaving it.

Vane takes the news quietly. She pays full wages — she is fair, she always has been. She asks one question: did he go down there knowing the risk? The Posse tells her whatever is true.

"Then it was his choice," she says. "That's what people out here keep needing it to be."

Rewards

Trail Marks: 5 TM per character for completing the adventure. Adjust for specific achievements (sealing the ley: +1 TM; saving Bray alive: +1 TM; learning the full history of the Gulch from Old Hettie: +1 TM).

Dust (coin): The agreed payment from Marshal Vane. Possible additional income from the Scavenger's Collective if the Posse sells information about the mine.

The Ley-Touched Revolver: In the deepest chamber (Area 6), wedged between the gold-threaded rock and the shaft wall, the Posse finds a revolver that belonged to the mine's first foreman — a man who sealed an earlier, smaller ley break thirty years ago and left his gun as a marker. The gun has been in contact with an active ley line for thirty years.

The Ley-Touched Revolver: Standard Frontier Revolver statistics (+1 to attack rolls). Additionally, once per day the wielder may fire a spell-bullet without spending Oldways Points — the gun provides the charge. The spell-bullet must be one the wielder already knows how to load; the gun does not teach new magic, it only powers what the wielder brings to it. The gun has a faint blue-green luminescence along the barrel in low light. It has a name — "**Patience**" — scratched into the grip by its previous owner.

Seeds for Future Adventures

The adventure ends, but the Frontier does not.

- **The Iron Rail Company** sends a representative to Crumble Creek within two sessions. They have heard about the ley-deposited gold and the stabilized ley line. Director Voss would like to discuss acquisition. The terms he presents are technically fair. The implications are not.

- **Old Hettie** asks the Posse, when they come to say goodbye, if they saw anything in the pool. If any character says yes – even partially – she is quiet for a long time. Then: "What you saw is not a memory. It is a location. The Old World is not gone. It is underneath." She will not say more unless they come back with more questions, and by then she will have prepared.

- **Scratch** has finished his mapping of the mine's acoustic structure. He believes there is a secondary chamber below Area 6 that no one has reached. He cannot go himself – Goblin tinkerers and cracked ley lines are a combination he has survived once and does not intend to repeat. He would like to discuss the matter over drinks.

NPCs. Let the Posse get invested before they go underground. Session 2 should be the mine – Areas 1 through 5. Session 3, if needed, finishes with Area 6 and Act 3. If the group moves faster, let them.

- **Old Hettie:** She is the emotional core of this adventure. Give her weight. She knows what the Posse is walking into and she is not going with them, and that costs her something. Let it show.

End of Chapter II – Dead Man's Gulch

This concludes Goblins & Gunslingers: The Wild Frontier. The Sheriff's Guide will expand on faction politics, advanced campaign structures, and the wider world beyond the known Frontier.

Book design and original content created for the Goblins & Gunslingers tabletop RPG system. All mechanics, lore, terminology, and content are original and wholly owned by the creator.

GAME MARSHAL NOTES

Tone: Crumble Creek is gritty and tired, but not hopeless. Dolores Vane is exhausted, not defeated. Old Hettie is not ominous – she is matter-of-fact about terrible things because she has seen enough of them to stop being surprised. Bray is not a monster. He is a man who made one too many decisions in a row and each one seemed reasonable at the time. The mine itself is interesting, not punishing – there should be wonder in the deep ley pool, not just dread.

Death: Keep it meaningful. If a character dies in this adventure, it should be because of a choice they made, not because the dice were cold on the wrong round. The mine has escape routes. The enemies are not sadists. Let the Posse find ways out.

Pacing: Session 1 should be almost entirely Crumble Creek – the social encounters, the clue gathering, the three

GOBLINS & GUNSLINGERS

THE WILD FRONTIER

Where gunpowder and ancient magic are the same desperate force

The Wild Frontier is a vast wasteland of dust and ancient ruins. Magic lingers in dry riverbeds and dead groves. Towns rise fast and die faster. Four peoples – Humans, Goblins, Straw Elves, and Desert Devils – scratch out existence in a land that was never truly tamed.

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