

# IRONSWORN

A FANTASY TABLETOP  
RPG OF PERILOUS QUESTS

BY SHAWN TOMKIN

PREVIEW 3

This is a preview of the Ironsworn core rulebook. It is incomplete and a work in progress.

Thank you for your interest! If you have any questions or feedback, please contact [ironswornrpg@gmail.com](mailto:ironswornrpg@gmail.com).

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# IRONSWORN

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

System mechanics inspired by and drawn from:

**Apocalypse World**, by D. Vincent Baker

**Dungeon World** by Sage Latorra and Adam Koebel

**City of Judas** by Davide Pignedoli

## CAVEATS

If you are a fan of games powered by D. Vincent Baker's Apocalypse World game engine, such as Dungeon World, Monsterhearts, Monster of the Week, or City of Judas, you will notice intentional similarities in Ironsworn. However, I have taken a fair number of liberties. It utilizes a different dice mechanic. It includes several resource tracking mechanisms. It uses ad hoc character building rather than character playbooks. It has taken some of the core concepts of Apocalypse World games, torn them apart, and bolted them back together into an ungainly monster suited for the kind of play experience I wanted to create.

In short, there are some amazing **Powered by the Apocalypse (PbtA)** games, and this is not one of them. Let's call it "Inspired by and borrowing liberally from the Apocalypse" (IbaBLftA?). If you are a fan of PbtA games, please forgive the liberties taken. If you're new to the world of PbtA games, you should check them out! They are awesome, richly narrative, and tons of fun.

CHAPTER 1

# THE BASICS



# PLAYING IRONSWORN

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You are Ironsworn. Others live out their lives hardly venturing beyond the lands around their village or steading, but you are different. Your vows will lead you to a life of heroism, danger, and sacrifice beyond the edges of civilized lands.

Ironsworn is a tabletop roleplaying game (RPG) where you play a hero sworn to complete perilous quests in a fantasy setting. You will create your character, make some decisions about the world you inhabit, set your story in motion, and play to see what happens. When you encounter something dangerous or uncertain, your choices and the dice determine the outcome.

Ironsworn supports three modes of play:

- **Guided:** One or more players take the role of their characters, the protagonists in your story, while a gamemaster (GM) moderates the gaming session. The GM helps bring the world to life, portrays the people and monsters the characters meet, and makes decisions about the outcome of your actions.
- **Co-Op:** You and one or more friends play together to overcome challenges and complete quests as your characters. A GM is not required. The Ironsworn game system—and your imagination—will help you resolve challenges and decide what happens next.
- **Solo:** As with Cooperative play, no GM is necessary. You portray a lone heroic character in a world fraught with danger. Good luck!

If you are playing with other players, those characters are referred in these rules as your **allies**.

Solo or cooperative play is the default mode for Ironsworn, and these rules assume you are playing without a GM. However, very little needs to change for guided play. When you're ready to learn more, refer to modes of play on page XX for details.

## WHAT YOU NEED

If you're playing solo, just grab some materials and get started. A session can be as long as you like, from a few minutes to a few hours. If you're playing with one or more friends, either guided or co-op, you'll probably want to dedicate enough time (a couple of hours or more) to make some progress in your quests.

Make sure you have:

- At least two ten-sided for each player. These are your challenge dice.
- One six-sided die for each player. This is your action die.
- A printed character sheet for each player and printed asset cards (available at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com)).
- Some counters for marking condition trackers on your character sheet. You can use paper clips, beads, dice, coins, tokens from other games, or whatever is convenient.

**Not required, but handy: printed reference sheets for moves, the Ironlands map, and progress worksheets (all available at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com))**

## THE SETTING

The default setting for your adventures is the Ironlands. It is a rugged land of isolated communities and untracked wilds on the frontier of the known world. You can learn more about the setting starting on page XX. For now, here's a summary of some default assumptions:

- Generations ago, the people of the Ironlands settled here after traveling across a wide sea in the wake of a worldwide cataclysm.
- There is a diverse mix of peoples and cultures within the Ironlands, even within a single community. Communities are formed through shared interests, mutual protection, or strong leadership. You can envision your character and the people she interacts with however you like, unbound by considerations of geography, race, and gender roles.
- There are no thriving cities. Instead, imagine isolated villages or steadings of wood and thatch. These are sometimes watched over by leaders who live in longhouses or in keeps of wood and stone.
- Communities will sometimes band together under a powerful leader, but there are no kingdoms. Territorial lines are sketchily drawn, if at all.
- Large-scale warfare is unheard of, but raiding parties and skirmishes between communities are a constant menace. Some communities subsist entirely on raiding.
- Communities can be found throughout the Ironlands. However, some areas are untracked and uninhabited except by the firstborn—beings such as elves, giants and the wolf-like varou.

- The weather is harsh. Winters are brutal. The rugged terrain makes travel and trade difficult and dangerous.
- Trade in basic goods such as iron, grain, livestock, wood, wool, and coal is common.
- Commerce is made through trade and promised favors. Coins from the old world have little value here except as keepsakes. The exception is iron coins, which are sometimes used as promissory notes or for swearing iron vows.
- Spear, axe, shield and bow are the dominant weapons. Swords are rare and highly prized. Some warriors choose to wade into battle clad in iron, while others trust in their prowess or in the strength of their shields.
- Magic is subtle and mysterious. Mystics seek to ward away the darkness through the practice of magic, but often succumb to it. Rituals are performed as blessings and to gain insight.
- Supernatural creatures and beasts are rare, frightening, and dangerous.

You are encouraged to make Ironsworn your own, and to bend the setting to your liking. Your version of the Ironlands will be unique because you'll define aspects such as the the history of your people, magic, mythic beasts, and much more. The choices you make will also help inspire the personal vows that drive your character. See Chapter 4 (page 106) to get started exploring your world.

You can even ignore this setting entirely and introduce your own world, or play in a setting inspired by media or another RPG. The Ironsworn rules are flexible enough to accomodate many forms of human-centric fantasy or historical fiction.

## IRON VOWS

In the Ironlands, a vow is sacred. When you declare your solemn promise to serve or aid someone, or to complete a personal quest, it is said that the eyes of the gods fall upon you and you will be judged if you fail to fulfill your vow. Abandoning or recanting an oath is the worst sort of failure.

When you swear a vow, you touch a piece of iron. It can be an iron coin, a weapon, or simply laying your hand on your armor. It's an old tradition, the origins of which are murky. Some say that the iron, a piece of the primal world, serves as a conduit to the old gods—so that they may better hear your promise.

Vows are the core of playing Ironsworn. It is your vows that drive you. These goals create the context for your adventures and challenges. As you complete vows, you gain experience and new abilities.

When you create your character, you will start with one or more vows. You'll see several prompts for vows associated with the details of the world in Chapter 4 (page 106) and with foes and encounters in Chapter 5 (XX). You can select something which fits your vision for the world and your character's goals, or just come up with something yourself. If you are playing in co-op mode, you and your fellow players may have overlapping vows or unique vows.

To learn more about your first vows and starting your campaign, see page XX.

## YOUR CHARACTER

For the most part, when the rules refer to 'you', it means your character. For the purposes of gameplay, your character sheet is composed of stats, trackers, conditions, and assets. These elements help you determine the outcome when things get dangerous or uncertain, and define your abilities and readiness.

Your character is, however, much more than these mechanical bits. Think of your character as the protagonist in a rich story. You have hopes and fears, virtues and failings. You have a history. You are, or were, part of a community. Consider a few of these details as you create your character, but don't sweat it. You'll evolve it through play. At the start of your game, you'll put your character on stage see what happens. Fill in the blanks—for your character and your world—as you go.

To learn more about creating your character and the components that make up your character, see page 29.



Your vows are your sacred oath to complete perilous quests.

You have five stats which represent the core aspects of your character. These are often added as a bonus when you take action.

As you fulfill your vows, you'll earn experience. You spend experience to gain new abilities.

The character sheet is titled 'IRONSWORN' at the bottom. It features a central 'CHARACTER' section with five stats: **EDGE**, **IRON**, **HEART**, **SHADOW**, and **WITS**. To the left of these stats is a vertical track for momentum, ranging from +10 to -6, with a 'MAX' and 'RESET' button at the bottom. To the right is an 'EXPERIENCE' track consisting of 20 small circles. Below the stats are sections for **BONDS** (8 squares), **VOWS** (5 radio buttons: **TROUBLESOME**, **DANGEROUS**, **FORMIDABLE**, **EXTREME**, **EPIC**), and **DEBILITIES** (radio buttons for **WOUNDED**, **UNPREPARED**, **SHAKEN**, **ENCUMBERED**, **MARKED**, **BANES**, **MAIMED**, **HAUNTED**, **CORRUPTED**). On the far right are three vertical tracks: **HEALTH** (+5 to 0), **SPIRIT** (+5 to 0), and **SUPPLY** (+5 to 0). A silhouette of a mountain range is at the bottom of the sheet.

As you encounter challenges, you build or lose momentum. Positive momentum can help improve the result of an action. Negative momentum can undermine an otherwise successful action.

You have tracks for health, spirit and supply which represent your current fitness and readiness.

# MOVES

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There is a move for most common situations you will encounter in Ironsworn. Moves are self-contained systems to resolve a specific action, scene or question. When a move's name is referenced within these rules or by another move, you'll see it as *italicized text*. Moves are organized by activities or the types of situations you will encounter.

- **Adventure moves (page 55)** cover a variety of dangers, conducting investigations, traveling, making camp, and healing
- **Relationship moves (page 64)** cover trying to persuade others to do something, building bonds with people and communities, resting and recuperating within a community, aiding your allies, and initiating duels
- **Combat moves (page 73)** are used when fighting (but not exclusively; other moves may come into play as well)
- **Suffer moves (page 84)** occur when you suffer physical harm, face a dispiriting challenge, or run out of supplies or momentum
- **Quest moves (page 93)** encompass iron vows, making progress in a sworn quest, and improving your character
- **Fate moves (page 98)** help you decide what happens in solo and co-op play (or support the GM's decisions and brainstorming in guided play)

Moves have specific triggers, phrased as “When you do [blank]”. When your character does that thing, or you encounter that situation, refer to that move to see what happens.

Most moves are character-centric and based on risky actions you are taking. You are attacking with your sword, or setting off on a journey, or healing an ally. These moves usually use dice to determine the outcome. This is called an **action roll** (page 9).

Some moves utilize a different kind of dice roll, called an **oracle roll** (page 21). These moves help determine the outcome of uncertain events out of your character's control. If you're playing solo or co-op, you can use the *Ask the Oracle* move (page 22) to help answer questions about the world, resolve how other characters respond, or determine what happens next.

Some moves don't require a roll. They might support or reference a separate move, or simply help you to resolve a mechanical or narrative situation (such as improving your character or failing a quest). Don't roll dice unless a move tells you to.

To learn more about moves, see page 48.

This is the move's trigger. When you do this thing, or encounter this situation, make the move.

This is the move's name.

Moves which require an action roll will tell you which **stat** to add to your roll, and may give you an option to include other bonuses (called **adds**).

### **GATHER INFORMATION**

When you search an area, ask questions, conduct an investigation, or follow a **track**, roll +wits. If you act within a community or ask questions of a person with whom you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you discover something helpful and specific. The path you must follow or action you must take to make progress is made clear. Envision what you discover (Ask the Oracle if unsure) and take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, the information complicates your quest or introduces a new danger. Envision what you discover (Ask the Oracle if unsure) and take +1 momentum.

On a **miss**, your investigation unearths a dire threat or reveals an unwelcome truth that undermines your quest. *Pay the Price.*

Moves with an action roll usually offer three levels of possible results: a **strong hit**, a **weak hit**, and a **miss**.

When a move is referenced within another move, you'll see it as *italicized* text.

# THE ACTION ROLL

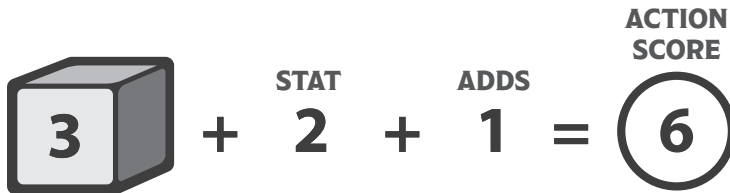
When you make a move that represents a risky or uncertain action, you will roll three dice at once:

- **Challenge dice:** Two ten-sided dice (D10)
- **Action die:** A six-sided die (D6)



You'll add your relevant stat to your action die. The move will tell you which stat to add, or may give you a choice. Some moves may tell you to use one of your tracks, such as health or supply, in place of stat. Based on the move or your character's assets, you may also have an opportunity to apply adds.

The total of your action die, your stat and any adds is your **action score**. Your action score will never be greater than 10—anything over that is ignored.



To determine the outcome of your move, compare the action score to each of the challenge dice. You want it to be greater than the individual value of those dice.



There are three possible results for a move. The move will tell you how to interpret the results.



### Strong Hit

Your action score is greater than both the challenge dice. You succeed at what you are trying to do.



### Weak Hit

Your action score is greater than only one of the challenge dice. It's a mixed result; you've probably succeeded, but with a lesser effect or with a cost.



### Miss

Your action score isn't greater than either of the challenge dice. You failed and things get worse, or you'll need to make some serious concessions.

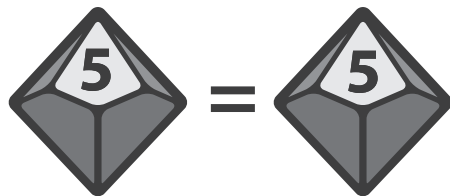
When you fail on a move (score a miss) the move may describe the outcome. In most cases, rather than giving you a specific result, the move will tell you to *Pay the Price*. This is a special move that lets you pick a likely outcome or roll to see what happens. If you're playing with a GM, she may consult with this move, or just tell you the price.

The primary thing to remember: something always happens. A miss doesn't mean things stay the same. The situation gets more complex, dramatic or dangerous. To learn more about the *Pay the Price* move, see page 100.

**Ties always go to the challenge dice. Your action score needs to exceed—not equal—the challenge dice to count as a hit.**

## MATCHES

When you roll for a move, you should be on the lookout for a match on the challenge dice. In cooperative and solo play, this is your trigger to add a twist, create a new complication, or otherwise mix things up. Something interesting, unexpected, or unusual happens. If you're unsure, you *Ask the Oracle*, which is a special move that lets you ask questions or check for inspiration. If you're playing with a GM, a match on the challenge dice can be her prompt to throw a wrench in the works.



The outcome of a match should be evaluated based on the result of your move.

- **Strong hit:** The match should represent a twist in the narrative, something interesting, or a new opportunity.
- **Weak hit or miss:** The match should represent a heightened negative outcome, a complication, or new danger. Things get worse for you in an unexpected way.

You can also let the intensity of your success or failure feed into the interpretation of a match. Rolling a match of 10's on your challenge dice, for example, should prompt you to introduce a harrowing turn-of-events or a dire failure. It's as bad as things get.

## GM'S AND THE DICE

If you are playing as a GM, and don't want to miss out on the fun of rolling dice, you can roll the challenge dice yourself. In this case, each player would roll only their action die and compare their result to your roll.



# MOMENTUM

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Momentum is a special track which is core to playing Ironsworn. It ranges from a -6 to +10 and represents how you are faring in your quests. Move results may tell you to increase or decrease momentum.

The momentum track is on the left side of your character sheet. You can use a paper clip or token to mark the current value.

When you have **positive momentum**, things are going your way. You have the advantage. You are in control. Your path is clear. You are properly positioned for success.

When you have **negative momentum**, the tide has turned against you. You face tough odds. You are outmatched. Your next steps are uncertain.

**Your momentum persists though scenes and between gaming sessions. When you finish a session, make note of your current momentum value and pick up where you left off when you return to the Ironlands.**

## GAINING MOMENTUM

You gain momentum as an option when making moves. This represents securing advantages, acquiring new insight, and making progress in your quests. If a move tells you to add momentum (phrased as “take +X momentum”), increase your momentum track by the value indicated. The choices you make in a move or the assets you use to support the move may modify the amount rewarded.

In general, taking +1 momentum represents a minor advantage. Taking +2 momentum (or more) represents a major advantage.

## LOSING MOMENTUM

You can lose momentum as a choice when making moves, or as an outcome of a move—particularly on a weak hit or miss. Sometimes you’ll have the option within a move to suffer a loss of momentum in exchange for temporary advantages.

Moves will sometimes tell you to suffer a specific loss of momentum (phrased as “suffer -X momentum”). If so, reduce your momentum track by the value indicated. The choices you make in a move or the assets you use to support your move may alter this penalty.

If you lose momentum as a result of a narrative outcome without a defined value, such as when you make the *Pay the Price* move (page 100), you should suffer a reduction appropriate to the narrative circumstances.

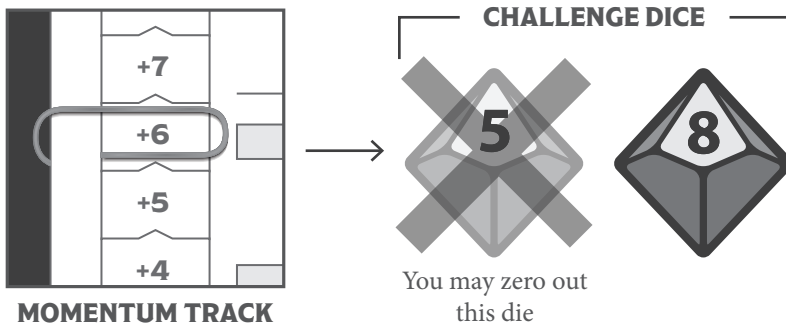
- For a **minor disadvantage or complication**, suffer -1 momentum
- For a **major disadvantage or complication**, suffer -2 momentum

Generally, when you suffer -momentum, unless a move tells you otherwise, you should suffer -2 momentum.

## BURNING MOMENTUM

Burning momentum is a powerful option to build on your success and deliver a decisive result or avoid dire failure. When you have positive momentum, after you roll your move, you may zero out any challenge dice which are less than your current momentum value.

If both challenge dice are less than your momentum value, you may zero them both. If you burn momentum when only one of the challenge dice is less than your momentum value, the result of the other die stands.



Burning momentum is never required. Even if you score a miss on a move and have enough momentum to cancel out the challenge dice, you can choose to suffer the failure and save that momentum for a more crucial moment.

## RESETTING MOMENTUM

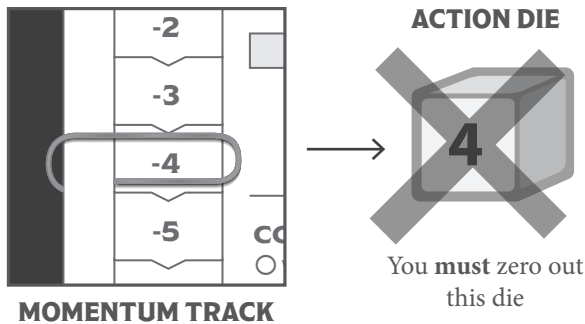
When you create your character, you'll set your momentum track to 2. After you burn momentum, you must reset your momentum track. The default reset is 2, but marked debilities will lower this value. There is a box below the momentum track where you can make note of your current momentum reset.

- **If you have a debility marked**, your momentum reset is 1
- **If you have more than one debility marked**, your momentum reset is 0.



## SUFFERING NEGATIVE MOMENTUM

When your momentum is less than 0, and it matches the value of your action die, you must zero out your action die. You'll still check the success of your move by comparing your stat plus your adds to the challenge dice, but you won't have your action die to help you.



The only way to raise negative momentum is to gain momentum through moves.

## MINIMUM MOMENTUM

Your momentum cannot drop lower than -6. If a move tells you to lower your momentum, and your momentum is already at its minimum (-6), you will instead make the *Face a Setback* move (page 92). As a result of this move, you will reduce your health, spirit or supply (or some combination thereof) by that amount, or undermine your progress in a current quest, journey or fight.

Make moves such as *Secure an Advantage* (page 56) to increase your momentum.

## MAXIMUM MOMENTUM

Your maximum momentum starts at +10, and is reduced by 1 for every marked debility.

You can't increase momentum over your max momentum. If a move gives you an option to increase your momentum and your momentum is already at +10, you can't choose that option.

# PROGRESS TRACKS

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There are three moves which utilize progress tracks to measure your pace and determine the outcome of a goal or challenge. When you make these moves, you'll add the number of progress boxes you've filled instead of adding a stat.

- When you *End the Fight* (page 77), your progress represents how much you've weakened or wounded your foe in a physical fight.
- When you *Reach your Destination* (page 63), your progress is a representation of how favorable your travel has been, whether you've remained on course, and what sort of situation you will find when you arrive.
- When you *Fulfill your Vow* (page 96), your progress is a measure of the challenges you overcame on your way to achieving your ultimate goal.
- When you *Write your Epilogue* (page 72), your progress represents the bonds you've formed with others.

Progress tracks are drawn as a row of ten boxes which you fill in—or mark—as you make headway toward a goal. When you initiate a challenge, these boxes are empty.



Since making progress on your vows may stretch over many sessions, your character sheet includes progress tracks for those. Your character sheet also includes a progress track for your bonds (page 37). For travel and combat, you can sketch out your progress tracks on whatever is convenient, or use the challenge worksheets provided at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com).

## CHALLENGE RANKS

When you initiate a journey, engage in a fight, or swear a vow, you will give your challenge a rank. In increasing order of difficulty, the ranks are **troublesome**, **dangerous**, **formidable**, **extreme**, and **epic**. You (or the GM) will choose a rank that represents the situation and how quickly or easily it should be resolved. For purposes of combat, a commoner or thus is troublesome. A soldier or bandit might be a dangerous foe. An elder bear, a monstrous beast twice the size or more of a normal bear? That's likely a formidable foe. You'll find guidelines for ranks in the Foes and Encounters chapter (page XX).

## MARKING PROGRESS

You will perform specific moves to advance toward your goal. For example, to *Reach your Destination*, you will first *Undertake a Journey* and mark progress as you successfully reach waypoints in your travel.

### UNDERTAKE A JOURNEY

When you prepare to travel across hazardous or unfamiliar lands, determine the rank of your journey (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

- Troublesome journey: three progress per waypoint
- Dangerous journey: two progress per waypoint
- Formidable journey: one progress per waypoint
- Extreme journey: two ticks per waypoint
- Epic journey: one tick per waypoint

Then, for each segment of your journey, roll +wits. If you are setting off from a community with which you share a bond, add +1 to your initial roll.

On a strong hit, choose two. On weak hit, choose one.

- You reach a waypoint: if the waypoint is unknown to you, envision it (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Then, mark progress.
- You make good use of your resources: do not suffer -1 supply
- You move at speed: take +1 momentum
- You *Reach your Destination*

On a **miss**, you are waylaid by a perilous event and must *Pay the Price*.

This move includes an option to mark progress on a hit.

Similarly, to *End the Fight*, you will *Strike* or *Clash* to inflict harm on your foe. To *Fulfill your Vow*, you will use the *Reach a Milestone* move when you make significant progress in your quest. These incremental moves, combined with your momentum track, let you amass advantage to have the best chance of success when you roll your progress move.

Whenever you successfully move toward your goal, you will either partially or fully fill in a box on your progress track. You'll fill progress boxes with lines—called ticks. A full progress box consists of four ticks in a star-shaped pattern. When a move tells you to mark progress, you fill in the appropriate number of ticks or progress boxes based on the rank of your challenge.



**Troublesome**  
mark 3  
progress



**Dangerous**  
mark 2  
progress



**Formidable**  
mark 1  
progress



**Extreme**  
mark 2  
ticks



**Epic**  
mark 1  
tick

## PROGRESS ROLLS

You don't make an action roll when you make a progress move. Instead, you will tally the number of fully filled progress boxes (those with four ticks). This is your progress score. Then, you roll your challenge dice and compare your progress score to the value of the dice.



In the progress track shown above, you would compare +6 to your challenge dice when rolling your progress move. The seventh progress box is only partially filled in, and won't count toward the progress roll. As with an action roll, if your score is greater than both challenge dice, that's a strong hit. If you beat one of the challenge dice, that's a weak hit. If you fail to beat either die, that's a miss.

When deciding when to make your progress move, you'll need to weigh your chance of success against the risk and time investment of continuing to make preparatory moves. Rolling a miss is a potentially dire setback.

## SHARING PROGRESS TRACKS WITH ALLIES

When you and your allies are working together to resolve a challenge—a quest, a journey, or a fight—you will share a progress track and mark progress together. When you make a progress move, only one of you will roll the dice and the result stands for the group.

## MOMENTUM AND PROGRESS ROLLS

Momentum is ignored when you make a progress move. You cannot burn momentum on a progress roll, and you do not suffer from negative momentum.

## HARM

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Harm represents physical damage and fatigue. You inflict harm on your foes in combat, and you suffer harm when you are attacked or fail to overcome a physical hazard. There are five ranks of harm:

- A nasty fall, an attack by a minor foe, or an arduous effort is **troublesome (1 harm)**
- An attack by a competent foe, an animal attack, or a fierce environmental hazard is **dangerous (2 harm)**
- An attack by an exceptional foe or a large animal attack is **formidable (3 harm)**
- A fall from a great height or an overwhelming attack by a monster or beast is **extreme (4 harm)**
- A supernaturally powerful attack is **epic (5 harm)**

When you are fighting a foe, they inflict harm based on their rank. You'll find sample foes in Chapter XX.

## SUFFERING HARM

When you suffer harm, you will make the *Endure Harm* move (page 86). As part of that move, you will likely reduce your health track by the amount of harm suffered. If you are at 0 health, you are in danger of suffering a debility or dying.

You recover health by using appropriate moves, such as *Heal* (page 58) or *Sojourn* (page 66).

## INFLECTING HARM

When you successfully attack a foe, such as through the *Strike* or *Clash* moves, you inflict harm. If you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), you inflict 2 harm. If not, you inflict 1 harm. You may have an option to inflict additional harm through the choices you make in a move or with the bonuses provided by assets.

The total amount of harm you inflict as part of a move is marked as progress on your foe's progress track, as appropriate to that foe's rank. For example, each point of harm would equal two ticks when fighting an extreme enemy.

## STRESS

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Stress represents mental burdens and trauma. When you are afraid, discouraged, demoralized, grief-stricken, or act against your best instincts, you suffer stress.

You may suffer stress as specific outcome defined by a move, or as a logical narrative choice when you fail a challenge or encounter a hardship. Unlike harm, you do not inflict stress on others—at least not mechanically.

There are five ranks of stress:

- An unsettling incident or a frustrating failure is **troublesome (1 stress)**
- A distressing incident or an upsetting failure, is **dangerous (2 stress)**
- A horrifying incident or a demoralizing failure is **formidable (3 stress)**
- A heart-rending incident or traumatic failure is **extreme (4 stress)**
- A soul-shattering incident or the loss of all hope is **epic (5 stress)**

When you suffer stress, you will make the *Test your Spirit* move (page 90). As part of that move, you will likely reduce your spirit track by the amount of stress suffered. If you are at 0 spirit, you are in danger of suffering a debility or falling into desolation.

You can recover spirit by relaxing when you *Make Camp* (page 59), finding fellowship when you *Sojourn* (page 66), or when you *Forge a Bond* (page 69).



# ASSETS

Assets are a key component of your character. They give you additional options and bonuses when making a move, and may include their own special moves. When you create your character (page 29), you'll select your starting assets. When you *Fulfill your Vow* and gain experience (page 43), you can *Advance* to spend that experience on new assets or upgrade your current assets.

To learn more about assets, see page 37.

**You can mix-and-match assets however you like. There are no designated assets based on character classes or roles. You should, however, avoid picking the same asset as another player.**

Most assets include a default ability, represented by the filled-in circle. If it doesn't have a starting ability, you get to pick one.


Assets will usually modify moves by giving you a bonus or allowing you to use the move in a different way. Some assets will include their own unique moves.

As you gain experience, you can purchase upgrades to your assets. When you purchase an upgrade, you fill in the circle to show that you now have that ability.

This is the asset type. When you pick an asset, you will choose from **companions**, **paths**, **martial focus** and **rituals**.

**PATH**

**SLAYER**



- When you *Gather Information* or *Secure an Advantage* using your knowledge of monsters or beasts, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.
- When you slay a monster or beast (at least formidable) you may take a trophy and use it one time to:
  - Power a ritual: When you or an ally make a ritual move, reroll any dice
  - Prove your worth: When you *Sojourn*, reroll any dice
- ● When you *Swear an Iron Vow* to kill a fierce monster or beast, you may reroll any dice. When you *Fulfill your Vow* and mark experience, take +1 experience.

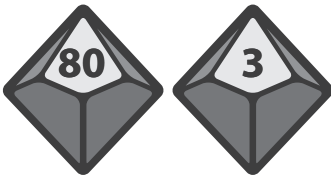
# ORACLE ROLLS

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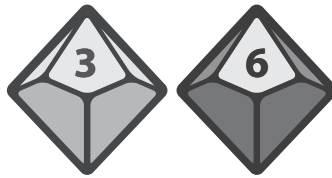
Some moves may prompt you to roll on a table to generate a result between 1 and 100. There are also a set of creative prompts in Chapter XX, which you can use to help guide events and the actions of other characters in your world. These oracles will help answer questions and trigger story twists in solo or co-op games, or provide inspiration for the GM in guided play.

## ROLLING ORACLE DICE

Whenever you are prompted by a move or an oracle table to generate a result between 1 and 100, you will roll two ten-sided dice.



One of your oracle dice may include the 10's digits on its faces. If so, you'd read this result as 83.



You can use also two D10's of different colors, and decide before rolling which one represents the 10's digit and which will be the 1's. You'd read this result as 36.

As with the move roll, a match on the oracle dice indicates something unexpected has occurred. To find out what happens, go with what seems appropriate to the circumstances, or *Ask the Oracle* for additional inspiration. Ideally, the narrative outcome of a match should heighten the drama and stakes.

You might want to use a special set of dice for your oracle rolls, shared by everyone at the table, especially when playing solo or co-op without a GM. It'll make those dice feel special and unique.



## SEEKING ANSWERS

If you are playing solo or co-op, you can *Ask the Oracle* to help guide your game session and trigger ideas when you need to know what happens next. Its most basic function is to answer a “yes” or “no” question. Combined with your own instincts and creativity, this move—and other random prompts—can push your story in interesting, surprising, and exciting directions. To

### ASK THE ORACLE

When you seek to discover details in the world, determine how other characters respond, or trigger encounters or events, you may...

- Draw a conclusion: decide the answer based on the most interesting and obvious result
- Ask a yes/no question: decide the odds of a ‘yes,’ and roll on the table below to check the answer.
- Pick two: envision two options. Rate one as ‘likely’ and roll on the table below to see if it is true. If not, it is the other.
- Spark an idea: brainstorm or use a random prompt

Odds	The answer is ‘yes’ if you roll (d100)
Almost Certain	11-100
Likely	26-100
50/50	51-100
Unlikely	76-100
Small Chance	91-100

On a match, an extreme result or twist has occurred.

Roll on this table using your oracle dice to generate a result between 1 and 100

learn more about this move, see page 102. **If you are playing with a GM, the GM is the oracle.** When you see a prompt to *Ask the Oracle*, turn to your GM. The GM is of course free to leverage random tools and creative prompts to come up with the answers.

Keep in mind that—even when playing with a GM—Ironsworn is about shared storytelling. Offer suggestions. Talk it out. The GM is the final arbiter of what happens next, but everyone at the table should participate in building that world and in creating the narrative of your game.

## MORE RANDOMNESS

You'll find a set of random tables in Chapter XX. These provide inspirational prompts and random results for common situations. You can also use any random generators you have on hand, whether they are drawn from another game, online generators, or tools such as Rory's Story Cubes.

## TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

These random generators will never replace your own imagination and intuition. When in doubt, use rule #1: if it's interesting, dramatic, and pushes the story forward, make it happen. Too much reliance on random generators to answer questions about "what happens next" can kill the momentum of your game or make it feel disconnected and incoherent.

Keep it moving. Ask a question. If an answer leaps to mind, go with it. If you're not sure, *Ask the Oracle*. Then, play.

For more about using random prompts to spark ideas, see page XX.

## BONDS

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As you explore your world and complete quests, you will create bonds with others by making the *Forge a Bond* (page 69) move. Bonds give you advantages within specific moves when interacting with the people and communities you have bonded with. For example, if you attempt to *Compel* (page 64) someone, and you share a bond with that person, you'll add +1 to your roll. The moves will tell you when having a bond provides this advantage.

Bonds also help determine your fate when you retire from your life as an adventurer. The more bonds you create, the more connections you have with people and communities, the better your chance to live out your days peacefully in the company of others.

Your character sheet has a special progress track for bonds. When you successfully *Forge a Bond*, you mark 1 tick on this progress track. When your adventures are complete and you *Write Your Epilogue* (page 72), you tally your bonds and make a progress roll to wrap up your character's story.

# OTHER CHARACTERS

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The mechanics of Ironsworn are almost entirely character-facing—meaning they reference the capabilities and actions of your character. Other non-player characters (called NPCs for short) in your world don't have mechanical detail. In fact, they may only have a single stat—their rank—for tracking progress against them in a combat scene. They should otherwise act as appropriate to their motivations and the fiction of your world. When you attempt to influence them, oppose them, resist them, or aid them, make moves as appropriate.

To learn more about other characters, see page XX.

# EQUIPMENT

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In Ironsworn, you generally won't worry too much about equipment. Your supply track (page 33) acts as an abstract representation of your general readiness, clothes, ammo, food, water, and mundane gear.

You are armed and armored as appropriate to your vision for your character, and are assumed to be competent with a variety of weapons. If you wield a weapon, you can inflict harm with it. If you are armed with a deadly weapon, you inflict 2 harm. Otherwise, you inflict 1 harm.

Equipment primarily provides narrative benefit. It enables you to make moves where that gear is important, or perhaps allows you to avoid a move altogether.

For example, you need to make your way down a rock face. It's a short climb, but steep. Without assistance, you'd make a *Face Danger* move to see what happens. If you had rope, the climb would be relatively mundane and not particularly risky or uncertain. In that case, you might skip the move and just narrate the result.

Specific assets (page 37) can make equipment more important and relevant to your character. **Martial Focus** assets (page 39), for example, represent your expertise in a particular weapon or fighting style. When you wield an appropriate weapon, you gain the benefit of the asset.

Apart from assets, you can make note of equipment you want to keep track of to whatever level of detail you like, but don't fuss over it. If you're wondering whether you have a particular mundane item, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 102).

# THE FLOW OF PLAY

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Like most roleplaying games, you'll play primarily from the perspective of your character. What are you doing? What are you trying to achieve? What opposition and challenges do you face? Your quests and the characters and situations you encounter will guide the fiction and the choices you make for your character.

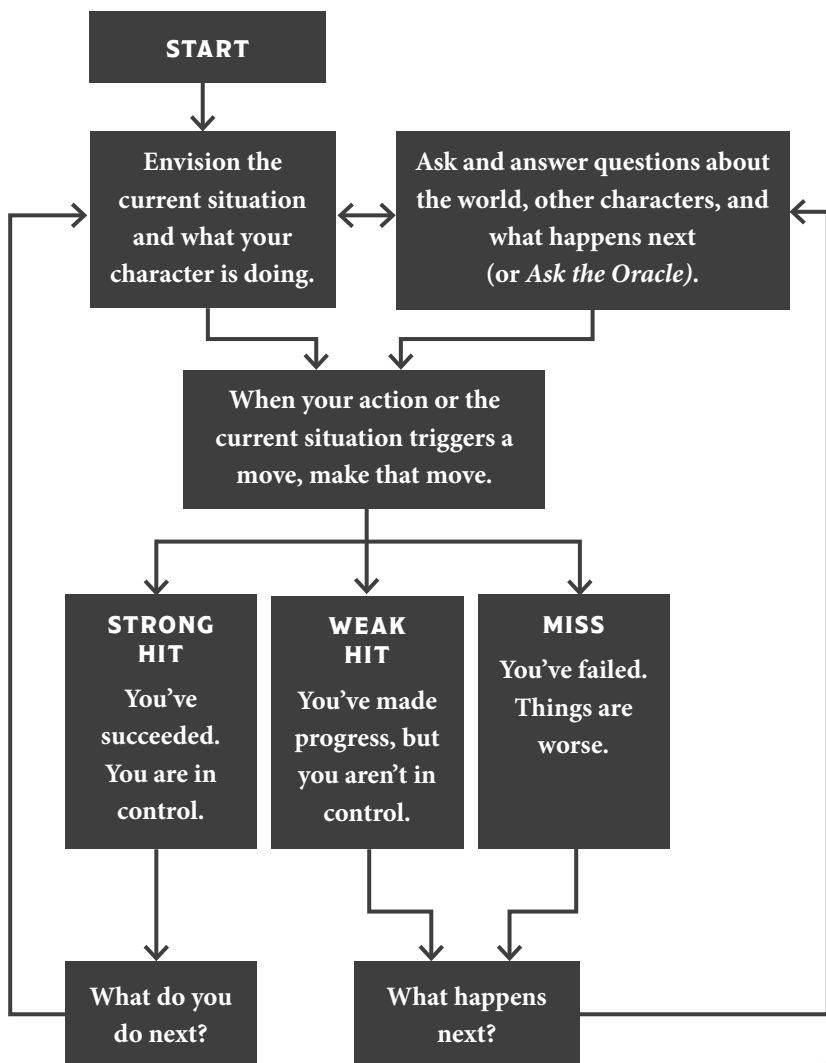
When you have questions about what you find, how other characters in your world respond, or what happens next, you can go with what feels right (if you're playing solo or co-op), or turn to your GM. When you are seeking inspiration or want to put it in the hands of fate, you can make the *Ask the Oracle* move (page 102). Use the yes/no questions and random prompts to generate interesting twists and new complications that you might not have thought of on your own. Above all, if it's interesting, dramatic and fits the fiction, make it happen.

If you are doing something mundane or certain, you just make it happen. If you are doing something that is dangerous or uncertain (or, better yet, dangerously uncertain), you've probably triggered a move. Check the move to resolve your action. If it tells you to roll dice, do it.

Scoring a strong hit on a move means that you are in control. You're driving the narrative. What do you do next?

A weak hit or a miss means that you don't have control of the situation. Instead of acting, you'll react. What happens next? If you're playing with a GM, she'll determine how the world responds. Otherwise, you'll rely on your intuition and occasional oracle rolls to drive the narrative.





# WHAT'S NEXT

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That's the basics of playing Ironsworn. You'll see these concepts expanded on through this manual, but it's not necessary to read or understand it all before playing. To get started:

- 1** **Create your character (page 30):** Set your stats, purchase your assets, and consider your background and personality.
- 2** **Review the moves (page 48):** It'll be helpful to get a basic understanding of the moves and how you'll translate your character's actions and intent into appropriate moves. You can print out the move sheets, available at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com), as a handy reference
- 3** **Build your world (page 106):** Take a tour of the Ironlands, create your unique vision of your game setting, and find inspirational prompts for vows and quests.
- 4** **Play:** At this point, you you'll have an interesting situation for your character to explore. *Swear an Iron Vow* (page 93) and play to see what happens. When you have questions about moves, see page 48. When you need a threat or a challenge, see page XX. When you're ready to explore gameplay options and best-practices, see page XX.

## WELCOME TO THE IRONLANDS!

*The mother asked the seer to divine her  
new baby's fate. The old mystic came  
and looked at the sleeping child. She  
tilted her head, closed her eyes. Then,  
she drew back, frowning. No need to ask  
the gods. No need to roll the stones.*

*"Ironsworn," the seer said.*

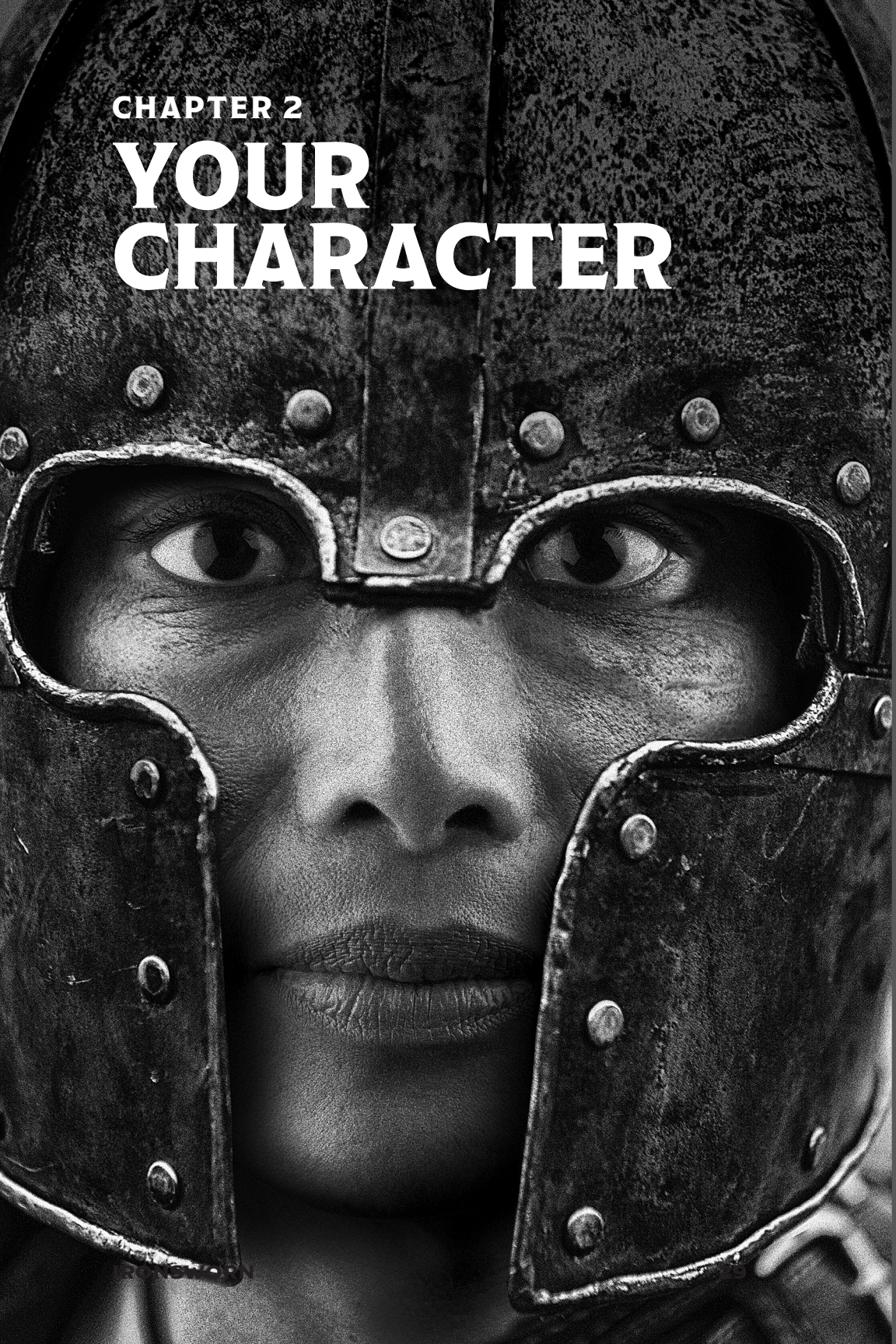
*She took her price in silver and blood,  
and left the mother alone with the baby.*

*That night, the mother wept, for she  
knew her child would grow to live apart  
from her. Whether consumed by duty or  
vengeance, wanderlust or love, it was all  
the same. The trackless wilds would call,  
the blade and shadow would whisper  
their secrets, and her child would leave.*

*She cried for the life her child would live,  
and she cried for the knowing of it.*

CHAPTER 2

# YOUR CHARACTER





# **ENVISION YOUR CHARACTER**

Before you jump into the mechanics of your character, consider her motivations, interests and skills, personality and foibles. It's fine to start with one or two ideas about your background and goals—or even a relatively clean slate. You can flesh out your character as you play. You can even *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration when questions arise.

## **BE AWESOME**

Your character is highly competent. You can hold your own in a fight, and you're familiar with common weapons and armor. You're smart, brave, and driven. When you *Swear an Iron Vow*, you mean it.

You are not without your limitations. You'll face hardship. You'll make bad decisions. You will fail. It is those failures, overcoming them, pushing on, that makes you heroic.

## **BE WHO YOU WANT**

The people of the Ironlands are diverse. You can envision your character however you like—unbound by geography, history, race, and gender roles—as long as the concept fits into your version of the Ironlands.

Your character can be inspired directly by a real-world or historical culture, or you might weave a blend of cultural influences into your concept. Perhaps you are modeling your character after someone from fiction or history.

The default assumption is that the setting is human-centric, and these rules do not include specific options to play fantasy races. You can, however, adjust to your liking. The mechanics of your character are relatively light and can be skinned to support several types of fantasy fiction.

## **WHERE TO START?**

You can build your world (page 106), or build your character, or do both in tandem. If you have a clear idea for your character, start there and build your world around them, as if you're building a set to suit your actor. If you need inspiration, start with the world. That chapter includes prompts for situations and quests that may help you to envision your character and her place in the Ironlands.

You can also refer to page XX for more about your starting situation.

**MOMENTUM**      **NAME**      **STATS**      **EXPERIENCE**      **HEALTH**      **SPIRIT**      **SUPPLY**

**CHARACTER**      **EXPERIENCE**

Asha Shadiya      ●●●○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○

+10	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>HEALTH</b>
	EDGE	IRON	HEART	SHADOW	WITS	+5
+9	<b>BONDS</b>					+4
+8	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ <b>BONDS</b>					+3
+7	<b>VOWS</b>					+2
+6	Find my sister					+1
+5	○ TROUBLESOME ○ DANGEROUS ○ FORMIDABLE ○ EXTREME ● EPIC					0
+4	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ <b>VOWS</b>					<b>SPIRIT</b>
+3	Guide the caravan safely through the mournwood					+5
+2	○ TROUBLESOME ○ DANGEROUS ● FORMIDABLE ○ EXTREME ○ EPIC					+4
+1	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ <b>VOWS</b>					+3
0	Kill the wolverine					+2
-1	○ TROUBLESOME ○ DANGEROUS ○ FORMIDABLE ○ EXTREME ○ EPIC					+1
-2	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ <b>VOWS</b>					0
-3	○ TROUBLESOME ○ DANGEROUS ○ FORMIDABLE ○ EXTREME ○ EPIC					<b>SUPPLY</b>
-4	⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗					+5
-5	<b>DEBILITIES</b>					+4
-6	○ TROUBLESOME ○ DANGEROUS ○ FORMIDABLE ○ EXTREME ○ EPIC					+3
<b>MAX</b>	<b>CONDITIONS</b> <b>BURDENS</b>					+2
<b>9</b>	● WOUNDED ○ SHAKEN ○ MARKED ○ HAUNTED					+1
<b>RESET</b>	○ UNPREPARED ○ ENCUMBERED ○ BANES ○ MAIMED ○ CORRUPTED					0
<b>1</b>	<b>DEBILITIES</b>					

**COMPANION**

**HOUND**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your hound is your steadfast companion.

- Sharp:** when you *Gather Information* using your hound's keen senses to track your quarry or investigate a scene, add +1
- Ferocious:** when you *Strike* or *Clash* alongside your hound and score a hit, choose one more; when you *Manipulate* with +iron using threats of violence, add +1
- Loyal:** when you *Test Your Spirit* in the company of your hound, add +1

○ +1 ○ +3 ⊗ ⊗ ⊗

**PATH**

**HERBALIST**

- When you attempt to *Heal* using herbal remedies, and you have at least +1 supply, you may choose one (before rolling): add +1, or take or give an additional +1 health
- When you *Heal* a companion, ally or other character, and you give at least +1 health, take +1 spirit
- When you *Make Camp* and choose the option to partake, you and your companions and allies may take +1 health or +1 spirit; if you reveal something to your allies through a personal story as you prepare the meal (or contemplate your past if alone), you each take an additional +1 spirit or +1 momentum

○ ○ ○

**MARTIAL FOCUS**

**SUNDERER**

If you wield an axe...

- When you *Strike* or *Clash* in close quarters, you may suffer -1 momentum before you roll and inflict +1 harm on a hit
- When you make a tribute to a fallen foe (dangerous or epic) by carving a rune in the haft of your axe, envision the meaning of that rune and take +1 spirit or +2 momentum
- When you *Secure an Advantage* with +iron using your axe to batter at your foe's armor, weapon or shield, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a strong hit

○ ○ ○

**ASSETS**

# CHARACTER BASICS

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## NAME

You have a name. Perhaps others will honor it someday in their tales of your deeds.

Give your character a name. For inspiration, you can roll on the names oracle in the oracle reference available at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com).

## STATS

There are five stats, and each is given a numerical bonus. When you make a move and roll dice, you will usually add one of your stats. The move will tell you which stat to add, or give you a choice.

- **Edge:** quickness, agility, and prowess in ranged combat
- **Iron:** physical strength, endurance, aggressiveness, and prowess in close combat
- **Heart:** courage, willpower, sociability, and loyalty
- **Wits:** expertise, knowledge, and observation
- **Shadow:** sneakiness, deceptiveness, and cunning

To start, arrange these bonuses across your five stats in any order: 3, 2, 2, 1, 1.

## HEALTH

Health represents your current physical condition and stamina, ranked from 0 to +5. Health is reduced when you take harm, and increased when you rest or receive care through moves such as *Heal* (page 58) or *Sojourn* (page 66).

When you suffer damage to your health track, you must make the *Endure Harm* move (page 86). When you are at 0 health, and *Endure Harm*, you are in danger of being killed.

To start, set your health track to +5.

## SPIRIT

Spirit is your current mental state, ranked from 0 to +5. Spirit is decreased when you take stress as an outcome of moves. Spirit is increased when you find comfort through companionship, success, or relaxed moments through moves such as *Make Camp* (page 59) or *Forge a Bond* (page 69).

When you suffer damage to your spirit track, you must make the *Test your Spirit* move (page 90). When you are at 0 spirit, and *Test your Spirit*, you are in danger of falling into despair or giving into your compulsions.

**To start, set your spirit track to +5.**

## SUPPLY

Supply is an abstract representation of your preparedness, including ammo, food, water, and general upkeep. Instead of keeping track of a detailed inventory, you can consider most of your mundane gear falling under supply. It is ranked from 0 to +5. Supply is decreased when you make the *Undertake a Journey* move (page 60). You might also reduce supply as a narrative cost when you face hardships as an outcome of other moves. For example, if you make the *Face Danger* move (page 55) to ford a wild river, you might lose some gear as a result of a weak hit or miss. Supply is increased when you gather provisions through moves such as *Resupply* (page 58).

The supply track represents the shared assets among your party. You and your allies will use the same supply value while you travel together. If you make any moves to increase supply or suffer the result of a move that reduces your supply, each of you will adjust your supply tracker accordingly.

When your supply falls to 0, all characters make the *Out of Supply* move (page 92). If you are at 0 supply and suffer additional -supply, you will each need to reduce either your health or spirit trackers by that amount.

**To start, set your supply track to +5. You and your allies will share the same supply value while you adventure together. When one of you makes a move that raises or lowers the supply track, each of you should make the adjustment on your character sheet.**

## MOMENTUM

Momentum represents how you are faring in your quests. Momentum is gained and lost through moves. If you have positive momentum, you are building on your successes and ready to make decisive moves. If you have negative momentum, you have suffered setbacks and your quest is in jeopardy.

To learn more about momentum and how it helps and hinders your character, see page 11.

Your character sheet also includes boxes to mark your current max momentum and momentum reset.

- Your **max momentum** starts at +10, and is reduced by one for every marked debility.
- Your **momentum reset** starts at +2. If you have a one debility marked, your reset is 1. If you have more than one debility marked, your reset is 0.

To start, set your current momentum to +2, your max momentum to +10, and your momentum reset to +2.

## DEBILITIES

As you suffer hardships and setbacks in your quests, you may need to mark a debility as a result of a move or a narrative event. Moves will tell you which debility to mark, or give you a choice. Debilities represent temporary, long-term, and permanent disadvantages. Some can be easily cleared through an appropriate move—others will forever become a part of your character.

Debilities should have a narrative impact in how you envision your character's actions and how others react to you. They also have a mechanical impact by reducing your momentum track.

- **Each marked debility** reduces your max momentum by 1
- If you have **one marked debility**, your momentum reset is 1 instead of 2
- If you have **more than one marked debility**, your momentum reset is 0

To learn more about momentum and debilities, see page 12.

## CONDITIONS

- **Wounded** may be marked when you fail to *Endure Harm* (page 86). You cannot increase your health track until you clear the condition
- **Shaken** may be marked when you fail to *Test your Spirit* (page 90). You cannot increase your spirit track until you clear the condition
- **Unprepared is** marked when you are *Out of Supply* (page 92). You cannot increase your supply track until you clear the condition. You and your allies share the same supply value, and will all mark unprepared when you are *Out of Supply*.
- **Encumbered** is marked as appropriate to the circumstances when you are carrying excessive or cumbersome weight

As with all debilities, conditions impact your max momentum and momentum reset. In addition, if you are wounded, shaken or unprepared you cannot increase the associated tracker.

- **If you are wounded**, you cannot increase health
- **If you are shaken**, you cannot increase spirit
- **If you are unprepared**, you cannot increase supply

Conditions can be cleared when you succeed on appropriate moves. For example, scoring a hit on the *Heal* move (page 58) can clear the wounded condition. The shaken and unprepared conditions can generally only be cleared as you find fellowship and gather provisions in a community through the *Sojourn* move (page 66) . Once you clear a condition, you restore your max momentum and momentum reset as appropriate.

Unlike the other conditions, encumbered is not specifically triggered or resolved by a move. Instead, it should be marked when appropriate to the narrative. If you are carrying an unconscious ally to safety, you might mark encumbered as a consequence of scoring a miss on a *Face Danger* move. Encumbered can also be triggered by the Ironclad asset, which allows you to gain an advantage for heavy armor in exchange for marking the condition. Encumbered is cleared when you lighten your load.

## BURDENS

- When you *Face Death* (page 88) and return with a soul-bound quest, you are **marked**. This burden can only be cleared by completing the quest.

- When you *Face Desolation* (page 91), and undertake a quest to prevent a dire future, you are **haunted**. This burden can only be cleared by completing the quest.

Burdens are a result of life-changing experiences that leave you bound to quests. Clearing a burden can only be accomplished by resolving the quest.

When you are marked or haunted, you should consider the physical or emotional manifestations of these conditions. You have walked the lands beyond death or gained visions of your greatest fears. What signs do you bear? How do these experiences affect how you interact with others? How do they treat you?

## BANES

- **Maimed** may be marked when you fail to *Endure Harm* (page 86). You have suffered a wound which causes you ongoing physical challenges, such as the loss of an eye or hand. Or, you bear horrific scars which serve as a constant reminder of your failures.
- **Corrupted** may be marked when you fail to *Test your Spirit* (page 90). Your experiences have left you emotionally scarred. You are at the threshold of losing yourself to darkness.

Banes are permanent. They will forever impact your character through the momentum penalty and—more importantly—through the narrative impact of being maimed or corrupted. You should factor this debility into how you perform moves and how you interact with the world. You may have physical or emotional limitations you must cope with. Your outlook may change. Your goals and methods may change. How others behave toward you may change.

If you are maimed, envision the injury and make a note of it. Consider how this impacts your ability to overcome physical challenges, and weave it into your roleplaying and the narrative of your moves.

When you are corrupted, consider how this impacts your personality and motivations. You might struggle with a new compulsion, quirk or fear. You might even bear a physical, supernatural sign of the corruption. If so, what is it?

All is not lost. You are still a heroic character. You still struggle to do the right thing, to keep your vows, to overcome your limitations and rise above your impulses. It is more difficult now, but that challenge may become part of what motivates you.

**When you create your character, all debilities should be unmarked.**

# VOWS

---

You are Ironsworn, and your vows are what motivates you. When you *Swear an Iron Vow* (page 93), you'll give it a rank (troublesome, dangerous, formidable, extreme, or epic) and mark it on your character sheet. You'll then use the progress tracks to keep track of when you *Reach a Milestone* (page 95).

**You should start your first session with at least one vow. You'll find prompts for vows in Chapter 4 - 'Your World' (page 106) and Chapter 5 - 'Foes and Encounters' (XX). To learn more about your starting your campaign, see XX.**

# BONDS

---

As you travel the Ironlands and undertake and complete quests in the service of others, you can create bonds by making the *Forge a Bond* move (page 69).

Bonds provide narrative texture to your world by fleshing out other characters and communities. They give you places to return to, and people to reconnect with, when your life as Ironsworn has taken its toll. Bonds also provide mechanical benefits when you act within a community or interact with someone with whom you share a bond. The *Sojourn* move (page 66), for example, gives you a bonus to your action roll if you share a bond with that community.

The bonds progress track on your character sheet represents the connections you have made. When you successfully *Forge a Bond*, you mark progress (one tick). When your time as Ironsworn is done, when you *Write your Epilogue* (page 72), you will add the filled boxes on your bond progress track as the bonus to your action die.

**You should start your first session with up to three bonds. Make a note of the people or communities you share bonds with, and mark up to three ticks on your bond progress track. To learn more about your first session and your starting bonds, see XX.**






# ASSETS

Assets distinguish your character from others in the Ironlands. They represent your core skills, abilities, and traits. They give you additional options and bonuses when making a move—or sometimes act as their own self-contained moves.

Assets give you both narrative and mechanical benefits. For example, you might have a sword, but that sword is just an item which defines the look of your character and enables you to fight and inflict harm. When you take the Swordmaster asset, you gain additional benefits and opportunities while you carry a sword. Or, you might have a horse which offers narrative opportunities to travel quicker and influences the narration of your travel. A horse companion, on the other hand, gives you additional options and adds texture to who you are and what is important to you.

## ASSET TYPES

There are four types of assets: **companions**, **paths**, **martial focus**, and **rituals**. You can mix-and-match assets however you like—whatever fits your vision for your character and reflects your character’s experiences and goals. You should, however, avoid picking the same asset as another player.

COMPANION					
<b>HOUND</b>					
Name: _____					
Your hound is your steadfast companion.					
<input type="radio"/> <b>Sharp:</b> when you <i>Gather Information</i> using your hound’s keen senses to track your quarry or investigate a scene, add +1					
<input type="radio"/> <b>Ferocious:</b> when you <i>Strike</i> or <i>Clash</i> alongside your hound and score a hit, choose one more; when you <i>Manipulate</i> with +iron using threats of violence, add +1					
<input type="radio"/> <b>Loyal:</b> when you <i>Test Your spirit</i> in the company of your hound, add +1					
0	+1	+2	+3		

## COMPANIONS

Companions are your bonded animal friends. When you acquire a companion, you name it and choose its starting ability. Upgrading a companion lets you enable additional abilities.

Companions utilize a health track and may suffer harm as a result of one of your moves. When your companion takes damage (page 42), you make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 89) to determine the outcome.

## PATHS

Paths are a representation of your background, interests, training, or natural talents. Paths provide mechanical and narrative advantages, but they can also reflect who you are and how you interact with the world. An Herbalist would likely have a different outlook than a Veteran, for example. Choosing both those paths, on the other hand, can reflect an evolution of your character or an interesting background.

### PATH



#### HERBALIST

- When you attempt to *Heal* using herbal remedies, and you have at least +1 supply, you may choose one (before rolling): add +1, or take or give an additional +1 health
- When you *Heal* a companion, ally or other character, and you give at least +1 health, take +1 spirit
- When you *Make Camp* and choose the option to partake, you and your companions and allies may take +1 health or +1 spirit; if you reveal something to your allies through a personal story as you prepare the meal (or contemplate your past if alone), you each take an additional +1 spirit or +1 momentum

### MARTIAL FOCUS

#### SUNDERER



If you wield an axe...

- When you *Strike* or *Clash* in close quarters, you may suffer -1 momentum before you roll and inflict +1 harm on a hit
- When you make a tribute to a fallen foe (dangerous or epic) by carving a rune in the haft of your axe, envision the form and meaning of that rune and choose one: clear a shaken condition, take +1 spirit, or take +2 momentum
- When you *Secure an Advantage* with +iron using your axe to batter at your foe's armor, weapon or shield, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a strong hit

### MARTIAL FOCUS

Ironsworn characters are assumed to be skilled fighters. Even without a martial focus, you can wield weapons and perform combat moves (page 73). A martial focus reflects a particular area of expertise, and gives you additional options and bonuses.

Martial focus assets typically require that you wield a specific weapon. If you are a sunderer and don't have an axe at the ready, you don't gain the benefits of the asset.

## RITUALS

Magic in Ironsworn is cast through rituals which help to support your actions or act as unique moves. Like all assets, rituals can be selected as you gain experience and can be upgraded over time to make them more flexible or powerful.

Rituals are not quickly or easily performed. They require time and focus. The description of the ritual will generally provide some indication of the time and materials required, but you should envision how the ceremony is performed and how the result—for better or worse—manifests.

### RITUAL

#### COMMUNION



- When you surround the remains of a recently deceased intelligent creature with lit candles, and summon its spirit, roll +heart. Add +1 if you shared a bond. On a strong hit, its spirit appears and you may converse for a few minutes (make moves, as appropriate). On a weak hit, the encounter is tenuous and troubling; you suffer -1 spirit and have only a few moments before it slips away.
- You may commune with the long-dead
- When you perform this ritual, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a strong hit

## ACQUIRING ASSETS

**You may select three assets when you create your character.** Additional assets can be acquired with experience points when you *Advance* (page 98). You spend three experience to buy a new asset, and two experience to upgrade an existing asset.

You should consider the narrative justification for new assets. What has your character done to gain these abilities? How have your goals changed to support this new focus? New assets should reflect what has happened in the narrative.

It's not a requirement, but assets are often best linked to a specific quest. For example, you *Swear an Iron Vow* to become a skilled Swordmaster. You make progress in that quest by seeking out training, demonstrating your prowess, and commissioning the crafting of a fine blade. When you *Fulfill your Vow* and spend experience on the Swordmaster asset, it will be a satisfying and rewarding resolution of that vow.

## UPGRADING ASSETS

When you spend experience (page 43) to upgrade an asset, you'll fill in the dot on your asset card to show that you've acquired that ability. All assets include three abilities. The first one will probably be filled in when you purchase that asset. If not, you get to choose one of the three abilities to start.

Abilities may be selected in any order. You don't have to activate the second ability in order to upgrade the third one.

## ASSET ABILITIES

Assets provide one or more functions.

- They provide **bonuses (adds) for specific moves**
- They allow you to **alter the outcome of a move** by rerolling any dice
- They provide **improved outcomes for successful moves**, such as taking +1 momentum on a strong hit
- They give you an option to **exchange one resource for another**, such as trading momentum for inflicting additional harm
- They allow you to **use moves in different circumstances**, such as using the Scrying ritual to *Gather Information* remotely
- They allow you to **use a different stat** instead of the one normally required by a move
- They provide **unique self-contained moves**
- They **add narrative detail** and create situations where you can reveal more about your character or your world

Follow the directions on the asset to apply its abilities to your current situation.

## FAILING AN ASSET MOVE

For the sake of brevity, moves within an asset do not always spell out the result of a miss. If an asset offers a self-contained move, and doesn't provide a specific consequence for a miss as part of its move, you should assume that you must *Pay the Price* (page 100). Make something happen as appropriate to the narrative or circumstances, roll on the *Pay the Price* table, or *Ask the Oracle* (page 102).

## FAILED RITUALS

Scoring a miss when you perform a ritual is a special circumstance. Dabbling in the mystic arts is dangerous, and the results can be unpredictable. If the

ritual goes wrong, consider what sort of backlash might be possible. If you need inspiration, *Ask the Oracle*. You'll also find a 'Mystic Backlash' table in on page XX.

Of course, failing a ritual might lead to an entirely mundane result. Perhaps you were ambushed in the midst of the ritual. Perhaps you are demoralized by your lack of mastery and suffer a loss of spirit. The key requirement is to ensure that a failure on a move means something. Make something happen.

## COMPANIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

If you have a companion, leveraging their ability is an option—never a requirement. Narratively, you can interact with your companion and have them perform tasks or assist you without gaining mechanical benefit.

When you leverage a companion's ability to gain mechanical benefit (as defined by their abilities), you are inherently putting them at risk. **If you roll a 1 on your action die when aided by a companion, any negative outcome of that move should involve your companion.** Depending on the circumstances when you *Pay the Price*, they might suffer harm, be put in danger, become separated from you, or decide to refuse your commands.

When a companion suffers physical damage, you will make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 89). When their health is at 0, they are in danger of being killed.



## SLAIN COMPANIONS

Companions can be killed. If your companion is killed, set aside the asset. If you acquire the same type of companion through the narrative of your quest and journeys, you may re-buy that asset and any existing upgrades for 1 less experience (rebuy the asset for 2 experience, and upgrade for 1 experience).

## ASSET REQUIREMENTS

Some assets have conditional requirements for your character that must be met before you can use those abilities. For example, the Battle-Scarred asset requires that you have marked the maimed debility.

Some assets also have narrative requirements. Rituals, for example, often define the steps that must be taken or materials that need to be at-hand. If you are a Swordmaster and don't have a sword at hand, you can't use those abilities. Consider the circumstances and ensure that you are properly positioned and equipped to use the ability.

## USING ASSET CARDS

Ironsworn assets are available as printable cards which can be put alongside your character sheet for easy reference. You can freely download asset booklets at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com). You then print them out and cut out the individual assets cards as needed. If you'd like to give your asset cards a bit of additional heft, they are sized for use with standard 3.5x2.5 in (88x63mm) card protectors.

To start, select three assets. You may download asset booklets from [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com).

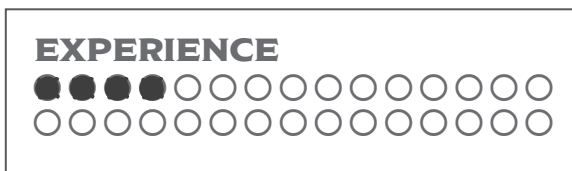
## EXPERIENCE

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When you *Fulfill your Vow* (page 96), you gain experience. The amount of experience is based on the difficulty of the quest and will range from 1 to 5 points. Make an 'X' on your character sheet for each point you've earned.



When you *Advance* (page 92), you may spend experience to purchase assets or upgrade an asset. When you do, replace each 'X' on your character sheet with a filled-in dot.



Per the *Advance* move, you may...

- **Add a new asset** by spending 3 experience
- **Upgrade an asset** by spending 2 experience

To start, your experience is unmarked.

## **EQUIPMENT AND ITEMS**

Make note of any important equipment or items you start with. These are things that might impact the narrative and the moves you make, or provide texture to your character's background. They don't offer mechanical bonuses unless they are represented by an asset (such as a weapon used in a martial focus).

You can assume you are equipped for travel and adventure, as represented by your supply track. Don't worry about fussing with rations or ammo or other mundane necessities.

There are no limitations by the rules, but consider your character's place in society and be mindful that the Ironlands is a resource-scarce setting. A sword or a set of fine armor is rare, and will mark you of someone of note. It will influence how others react to you in the fiction of your game. If you want to begin your adventures as a typical Ironlander, envision yourself outfitted with cheap, mundane gear. A hand-me-down set of quilted armor. A ratty traveling cloak. A battered wooden shield. A spear and a worn dagger. Improving your lot in life can be part of your narrative journey.

To start, make note of any gear which might have a narrative impact and equipment which relates to your assets. Keep it simple.

# BECOMING IRONSWORN

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Envision your current situation. What has happened that has driven you to action? Make it personal. Give it teeth. It's not a situation you can just walk away from. You must set things right.

You might introduce less urgent vows through the course of play, but this one is important. This is what puts you on the path of the Ironsworn.

If you need inspiration, have a look at the prompts for vows in Chapter 4 - 'Your World' (page 106) and Chapter 5 - 'Foes and Encounters' (XX). To learn more about your starting your campaign, see XX.. Then, *Swear an Iron Vow* and play to see what happens.





# CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

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1

Envision your character (page 30)

2

Set your **stats** by arranging these bonuses across iron, edge, heart, shadow and wits in any order: 3, 2, 2, 1, 1 (page 32)

3

Set your **health**, **spirit** and **supply** to +5 (page 32)

4

Set your **momentum** to +2, your **max momentum** to +10, and your **momentum reset** to +2 (page 33)

5

Pick three **assets** (page 37)

6

Make note of any important equipment (page 44)

7

Envision your **current situation**, *Swear an Iron Vow*, and play to see what happens (XX)

CHAPTER 3

# MOVES



# MAKING MOVES

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Moves help you decide what happens when you do something risky or uncertain, or to resolve various narrative and mechanical situations. There is a move for most common actions and scenes you will encounter in Ironsworn. When you do something or encounter something within the scope of a move, you'll refer to that move and follow its instructions to resolve what happens.

When a move is referenced within this rulebook or within another move, the move's name will be *italicized*. When you see *italicized* text, it's your prompt to refer to that move.

These moves are also available as a downloadable reference at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com). Print that out and have it at the ready, and refer back here when you need guidance on a specific move.

## THE 5 RULES OF MOVES

1

### **Fiction first, then move.**

What are you trying to do? How are you doing it? What complications might you face? Envision it. If you're playing co-op or guided, talk it out. Depending on the scale of the current action, you might be visualizing a montage of days (a journey, for example) or the passing of a mere second (an intense fight). Always think from the standpoint of the fiction—even if it's obvious what move you'll be making. Then, translate the fiction into the mechanics of a move, and back to the fiction again as you play out the result.

2

### **When you do the thing, make the move.**

If—after thinking through the fiction—you decide you are doing something or encountering a situation that falls under a move, make the move.

3

### **Not everything is a move.**

Don't let your session jump from move to move without any roleplay, worldbuilding or storytelling. If you're doing something safe and certain, it's probably not a move. If you'd rather gloss over something, do it.

Many moves offer a potential benefit and a potential cost, and it's ultimately your decision whether to risk the move to gain the reward. If you happen across a community in your travels, and decide to roleplay some interactions with the locals, that's not necessarily a move. If, however, you are wounded and low on supplies, *Sojourn* will give you an opportunity to recover.

Moves are also used as a pacing mechanism. Moves that lead immediately to other moves will make the situation feel more intense and dangerous. To learn more about pacing and moves, see XX.

4

#### **Whatever happens, something happens.**

A move, hit or miss, should always result in a change in the current situation. On a strong hit, you push forward, overcome obstacles, strengthen your position, gain insight. You are in control. On a weak hit, the progress is offset by a reduced effect or complication. On a miss, you face setbacks, suffer physical or mental harm, encounter new dangers. The answer to “what happens on a miss?” is never “nothing.”

Some moves will provide you specific outcomes for weak hits or misses. Others will tell you to *Pay the Price*—you’ll choose the most likely outcome based on the circumstances or use random tables for inspiration.

Some moves won’t utilize an action roll, but they will result in a change to your character’s status or the current situation.

5

#### **Pace yourself.**

Don’t repeat a move trying to get your desired outcome. Let your moves flow organically out of the fiction.

For example, you are trying to *Compel* a clan leader to agree to an alliance. You roleplay how you attempt to reason with him. Then, you make the roll, and fail. The outcome of that failure will change the situation. He refused? Why? What else did you learn or what did he do that now makes your situation more complex or dangerous? Whatever happens, something happens. The situation changes. That avenue is now cut off to you. You shouldn’t try to *Compel* him again unless you can bring a new approach or some new leverage to bear.

There will, however, be times when you make a move multiple times. In combat, it’s not unreasonable to *Strike* or *Clash* with subsequent rolls. When you *Undertake a Journey*, you may make the roll several times to gain progress. That’s fine as long as the rolls don’t get too mechanical. Break up the flow of play with other actions, narrative beats, and events that cause you to rethink your approach. When in doubt, follow this guideline: if you’ve made the same move three times in a row, switch things up or make something happen.

Also, keep an eye out for matches (page 10). That’s your prompt to toss a narrative curve ball.

## MOVES GLOSSARY

There are several phrases and prompts you'll see consistently as part of moves. They are summarized here for reference.

### “ADD +X”

Add this number to your action die. This is in addition to any other bonuses you would otherwise receive, such as your stat. Your action die + your stat + adds is your final move score. See page 9 for details.

### “ASK THE ORACLE”

When you seek inspiration to decide the outcome of a move, resolve what happens next, or get details about your world, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 102). This move lets you ask questions to get a yes/no result or use random prompts for brainstorming.

When you are playing with a GM, they are the oracle. Ask them what happens, or talk it out. They are of course free to use random prompts as well.

To learn more about this move, see page 102.

### “CHOOSE...”

The move will provide a list of options, and the number of results you may select.

### “INFLICT YOUR HARM”

When you inflict your harm (page 18), you add that harm to the progress made against your foe (see page 15 for more about progress). When you *End the Fight* (page 77), you will roll +progress.

If you are unarmed, your harm is 1. If you wield a dangerous weapon (such as an axe, sword, bow, or spear) your harm is 2.

### “INFLICT +X HARM”

“Inflict +1 Harm” tells you to add 1 harm to your current attack.

Some assets will increase your harm in particular circumstances, or a move might give you an option to increase your harm. Always add your harm and any bonus harm together, then apply that to your foe's progress track.

### “...ON A HIT” / “IF YOU SCORE A HIT”

Act on these instructions if you score a weak or strong hit on a move (your move score beats one or more of the challenge dice).

### “...ON A WEAK HIT” / “IF YOU SCORE A WEAK HIT”

Only act on these instructions if your move score beats one challenge die, but is less than or equal to the other.

### “...ON A STRONG HIT” / “IF YOU SCORE A STRONG HIT”

Only act on these instructions if your move score is greater than both challenge dice.

### “...ON A MISS”

Act on these instructions if your move score is less than both challenge dice.

### “PAY THE PRICE”

When you roll a miss on a move, you'll usually see a prompt to *Pay the Price*. This move (page 100) helps you resolve the outcome of failure. If you're playing without a GM, you'll either make the most obvious or interesting bad outcome happen based on the current circumstances, roll to see what happens, or *Ask the Oracle* (page 102) for inspiration. If you're playing with a GM, they get to decide, or you can talk it out as a group.

### “REROLL ANY DICE”

After you roll your move, you may pick up and reroll any dice, including the challenge dice and your action die. You may only reroll once, using a single throw for all dice you choose to reroll. The new result for all dice must stand.

### “ROLL +[STAT]”

Add the value of the indicated stat to your action die (page 9). This is the basic mechanic for Ironsworn. Unless a move indicates otherwise, always roll your action die, add the appropriate stat, and then compare to the challenge dice. Most moves indicate the stat you should use (such as “roll +iron”). If it doesn't, or gives you a choice, use the most appropriate stat.

Moves usually require a roll, but some moves trigger an immediate result or setup another move instead of rolling dice. Don't roll unless the move says so.

### “SUFFER -X”

Subtract this number from the indicated counter. For example, “Suffer -1 Health” tells you to subtract 1 from your health counter.

This result may also trigger additional moves.

- When you suffer -health, immediately *Endure Harm* (page 86)
- When you Suffer -spirit, immediately *Test Your Spirit* (page 90)

- When you suffer -supply and your supply falls to 0 (or is already at 0), you are *Out of Supply* (page 92). Make that move now.

If a specific amount is open to interpretation, reduce the counter as appropriate to the challenge faced.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Troublesome	-1
Dangerous	-2
Formidable	-3
Extreme	-4
Epic	-5

When in doubt, just assume it is a dangerous result and adjust the associated track by -2.

### “TAKE+X”

Add this number to the indicated counter. For example, “Take +2 Momentum” tells you to add 2 to your current Momentum counter.

Some assets may offer additional bonuses. Unless stated otherwise, this bonus is added to anything else you gain as part of the result of your move. If you take +2 momentum as part of a move, and you are using an asset which gives you +1 momentum on that same move, you take +3 momentum total.

### “WHEN YOU...”

This is the move trigger. When you do this thing, or encounter this situation, make the move. Only you, the character, makes moves. Your or the GM don’t use moves for non-player characters or creatures. If you’re just checking to see if something happens or how someone acts, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 102).

## MOVE OUTCOMES

Most moves will use an action roll to resolve the outcome. Roll your action die and challenge dice, add the relevant stat to your action die along with any adds provided by the move or your assets, and then compare the result. To learn more about action rolls, see page 9.

- **Strong hit:** when your action score is greater than both of the challenge dice, You succeed at what you are trying to do. Take any benefits as defined by the move. You are in control. Envision what you do next.

- **Weak hit:** when your action score is greater than only one of the challenge dice, it's a mixed result. You've probably succeeded, but with a lesser effect or with a cost. The move will describe the outcome or the choice you need to make. Control of the situation is slipping away. What happens next?
- **Miss:** when your action score isn't greater than either of the challenge dice, you failed. Things get worse, or you'll need to make some serious concessions. The move will give you a specific result, or tell you to *Pay the Price* (page 100). You've lost control of the situation. What happens next?

Not every move uses an action roll. Some moves give you a reference for what happens in a common situation or feed into another move. Others leverage oracles (page 21) to help guide the narrative. Don't make the roll unless the move tells you to.

## MAKING PROGRESS MOVES

There are four progress moves: *Undertake a Journey* (page 60), *End the Fight* (page 77), *Fulfill your Vow* (page 96), and *Write your Epilogue* (page 72). These moves represent your attempt to act decisively and resolve a challenge or complete a narrative arc. When you make these moves, you'll use your progress score instead of rolling your action die. Add +1 to your progress score for each fully filled progress box. Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to the progress score, and resolve the move as normal.

You cannot burn momentum (page 13) when making a progress move, and you are not affected by negative momentum. If you are working with allies, one of you will make the progress move and each of you will benefit (or suffer) from the outcome of the roll.

To learn more about progress tracks and progress moves, see page 15.

## EQUIPMENT AND MOVES

Equipment and items might contribute to the narrative of how you make a move, or avoid a move. What you wear or the items you carry might also affect how you envision your character. Otherwise, equipment is not especially important. To learn more about equipment for your character, see page 24 and page 44.

In combat, the weapon you wield and armor you wear mainly provide narrative texture to a combat scene. When you envision how you fight, take your equipment into account. Weapons, for example, have implied characteristics. Light axes, daggers or spears can be thrown. A bow can be fired. A sword is a fine weapon balanced for attack and defense. When you wield a spear,



you'll leverage its reach to hold your opponent at bay or attack with speed and precision. When you wield a dagger, you'll move inside your opponent's guard and slash and cut. When you hold a shield, you will deflect blows, bash or shove your foe, or even block arrows at range.

Similarly, you can envision yourself relying on armor as you like. Do you wear crudely stitched hides for protection? Perhaps a fine shirt of mail handed down from your father? Do you hide your face within a visored iron helm? How does your armor affect your combat stance and the tactics of your foe?

You can lose a weapon or see your armor damaged as a result of a failed move. This should be represented mechanically through a loss of momentum, or even -spirit if the item had sentimental value. Being disarmed also limits your ability to inflict harm (1 harm instead of 2—see page 18). Always start with the fiction. What moves does this item allow you to make or avoid? What happens when you no longer have it?

If you have a martial focus asset (page 39), your weapon and armor may provide additional benefit through abilities. As long as you carry that item, you may use those abilities.

## INITIATIVE

Initiative is a special mechanic in combat. It reflects who is in control. When you have initiative, you will make proactive moves and have more options. When your foe has initiative, they are forcing you to react. Some moves are inherently proactive or offensive and can only be made when you have initiative. Others are defensive or reactive and are only made when your foe has initiative.

Initiative will shift between you and your foes depending on the result of your moves. There are specific moves you make in combat (see page 73) which usually specify who has initiative as part of the outcome. You will, however, make other moves which aren't specifically combat moves to take action or avoid dangers. For all moves, simply follow these guidelines:

- **When you score a strong hit**, you take or retain initiative.
- **When you score a weak hit or miss**, you lose initiative.

As with other moves, a strong hit means you are in control and driving the narrative. What do you do next? A weak hit or miss means that you are now forced to react. What happens next?

Suffer moves (see page 84) are an exception. These moves are made as a result of a weak hit or miss on another move, and are part of the narrative of that original move. The outcome of a suffer move should not shift initiative.

# ADVENTURE MOVES

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Adventure moves are used as you travel the Ironlands, investigate situations, and deal with threats.

## FACE DANGER

When you attempt something risky or react to an imminent threat, and another move does not apply, envision your action and roll. If you act...

- with speed, agility, or precision: roll +edge
- through aggressive action, forceful defense, strength or endurance: roll +iron
- using charm, loyalty, or courage: roll +heart
- through deception, stealth or trickery: roll +shadow
- through expertise, insight or observation: roll +wits

On a **strong hit** do you what you set out to, and take +1 momentum.

On a **weak hit** you do it, but encounter a minor cost, complication, concession or delay. Envision what happens, and suffer -1 momentum, health, spirit, or supply as appropriate to the circumstances.

On a **miss**, you don't do it. *Pay the Price.*

The *Face Danger* move is a catch-all for risky actions that aren't covered by another move. If you're trying to overcome an obstacle or resist or oppose a threat, make this move to see what happens. You will select which stat to roll based on how you address the threat.

A strong hit means you do it. You are in control. What do you do next?

A weak hit means you overcome the obstacle or avoid the threat, but not without cost. Narratively, you don't have complete control over the situation. What happens next? Consider how this result might snowball, perhaps forcing you to react with another move.

A miss on this move means you are thwarted in your action or you fail to oppose the threat. You *Pay the Price*. Make it hurt.

Failing to *Face Danger* should never mean that things stay the same. Remember rule #4: Whatever happens, something happens. The situation becomes more dramatic and dire.

## SECURE AN ADVANTAGE

When you assess a situation, make preparations, or attempt to gain leverage, envision your action and roll. If you act...

- with speed, agility, or precision: roll +edge
- through aggressive action, forceful defense, strength or endurance: roll +iron
- using charm, loyalty, or courage: roll +heart
- through deception, stealth or trickery: roll +shadow
- through expertise, insight or observation: roll +wits

On a **strong hit**, you gain advantage. Choose one.

- Take control: make another move now (not a progress move); when you do, add +1
- Prepare to act: take +2 momentum

On a **weak hit**, your advantage is short-lived or you face a danger or complication. Envision what happens (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and take +1 momentum.

On a **miss** you fail or your assumptions betray you. *Pay the Price.*

The structure of this move is similar to *Face Danger*. You envision your action and roll + your most relevant stat. This move, however, is proactive rather than reactive. You're evaluating, strengthening your position, pushing for advantage. You bring your expertise or abilities to bear to set yourself up for success.

Mechanically, this move gives you an opportunity to build your momentum or improve your chance of success on a subsequent move (but not a progress move). It's a good move to make if you want to take a moment to size up the situation, or if you're acting to gain control. It will often encompass a moment in time—such as shoving your foe with your shield to setup an attack. Or, it can represent preparation that might span minutes, hours, or even days, depending on the narrative circumstances.

A strong hit means you've identified an opportunity or gained the upper hand. You knocked your enemy down. You moved into position for an arrow shot. You built your trap. You scouted the best path through the mountains. Now it's time to build on that success.

A weak hit means your action has helped, but also revealed a new danger or complication. Things are worse than you might have thought, or you foe reacts unexpectedly and forces you to alter your strategy. You pushed, and the

world pushes back. As with *Face Danger*, a weak hit might force you to react with additional moves.

A miss means that your attempt to gain advantage has backfired. You acted too slowly, or presumed too much, or were outwitted or outmatched.

## GATHER INFORMATION

When you **search an area**, **ask questions**, **conduct an investigation**, or **follow a track**, roll +wits. If you act within a community or ask questions of a person with whom you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you discover something helpful and specific. The path you must follow or action you must take to make progress is made clear. Envision what you discover (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, the information complicates your quest or introduces a new danger. Envision what you discover (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and take +1 momentum.

On a **miss**, your investigation unearths a dire threat or reveals an unwelcome truth that undermines your quest. *Pay the Price*.

Use this move when you're not sure of your next steps, when the trail has gone cold, when you make a careful search, or when you do fact-finding.

There's some overlap with other moves that might use +wits and involve knowledge, but each has their purpose. When you're forced to react with awareness or insight to deal with an immediate threat, that's *Face Danger*. When you size up your options or leverage your expertise and prepare to make a move, that's *Secure an Advantage*. When you're spending time searching, investigating, asking questions—especially related to a quest—that's when you *Gather Information*. Use whichever move is most appropriate to the circumstances and your intent.

A strong hit means you gain valuable new information. You know what you need to do next. Envision what you learn, or *Ask the Oracle*.

A weak hit means that what you learned is unsettling or ambiguous. To move forward, you'll need to overcome new obstacles and see where the breadcrumbs lead.

On a miss, some event or person acts against you, a dangerous new threat is revealed, or you learn of something that contradicts previous information or severely complicates your quest.

## HEAL

When you **attempt to mend an injury**, roll +wits. If you are tending to your own wounds, roll +wits or +iron, whichever is lower.

On a **strong hit**, if you (or the ally under your care) have the wounded condition, you may clear it. Then, take or give up to +2 health.

On a **weak hit**, as above, but you must suffer -1 supply or -1 momentum (your choice).

On a **miss** your aid is ineffective. *Pay the Price.*

When you tend to physical damage or sickness—for yourself, an ally, or a companion—make this move. Narratively, healing might be represented by staunching bleeding, binding wounds, applying salves, or using herbs to brew a tonic. Healing is not overtly magical.

Healing takes time. Minutes, at the least, for a quick treatment to get someone on their feet. Hours or perhaps days for more severe injuries. There's no fixed guidelines. Use what seems appropriate to the circumstances, or *Ask the Oracle*. Also consider how this healing downtime relates to your quests and other things going on in your world, especially on a weak hit or a miss. What is the cost of the delay?

A miss might mean that you've caused harm rather than helping, or that some perilous event interrupts your care.

## RESUPPLY

When you **hunt, forage or scavenge**, roll +wits. On a **strong hit**, take +2 supply. On a **weak hit**, take up to +2 supply, but suffer -1 momentum for each.

On a **miss** you find nothing helpful and must *Pay the Price*

When you're in the field and need to bolster your supply track, make this move. Fictionally, this represents hunting and gathering. You might also search an area where supplies might be found, such as an abandoned camp or field of battle.

*Resupply* is not used to clear the unprepared condition. For that, you'll need to find help in a community when you *Sojourn*.

## MAKE CAMP

When you **prepare a camp and rest and recover for several hours in the wild**, roll +supply.

On a **strong hit**, you and your allies may each choose up to three.

On a **weak hit**, choose one.

- Recuperate: take +1 health for you and any companions
- Partake: suffer -1 supply in exchange for +1 health for you and any companions
- Relax: take +1 spirit
- Focus: take +1 momentum
- Prepare: when you break camp, add +1 if you *Undertake a Journey*

On a **miss** you take no comfort and must *Pay the Price*.

Making camp can be a purely narrative activity and can be hand-waved or roleplayed as you like. If, however, you need to recover from the struggle of your adventures while traveling through the wilds, make this move.

Unlike most moves, you will not roll + a stat. Instead, you will roll +supply. This represents your access to provisions and gear. Huddling in your cloak on the cold ground is a different experience than a warm fire, good food, and a dry tent.

If you are traveling with allies, only one of you will make this roll for the group. Each of you may choose your own benefits on a strong or weak hit.

On a miss, you gain no benefits of your downtime. Perhaps you suffered troubling dreams or just could not find rest (take -Spirit). Poor weather may have left you tired and cold (-Health). Perhaps you were attacked. If in doubt, roll on the *Pay the Price* table or *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration. Depending on what you envision, you can play to see what happens, or jump to the next day as you continue on your journey the worse for wear.

## UNDERTAKE A JOURNEY

When you **prepare to travel across hazardous or unfamiliar lands**, determine the rank of your journey (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

- Troublesome journey: 3 progress per waypoint
- Dangerous journey: 2 progress per waypoint
- Formidable journey: 1 progress per waypoint
- Extreme journey: 2 ticks per waypoint
- Epic journey: 1 tick per waypoint

Then, for each segment of your journey, roll +wits. If you are setting off from a community with which you share a bond, add +1 to your initial roll.

On a **strong hit**, choose two. On **weak hit**, choose one.

- You reach a waypoint: if the waypoint is unknown to you, envision it (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Then, mark progress.
- You make good use of your resources: do not suffer -1 supply
- You move at speed: take +1 momentum
- You *Reach your Destination*

On a **miss**, you are waylaid by a perilous event. *Pay the Price*.

This is Ironsworn's travel move. When you set off toward a destination, make this move.

First, you'll give your journey a rank. Decide how far—and how hazardous—it is based on the established fiction. If you're unsure, *Ask the Oracle*. Most of your journeys should be dangerous or formidable. An epic journey is one of months, or even years. It is the journey of a lifetime.

If the journey is mundane—a relatively short distance through safe territory,—don't make this move. Just narrate the trip and jump to what happens or what you do when you arrive.

### ALONG FOR THE RIDE?

If you are not leading your journey, you should not make the *Undertake a Journey* move. If you are part of a caravan or a party of NPCs, and aren't in charge, you won't make this move or track progress. The journey will be narrative. You can *Ask the Oracle* to determine what happens en route or when you arrive.

## ALLIES AND JOURNEYS

If you are traveling with allies, only one of you will make the *Undertake a Journey* roll for each segment, and you will share a progress track. The responsibility for leading the journey can switch from segment to segment as you like.

Your fellow travelers can assist by making an *Aid your Ally* move. Perhaps they are scouting ahead or sustaining you with a lively song—both of which could be represented by *Secure an Advantage* moves. They can also *Resupply* to represent foraging or hunting for supplies en route.

Everyone should offer narrative color for what you do and see on your journey, even if you are not making moves.

## TRAVEL TIME

Travel time can largely be abstracted. The time between waypoints might be hours or days, depending on the terrain and the distance. If it's important, make a judgment call based on what you know of your journey, or *Ask the Oracle*.

## WAYPOINTS

A waypoint is a feature of the landscape, a settlement, or a point-of-interest. Depending on the information you have or whether you have traveled this area before, a specific waypoint may be known to you. If it isn't, envision what you find. If you need inspiration, *Ask the Oracle*.

You will find random tables for waypoint features starting on page XX, but do not rely too heavily on these generators. Seek inspiration from your narrative and the landscape you envision around you. If it's interesting, wondrous, or creates new opportunities for drama and adventure, make it appear and bring it to life.

Depending on the pace of your story and your current situation, you may choose to focus on this waypoint, making moves as appropriate. A settlement can offer roleplay opportunities or provide a chance to rest and resupply via the *Sojourn* move. In the wilds, you might make moves such as *Make Camp* or *Secure an Advantage*. Or, you might just choose to play out a scene that doesn't involve moves as you interact with your allies or the world. Mix it up. Some waypoints will pass as a cinematic montage (doubtlessly depicted in a soaring helicopter shot as you trudge over jagged hills). Other waypoints will offer opportunities to zoom-in, enriching your story and your world.

When you roll a match (page 10), take that as an opportunity to introduce something unexpected. This could be an encounter, a surprising or dramatic feature of the landscape, or a turn of events in your current quest.



## MOUNTS AND TRANSPORT

Horses, mules and transport (such as boats) will influence the fiction of your journey—the logistics of travel and how long it takes. They do not provide a mechanical benefit unless you have an asset which gives you a bonus (such as a horse companion).

## MANAGING SUPPLIES

You can intersperse *Resupply* or *Make Camp* moves during your journey to manage your health, spirit and supply, or to create narrative diversions. Don't be concerned with using the *Make Camp* move as an automatic capstone to a day of travel. You can be assumed to rest and camp as appropriate without making the move, and you can roleplay out those scenes or gloss over them as you like. When you want the mechanical benefit of the *Make Camp* move, or you're interested in playing the move out through the fiction, then do it.

## ON A MISS...

A miss on this move offers opportunities for adventure and drama. You might face hazards through the weather, the terrain, encounters with creatures or people, attacks from your enemies, strange discoveries, or supernatural events. Decide what happens based on your current circumstances and surroundings, roll on the *Pay the Price* table, or *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration. Depending on your desired narrative pace, you can then play out the event to see what happens, or summarize and apply the consequences immediately.

For example, you decide that you come across a broad, wild river which must be crossed to continue on your journey. If you want to focus on how you deal with the situation, play to see what happens by making moves. You might *Secure an Advantage* by exploring upriver for a ford and then *Face Danger* to cross. Or, if you'd like to quickly push the narrative forward, you could skip to a perilous outcome, such as losing some provisions during the crossing (suffer -supply). Mix things up, especially on long journeys. To learn more about using moves and narrative to control the pace of your game, see XX.

## REACH YOUR DESTINATION

### *Progress Move*

When **your journey comes to an end**, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

On a **strong hit**, the situation at your destination favors you.

Envision what you find and choose one:

- Make another move now and add +1
- Take +1 momentum

On a **weak hit**, you arrive but face an unforeseen hazard or complication. Envision what you find (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and *Pay the Price*.

On a **miss**, you have gone astray, your objective is lost to you, or you were misled about your destination. If your journey continues, clear all but one filled progress and raise the journey's rank by one (if not already epic).

You make this move by choosing it as a result of a hit when you *Undertake a Journey*. Since this is a progress move, you will tally the number of filled boxes on your progress track for this journey. This is your progress score. Only add boxes that have been fully filled (four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

When you score a strong hit, you arrive at your destination and are well-positioned for success. This should be reflected in the mechanical benefit offered by the move, but more-so in the fictional narrative of your arrival. If this has been a long, arduous journey, make this moment feel meaningful and rewarding.

On a weak hit, something complicates your arrival or your next steps. Things are not what you expected, or a new danger reveals itself. Perhaps the village is occupied by a raiding party, or the mystic whose council you sought is initially hostile to you. Envision what you find and play to see what happens.

On a miss, something has gone horribly wrong. You realize you are off-course, you had bad information about your destination, or you face a turn of events that undermines your purpose here. Perhaps the village is mysteriously abandoned, or the mystic left this place years ago. Depending on the circumstances, this might mean that your journey ends in failure or

that you must push on while clearing all but one of your filled progress and raising the journey's rank.

If you are traveling with allies, only one of you will make this move. Each of you will benefit (or suffer) from the outcome of the roll.

## RELATIONSHIP MOVES

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Relationship moves are made as you interact with others in the world, form bonds, and aid or obstruct your allies.

### COMPEL

When **you attempt to persuade someone to do something**, envision your approach and roll. If you...

- charm, pacify, barter, or convince, roll +heart (add +1 if you share a bond)
- threaten or incite, roll +iron
- lie or swindle, roll +shadow

On a **strong hit**, they'll do what you want or share what they know. You may also choose one:

- If you use this exchange to *Gather Information*, make that move now and add +1
- Take +1 momentum

On a **weak hit**, as above, but they will first demand something in return. Envision what they want (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **miss** they refuse and you must *Pay the Price*.

When you act to persuade someone to do as you ask, or give you something, make this move. It might be through bargaining, or intimidation, charm, diplomacy, or trickery. Use the appropriate stat based on your approach, and roll to see what happens.

This move doesn't give you free reign to control the actions of other characters in your world. Remember: fiction first. Consider their motivations. What is your leverage over them? What do they stand to gain or avoid? Do you have an existing relationship? If your argument has no merit, or your threat or promise carries no weight, you can't make this move. You can't intimidate your way out of a situation where you are at a clear disadvantage. You can't barter when you have nothing of value to offer in trade. If you are unsure, *Ask the Oracle*: "Would they consider this?" If the answer is yes, make the move.

On the other hand, if their positive response is all but guaranteed—you are acting obviously in their best interest or offering a trade of fair value—don't make this move. Just make it happen. Save the move for times when the situation is uncertain and dramatic.

On a weak hit, success will be hinged on their counter-proposal. Again, look to the fiction. What would they want? What would satisfy their concerns or motivate them to comply? If you accept their offer, you gain ground. If not, you've encountered an obstacle in your quest and will need to find another path forward.

If you promise them something as part of this move, but then fail to do as you promised, they should respond accordingly. Perhaps it means a rude welcome when next you return to this community. If they are powerful, they may even act against you. If you share a bond, you would most certainly *Test your Bond* (page 70). Your actions, good or bad, should have narrative ramifications beyond the scope of the move.

On a miss, they are insulted, angered, they see through your lies, or they reveal a harsh reality. The way they respond, and their reasons for refusing your request, should introduce new dangers or complications.

*Compel* may also be used to bring combat to a non-violent conclusion. Your approach will dictate the stat you use—typically +iron when you threaten with further violence, +heart when you attempt to surrender or reason with them, and +shadow when you use trickery. Your foe must have a narrative reason to be open to your approach. If unsure, *Ask the Oracle*. To learn more, see page 83.



## SOJOURN

When you **spend time in a community seeking assistance**, roll +heart. If you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you and your allies may each choose two. On a **weak hit**, choose one. If you share a bond, choose one more.

On a hit, you may also focus on one of your chosen recover actions and roll +heart again (if you share a bond, add +1). If you score a **strong hit**, take +2 more for that action. On a **weak hit**, take +1 more. On a **miss**, it goes badly and you lose all benefits for that activity.

On a **miss** you find no hospitality here. *Pay the Price.*

### Clear a Condition

- Mend: clear a wounded debility
- Equip: clear an unprepared debility
- Hearten: clear a shaken debility

### Recover

- Recuperate: take +2 health for yourself and any companions
- Consort: take +2 spirit
- Provision: take +2 supply
- Plan: take +2 momentum

### Provide Aid

- Take a quest: envision what this community needs, or what trouble it is facing (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). If you chose to help, *Swear an Iron Vow* and add +1.

From the Barrier Islands to the Havens, from the Flooded Lands to the Veiled Mountains, communities stand as an oasis within the perilous wilds of the Ironlands. They are a source of protection, trade, and fellowship.

Communities range from the smallest steading to expansive villages. There are, however, no grand cities like those that stood in the old world. Life here is too harsh. Resources too few.

When you rest, replenish and share fellowship within a community, you make this move. Depending on your level of success, you may choose one or more debilities to clear or tracks to increase. If you *Sojourn* with allies, only one of you will make this move, but all of you can make your own choices on a strong or weak hit.

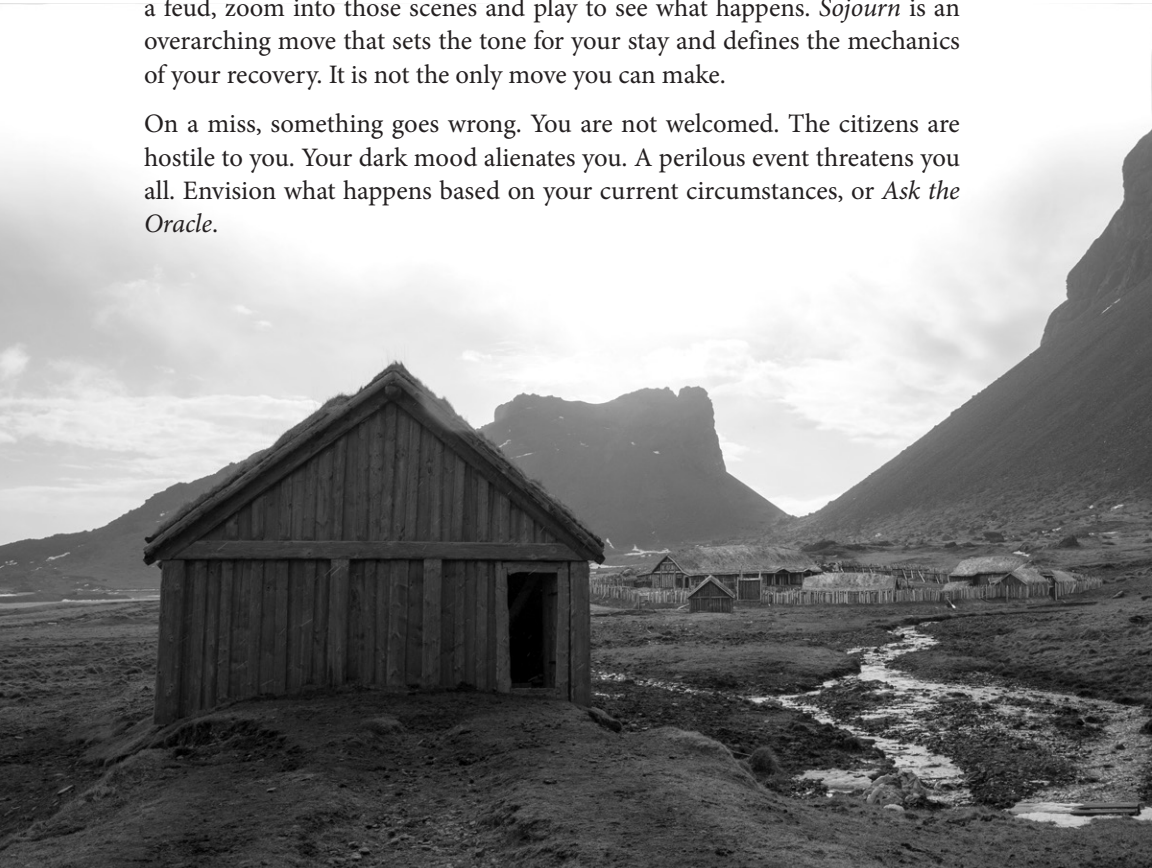
Your *Sojourn* should require several hours or several days, depending on your current circumstances and level of aid and recovery required. Make this move only once when visiting a community.

On a strong hit, this move includes an option to roll again for one of your selected recover actions. That second roll will either provide or bonus to that activity (on a hit) or will cause you to lose all benefits for that recovery. For example, if you are suffering from low spirit, you might choose to focus on the 'Consort' action, representing time in the mead hall or intimacy with a lover. Roll +heart again, and take the bonus if you score a hit.

Narratively, you can imagine much of the time in this community passing as a montage. If you choose to focus on a recovery action, zoom into that scene and envision what happens. You might be in the healer's house, or in the market, or dancing at a festival, or speaking with the clan leader and making plans. Envision how this scene begins, make your roll, and then narrate the conclusion of the scene—good or bad—based on the result of your focus roll.

You can also perform additional moves while in the community. If you need to *Gather Information*, or *Compel* someone, or *Draw the Square* to resolve a feud, zoom into those scenes and play to see what happens. *Sojourn* is an overarching move that sets the tone for your stay and defines the mechanics of your recovery. It is not the only move you can make.

On a miss, something goes wrong. You are not welcomed. The citizens are hostile to you. Your dark mood alienates you. A perilous event threatens you all. Envision what happens based on your current circumstances, or *Ask the Oracle*.



## DRAW THE CIRCLE

When you **challenge someone to a formal duel, or accept a challenge**, roll +heart. If you share a bond with this community, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, take +1 momentum. You may also choose up to three boasts and take +1 momentum for each.

On a **weak hit**, you may choose one boast in exchange for +1 momentum.

- Grant first strike: your foe has initiative
- Bare yourself: take no benefit of armor or shield; your foe's harm is +1.
- Hold no iron: take no benefit of weapons; your harm is 1
- Bloody yourself: suffer -1 health
- To the death: one way or another, this fight must end with death

On a **miss**, you enter the fight at a disadvantage. *Pay the Price.*

Then, use moves to resolve the fight. If you are the victor, you may make a lawful demand, and your opponent must comply or forfeit their honor and standing. If you refuse the challenge, surrender, or are defeated, they will make a demand of you.

Ritualized duels are a common way of dealing with disputes among Ironlanders. When you challenge someone or accept a challenge, you each trace one-half of the outline of a circle—the combat arena—into the ground with the point of an iron blade. Then, you face each other in the center of the circle and fight.

Make moves to play out the duel. If you'd rather resolve it quickly with a single move, you can *Battle*.

Duels are usually stopped when one of the duelists surrenders or is clearly defeated (knocked out cold, for instance). The victor may then make a demand which the loser must abide by. Not complying with this demand means ostracism and shame.

Duels may also be to the death. If one of the combatants declares their intent to fight to the death, the other must agree or forfeit.

If you lose a duel and are still alive, envision what your opponent demands of you. If you're unsure, *Ask the Oracle*. Then, do it or face the narrative cost of your dishonor.

## FORGE A BOND

When you **successfully Fulfill your Vow to the benefit of a person or community**, you may attempt to create a bond. When you do, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, make note of the bond, mark a tick on your bond progress track, and choose one.

- Take +1 spirit
- Take +2 momentum

On a **weak hit**, they ask something more of you first. Determine what it is (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), do it (or *Swear an Iron Vow*), and then write the bond.

On a **miss** you are refused. *Pay the Price.*

Bonds will connect you to the people of the Ironlands. They provide a narrative benefit by enriching your interactions and creating connections with a recurring cast of characters and familiar places. They also provide mechanical benefits by giving you adds when you make moves such as *Sojourn* or *Compel*. And, perhaps most importantly, your bonds will help determine your ultimate fate when you retire from adventuring and *Write your Epilogue*.

Bonds can be created when you *Fulfill your Vow* in the service of a person or community. When you score a strong hit on this move, mark a tick on your bond progress track (page 37) and make a note of your bond.

On a weak hit, they ask more of you. It might be a task, an item, a concession, or even a vow. Envision what they need, or *Ask the Oracle*. If you do it, or swear the vow, you can mark the bond.

On a miss, they have refused you. Why? The answer should introduce new complications or dangers. *Ask the Oracle* if you're unsure.

## BONDS AND THE FICTION

In the fiction of your world, bonds can be ceremonial. If your bond is with a person, perhaps you trade a keepsake or item of value. When you form a bond with a community, they may honor you in their own way. Envision what these ceremonies look like to add color and texture to the setting.

Respect the narrative weight of a bond. Don't walk through the village after completing a quest and declare a bond with everyone in sight in order to add more ticks to your bond progress track. Your bonds represent true, deep connections. They are the narrative capstone to a difficult and heroic quest.



## BONDS WITH ALLIES

Bonds can also be made with allies if you have sworn and fulfilled a vow to them. On a weak hit, your ally may decide what they ask of you. On a miss, something still stands between you. What is it? What must you do to form a deeper connection?

## STARTING BONDS

When you create your character, you will mark up to three bonds. These bonds already exist and do not require this move. They represent your background and your connections to home and family. See XX for details.

### TEST YOUR BOND

When your **bond is tested through conflict, betrayal, or circumstance**, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, this test has strengthened your bond. Choose one.

- Take +1 spirit
- Take +2 momentum

On a **weak hit**, your bond is fragile and you must prove your loyalty. Envision what they ask of you (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and do it (or *Swear an iron Vow*). If you refuse or fail, clear your bond and *Pay the Price*.

On a **miss**, or if you have no interest in maintaining this relationship, clear your bond and *Pay the Price*.

Bonds are not necessarily everlasting. How strong is your commitment? If you seek to maintain this bond, at what cost? Events in your narrative may cause your bond to be tested. When you are forced to act against a community or person who you share a bond with, or they break faith with you, make this move.

You should *Test your Bond* within the community or in the company of the person with whom you share the bond. If you learn of something that will force this test, but aren't in a position to resolve it, make a note. Then, make this move when you next come in contact. If extended time passes without making the test (weeks or months, depending on the circumstance) then clear the bond and be done with it.

## AID YOUR ALLY

When you *Secure an Advantage* in direct support of an ally, and score a hit, they (instead of you) can take the benefits of the move. If you are in combat and score a strong hit, you and your ally have initiative.

When you take an action to aid an ally (another player's character) through a *Secure an Advantage* move, you can hand over the benefits of that move to your ally. This represents setting your ally up for success through a supporting action. You might be distracting a foe in combat, scouting ahead on a journey, or giving them encouragement as you stand against a dire threat.

If you score a strong hit when you *Secure an Advantage*, your ally will make the choice between +2 momentum or making an immediate move with a +1 add. If you have an asset which gives you any additional benefits on the outcome of a *Secure an Advantage* move, your ally also takes those benefits (instead of you). If you score a strong hit in combat, you and your ally may both take or retain initiative.

On a weak hit, they take the +1 momentum, but should also bear the brunt of the danger or complication. If you are in combat, you both lose initiative.

On a miss, you or the ally (or both of you) should suffer the outcome of the move, as appropriate to the circumstances and the narrative. If in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*. As with a weak hit, you both lose initiative when in combat.



Don't ping-pong this move back and forth in an attempt to build momentum. Narratively, that's hard to justify. Envision what you are doing to *Aid your Ally*, make the *Secure and Advantage* move, resolve it, and hand the reins over to your ally as they leverage that advantage. Keep it moving. Make things happen.

## WRITE YOUR EPILOGUE

### *Progress Move*

When **you retire from your life as Ironsworn**, envision two things: what you hope for, and what you fear.

Then, roll your challenge dice and compare to your bonds. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum. If you are not corrupted, you may—one time only—reroll either or both challenge dice.

On a **strong hit**, your life comes to pass as you hoped.

On a **weak hit**, your life takes an unexpected turn, but not necessarily for the worse. You find yourself spending your days with someone or in a place you did not foresee. Envision it (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **miss**, your fears are realized.

You will make this move only once—when all your vows are fulfilled or forsaken and you choose to end your character's adventuring life. For better or worse, the bonds you've made, the vows you swore, will echo through your days. How have you left your mark? Where are you welcomed and where are you shunned? What remains of you when your quests are at an end?

This is a progress move. Tally the number of filled boxes on your bonds progress track as your progress score. Only add boxes that have been fully filled (four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum. You may, however, reroll any dice either or both challenge dice (once only) if you are not corrupted.

Based on the result of this move, envision how you spend the remainder of your days.

# COMBAT MOVES

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When there are no other options, when the sword slips free of its sheath, when the arrow is knocked, when the shield is brought to bear, make these moves.

## ENTER THE FRAY

When **you enter into combat**, determine the rank of each of your foes (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

- Troublesome foe: 3 progress per harm; inflicts 1 harm
- Dangerous foe: 2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm
- Formidable foe: 1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm
- Extreme foe: 2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm
- Epic foe: 1 tick per harm; inflicts 5 harm

Then, roll to determine who is in control. If you are...

- ambushed, roll +wits
- facing off against your foe, roll +heart
- moving into position against an unaware foe, or striking without warning, roll +shadow

On a **strong hit**, take +2 momentum. You have initiative.

On a **weak hit**, choose one:

- Bolster your position: take +2 momentum
- Prepare to act: take initiative

On a **miss**, combat begins with you at a disadvantage. *Pay the Price.* Your foe has initiative.

Make this move when combat is joined. Set up your progress tracks for your foes and roll to see who is initially in control. Then, play to see what happens. If you and your allies are fighting against a common enemy, you will share progress tracks and mark the harm you each inflict.

If you are fighting a group of troublesome or dangerous foes, you can combine them into a single progress track. This is called a pack. Managing your progress against a pack is easier than tracking them as individuals, and will tend to make combat go a bit faster. For a small pack (about 3 to 5), increase the rank by one. For a large pack (about 5 to 10) increase the rank by two. If you are facing more than 10 troublesome or dangerous foes, group them into smaller packs and associated progress tracks as appropriate.

For more about the foes you might face in the Ironlands, see XX.

## STRIKE

When **you have initiative and attack in close quarters**, roll +iron.  
When you have initiative and attack with a thrown weapon or bow, roll +edge.

On a **strong hit**, inflict +1 harm. You retain initiative.

On a **weak hit**, inflict your harm and lose initiative.

On a **miss** your attack fails and you must *Pay the Price*. The enemy has initiative.

Make this move when you have initiative and act to inflict harm on your foe. Narratively, this move might represent a focused moment in time—a single sweep of your axe or the flight of an arrow. Or, it can depict a flurry of attacks as you put your opponent on the defensive.

On a strong hit, you strike true. By default you inflict 2 harm if you are armed with a dangerous weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), and 1 harm if not. A strong hit on this moves gives you an additional +1 harm (so, 3 harm with a dangerous weapon). You may also have assets that provide an additional bonus to your harm. Tally your harm and mark it on your foe's progress track.

Narratively, a strong hit represents wounding your enemy or wearing them down. You have initiative and can make your next move. If this attack was intended as a decisive blow, you can attempt to *End the Fight*.

On a weak hit, you've done some damage but you have overextended or your foe counters. You mark your harm, and your foe has initiative.

On a miss, you must *Pay the Price*. Your opponent might strike back (you suffer -health and *Endure Harm*), you might lose position or advantage (suffer -momentum), you might face a new or intensified danger, or your weapon might be dropped or broken. Let the outcome flow out of the fiction, or roll on the *Pay the Price* table to see what happens.

## CLASH

When **your foe has initiative and you fight with them in close quarters**, roll +iron. **When you exchange a volley at range**, roll +edge.

On a **strong hit**, inflict your harm and choose one. You have the initiative.

- You bolster your position: take +1 momentum
- You find an opening: inflict +1 harm

On a **weak hit** inflict your harm, but then *Pay the Price*. Your foe has the initiative.

On a **miss** you are outmatched and you must *Pay the Price*. Your foe has the initiative.

When your foe has initiative and attacks, and you choose to fight back, make this move. On a strong hit, you manage to take control of the exchange, inflict your harm, and take back initiative. On a weak hit, you'll inflict harm on your foe but you will also *Pay the Price*. As with the *Strike* move, the price might be that you suffer -health, or some other dramatic negative outcome.

When you envision this move, consider the fiction of the exchange. Is this a focused, dramatic moment where you each seek an opening? Or is it a flurry of attacks and parries, advances and retreats? The outcome of this move determines if your foe presses their advantage or you turn the tide in your favor.

If you aren't actively fighting back—you're just trying to avoid the attack or seeking cover, you should *Face Danger* instead. Using that move gives you the advantage of suffering a relatively minor cost on a weak hit (-1 momentum), but you give up the opportunity to inflict harm on your foe.

If your foe isn't making a physical assault—but trying to maneuver or gain an advantage—that might also be a cue to *Face Danger*. Think of it as the inverse of your *Secure an Advantage* move.

If you ever respond to an attack by just standing and taking the hit, that's not a move. The outcome isn't in much doubt. *Pay the Price*.

## LAST STAND

Once per combat, when **you risk it all**, you may steal initiative from your foe in order to make a move. When you do, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

If you fail to score a hit on that move, you have lost. Choose one or more miss results from the *Battle* move as appropriate to the circumstances and intent of your foe (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

This move represents a last ditch effort to turn the tide of the fight. It is that moment when all seems lost, but the hero somehow rallies.

*Last Stand* lets you take initiative and make a move. That move can be whatever is appropriate under the circumstance—*Strike*, *Secure an Advantage* or perhaps *End the Fight*. Roll the move (add +1), and act on the results. If you've scored a hit, you may take an additional +1 momentum. Then, play to see what happens. Hopefully this bold action is a turning point for the fight.

Here's the catch: if you score a miss when you make your move, you jump immediately to the miss result on the *Battle* move. You've lost. The fight is done.

Narratively, this is a dramatic moment. Focus on it. Envision your character's action. You struggle to your feet and raise your sword, your eyes hardening with determination. You spur your mount into a desperate charge. You grab your opponent's blade in your bare hand. You pull the dagger from your boot and lunge. Or, perhaps you state your name, lament the killing of your father, and tell your foe to prepare for death.



## END THE FIGHT

### *Progress Move*

When you **take decisive action and score a strong hit**, you may check to see if this foe is defeated. If you do, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

On a **strong hit**, choose one as appropriate to the current situation. If you're unsure of which to select, *Ask the Oracle*.

- Your foe is killed
- Your foe is or grievously injured and incapacitated
- Your foe is knocked out or otherwise out of action
- Your foe stands down and attempts to negotiate
- Your foe surrenders without conditions
- Your foe flees

On a **weak hit**, take +1 momentum but lose initiative.

On a **miss**, you have over-committed and you must *Pay the Price*. Your foe has initiative.

When you have scored a strong hit on decisive move, such as *Strike*, *Clash*, or *Secure an Advantage*, you may make this move to determine if your foe is defeated.

*End the Fight* follows on and fulfills the previous move and the progress you have made in this scene. It represents that moment when your foe reels from a savage blow, or succumbs to a clever maneuver. What will they do? Will they fall or recover? Flee or rally? Surrender or attack with renewed strength? Make this move to find out.

Since this is a progress move, you will add the number of filled boxes on your progress track for this foe, whether it's a single enemy or a pack. This is your progress score. Only add boxes that have been fully filled (four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

Making this move is inherently risky. If you score a weak hit or a miss, you'll undermine the success you gained on your previous move by losing initiative, and potentially turn the tide back to your foe.



On a strong hit, envision how this foe is defeated. If you still face other foes, you have initiative and the fight continues. On a weak hit, your foe is battered but still in the fight. On a miss, you have misjudged your advantage and must *Pay the Price*. Your opponent surges back into the fight. The price might be an attack and immediate harm you are unable to defend against (-health), a loss of advantage or position (-momentum), a new danger being revealed, or anything dramatic and appropriate to the current situation.

When you and your allies are fighting against a common foe, you share a progress track and any of you may attempt to *End the Fight* if you have initiative and score a strong hit on a setup move. The outcome will affect the situation for everyone involved.



## BATTLE

When you **fight a battle**, and it happens in a blur, envision your objective and roll. If you primarily...

- fight in close to overpower your opponents, roll +iron.
- fight at range, or using your speed and the terrain to your advantage, roll +edge
- fight using trickery to befuddle your opponents, roll +shadow
- fight depending on your courage, allies or companions, roll +heart
- fight using careful tactics to outsmart your opponents, roll +wits

On a **strong hit**, you achieve your objectives unconditionally. Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you achieve your objectives, but not without cost. *Pay the Price.*

On a **miss**, you are defeated. Choose one or more as appropriate to the circumstances and intent of your foe (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

- You are captured: suffer -spirit and *Test your Spirit*
- Something precious is lost: suffer -spirit and *Test your Spirit*
- You have failed in your objective: suffer -spirit and *Test your Spirit*
- You are gravely wounded: reduce health to 0, mark wounded, and *Endure Harm*
- You are left for dead: reduce health to 0, mark wounded, and *Face Death*
- Your quest has failed: *Forsake your Vow*

This move is used as an alternative to a detailed combat scene. When you want to zoom out and resolve a fight in a single roll, make this move.

First, consider your objective. Are you trying to get away? Defeat your foes? Defend a person or place? Reach a position? Envision the situation, your strategy, what you intend to gain or avoid, and make this move. When you roll, add the stat most relevant to your overall approach.

Then, envision the outcome. A strong hit is unconditional success. Your foes have been defeated, surrendered, fled, or given up their objectives as appropriate to the situation and your goals for the fight.

A weak hit means you've achieved your overall objective, but at some cost. Since this is the resolution of an extended scene, the price you pay should be

dramatic and meaningful. This can include suffering a significant amount of harm, failing to achieve a secondary goal, or encountering a new danger or complication. If in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.

The miss results include narrative costs (being captured, losing something, suffering grievous wounds) and mechanical costs (suffering -health or -spirit). A miss on the *Battle* move should have dire ramifications on your character and your quest. Make it hurt.

Use the *Battle* move as you like. If your story doesn't emphasize fighting, or you'd rather generally hand-wave combat encounters, you can use this move exclusively. You can also drop it into some portion of a larger scene. Perhaps you *Battle* to quickly deal with lesser foes, then handle the fight against their leader with more detail. The mix of *Battle* moves and more detailed fight scenes can help you pace your gaming sessions and let you focus on what is interesting or important.

## OTHER MOVES IN COMBAT

You won't rely solely on combat moves in a fight. You can—and should—make other moves as appropriate to the situation, your intent, and the actions of your foes.

### FACE DANGER (PAGE 55)

Make this move when you seek to avoid or overcome an obstacle other than a direct physical attack. For example:

- You leap over a gully as you ride into battle. Do you make it? *Face Danger* +edge.
- The massive bear roars, spittle flying. Will you muster your courage and stand your ground? *Face Danger* +heart.
- As you fight one raider, another is skulking among the trees, trying to get a bead on you for an arrow shot. Do you catch sight of him? *Face Danger* +wits.

If this is a proactive move—you're overcoming an obstacle or setting up another move—make it when you have initiative. If this is a reactive move—you are trying to avoid an immediate threat—your foe likely has the initiative.

When would you *Face Danger* instead of using *Clash* against an imminent threat in combat? If you are fighting back, that's probably *Clash*. If you are trying to avoid an attack by focusing on defense, getting out of the way or seeing cover, that's *Face Danger*. Also, if you envision your foe taking an action to put you at a disadvantage, or you're dealing with a situational threat, you'll likely *Face Danger*. This is especially true if you are leveraging a stat other

than iron or edge. If in doubt, go with what makes the most sense or creates the most interesting narrative.

*Face Danger* might also be used to flee combat altogether. If you have initiative, and have a path and means to escape, make this move and see what happens.

### **SECURE AN ADVANTAGE (PAGE 56)**

This move is made in combat when you try to gain some leverage, improve your position, or setup another move. For example:

- You take careful aim before shooting. *Secure an Advantage* +wits.
- You perform a sly feint, trying to put your opponent off balance and create an opening. *Secure an Advantage* +shadow.
- You attempt to dishearten your foe with an intimidating roar as you charge. *Secure an Advantage* +iron.



When you want to *Secure an Advantage*, envision the scene. Consider the terrain, your weapons, your position, and your fighting style and approach. Consider your enemy and their tactics and readiness. Where is there an opportunity? Remember: fiction first. Envision your action, then make the move.

*Secure an Advantage* can be used whenever you have initiative. Mechanically, it's a powerful move for building your momentum track toward a decisive action. Narratively, it's a great way to bring cinematic action into the scene.



## **COMPEL (PAGE 64)**

Combat does not need to be to the death. Your foe likely has their own interests and self-preservation in mind and may be open to coercion through threats or negotiation. If you have initiative, and the narrative justifies it, you can attempt to *Compel* your foe.

- **When you attempt to force your foe to surrender**, *Compel* +iron
- **When you try to surrender, reason or negotiate**, *Compel* +heart
- **When you trick your foe into giving up the fight**, *Compel* +shadow

*Compel* can be used as a shortcut to ending a combat. That's intentional. You don't have to make the *End the Fight* move to surrender or negotiate a truce. *End the Fight* is the outcome of a desperate, probably bloody, skirmish. If you or your foe have other objectives, give *Compel* a try.

On the other hand, trying to *Compel* your foe needs to be supported by the narrative. What is your foe's intent? How do they feel about you? Are you a hated enemy? A potential meal? What are they willing to risk to end you? Has the fight gone in their favor or against them? What leverage do you have? If there's no upside for them, you can't make this move. If you aren't sure if they'd consider your approach, you can *Ask the Oracle* before you *Compel*.

*Compel* should be used with sentient beings whom you can interact with. You can't *Compel* a hungry pack of wolves.

## **AID YOUR ALLY (PAGE 71)**

This move is an obvious choice when you want to bolster your ally's actions. Envision what you do to help them, make the *Secure an Advantage* move, and let them take the benefits of the outcome.

On a strong hit, both of you take or retain initiative. This is a huge advantage for your ally if they were stuck in a series of failed moves and having a difficult time making progress against their foe. On a weak hit or miss, you both lose initiative.

## **SUFFER MOVES (PAGE 84)**

Make Suffer moves as appropriate as you deal with the outcomes of your moves through a combat scene.

## **PAY THE PRICE (PAGE 100)**

Being forced to suffer -health (and make the *Endure Harm* move) is the obvious result when you are forced to *Pay the Price* in a fight, but there's much more that can happen in a dynamic combat situation. You lose your footing and suffer -momentum. You drop your weapon. Your shield is shattered. A

goal is lost to you. A companion or ally is injured. You are put in a perilous position and must *Face Danger*. A new threat reveals itself.

Mix it up. Make combat exciting and cinematic. Whatever happens, make the outcome one you wish you had avoided. If in doubt, roll on the *Pay the Price* table or Ask the Oracle.

### **ASK THE ORACLE (PAGE 102)**

In solo and co-op play, you can *Ask the Oracle* about your foe's objectives, tactics, and specific actions. The oracle can also help to determine the outcome of events or introduce new twists.

Use this move sparingly. For the most part, trust your instincts. Your actions trigger reactions. Who are you fighting? What do they want? What do they do next? Your first impulse is often the right one. You can also leverage the description of your foe's instincts in the Foes and Encounters chapter (XX) to guide their behavior.

Also be mindful of your surroundings and other characters. Ask questions. "Can I take cover here?", "Is the river shallow enough to cross?", "Do the villagers flee?" Consider your foe's actions and your opportunities in the context of the environment.

In guided play, the GM is your oracle. When you have questions about what happens next, look to them, or talk it out at the table. Your GM is free to use the *Ask the Oracle* move to answer questions.



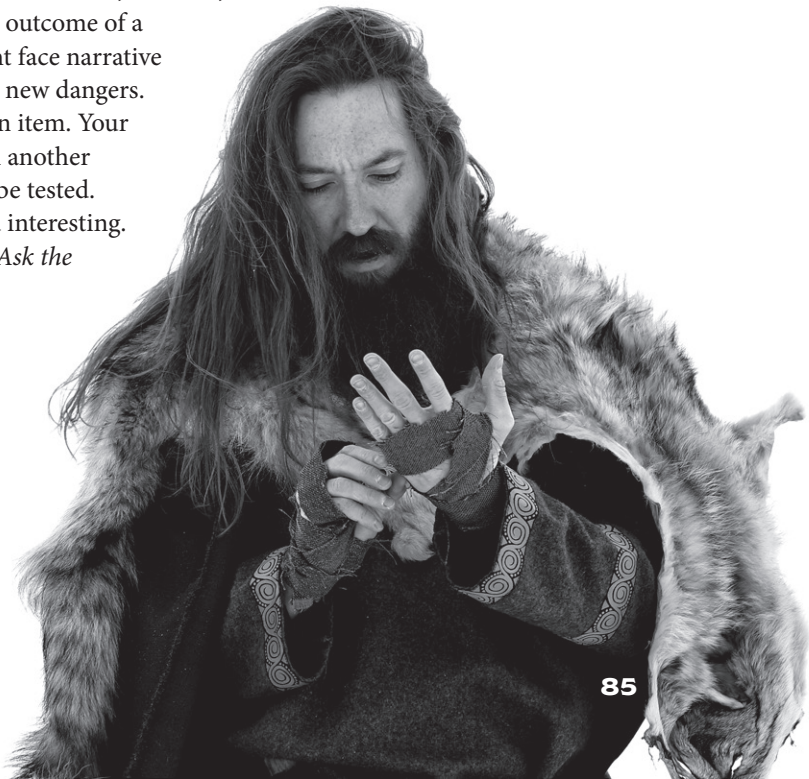
# SUFFER MOVES

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These moves are made as a result of a perilous event or bad outcome on other moves. They represent what happens to you, and how you hold up against the trauma.

- When you face physical damage (you suffer -health), make the *Endure Harm* move (page 86).
- When you score a miss on the *Endure Harm* move, and your health is at 0, you may need to *Face Death* (page 88)
- When your companion is exposed to harm, make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 86)
- When you are demoralized, afraid, or acting against your best intentions (you suffer -spirit), make the *Test your Spirit* move (page 90)
- When you score a miss on the *Test your Spirit* move, and your spirit is at 0, you may need to *Face Desolation* (page 91)
- When your supply falls to 0, all characters make the *Out of Supply* move (page 92). If you are at 0 supply and suffer additional -supply, you will each need to reduce either your health or spirit trackers by that amount.
- When your momentum track is at its minimum (-6) and you suffer additional -momentum, make the *Face a Setback* (page 92) move.

Making a suffer move is not, however, the only possible outcome of a failure. You might face narrative complications or new dangers. You might lose an item. Your relationship with another character might be tested. Keep it fresh and interesting. When in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.





## ENDURE HARM

When you **face physical damage**, Suffer -health equal to your foe's harm or to the nature of the damage. If your health is 0, suffer -momentum equal to any remaining -health. Then, roll +iron or +health, whichever is higher.

On a **strong hit**, choose one:

- Shake it off: If health is greater than 0, take -1 momentum in exchange for +1 health
- Embrace the pain: take +1 momentum

On a **weak hit**, you press on.

On a **miss**, you also suffer -1 momentum. If you are at 0 health, you must mark wounded or maimed (if currently unmarked) or roll on the following table.

d100	Result
1-5	The wound is mortal. <i>Face Death.</i>
6-15	You are dying. You will need to <i>Heal</i> within an hour or two, or <i>Face Death.</i>
16-30	You are unconscious and out of action. If left alone, you will come back to your senses in an hour or two. If you are vulnerable to a foe not inclined to show mercy, <i>Face Death.</i>
31-60	You are reeling and fighting to stay conscious. If you engage in any vigorous activity (such as running or fighting) before taking a breather for a few minutes, roll on this table again (before resolving the other move) and act on the result
61-100	You are battered but still standing.

You will make this move when you are wounded, battered, or weakened as a result of a failure on another move. Whenever you suffer -health, you must *Endure Harm*.

This move may flow naturally out of the fiction, such as when you are in a fight, suffer a fall, face extreme environments, or bear the brunt of an arduous journey. Or, you might face harm when you make a roll on the *Pay the Price* table, in which case you'd map that result back to your current circumstances to justify the harm.

When you suffer harm, first assess the damage based on the circumstances.

- A nasty fall, an attack by a minor foe, or an arduous effort is **troublesome (1 harm)**
- An attack by a competent foe, an animal attack, or a fierce environmental hazard is **dangerous (2 harm)**
- An attack by an exceptional foe or a large animal attack is **formidable (3 harm)**
- A fall from a great height or an overwhelming attack by a monster or beast is **extreme (4 harm)**
- A supernaturally powerful attack is **epic (5 harm)**

Reduce your health track by the amount suffered. If your health is at 0, apply any remaining -health to your momentum track. Then, roll to see what happens.

When you score a miss, you'll need to make an important decision. Do you risk the potential for death by rolling on the oracle table, or mark a debility? The wounded debility (page 34) is temporary and can be dealt with through the *Heal* or *Sojourn* moves, but becoming maimed (page 36) is a permanent, life-altering event.

If you've score a miss and your debilities are already marked, you have no choice. Roll the dice and hope for the best.



## FACE DEATH

When **you are brought to the brink of death**, and glimpse the world beyond, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, death rejects you. You are cast back into the mortal world.

On a **weak hit**, choose one:

- You die, but not before making a noble sacrifice. Envision your final moments.
- Death desires something of you in exchange for your life. Envision what it wants (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and *Swear an Iron Vow* (formidable or extreme) to complete that quest. If you fail to score a hit when you *Swear an Iron Vow*, or refuse the quest, you are dead. Otherwise, you return to the mortal world and are now marked. You may only clear the marked status by completing the quest.

On a **miss**, you are dead.

You will make this move when forced to *Face Death* as a result of a miss on the *Endure Harm* move, or when you face a physical trauma so horrific that death is the only reasonable outcome. This move is (hopefully) rarely made and a chance for storytelling and for enriching your world and its myths. Make it dramatic and personal.

When you first make this move, you should envision how the afterlife is represented in your version of the Ironlands, or specifically to your character. What do you see and experience? Is it only blackness and void? Do you see iron gates parting before you? Does a ferryman guide you across a blood-red river? Do you hear the songs of your kin calling you to the feast hall? On a strong hit, you might only catch glimpses of what lay beyond. Does your experience support your beliefs or call them into question? If in doubt, Ask the Oracle.

There is also the personage of death to consider. Does death take form, or is it nameless and unknowable? Is it beautiful and welcoming? Sly and full of guile? As grim as the coldest night? On a weak hit, you may decide what death asks of you, which will lead to a new quest and the marked debility (page 35) as you return to the mortal world.

On a miss, you are dead. Envision what awaits you. You may begin again with a new character in a new version of the Ironlands, or explore your current world and storyline from a new perspective. Perhaps you have a friend or kin who will avenge you?

## COMPANION ENDURE HARM

When **your companion faces physical damage**, they suffer -health equal to the amount of harm inflicted. If your companion has been reduced to 0 health, exchange any leftover -health for -momentum. Then, roll +heart or +your companion's health, whichever is higher.

On a **strong hit**, your companion rallies. Give them +1 health.

On a **weak hit**, your companion is battered. If they are at 0 health, they cannot assist you until they gain at least +1 health.

On a **miss**, also suffer -2 momentum. If your companion's health is at 0, they are gravely wounded and out of action. You must attempt to *Heal* them soon or they will die. If you score a miss when you *Heal*, they die.

If you roll a **miss** with a 1 on your action die, and your companion is at 0 health, they are now dead.

Animal companions (page 38) are an asset who complement your abilities and can help support you on moves. When you leverage a companion on a move, you are inherently putting them at risk. If you roll a 1 on your action die when using a companion ability, you should make the companion the focus of any negative outcome for that move. Depending on the fiction of the current situation, this might include harm.

Inflicting harm on your companion might also happen as a reasonable outcome of any move, or through a roll on the *Pay the Price* table.

Your companion asset has a health tracker which functions the same as your own. If they face physical damage, reduce the health tracker as appropriate to the circumstances and apply any leftover to reducing your momentum track. Then, roll this move.

On a weak hit, you cannot use your companion's abilities until they gain at least +1 health. To care for your companion, make an appropriate move, such as *Heal*, *Make Camp*, or *Sojourn*.

If your companion is killed, set aside the asset. If you acquire the same type of companion through the narrative of your quest and journeys, you may rebuy that asset and any existing upgrades for 1 less experience (rebuy the asset for 2 experience, and upgrade for 1 experience). This reflects your familiarity working with and training that animal.

You should also suffer -spirit and *Test your Spirit* as appropriate to the fiction when your animal companion is wounded or dies.

## TEST YOUR SPIRIT

When you **face mental stress or your resolve is tested**, suffer -spirit appropriate to the challenge you face. If your spirit is 0, exchange any leftover -spirit for -momentum.

Then, roll +heart or +spirit, whichever is higher.

On a **strong hit**, choose one:

- Shake it off: take -1 momentum in exchange for +1 spirit
- Embrace the darkness: take +1 momentum

On a **weak hit**, you press on.

On a **miss**, you also suffer -1 momentum. If you are at 0 spirit, you must mark shaken or corrupted (if currently unmarked) or roll on the following table.

d100	Result
1-15	Despair overwhelms you. <i>Face Desolation.</i>
16-30	You give up: <i>Forsake Your Vow</i> (if possible, one relevant to your current crisis)
31-60	You give in to a fear or compulsion and act against your better instincts
61-100	You persevere

You will make this move when your courage is put to the test, when you are demoralized or disheartened, or when you act against your best intentions. When you suffer stress, first assess the damage based on the circumstances.

- An unsettling incident or a frustrating failure is **troublesome (1 stress)**
- A distressing incident or an upsetting failure, is **dangerous (2 stress)**
- A horrifying incident or a demoralizing failure is **formidable (3 stress)**
- A heart-rending incident or traumatic failure is **extreme (4 stress)**
- A soul-shattering incident or the loss of all hope is **epic (5 stress)**

Reduce your spirit track by the amount suffered. If your spirit is at 0, apply any remaining -spirit to your momentum track. Then, roll to see what happens.

As with the *Endure Harm* move, when you score a miss, you'll need to make an important decision. Do you risk the potential for desolation by rolling on the oracle table, or mark a debility? The shaken debility (see page 34) is temporary and can be dealt with through the *Heal* or *Sojourn* moves, but becoming corrupted (see page 36) is a permanent, life-altering event.

If you've score a miss and your debilities are both marked, you must roll on the table to see what happens.

## FACE DESOLATION

When you are brought to the brink of desolation, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, you resist and press on.

On a **weak hit**, choose one:

- Your spirit or sanity breaks, but not before you make a noble sacrifice. Envision your final moments.
- You see a vision of a dreaded event coming to pass. Envision that dark future (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and *Swear an Iron Vow* (formidable or extreme) to prevent it. If you fail to score a hit when you *Swear an Iron Vow*, or refuse the quest, you are lost. Otherwise, you return to your senses and are now haunted. You may only clear the haunted status by completing the quest.

On a **miss**, you succumb to despair or horror and are lost.

You'll make this move when forced to *Face Desolation* as a result of a miss on the *Test your Spirit* move. This represents the potential breaking point for your character. Do you push on in spite of all you have seen, all you have done, or do you fall into darkness?

Choosing the option to become haunted (page 35) on a weak hit creates interesting narrative possibilities. What is your greatest fear? Preventing that dire outcome can steer your narrative in a compelling new direction.

On a miss, you are broken. There is no recovery possible.

## OUT OF SUPPLY

When **your supply is exhausted** (reduced to 0), mark unprepared. If you suffer additional -supply while unprepared, you must exchange each additional -supply for any combination of -health, -spirit or -momentum as appropriate to the circumstances.

When you and your ally's reduce your supply to 0 (through a choice or result of another move), you will each mark unprepared. The unprepared debility (page 34) can be cleared when you score a hit on the *Sojourn* move and choose the equip option.

While you are unprepared, you cannot increase your supply track. If you suffer additional -supply while unprepared, you and your allies must exchange each -supply for some combination of -momentum, -health or -spirit. Select an option as appropriate to the narrative circumstances. A lack of provisions can have an obvious impact on your well-being, your morale, and your readiness for challenges.

## FACE A SETBACK

When **your momentum is at its minimum** (-6), and you suffer additional -momentum, choose one:

- Exchange each additional -momentum for any combination of -health, -spirit, or -supply as appropriate to the circumstances.
- Envision an event or discovery which undermines your progress in a current quest, journey or fight. Then, for each additional -momentum, clear 1 unit of progress on that track per its rank (troublesome=clear 3 progress; dangerous=clear 2 progress; formidable=clear 1 progress; extreme=clear 2 ticks; epic=clear 1 tick).

When you suffer -momentum while your momentum track is already at its lowest possible point (-6), the leftover -momentum must be traded for an equal value in health, spirit or supply, or it must be accounted for as lost progress in a relevant progress track. Make a choice appropriate to your character's status and to the current situation. Don't just shift points around. Envision how your choice is reflected in the narrative.

If your health, spirit and supply are all at 0, you have no choice. You must clear progress on a related progress track. You should use the quest, journey or fight which is most relevant to the current situation.

# QUEST MOVES

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Making and fulfilling vows is central to your character's motivations. It drives the narrative of your game sessions and provides you with the means to gain experience and acquire new abilities. When you embark upon a quest, manage your progress on a quest, or seek to complete a quest, make these moves.

## **SWEAR AN IRON VOW**

When you **swear upon iron to complete a quest**, write your vow and give the quest a rank. Then, roll +heart. If you make this vow to a person or community with whom you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you are emboldened and it is clear what you must do next. Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you are determined but begin your quest with more questions than answers. Take +1 momentum, and envision what you do to find a path forward.

On a **miss**, you face a significant obstacle before you can begin your quest. Envision what stands in your way (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and choose one:

- You press on: Suffer -2 momentum, and do what you must to overcome this obstacle
- You give up: *Forsake your Vow*

When you encounter a wrong that must be made right, or seek to fulfill a personal ambition, or give your word to serve someone, make this move.

Fictionally, an iron vow is ceremonial. You touch a piece of iron and speak your vow. Don't just make the move. Envision how your character enacts the ceremony. What do you do? What do you say? Is this a moment of grudging acceptance or one of fiery determination?

Set the rank of your quest based on what you know of it, or *Ask the Oracle* if unsure. Higher ranked quests will require more effort (both in terms of fiction and session-time and focus), but offer greater experience rewards. An epic quest might be the endeavor of a lifetime, while a troublesome quest is resolved in days or even hours. It is not necessary to resolve one vow before swearing another. In fact, the intent of these rules is for your character to run afoul of new situations and get side-tracked with new vows even while attempting to complete a separate quest. This is the life of the Ironsworn.



Based on the results of this move, your path may be clear (a strong hit), or more investigation may be required in order to identify your next steps (a weak hit).

On a miss, you'll face a serious obstacle at the very start which prevents you from even undertaking this quest. It might be a sudden event, someone working against you or refusing your aid, or a personal conviction which must be overcome. When in doubt about what happens, *Ask the Oracle*. It should be significant and not easily dealt with. Also, the obstacle you face cannot be counted as a milestone for this quest once it is resolved. You aren't actually able to make progress on your quest until you get past this initial challenge.

You also have the option, on a miss, to come to the realization that your vow was made impulsively or without support, and you may simply give up. If you do, *Forsake your Vow*.

When allies join together to *Swear an Iron Vow*, one will speak for the group and make the move. The others, as appropriate, can commit to the cause with the *Aid your Ally* move.



## REACH A MILESTONE

When you **make significant progress in your quest** by overcoming a critical obstacle, completing a perilous journey, solving a complex mystery, defeating a powerful threat, gaining an important ally, or acquiring a crucial item, you may mark progress.

- Troublesome quest: mark 3 progress
- Dangerous quest: mark 2 progress
- Formidable quest: mark 1 progress
- Extreme quest: mark 2 ticks
- Epic quest: mark 1 tick

You will face obstacles as you strive to complete quests. Some of these obstacles will arise naturally out of the fiction of the situation. Overcoming one challenge leads naturally to the next. Others will represent narrative twists introduced when you interpret the result of a move, or when you *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration. When you overcome one of these obstacles, and they were a notable challenge, make this move.

Not every step on your narrative journey is worthy of a milestone. Did it put you in great danger? Did it cost you something significant? Did you unravel a complex web of clues and motivations? Was it dramatic and narratively interesting? Was it directly related to your quest, and not a random or unrelated event? If it's any (or all) of the above, it's probably worthy of a milestone.

How you define milestones will determine the pace of your game. You'll need to overcome challenges to *Reach a Milestone* and mark progress. You can't (with confidence) *Fulfill your Vow* unless you've marked progress. You don't gain experience unless you *Fulfill your Vow*. You can't add new assets to your character unless you gain experience. That's the broad flow of how quests drive gameplay and character improvement, the tempo of which is determined by you and others at your table. If you come up against relatively simple obstacles and call them milestones, you'll mark progress and move quickly toward completing the quest. But, if you do, you'll miss out on storytelling opportunities and the satisfaction that come from prevailing against a worthy challenge.

Not sure if something is worthy as a milestone? If you're playing co-op or guided, talk it out at the table. If you're playing solo, trust your instincts and the type of play experience you want to create. In the end, it's your game.

When you make this move, mark your progress and decide what happens next. When in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.

## FULFILL YOUR VOW

### *Progress Move*

When you **achieve what you believe to be the fulfillment of your vow**, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. Your momentum is ignored on this roll.

On a **strong hit**, your quest is complete. Mark experience (troublesome=1; dangerous=2; formidable=3; extreme=4; epic=5).

On a **weak hit**, choose one:

- The end is in sight, but there is more to be done. Clear one filled progress, and envision what twist of fate has left your quest incomplete (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure)
- At the end, you are betrayed or realize the truth of your quest. Envision what you discover (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Then, mark experience (troublesome=0; dangerous=1; formidable=2; extreme=3; epic=4) and *Swear an Iron Vow* to set things right.

On a **miss**, your quest is undone. Envision what happens (or *Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and choose one:

- You recommit: suffer -2 spirit, clear all but one filled progress, and raise the quest's rank by one (if not already Epic)
- You give up: *Forsake your Vow*.

Your path leads here. Your foe is defeated. The relic is found. Your training is complete. The village is saved. The murder is avenged. Your family's honor is restored. You are triumphant.

Or are you? Make this move to find out.

Since this is a progress move, you will tally the number of filled boxes on your progress track for this quest. This is your progress score. Only add boxes that have been fully filled (four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

When you and your allies are working to fulfill a common vow, you share a progress track. When it is time to see the vow done, one of you will make the *Fulfill a Vow* move. The outcome will affect everyone involved.

On a strong hit, your vow is fulfilled. Mark your experience, clear the vow, and decide what you do next. Do other quests call you into the wilds? Or, do you *Write your Epilogue*, never again to return as Ironsworn?

On a weak hit, you discover or realize something which leaves your quest unfinished or undermines your success. Envision what you learn (or *Ask the Oracle*), make your choice, and play to see what happens. Whether you continue on your current quest or take on a new quest should be driven by the narrative. Have you defeated your foe in a bloody fight, but they use their dying breath to tell you that your true enemy still lives? If so, clear one progress and envision what you do next. Have you helped return the clan chief to power, only to learn that his promises were lies? Mark your experience an *Swear an Iron Vow* to usurp this deceiver.

On a miss, a turn of events leaves you defeated or your true goal is suddenly beyond reach. The band of raiders were a diversion, and a more dangerous force has stolen away with the winter stores. The crown of kings is found, but it is a forgery. You've hunted and defeated the wyvern, but discover it was only one of a large flock of beasts. If you choose to press on, the nature of your quest remains the same—protect the village, find the crown, stop the ravages of the wyverns—but most of your progress is undone through this dramatic turn of events.

## **FORSAKE YOUR VOW**

When **you renounce your quest, betray your promise, or the goal is lost to you**, clear the vow and suffer -spirit equal to the rank of your quest. If the vow was made to a person or community with whom you share a bond, *Test your Bond* when you next meet.

Make this move when you decide to give up on a quest, or circumstances leave your goal seemingly unobtainable.

For an Ironsworn, realizing that you must *Forsake your Vow* is a dramatic and disheartening decision. Tradition says that the item upon which you swore your vow—your sword, your armor, the iron coin—is discarded. Some clans even hold to the notion that when you *Forsake your Vow* you must cast away all of your weapons and armor and bear no iron until you redeem yourself.

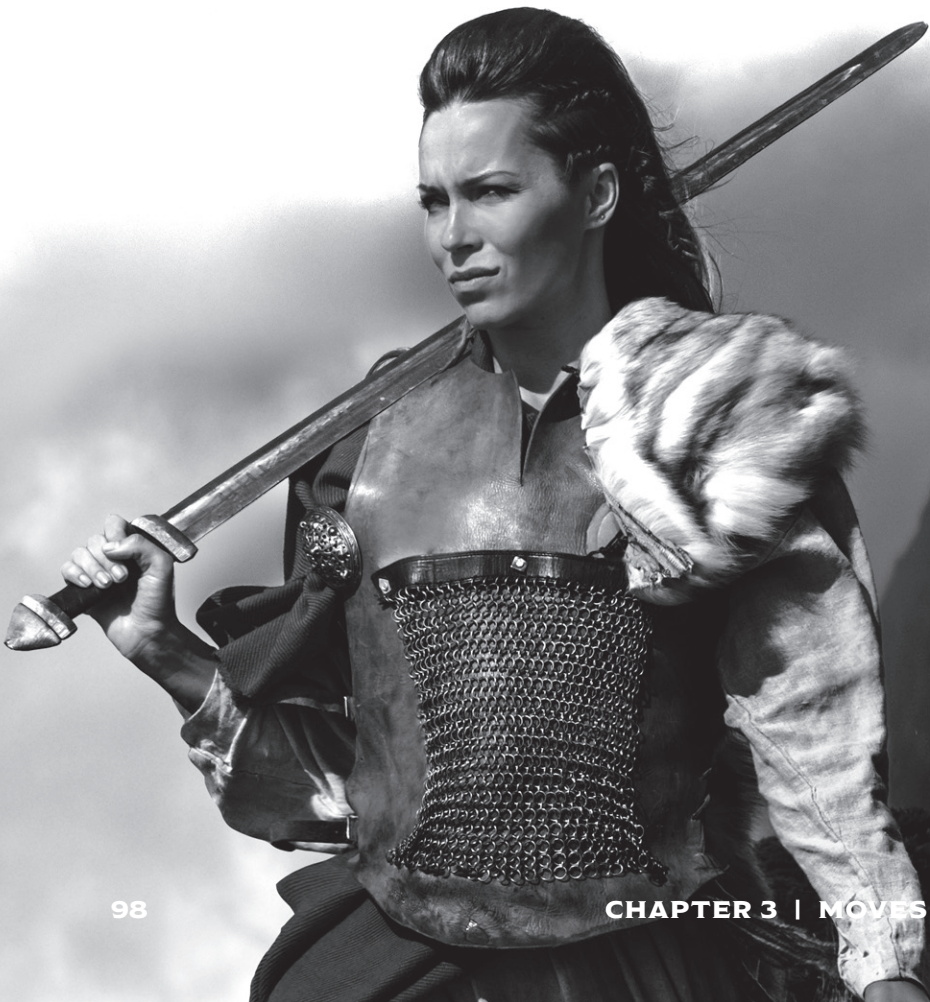
Mechanically, you will reduce your spirit track by an amount equal to the rank of your quest (troublesome=1; dangerous=2; formidable=3; extreme=4; epic=5), and *Test your Spirit*. Narratively, you should consider how your failure affects your attitude and interactions and what you do to put yourself back on the proper path.

## ADVANCE

When you focus on your skills, receive training, find inspiration, or gain a new companion, you may spend three experience to add a new asset, or two experience to upgrade an asset.

Make this move when you spend experience to add an asset or upgrade an existing asset. See page 38 for more about assets, and page 43 for how to spend your experience.

Narratively, you should consider how your recent experiences and fulfilled vows have led to these new abilities. Was your horse companion a reward from the thankful chief of a steppes clan? Did you train under a powerful mystic? Has your time spent trekking across the wilds made you adept at woodcraft or navigation? Let your choice of assets flow naturally from the fiction.



# FATE MOVES

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In solo and co-op play, the fate moves mediate the result of other moves or serve as inspirational prompts for your narrative. When you suffer the outcome of a weak hit or miss, want to know what happens next, or have a question about people, places and events external to your character, the fate moves will help you interpret the answer.

In guided mode, your GM represents the whims of fate. They can reference these moves as they like, but they can also just decide the outcome, ask you, or talk it out.

There are three key aspects of using the fate moves:

- **Instinct:** if an answer to a question or the result of a situation is obvious, interesting or dramatic (preferably all three), make it happen
- **Randomness:** you can roll on random tables to generate a result or answer a question
- **Inspiration:** you can use creative prompts, such as those included in the oracles chapter (page XX) to guide your narrative

## PAY THE PRICE

When you suffer the outcome of a move, choose one:

- Make the most obvious negative outcome happen
- Think of two negative outcomes. Rate one of those as 'likely', and *Ask the Oracle* using the yes/no table. On a 'yes', make that outcome happen. Otherwise, make it the other.
- Roll on the following table. If you have difficulty interpreting the result to fit the current situation, roll again

d100	Result
1-2	Roll again and apply that result but make it worse. If you roll this result yet again, think of something dreadful that changes the course of your quest (if in doubt, <i>Ask the Oracle</i> ) and make it happen.
3-5	A person or community you trusted loses faith in you, or acts against you
6-9	A person or community you care about is exposed to danger
10-17	Something of value is lost or destroyed
18-24	You are separated from something or someone
25-34	Your action has an unintended effect
35-44	The current situation worsens
45-54	A new danger or foe is revealed
55-69	It takes extra time or puts you at a disadvantage: suffer -momentum
70-74	It is tiring or harmful: suffer -health
75-79	It is troubling or requires you to act against your best intentions: suffer -spirit
80-84	Your companion or ally are put in harm's way: they suffer -health
85-88	It requires you to expend resources: suffer -supply
89-98	A twist or new threat complicates your current quest
99-100	Roll twice more on this table: both results occur. If they are the same result, make it worse.

On a match, an extreme result or twist has occurred.

This is one of the most common moves in Ironsworn. You'll make this move when directed to by the outcome of another move, or when the current narrative naturally leads to a cost through your choices or actions.

In solo or co-op play, you will determine the outcome yourself. Or, you can roll on the table if you're not sure or want to leave it up to fate. Always follow the fiction. If a dramatic outcome springs to mind immediately, go with it. If you roll on the table and you have a hard time making that result fit the current situation, you can roll again or fall back on your instincts.

## MANAGING THE COST

You may be tempted to use narrative costs and your various character status trackers (momentum, health, spirit and supply) as buffers to avoid more dire failure. That's fine. Managing your resources is a part of the game. If you can bend—but not break—the fiction to make a particular result work, do so.

## ROLLING MATCHES

If you rolled a match on a move (page 10), and the outcome of that move tells you to *Pay the Price*, you should consider rolling on this table—instead of just picking a result. This may fulfill the promise of that match by introducing a result you might otherwise not have considered. It will help to keep things interesting and exciting. When in doubt about what a result on the table might represent (for example, 'a new danger or foe is revealed'), you can *Ask the Oracle*.

If you make a roll on the *Pay the Price* table, and get a match on your oracle dice, you should make the result more dramatic or dire, or introduce a surprising turn of events. If you're not sure how to interpret a match, *Ask the Oracle*.

## GUIDED PLAY

If you are playing with a GM, look to them to determine the result of this move, or you can talk it out. The GM is free to roll on the table, or ask you to roll on it. The table should not be used, however, as the default approach when you make this move.



## ASK THE ORACLE

When you seek to resolve questions, discover details in the world, determine how other characters respond, or trigger encounters or events, you may...

- Draw a conclusion: decide the answer based on the most interesting and obvious result
- Ask a yes/no question: decide the odds of a 'yes', and roll on the table below to check the answer.
- Pick two: envision two options. Rate one as 'likely' and roll on the table below to see if it is true. If not, it is the other.
- Spark an idea: brainstorm or use a random prompt

<b>Odds</b>	<b>The answer is 'yes' if you roll (d100)</b>
Almost Certain	11-100
Likely	26-100
50/50	51-100
Unlikely	76-100
Small Chance	91-100

On a match, an extreme result or twist has occurred.

In solo or co-op play, use this move when you have a question or want to reveal details about your world. In guided play, the GM may use this move to answer their own questions or inspire the narrative of your game session.

## DRAW A CONCLUSION

The most basic use of this move is to simply decide the answer. Think it over for a moment (or talk it out with others at your table) and go with what seems most appropriate to the current situation and introduces the most potential for drama and excitement.

Your first instinct is often the right one. If it leapt to mind, it's probably a good fit for the current situation. But, if your initial impulse doesn't really excite or interest you, give it more thought. Wait for that "aha" moment.

If you're still not sure of the answer, or want to put things in the hand of fate, you have some other options....

## ASK A YES/NO QUESTION

You can ask a binary yes/no question and leave the answer open to fate.

- “Is this steading inhabited?”
- “Do I drop my sword?”
- “Is there something I can hide behind?”
- “Do I know the way?”
- “Is the weather fair?”

Decide the likeliness of a ‘yes’ answer, and roll your oracle dice to get the result. For example, if you rate the chance of a ‘yes’ as ‘unlikely’, you must roll ‘76-100’ for a yes. Otherwise, the answer is no.

## PICK TWO

The next option is to ask a question and pick two viable results. You rate one of those as ‘likely’, and roll on the table. If it’s a ‘yes’, the answer is your likely pick. If not, it’s the other. Use this approach when the answer is more open-ended, but you have a couple of options in mind.

- “Do they welcome me here, or try to turn me away?”
- “Do I drop my sword or my shield?”
- “Does the dire bear try to pin me down, or does it bite?”
- “Is it to the north or to the west?”
- “Is this a formidable quest, or a dangerous one?”

## SPARK AN IDEA

The final option is to seek inspiration through an open-ended question.

- “What happens next?”
- “What does she do?”
- “What’s this place look like?”
- “What do I find?”
- “Who or what attacks?”

If you’re in a game with other players, you can talk it out. More brains make light work, and brainstorming together will lead you to interesting answers that you might not have thought of on your own. You can also use random generators to help inspire an answer. You will find a booklet of oracle tables at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com) with creative prompts and random results. You can also

use whatever random generator you like, whether it's an online generator for interesting names or a set of Rory's Story Cubes for visual inspiration.

Generally, you should use generators which help trigger sparks of inspiration rather than ones that give you a definitive answer. It'll be much easier, and more rewarding, to let a prompt lead you to an interesting result versus one that forces you to try to hammer a square peg into the round hole of your fiction. Your creative mind will lead you naturally from an abstract concept to specific answers that add exciting dimension to your story and your world.

You can also create your own lists. Within the oracles handout (available at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com)) you will find a set of blank tables. If you are setting off on a journey, you might fill a table with things you expect to encounter. When you want to trigger an event, roll on that table.

## QUESTIONS UPON QUESTIONS

You can come back to the yes/no table and ask a follow-up question to clarify or affirm a result. You should avoid, however, leaning too heavily on asking questions (or this move in general). Don't let one question waterfall into a series of more specific questions. Even when playing solo, oracles should be the spice of your game, not the main course. Ask a question or two, decide what it means, and move on. When in doubt, follow your gut. Your first instinct is probably the right one. Go with it.

## ROLLING MATCHES

A match on your oracle dice should trigger a narrative twist or an extreme result. On the yes/no table, this can mean an all-caps "HELL YES!" or "HELL NO!," or a yes or no but with an interesting twist.

When you're unsure what a match might mean, you can roll on another generator for inspiration. If you're still left scratching your head, just move on. It's not a requirement. It's just a way to introduce narrative turning points and lead you down unexpected paths. Follow the rabbit hole, but don't get stuck in it.

## ORACLES AND GUIDED PLAY

In guided play, your GM is the oracle. You won't make this move unless you are talking things out and need a random result or a bit of inspiration. Your GM is of course free (and encouraged) to use this move or random prompts to help guide the narrative. Ironsworn stories are best created at the table, through the creative effort of everyone involved—rather than some predetermined storyline.

**CHAPTER 4**

# **YOUR WORLD**



# WELCOME TO THE IRONLANDS

The Ironlands is a vast peninsula in the northern ocean. The people who now refer to themselves as Ironlanders settled here three generations ago, cast out of their homelands by a catastrophic event. Since that time, they have survived but not prospered. The Ironlands are a harsh, dangerous place. The winters are long and brutal. Harvests are uncertain. Depending on the choices you make as you create your version of the Ironlands, monstrous beasts and dreaded horrors may be a constant threat.

This chapter includes brief summaries of the various regions of the Ironlands. It also includes a section where you will define the characteristics, dangers and mythology of your own Ironlands, creating a setting that best fits your vision and preferences.

The detail here is intentionally spare. Consider it a sketch on a canvas, ready to be adorned with the vibrant colors and details of your story.

## TRAVEL IN THE IRONLANDS

When traveling through dangerous or unknown areas, make the *Undertake a Journey* move. The rank of this journey can be defined as appropriate to the region, terrain, and season. The pace of your storyline is largely dictated by the rank you set for quests, journeys, and combat. For travel, higher ranks mean more storyline dedicated to that journey. If you want to move quicker to your destination in game-time, give it a lower rank. If this journey represents an important aspect of your character's story, or you want to create opportunities for interesting events and side-quests, give it a higher rank.

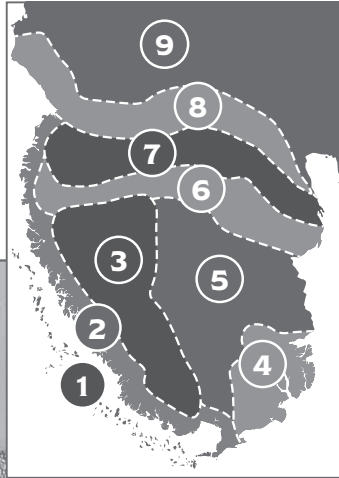
When in doubt, refer to the following for general guidelines, or *Ask the Oracle*.

- Traveling a moderate distance within a single region is **Troublesome**
- Traveling a long distance within a single region, or across rough terrain, is **Dangerous**
- Traveling from one region to another, or within especially challenging terrain, is **Formidable**
- Traveling through multiple regions is **Extreme**
- Traveling from one end of the Ironlands to another, or to a separate land, is **Epic**

Generally, don't sweat it. Travel should move at the speed of your story. Don't worry about counting hours or days. Give your journey a rank that reflects the impact of that journey on your character and story, and make the move to see what happens.

# REGIONS OF THE IRONLANDS

- 1 - Barrier Islands
- 2 - Ragged Coast
- 3 - Deep Wilds
- 4 - Flooded Lands
- 5 - Havens
- 6 - Hinterlands
- 7 - Tempest Hills
- 8 - Veiled Mountains
- 9 - Shattered Wastes



# BARRIER ISLANDS

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## Features:

- Crashing waves and treacherous currents
  - Jagged rocks hidden just beneath the surface
  - Snow-dappled cliffs jutting out of the sea
  - Low clouds and curling mists
  - Ferocious winds
  - Gliding seabirds
  - Decaying wrecks of wooden ships
  - Fisher-folk braving the wild sea
  - Lurking seaborne raiders
- 

This long string of islands parallels the Ragged Coast. They are beautiful, but imposing. The slate-gray cliffs rise dramatically out of the water, topped by treeless moors. Waterfalls, fed by persistent rains, plunge over these cliffs into the raging sea. The winds are fierce and ever-present. In the winter, sleet, snow and ocean mist can cut visibility to the length of one's arm.

The islands are sparsely populated by Ironlanders, mostly fisher-folk who brave the surrounding waters. Their settlements cling to narrow, rock-strewn shores or lie on high overlooks. At night, the dim lights of their fires and torches glimmer pitifully against the wild, storm-tossed sea.

*Quest Starter: The spectral maiden appears at the bow of your ship, offering to guide you safely through the storm—for a price. What does she demand of you?*



# THE RAGGED COAST

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## Features:

- Narrow fjords
  - Settlements built on rocky shores
  - Trade ships flying colorful sails
  - Shipbuilders hammering at wooden hulls
  - Raiders sounding the drums of war
  - Schools of orca gliding through the waves
  - Monstrous serpents rising from unfathomable depths
- 

This coast is marked by massive fjords. It is a beautiful, rugged land of snow-capped cliffs overlooking blue waters.

Ironlander settlements are located at the head of the fjords in the shelter of narrow valleys. From there, both fisher-folk and raiders set sail. The community gathers to see them off, laying wreaths of spruce in their wake.

In the center of each settlement, at the front of the longhouse, a stack of rune-marked river stones memorialize those who did not return—one stone for each of the lost.

*Quest Starter: A ship which set off from a coastal settlement is found washed up on shore. It is empty. This ship carried something of great importance. What was it, and why do you swear to recover it?*





## DEEP WILDS

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### Features:

- Unbroken woodland
  - A thick canopy casts the forest floor in shadow
  - Lingering fog
  - Constant rains
  - Elves, ever watchful
  - Ancient trees hung with moss
  - Streams winding their way through rough terrain
  - Skittering and growls from out of the mist
- 

The Deep Wilds are a vast swath of ancient forest. The ground here is a lush carpet of ferns and lichens. The curled, gnarled branches are cloaked in hanging moss. The air is almost perpetually misty and wet. Unlike the bordering regions, heavy snow is rare here. Instead, there is the ceaseless patter of rain dripping from high boughs and the rush of river over rock. The air carries the earthy smells of damp and decay.

A few Ironlanders live along the fringes of the Deep Wilds, taking advantage of the relatively temperate climate and abundant game. However, most avoid this region. This is a land of the firstborn, of monstrous beasts, of horrors that defy description. This is the world before man.

*Quest Starter: An Ironlander has sided with an enemy in the heart of the Wilds, and is leading attacks against Ironlander settlements. Who is this person? Who have they joined forces with? What will you do to stop these attacks?*



# FLOODED LANDS

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## Features:

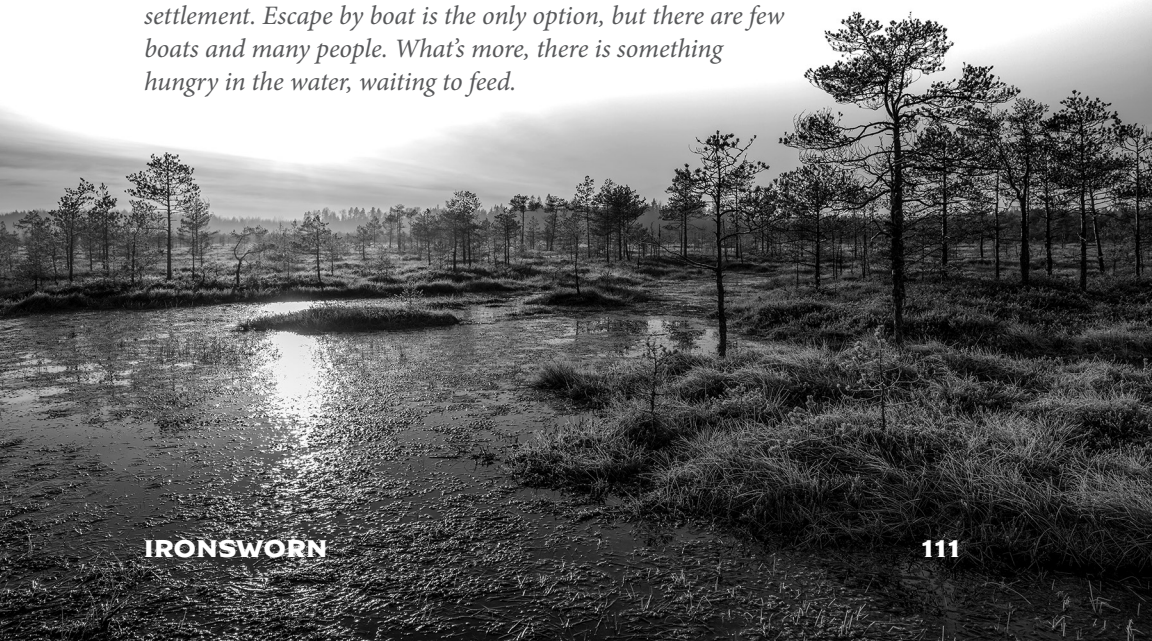
- Dead trees poisoned by salt water
  - Networks of sluggish rivers
  - Ponds and lakes shrouded in clinging mist
  - Fetid wetlands
  - Beguiling ghostlights, drawn to the warmth of the living
  - Biting insects
  - Creatures, just beneath the surface, laying in wait
- 

This is a low-lying region of bogs, swamps, lakes, and slow-moving rivers. Near the coast, the water is salty and riddled with dead trees. Further north, the morass of forested wetlands and bogs is interspersed with rare patches of higher ground. Through it all, twisting rivers make their sluggish journey to the sea. The smell of these lands is rotten and dank. It is the smell of slow death.

A few hardy Ironlanders live here in small settlements built atop hillocks, or in homes standing on stilts over the wetlands. Most fish and forage, making their way among the waterways on flat-bottomed boats propelled by long poles. Some dig through sodden turf for bog iron—a cold, wet, grueling task.

Travel is precarious here. One step has you on solid ground. The next sends you plunging through a thin layer of peat into a murky bog. Then, bony hands reach out to you, grasping, pulling. “Stay with me,” a voice whispers. “Stay with me here in the dark.”

*Quest Starter: Rising flood waters threaten to overwhelm an Ironlander settlement. Escape by boat is the only option, but there are few boats and many people. What’s more, there is something hungry in the water, waiting to feed.*



# HAVENS

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## Features:

- Rolling hills and rocky bluffs
  - Pockets of dense wood, thick with shadow
  - Walled settlements
  - Verdant heaths
  - Wide rivers navigated by wary boatmen
  - Long, harsh winters
- 

This is an expansive region of forests, rivers, shrubland, and low hills. After an arduous journey, after untold losses, the first Ironlander settlers looked upon the Havens as a fresh start—a relative oasis in a fierce, uncaring land. It gave them hope.

Years later, that hope is fading. Even within the Havens, there is little rest or safety. The winters are long. The harvests are never enough. Raiders strike without mercy. The thick woods, deep rivers and dark nights hold secrets and lurking horrors. Some say the Ironlands is a living thing, a malevolent spirit, intent on ridding itself of the human invaders. Slowly, season by season, year by year, it is succeeding.

The Ironlander settlements in this region typically stand on hills or at the confluence of rivers. The buildings are made of wood, or sometimes stone, with roofs covered in turf. The central homes and communal structures are protected by an outer palisade fashioned from earth and wood. Outside these walls, from spring through autumn, farmers work the meager fields. In winter, the settlements are smothered by deep snow and oppressive gray clouds.

*Quest Starter: A settlement has fallen under the oppressive rule of a cruel leader. What leverage does he hold over these people? What is your connection to the community? What can be done to overthrow this tyrant?*

# HINTERLANDS

---

## Features:

- Dense forests nestled against rugged terrain
  - Hunter camps and remote settlements
  - Birdsong interspersed with sudden, unsettling stillness
  - Ironlanders, foraging and hunting game
  - Hungry beasts, stalking
  - Varou bands, howling their war song
- 

This high terrain consists of a long string of forested hills.

Isolated Ironlander settlements in this region serve primarily as bases for hunters and trappers. A few farmers do the best they can with the rocky soil, but the people depend mostly on meat, mushrooms, berries and other bounties from the forest to sustain them during the long winters.

Those winters are bitter and harsh. Snow gathers as deep as a man is tall, or more. Hunters, cloaked in heavy furs, wear snowshoes to navigate across the rough terrain. At night, they make camp. They drink and tell stories. They try to ward away the encroaching darkness with a blazing fire. They cast nervous glances at sounds just beyond the light.

In the spring and summer, the melting snow feeds tumultuous rivers. The forests burst with rich life. But, always there is a chill in the air. Always there is a reminder of the coming winter.

*Quest Starter: A group of Ironlanders have been forced out of their Hinterland settlement. What caused them to leave? With winter coming, and food in short supply, will you attempt to reclaim their settlement or convince someone to take them in?*

# TEMPEST HILLS

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## Features:

- Stunted forests
  - Howling winds
  - Mist-shrouded waterfalls
  - Mining settlements
  - Nomad encampments on high plateaus
  - Ironlander caravans hauling bounties of ore
  - Wary giants keeping their distance
  - Mammoths grazing in alpine meadows
- 

These highlands are defined by rugged hills and low mountains, thin conifer woods, and wide, grassy plateaus, leading up to the heights of the Veiled Mountains. Through most seasons, the constant ill-winds break against the sides of the hills, screeching and moaning. In the dead of winter, some say these winds carry the names of those fated to die during the long cold season.

Nomadic Ironlanders live among the hills, herding livestock. In the spring and summer they move among high pastures. In the winter, they find some relief from the brutal weather in sheltered valleys.

Others live in mining settlements, drawing iron ore from riverbeds and shallow digs. Their furnaces, sending up plumes of black smoke, convert the ore into wrought iron, which is sent south for trade with the Havens.

*Quest Starter: You have come across or learned of a rich source of unclaimed iron and silver among these hills. What hazards must be overcome before a mine can be established? What force opposes you or attempts to establish its own claim?*



# VEILED MOUNTAINS

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## Features:

- Massive peaks shrouded in roiling clouds
  - Howling beasts
  - Endless snows
  - Precarious mountain trails
  - Stone cairns, marking the dead
  - Circling wyverns, ever watchful
- 

Commonly referred to as the Veils, these great mountains mark the northern bounds of the settled lands. They are almost perpetually shrouded in cloud, snow and mist. On the rare day they are visible to those Ironlanders far south in the Havens, the sight of the towering peaks is enough to inspire a mix of fear and awe.

For a few, that feeling is a call rather than a warning. The Ironlanders who dwell here are mostly members of small mining communities. They seek fortunes in iron or silver but often find only death in the endless, brutal cold. Even those who manage to eek out some sort of life among the Veils are sure to head south to before the onset of winter. Before the long dark takes hold.

*Quest Starter: As winter fast approaches, there is no sign of the Ironlanders who live in a small mining community on the flanks of the Veils. They should have been off the mountain weeks ago. Time is running out.*

# SHATTERED WASTES

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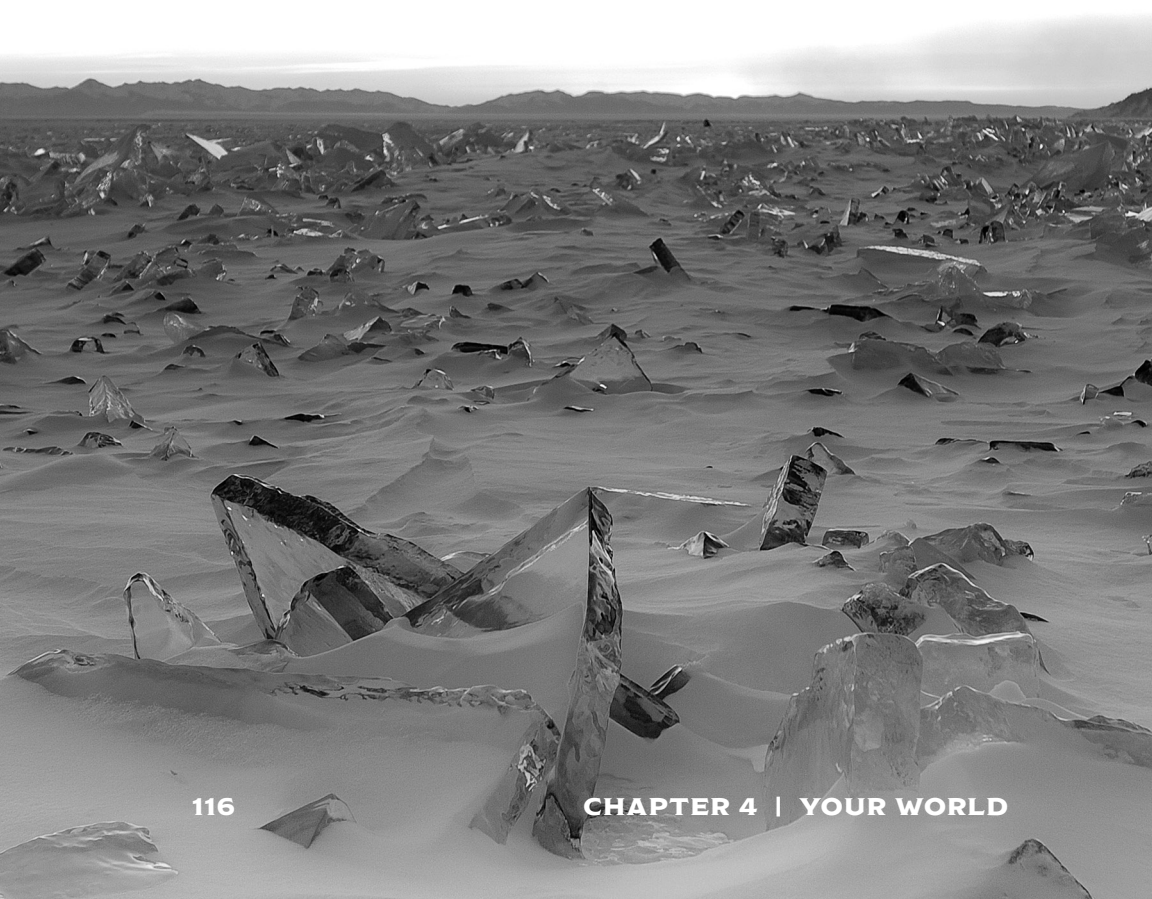
## Features:

- Vast fields of broken ice
  - Discomforting stillness
  - Deep crevasses, plunging into darkness
  - Piercing cold
  - Unnatural horrors breaking through the ice
- 

To the north of the Veiled Mountains lies the Shattered Wastes, a plain of jagged, broken ice.

No one knows the bounds of this land or what lies beyond. No Ironlanders dwell here, and only a handful have explored the passage into the Wastes through the Veils. Those who survived the journey returned with stories of unimaginable cold and *things* moving beneath the ice.

*Quest Starter: The traveler returned from his journey into the Shattered Wastes with dead, frostbitten hands and extraordinary stories. The others scoff at him, but you believe. Why? What does he tell you? What compels you to see for yourself?*



# **BUILD YOUR WORLD**

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For each category in this section, choose one of the three options and make it true for your version of the Ironlands. Your choices will set the background and tone of your campaign and may inspire vows through the quest starters listed with each option.

Not happy with any of the choices? You can also make your own truth.

Some choices in one category may contradict a choice you make in another, but you're free to bend and twist these options to fit your unique version of the Ironlands. If you find a particular choice to be evocative or interesting, make it work in the setting implied by your other choices. You can even select multiple choices within a single category. There are no rules here. Seeming contradictions can be the foundation of interesting stories.

Your choices may impact your characters and the assets you might reasonably select. For example, if magic is rare or unknown in your world, rituals can be ignored or themed in such a way as to make them more about superstition and subtlety. Feel free to build your world around your characters, or let the world influence or limit your options.

Also, keep in mind that your choices will leave many unanswered questions. The details of the Ironlands provided here is intentionally sketchy. As questions arise, fill in the blanks to further deepen your narrative and world. Talk it out, or *Ask the Oracle*. You may even discover through play that your choice, which reflects the common knowledge of the people, isn't the actual truth after all.

Most importantly, don't get mired in building the detail of your world before you start playing. Keep it loose. Leave room for inspiration and surprises.

**The following section is available as a separate handout at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com), making it easy to print and mark your choices. IF you are playing co-op or guided, do this as a group as part of your first session to give everyone input into your setting. See page XX for more on starting your campaign.**



## THE OLDWORLD

- The savage clans called the Skulde invaded the kingdoms of the oldworld. Our armies fell. Most were killed or taken into slavery. Those who escaped set sail aboard anything that would float. After an arduous months-long voyage, the survivors made landfall upon the Ironlands.

*Quest Starter: You are a descendant of the Skulde. Because of your heritage, your family has long borne the distrust of your fellow Ironlanders. Now, a small force of Skulde have landed on our shores. Are they the harbinger of an invasion? Where do your loyalties lie?*

- The sickness moved like a horrible wave across the oldworld, killing all in its path. Thousands fled the plague aboard ships. The sickness, however, could not be outrun. On many ships, the disease was contained through ruthless measures—tossing overboard any who exhibited the slightest symptom. Other ships were forever lost. In the end, those who survived found the Ironlands and made it their new home. Some say we will forever be cursed by those we left behind.

*Quest Starter: a settlement is stricken by disease. Though this sickness bears some similarities to the oldworld plague, it doesn't kill its victims. Instead, it changes them. How does this disease manifest? Why do you swear to seek out a cure?*

- The oldworld could no longer sustain us. We were too large in number. We had felled the forests. Our crops withered in the barren ground. The cities and villages overflowed with desperate, hungry people. We cast our fate to the sea and found the Ironlands. A new world. A fresh start.

*Quest Starter: Decades ago, the exodus ended. Since then, no ships have sailed here from the oldworld. Until now. Word comes of a single ship, newly arrived across the vast ocean, grounded on the rocks of the Barrier Islands. Strangely, not a single soul is aboard. Half-eaten food sits on plates. The captain's pen lay on an unfinished journal entry. When you hear the name of this ship, you swear to uncover the fate of its passengers. Why is it so important to you?*

## IRON

- The imposing hills and mountains of the Ironlands are rich in iron ore. Most prized of all is the star-forged black iron.

*Quest Starter: The caravan, bound for the distant southlands, left the mining settlement last season but never arrived at its destination. It carried a bounty of black iron. Why is finding this lost caravan so important to you?*

- The weather is bleak. Rain and wind sweep in from the ocean. The winters are long and bitter. One of the first settlers complained “only those made of iron would dare live in this foul place”—and thus our land was named.

*Quest Starter: The harvest fell short. The unrelenting snows left the village isolated. The food is running out. What will you do to see these people through this harsh season?*

- Inscrutable metal pillars are found throughout the land. They are iron gray, and as smooth as a river stone. No one knows their purpose. Some say they are as old as the world. Some, such as the Iron Priests, worship them and swear vows upon them. Most make the warding sign and hurry along their way when they happen across one. The pillars do not tarnish, and not even the sharpest blade can mark them.

*Quest Starter: Your dreams are haunted by visions of a pillar which stands in an unfamiliar landscape. What do you see? Why are you sworn to seek it out?*

## LEGACIES

- We are the first humans to walk these lands.

*Quest Starter: In the writings of one of the first settlers, there is a description of a glade in the heart of the Deep Wilds. The spirits of this place are said to grant a miraculous blessing. What boon does it bestow, and why are you sworn to seek it out?*

- Other humans sailed here from the oldworld untold years ago, but all that is left of them is a savage, feral people we call the broken. Is their fate to become our own?

*Quest Starter: You find a child—one of the broken. It is wounded, and hunted by others of its kind. Do you protect it, even at the risk of inviting the wrath of the broken tribes?*

- Before man, before even the firstborn, another people lived here. Their ancient ruins are found throughout the Ironlands.

*Quest starter: Miners uncovered an underground ruin. Thereafter, the people of the settlement are haunted by strange dreams. The ruins call to them, they say. Several have disappeared in that dark, ancient place—including someone important to you.*

## COMMUNITIES

- We are few in number in this accursed land. Most will rarely have contact with anyone outside our own small steading or village, and strangers are viewed with deep suspicion.

*Quest Starter: In the dead of winter, a desperate man arrives at a snowbound steading. He is wounded, hungry, and nearly frozen to death. His family has been taken. By whom? Will you brave the merciless winter to save them?*

- We live in communities called circles. These are settlements ranging in size from a steading with a few families to a village of several hundred. Some circles belong to nomadic folk. Some powerful circles might include a cluster of settlements. We trade (and sometimes feud) with other circles.

*Quest Starter: A decades-long feud between two circles has flared into open conflict. What is the cause of this dispute? Why do you swear to put a stop to it?*

- We have forged the Ironlands into a home. Villages within the Havens are connected by well-trod roads. Trade caravans travel between settlements in the Havens and those in outlying regions. Even so, much of this land is untamed.

*Quest Starter: Caravans are forced to pay for passage along a trade road. This payment, one-quarter of the goods carried, leaves several communities without sufficient winter stores. Who is making these demands? How will you set things right?*

## LEADERS

- Leadership is as varied as the people. Some communities are governed by the head of a powerful family. Others have a council of elders who make decisions and settle disputes. In others, the priests hold sway. For some, it is duels in the circle that decide.

*Quest Starter: You have vivid reoccurring dreams of an Ironlands city. It has strong stone walls, bustling markets, and a keep on a high hill. And so many people! Nowhere in the Ironlands does such a city exist. In your dreams, you are the ruler of this city. Somehow, no matter how long it takes, you must make this vision a reality.*

- Each of our communities has its own leader, called an overseer. Every seventh spring, the people affirm their current overseer or choose a new one. Some overseers wear the iron circlet reluctantly, while others thirst for power and gain it through schemes or threats.

*Quest Starter: Someone close to you, an overseer, died in mysterious circumstances. Their rival now wears the iron circlet. What will you do to discover the truth of the overseer's death and see justice done?*

- Numerous clan-chiefs rule over petty fiefdoms. Most are intent on becoming the one true king. Their petty squabbles will be our undoing.

*Quest Starter: You secretly possess one-half of the True Crown, an oldworld relic. Centuries ago, this crown was broken in two when an assassin's axe split the head of the supreme ruler. You are descended from that lineage. Who gave you this relic? Will you find the other half of the broken crown and attempt to unite the clans under your rule? Or, do you see another use for it?*

## **DEFENSE**

- Here in the Ironlands, supplies are too precious, and the lands are too sparsely populated, to support organized fighting forces. When a community is threatened, the people stand together and protect their own as best they are able.

*Quest Starter: A settlement is unable, or unwilling, to defend itself against an imminent threat. Why? What peril do they face? What will you do to protect them?*

- The wardens are our soldiers, guards and militia. They serve their communities by standing sentry, patrolling surrounding lands, and organizing defenses in times of crisis. Most have strong ties to their community. Others, called free wardens, are mercenaries who will hire on to serve a community or protect caravans.

*Quest Starter: You come upon a dying warden. She tells you of an important mission, and charges you with its completion. "Swear to me," she says, reaching out with a bloodstained hand to give you an object crucial to the quest. What is it?*

- Our war-bands are rallied to strike at our enemies or defend our holdings. Though not nearly as impressive as the armies that once marched across the oldworld, these forces are as well-trained and equipped as their communities can manage. The banners of the war-bands are adorned with depictions of their oldworld history and Ironland victories.

*Quest Starter: A war-band was wiped out in a battle against an overwhelming enemy. What is your connection to this band? Who defeated them? Will you carry their banner on a quest for vengeance, or do you vow to see it brought home to a place of honor?*

## MYSTICISM

- Some still find comfort in the old ways. They call on mystics to divine the fortune of their newborn, or ask them perform rituals to invoke a bountiful harvest. Others act out of fear against those who they suspect of having power. Most, though, believe magic is lost to us now—if it even ever actually existed.

*Quest Starter: Someone close to you is accused of cursing a settlement, causing fields to go fallow and cattle to become sick. What is the evidence of this? Will you defend this person and uncover the true cause of the settlement's troubles?*

- Magic is rare and dangerous, but those few who wield the power are truly gifted.

*Quest Starter: You have heard stories of someone who wields true power. They live in an isolated settlement far away. Who told you of this mystic? Are they feared or respected? Why do you swear to seek them out?*

- Magic courses through this land as the rivers flow through the hills. The power is there for those who choose to harness it, and even the common folk often know a helpful ritual or two.

*Quest Starter: Someone you love walked the paths of power, and succumbed to it. Who are they? Why did they fall into darkness? Where are they now? Do you seek to save them or defeat them?*

## RELIGION

- A few Ironlanders still make signs or mumble prayers out of habit or tradition, but most believe the gods long ago abandoned us.

*Quest Starter: An ancient book, a relic of the oldworld, includes a description of what we now know as the Ironlands. It vaguely describes the location of a religious artifact. What is the value of this artifact? Why do you swear to seek it out? Who else seeks to possess it and why?*

- The people honor old gods and new. In this harsh land, a prayer is a simple but powerful comfort.

*Quest Starter: An Ironlander is determined to make a pilgrimage into dangerous lands. What holy place do they seek? Why do you swear to aid them on this journey?*

- Our gods are many. They make themselves known through manifestations and miracles. Some say they even secretly walk among us. The priests convey the will of the gods and hold sway over many communities.

*Quest Starter: You bear the mark of a god. What is it? The priests declare this as a sign you are chosen to fulfill a destiny. Do you accept this fate, and swear to see it through, or are you determined to see it undone? What force opposes you?*

## **FIRSTBORN**

- The firstborn have passed into legend. Some say the remnants of the old tribes still dwell in deep forests or high mountains. Some insist they were never anything more than myth.

*Quest Starter: Someone obsessed with the firstborn wants to find evidence of their existence. This will require an expedition into the far reaches of the Ironlands. What is your role in this mission?*

- The firstborn live in isolation and are fiercely protective of their own lands.

*Quest Starter: The elf, outcast from his kind, lives with Ironlanders. Over time, he became a part of the community. Now, he is dying. He yearns to return to his people before he passes. Does he seek absolution or justice? Why do you swear to help him? What forces oppose his return?*

- The firstborn hold sway in the Ironlands. The elves of the deep forests and the giants of the hills tolerate us and even trade with us, but many Ironlanders fear the day they decide humans are no longer welcome here.

*Quest Starter: Humans and giants are on the brink of war. What has happened? What can be done to defuse the situation?*

## **BEASTS**

- The beasts of old are nothing but legend. A few who travel into the deep forests and high mountains return with wild tales of monstrous creatures, but they are obviously delusional. No such things exist.

*You were witness to an attack by what you thought was an animal of monstrous proportions. No one believes you. In fact, you are accused of the murder you blame on this beast. How can you prove your innocence? Can you even trust your own memories of the event?*

- Monstrous beasts stalk the wild areas of the Ironlands.

*Quest Starter: A prominent Ironlander is consumed with the need to bring vengeance upon a specific beast. What makes this creature distinctive? How did it earn the wrath of this Ironlander? Do you seek to aid this person in their quest, or act to prevent their blind hate from destroying more than just the beast?*

- Beasts of all sort roam the Ironlands. They dwell primarily in the reaches, but range into the settled lands to hunt. There, they often prey on cattle, but attacks on travelers, caravans, or even settlements are not uncommon.

*Quest Starter: Professional slayers earn their keep by killing beasts. This particular slayer, famed throughout the Ironlands for her numerous kills, has gone missing on a hunt. Did she finally meet her match, or is something more nefarious at play. What is your connection to her?*

## HORRORS

- Bah. Nothing but stories to frighten children.

*Quest Starter: The murders began last season. Local gossip suggests they are the work of some monstrous being, but there may be more mundane forces at work. What is your connection to these killings? What will you do to stop them?*

- We are wary of dark forests and deep waterways, for monsters lurk in those places. On a moonless night, when all is wreathed in darkness, only fools venture beyond their homes.

*Quest Starter: You bear the scars of an attack by an unearthly creature. What was it? Are those scars physical, emotional, or both? How do you seek to make yourself whole again?*

- Some say that the time of man is coming to an end. At night we light torches, scatter salt, and post sentries at the gate. It is not enough. They are coming.

*Quest Starter: A group of Ironlanders attempts to found a settlement in a territory cursed by a malevolent horror. What evil plagues this land? Why are the Ironlanders so intent on settling here? Will you aid them, or attempt to force them to give up this foolish undertaking?*

# MAPPING YOUR JOURNEYS

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To keep track of the details of your world, download the blank Ironlands map at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com). Then, use a separate sheet, index cards, or a journal to create a key for the locations on your map.

In our playtesting, index cards works great. They give you space for a reasonable amount of information for a region or location, and it's quick and easy to dig through them to find details on-demand. Just mark the index card with a number, and mark that same number in the proper location on your Ironlands map. If you store your index cards in order, clipped to your map, it'll take all of a couple of seconds to remind yourself "what was the name of that village in the Hinterlands?"

You can even use these index cards for random events. Need to know where the raiders are headed? Shuffle your index cards, turn them face down, and draw one.

Don't worry about the details here. Not everything you encounter needs to be marked on the map or recorded. Focus on the people and places important to your story. Don't fuss with distances or exact positioning. There are no extra points awarded for neatness. That said, if you really enjoy detailed maps and recording your journeys, feel free to do so in whatever form works best for you.

If you're using your own map for the Ironlands or playing in a different setting altogether, you can manage the details however you like.

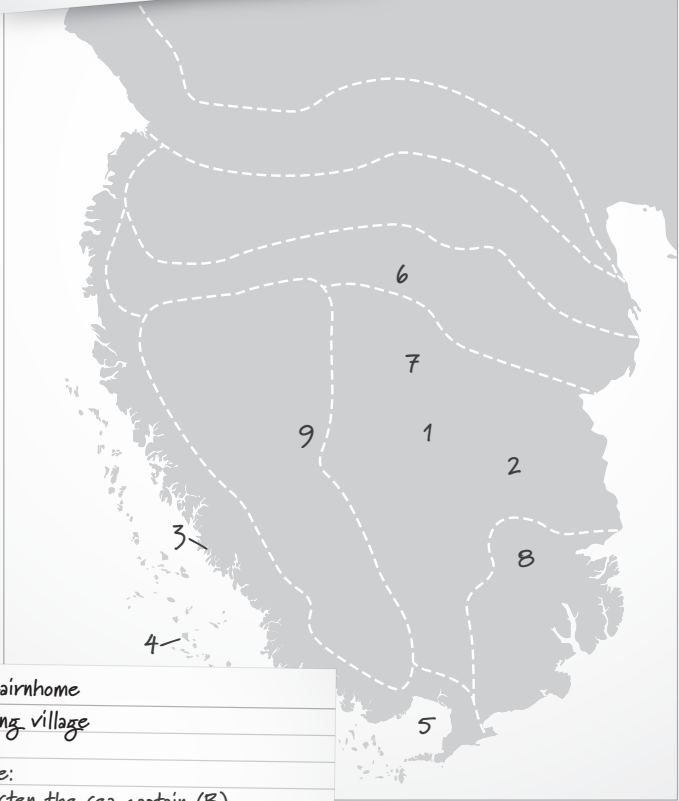




When you record the details for a location, make a note if you share a bond with that community or specific people within it. In the example below, (B) is used to signify a bond. The index cards can also be used to keep track of quests in that location.

1. Raven's Bluff (B)  
Large settlement on a rocky ridge  
People:  
Jilan the Overseer (B)  
Quest:  
Vengeful ghost

**IRONSWORN**  
THE IRONLANDS



3. Cairnhome  
Fishing village  
People:  
Thorsten the sea captain (B)  
Shay the Raider (enemy)

## **TO BE REVEALED....**

The full version of the Ironsworn rulebook will contain additional chapters covering foes and encounters, oracle tables, gameplay options and best-practices, and an extended gameplay example.

To keep up to date, please signup at [ironswornrpg.com](http://ironswornrpg.com). Thank you for your interest!