

# Wakare Water Woes

A Quick-Song from *The Ballad of Heroes*,

In the lowland farms of Vardare



# Welcome Heroes, Old and New!

## Credits

Written by

Kyle 'Kel' Elsasser

Layout by

Kyle 'Kel' Elsasser

Cover Art

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Interior Art

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Character Art by

Matheus 'Joe' Brisola

(Check out their portfolio at [joestrela.artstation.com/](http://joestrela.artstation.com/)!)

Borders and Text Decorators Courtesy of

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Greatest Thanks to the Playtesters:

- ♥ Jonathan Barnes, Phd. (Abelard)
  - ♥ Chris Buchanan (Heydar)
  - ♥ Sarah Sepan (Isabet)
  - ♥ Jacob & Daniela Wright (Niklaus & Asavellana)
  - ♥ Gonzalo Furci for identifying "Americanisms" (Thaddeus Ombrefeu)
- We learned 'Hafted' is not a common term for Axes and Maces!

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MECHANISED  
BY  
Mythras

## Who's on Stage Tonight?

This is an introduction to the world and system *The Ballad of Heroes*, a role-playing game of unexpected Heroes drawn toward their Journey. This is a game for **2-6 friends** to hold Audiences, engage in Combat, and Travel the Free Lands. It requires this booklet, pencils, and dice (ten-sided and six-sided); two paperclips are recommended if printing these pages out.

In short, it is a game for friends that want to ACT together.

## What's the Tone Tonight?

*The Ballad of Heroes* operates with the following tonal and thematic expectations:

- ♥ **The Free Lands are Old, but not Dark.** Most people are warm and bright. Protect them from points of darkness.
- ♥ **This is a world of Unexpected Heroes, not Adventurers.** Heroes have home and community. Keep it safe.
- ♥ **Personality Matters.** Instinct and behavior has mechanical value. Use yours to pursue victory.
- ♥ **Combat is Dangerous.** No one has Plot Armor, and no one wants to die. Consider and enter fights carefully.
- ♥ **Apply Reason to Discern Worth.** Why couldn't you rush to your ally's side to deflect an incoming attack on their behalf? You just need to reach them.

## What's the Song Tonight?

This booklet contains everything you need to get started for a one- or two-night introduction to *The Ballad of Heroes*:

- ♥ **Basic Rules**
  - How to make Checks, read Characteristics, Traits, Skills
- ♥ **How to Play**
  - How to engage in Interactions, Combat, and basic Travel
- ♥ **Wakare Water Woes**
  - Players are participating in the springtime dredging of the local Vardaren fields, when they hear a call from a distant farm full of excitement!
- ♥ **Pre-Generated Characters**
  - Six (6) ready to go Unexpected Heroes already out and about in the town of Wakare.

# Basic Rules: Check Resolution

## Making a Check

Roll the appropriate number or combination of ten-sided dice (D10s) and attempt to score  $\leq$  the appropriate Skill, Trait, or Consumable.

Depending on the Type of Check, you roll different combinations of D10s:

- ♥ **Use D100 for Skills.**
  - Skills have Levels of Success and Challenge Modifiers
  - You need a net result of **at least one (1) Success** to Succeed the Skill Check.
- ♥ **Use 2D10 for Traits.**
  - Traits are binary Succeed or Fail.
  - Traits double (benefit) or halve (penalty) an associated Skill Check target.
- ♥ **Use 1D10 for Consumables.**
  - Consumables are binary Succeed or Fail.
  - Failing a Consumable Check reduces it by 1 (min: 0).

## Opposed Checks

To make an Opposed Skill Check, simply subtract the total Successes of the defender from the total Successes of the aggressor:

- ♥ **Net Positive.** Resolve for the aggressor with that number of Successes. Defender fails.
- ♥ **Net Negative.** Resolve for the defender with that number of Successes. Aggressor fails.
- ♥ **Tie.** Resolve half-favor for both aggressor and defender. They both partially succeed, and partially fail.

## Helping on Checks

Any character can help another character on a Check, as long as they:

- ♥ Have the Skill being used in the Check.
- ♥ Must be able to reasonably describe 'how' they are helping.

If these are met, the character making the Check adds 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the helper's Skill to theirs.

(Static Skill Modifiers apply before Challenge Modifiers)

### Fun with Fractions

Any time deal with a fraction of a number, round UP unless specifically told otherwise!

## Skills: Level of Success

- ♥ **Normal Success (1 Success)**
  - Roll  $D100 \leq \text{Skill Value}$
- ♥ **Hard Success (2 Successes)**
  - Roll  $D100 \leq \frac{1}{2} \text{ Skill Value}$
- ♥ **Heroic Success (3 Successes)**
  - Any Success that is a multiple of 10 (10, 20, etc)
- ♥ **Failure (0 Successes)**
  - Roll  $D100 > \text{Skill Value}$
- ♥ **Fumble (-1 Successes)**
  - A Failure that is a multiple of 10 (10, 20, etc)
  - 100 ('00') is always a Fumble

## Check Challenge Modifiers

- ♥ **'Automatic' (Free Success)**
  - No roll, gain 1 Success
- ♥ **'Easy' (Skill×2)**
  - Target value is double for this Check.
- ♥ **'Normal' (default)**
  - Target value is unchanged for this Check.
- ♥ **'Difficult' (Skill/2)**
  - Target value is halved for this Check.
- ♥ **'Heroic' (Skill/10)**
  - Target value is one-tenth for this Check.
- ♥ **'Impossible' (No Success)**
  - No roll, automatic Failure.

'Easier'

'Harder'



# Basic Rules: Traits

## Personality Trait Pairs

### Adaptable | Steadfast.

- ♥ How do you respond to Change?

### Bold | Cautious.

- ♥ How do you respond to Risk?

### Impulsive | Deliberate.

- ♥ How do you respond to Pressure?

### Altruistic | Egoistic.

- ♥ Who is your Priority?

### Confident | Humble.

- ♥ How do you view Yourself?

### Empathetic | Detached.

- ♥ How do you view Others?

## Traits in Play

Here's some quick examples of using Traits:

- ♥ **Jonathan** is a new TTRPG player and a bit shy. He wants to participate, but isn't quite sure how to respond to some bandits on the road. He looks at his Hero-Character, Abelard the soldier, and sees that he has a Bold of 12 and Altruistic of 14. Those are kinda high, and his highest Traits, so he figures Abelard "would want to fight the Bandits, to bravely help other travelers on the road."
- ♥ **Isabet** is a bit of a Steadfast and Cautious spy-pirate caught in a dangerous melee with some Water-Eaters: voracious coastal monsters. One goes into a frenzy and attacks her multiple times, so she bids: "I'm going to Deflect the attacks, but try to do it Cautiously by using both my Sword and off-hand Dagger to try to catch the claws on either side of me." She rolls her Blades (53) to Deflect with Cautious (12), and rolls a 65. That's normally a Failure, but  $6+5=11 < 12$  so her Cautious doubles her Blades from 53 → 106. Her Cautious/Protective Instincts push adrenaline through her, turning a Failure into a Success!
- ♥ **Gerard** the woodsman follows the tracks to a small clearing. As he peers through the brush, he spots a Monster of Air and Water, which sings a dolorous song. Being a rare Monster of terrifying power, Gerard is asked to Check against a Steadfast Dilemma or be drawn by its music. Rolling a '3' on 2D10, he succeeds to hold Steadfast (13) against the song demon's call. He can act normally, but taking actions that aid or support the Song Demon are +1 Challenge (Normal → Difficult, etc).

## Using Personality

Your personality describes how your Hero-Character naturally responds to different situations. A Cautious character, for example, will tend to be a bit nervous, wary, and feel more comfortable doing things in a way that reduces or mitigates Risk. An Altruistic and Cautious person may be a "guardian person," that tries to protect friends and family; an Egoistic and Cautious person may work to protect themselves first.

### Three Ways to Use Personality

**First Way - Guidance.** Use a character's Personality Trait Pairs (ranging from 0-20) as a guide to general role-play and decision-making. This is especially helpful for new players, who can rely on their Hero-Character themselves to guide them "how to act."

- ♥ **Remember that Heroes are the ones who step forward when others do not.**

**Second Way - Bid.** Use a character's Personality Traits to "bid for a bonus." A Player-Hero can attempt to gain a bonus on a Skill Check by describing how they attempt to tie in one of their Traits. If both the Player-Hero and Ballad-Singer agree the Trait (or another, if offered) can reasonably apply to the Check:

- ♥ Make the Skill Check, and note the D100 result.
- ♥ Add the digits of the D100 Roll together.
- ♥ Compare this value to the Trait.
- ♥ If the sum is  $\leq$  Trait, double your Skill for the check.
- ♥ If the sum is  $>$  Trait, halve your Skill for the check.
- ♥ Resolve the original D100 roll against your new Skill value for the check.

**Third Way - Dilemma.** Sometimes a character finds themselves in a "fight-or-flight" situation, such as encountering a terrifying monster. In this circumstance, they will have a conflict between a Personality Trait Pair.

- ♥ Roll 2D10 against the primary Trait.
- ♥ If it Succeeds, make actions in-line with that Trait normally (modified by other effects as normal) and actions in-line to the opposite Trait at +1 Challenge (Normal → Difficult, Difficult → Heroic, etc)
- ♥ If it Fails, the opposite effect results: The opposing Trait-type actions are normal, but the tested Trait-type actions are +1 Challenge.

# Basic Rules: Heart and Tenacity

## The Heart of Heroes

The strength of the human self is the strength of one's Heart. Most Humans have a maximum of 16-19 Heart. A character's Heart is their Love, Hope, and Self; as Heart decreases, a character begins to lose each. The Bold become paranoid but reckless. The Deliberate are thoughtless and indecisive. As Heart weakens, a character falls deeper into flaws and despaired action.

- ♥ When making any Personality Trait Check, roll against the lower of Heart or the chosen Trait.

## Twisting Fate

Whenever a Player-Hero Character (PHC) makes a Skill Check, they may opt to swap the 10s and 1s dice. This may allow a PHC to score Successes instead of Failing. Fate dislikes meddlers and will weaken one's Heart in response.

### How to Twist Fate

- ♥ Swap the digits (10s and 1s places) of the Skill Check roll.
- ♥ Reduce Heart by one (-1 Heart).

## Restoring Heart

There are two (2) ways to restore Heart: Heroic Sacrifice, or Storyteller Pressure.

**Heroic Sacrifice.** When making any Opposed Skill Check, a PHC may choose to increase the Challenge of their check; they regain +1 Heart for every +1 Challenge harder they make the check for themselves.

**Ballad-Singer Pressure.** The BSer may make any PHC's Skill Check to resist an effect +1 Challenge Harder. This can only be applied to PHCs not at full Heart, and restores +1 Heart to the PHC if they roll any success.

## Becoming Heartbroken

Even the most stalwart Heroes may lose their Heart to trickery, guile, or through defiance of Fate. They lose hope, fall to despair, and their heart breaks.

When a Hero's Heart falls to zero (0), they become Heartbroken. The Player gives the character to the Storyteller. For this Quick-Song, this will mean they have given up; they flee from combat, hide at home, and no longer are willing to step forward for their neighbors and friends.

## Towering Tenacity

Each PHC has a number of Tenacity, representing their ability to push beyond the dictates of Fate. Tenacity recovers at +1 per Session, and may be used in either of two ways:

- ♥ Add +1 Success to any rolled Skill Check.
- ♥ Gain +1 Action for one Combat/Chase Round.

## How to Sing the Ballad of Heroes

These Grey-Boxes give tips, tricks, or notes to assist new Ballad-Singers (BS-ers!).

*Ballad-Singers play The World around the Player-Hero Characters (PHCs), and are regaling a future audience of their adventurous exploits.*

*You play the Adversarial, Allied, and Apathetic Non-Hero Characters (NHCs) that PHCs will interact.*

*Yours is the World to control, but with two specific guardrails:*

- ♥ *Your characters may be the Hero of another story, but that story is not told in this game.*
- ♥ *Gameplay intends and expects all players to be Reasonable in adjudication and expectations. Lean towards the 'reasonable' or 'common sense' method to resolve an issue; through enthusiastic approach, you will inspire the other players to follow suit!*

## Quick Reference Box: Rules

- ♥ Decorated Boxes are placed for the BS-er to quickly find on the page while playing this adventure.
- ♥ They provide necessary information for the BS-er to check and say "Got it" when a PHC interacts with The World in some way.
  - These boxes are specifically keyed for the adventure page they appear.
- ♥ Boxes may be split into three (3) sections:
  - Quick Rules recap, if unusual or uncommon
  - Non-Hero Character information
    - Adversaries, then Allies, then Apathetics
    - NHC Traits equal 10 unless stated otherwise
  - Skill Checks, including relevant modifiers
- ♥ This Box will be split into the following vertical sections (in order): Rules Notes, NHCs, Skill Check Guidance.
  - They will always be in the above listed order for official The Ballad of Heroes adventures, big or small.
  - Just find the decoration and scan down to find what you need.

# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Set Expectations

This adventure is the first in a series of six (6) anthological introductions to *The Ballad of Heroes*. Each takes place in a different nation of the Free Lands of Eiras at the same general time of year, but with different Heroes.

The introductory gameplay focus of this Quick-Song is:

♥ Combat in *The Ballad of Heroes* to provide a familiar gaming activity to get everyone started

→ This will give a playgroup a reasonable starting point to familiarize with combat flow, cooperative efforts, and perspective of how/when to engage in Combat in larger play.

## Set the Stage (Read out loud, or paraphrase as desired)

This Song takes place in the central-northern nation known as the Heptarchy of Vardare. Vardare is a caste-based society built around Seven Seats: Miner, Maker, Metalsmith, Monetarist, Militant, Mystic, and Magi. There is a focus on industry and hard commerce to designate the honor and value of a caste-citizen.

Wakare is a ferry-town in the lowlands, the wide sweeping peat bogs and marshlands that serve as the breadbasket for most of the Free Lands. It is on the southwestern border, with the Split-Tail river blocking it to the west and south. Wakare operates two major post-line ferries, the western leading to the Kingdom of Valenia and the southern to the crimson steppe known as the Bladeglass Plain.

It serves as a major pass-through town for travelers and merchants, making it a place well accustomed to disparate peoples. Most of the townsfolk, from simple Maker-caste rice and taro farmers to even the Militant-Caste guard-sergeant herself, collect trinkets to peddle to passerby.

As Vardarens are known to say: 'Every item has a purpose, and often that can become a profit'.

It is currently the day after Fallow's End (New Year's Day), and the Planting Season (Spring) has begun. (Consider it to be March 1<sup>st</sup> on the Earth Calendar).

The townsfolk have all gathered in the nearby paddies to begin the Salt-Dredge. This is a yearly ritual across Vardare where all townsfolk assist in dredging contaminants, trinkets, and oddities from the local paddies so they may be re-seeded safely. Any oddities or trinkets found are often shouted out excitedly for people to marvel over. Vardarens relish these finds, as they convert them into sightseeing oddities or tourist merchandise.

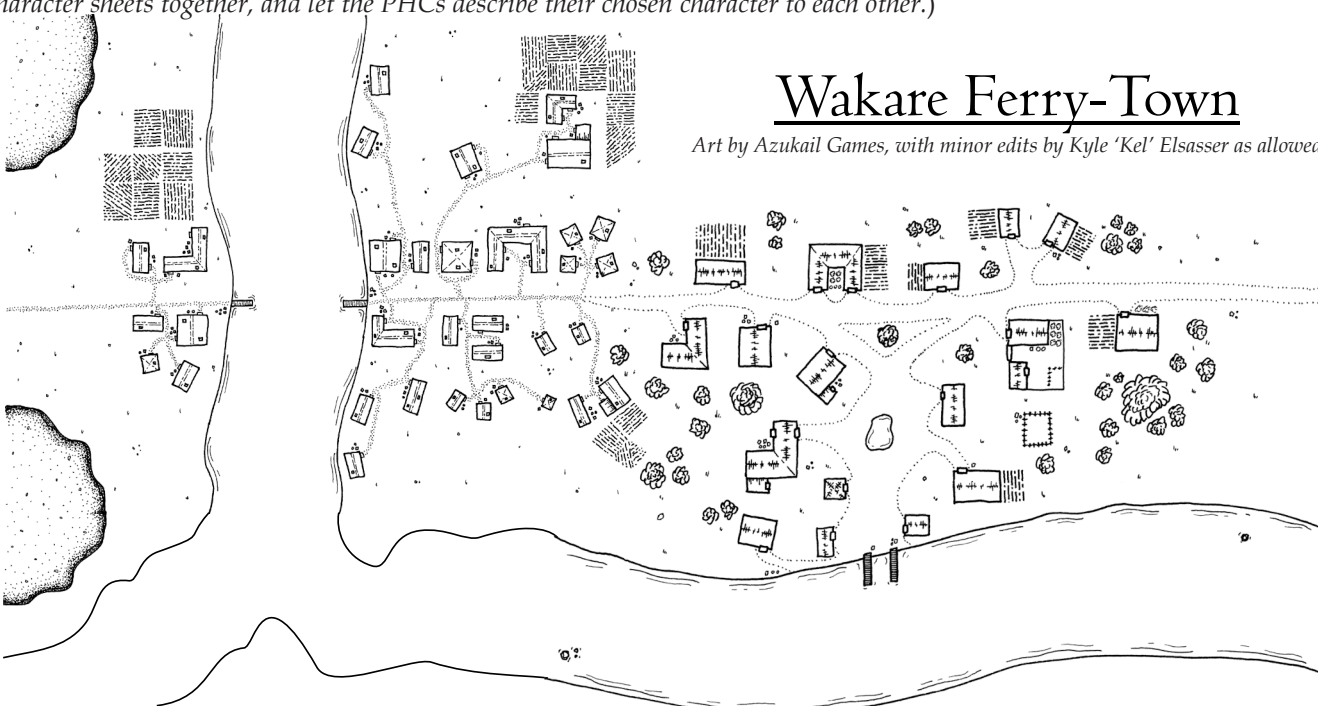
It is early morning, perhaps 8 or 9 a.m., and the whole town has made semi-competitive teams with good cheer and full bellies to dredge various farmer paddies.

The day has a slight chill but the weather is bright and sunny, promising a beautiful day through the afternoon.

(If not already done, take time with your friends to see who wants to play which Unexpected Hero. Take a moment to look over the character sheets together, and let the PHCs describe their chosen character to each other.)

## Wakare Ferry-Town

Art by Azukail Games, with minor edits by Kyle 'Kel' Elsasser as allowed



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Introduce the Unexpected Heroes

**Abelard sun-Water, the Soldier.** Abelard has spent the Fallow Season (Winter) in Wakare drinking and renewing trade contracts with the local Monetarist-caste members. He often spends winters in Wakare, ensuring the Valgard Watch have a steady influx of fresh supplies through the following year. He is currently pulling a dredge-comb with Isabet and a few local townsfolk, as this has become a second home to him.

- ♥ Abelard has *Heavy Armor* but is *Untested in Combat*.
- ♥ Abelard is good for players that like: Being a Tank, Being Intimidating, and Being a Guardian.

**Asavellana-Mithika, the Apothecary.** Asavellana has recently come to Wakare with her new husband, Niklaus. She is from the Emerald Sea, a warm rain-forest, where she worked as an apprentice apothecary. She had a rough go of her first winter with snow and ice, but is glad the weather is warm enough to wear her lighter clothes. She is acting as medical assistant to Life-Maker Brendin Steddyand, the town healer, and standing by her husband Niklaus and his pack-donkey, Associates.

- ♥ Asavellana has *Medical Skills* but has *Low Carry Capacity*.
- ♥ Asavellana is good for players that like: Being Supportive, Having Wide Utility, and Staying at Range.

**Heydar-Breathless-Face, the Scholar.** Heydar is an old scholar-mage who moved to Wakare two years ago. He's been taking notes and recording history of the ferries and the people for his Nahto's records. He's busy chatting with anyone who will listen and sharing random trivia that he finds interesting (regardless of whether anyone else does). He is currently chatting with Asavellana, trying to wheedle out any information about her home, the Emerald Sea.

- ♥ Heydar knows *Powerful Arcanism* but *Crumbles in Melee Combat*.
- ♥ Heydar is good for players that like: Thinking Outside the Box, Creating Solutions, and Feeling like a Wizard.

**Isabet Fleethaven, the Agent.** Isabet is a boastful and cheerful face amongst the Dredgers. She's sharing loud, possibly false, stories of her foreign exploits to the others on the dredge-comb to distract from them noticing she isn't actually pulling. She got stuck in Wakare for the winter while making a hasty exit from some prior work, and has been hired by Niklaus to be the first eyes (and hands) if any interesting trinkets get pulled up. She doesn't particularly care about the trinkets, but it's a nice distraction until the ferry opens. Plus, she did stay in Niklaus' and Asavellana's spare room over the winter; fair is fair, and a busy ship needs all hands.

- ♥ Isabet is a *Daring Swashbuckler* but *Lacks Strong Personality Traits*.
- ♥ Isabet is good for players that like: Being a Melee Aggressor, Lying with a Smile, and Playing a Con Artist.

**Niklaus Harbargin, Merchant-caste Caravanner.** Niklaus is a Wakare native, so has provided a case of famed Black Dragon Ale to the Dredgers as a morale boost. It is definitely not because he didn't want to pull a comb, surely. He is offering his ale to thirsty workers while flirting with his wife, Asavellana, feeding carrots to his donkey, Associates, and glancing toward Isabet to get updates on 'trinket collection.'

- ♥ Niklaus is a *Sturdy Artillerist* but is *Poorly Defended*.
- ♥ Niklaus is good for players that like: Saving Party Funds, Taking an Emergency Hit, and Sniping at Range.

**Thaddeus Ombrefeu, Priest of the Pale Flame.** Thaddeus is a foreign diplomat from The Holy Kingdom of Paran, far to the southeast. He's been in Wakare for eight years attempting to smooth political relations to keep trade to Paran open while also espousing the Searing Truth of the Pale Flame to anyone who will listen (and everyone who won't). He is too old and frail to assist with the dredging, so has instead been alternating between small, odd (for Vardarens) prayers of grace to the workers and trying (and failing) to engage Alderman Benedict Lazul in bureaucratic discourse.

- ♥ Thaddeus is a *Walking Apocalypse of Power* but is *Prone to Collateral Damage*.
- ♥ Thaddeus is good for players that like: Casting Fireball near Friends, Giving Inspirational Speeches, and Role-playing the Karen Meme.



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## A Normal Enough Morning

*This scene is intended to give a quick chance for PHCs to roll a Skill Check or two and get a feel for their characters. The given Skill Checks are reference examples for how to set a Skill Check, its Challenge (usually Normal), and consider ways Traits can combine roll-play with role-play.*

*PHCs typically only need to make a Check when lacking Time, Tools, Training, or when under Threat.*

*When assessing sufficient Training, 50 is the baseline; if they have less than a 50 in a Skill, they will need to make the Check.*

*The final evaluation is: Do Success and Failure, each, provide interest in an outcome? If no, they do not make a Check.*

*This does not mean they automatically succeed, they may reasonably and automatically fail as appropriate.*

## Checks, Challenges, and Traits

- ♥ A Skill Check is a 1D100 roll vs. a Skill, with a Success being any roll equal/less than their Skill.
  - Half or less than their Skill is a Hard Success (2 Successes)
  - A Success that is a multiple of 10 is a Heroic Success (3 Success)
- ♥ A Challenge Modifier is a term that increases or decreases the accompanying Skill by a set multiple.
  - Easy will double the Skill.
  - Difficult will halve the Skill.
  - Heroic divides the Skill by ten (round up!).
- ♥ Traits can be declared before the roll to attempt to double the Skill after the roll.
  - The chosen Trait must be agreed by the PHC and the BS-er. If no agreement is made, no Trait applies.
  - Add the digits of the roll and compare to the Trait. Fail on greater than, otherwise it Succeeds.
  - Failure halves the Skill after the roll.

## Apathetic NHCs Quick Notes

- ♥ Main Skills, those an NHC *do for work*, are assumed to be 60. If you decide they are experts, use 80 instead.
- ♥ Other Skills are assumed to be 25 unless stated otherwise.
- ♥ Most NHCs will have two major Traits, such as Bold/Confident; if these are rolled, use 14. Their opposite (such as Cautious/Humble) would then be 6.

## A Quick Mingling

(Give plenty of time to let the morning breathe, characters to fumble about, and set up a sense of 'this is a normal day in this world' type of feel. Encourage chewing the scene.)

Spirits are high and the chatter is loud and laughing across the wide Reap Farm paddies as most of the town is out to enjoy the sunny spring morning. Aside from two guards and one person elected to man the town-center watchtower, everyone in town is spread across the neighboring paddy fields to drag heavy dredge-combs to pull out contaminants and oddities in preparation of planting.

Each dredge-comb is a four-person operation, with two on either side of the wide 'H' shaped plow-comb. The combs are roughly the width of a paddy line, at about 10 Paces. They take a few days to clean out a paddy field for planting.

The PHCs are all in the same approximate area, around Paul Reap's middle paddies and fairly centralized. Most of the townsfolk are engaging in friendly competitions and chatter.

Here are some example activities of the morning dredge:

- ♥ The Wakare folk get quite competitive during the Salt-Dredge; a good show of *Deliberate Brawn* can help a dredge-comb team beat others in a race!
- ♥ When taking a quick breather, characters might Spot various a few folk flush and wheezing. A *Cautious First Aid* check will find they are winded, hungover (2 Successes), and with mild heat exhaustion.
- ♥ Alderman Lazul is touring up and down the paddy fields offering encouragement (and a bottle of Parani wine!) to the dredge team with the greatest find of the day. He will try to Hide from Thaddeus.
- ♥ Glenda, the oldest dredger in the fields, will try to feign weakness or injury in hopes of 'attention' by Heydar or Thaddeus. An *Opposed First Aid* against her *Difficult Sincerity* (45→23) will find she is simply drunk and hands-y for either eccentric old-timer. (Really ham up her 'need' for one of them to help her stand and walk!)
- ♥ There are quite a few Convincing gossip and rumors to pick up:
  - Celine Fallowfield, a Maker-Farmer's daughter, has been heard to claim she intends to petition for change to Metalsmith-caste against her father's wishes. Further successes reveal she recently met a blacksmith's son, Jac, from the next town over (Rujair, two days east).
  - Marsh-Witch Brian is said to not know any rituals at all, and relies on sleight of hand and rare Ylvin herbs to provide his ministrations. Some say he's never even had a Hag-night (initiation rituals of witchery)!
  - The last travelers from Valenia off the western ferry said there was some monsters sighted in the woods along the capital road before the Fallow. Some even said it was a thing of dark fire that ate up a whole Vardaren caravan carrying weapons and armor!

After everyone (including yourself!) is done chewing the local scenery, move to the next page.



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## A Distant Shout, A Local Bell

As the PHCs and townsfolk are going about their business and working the dredge-combs, announce a distant shout coming further east. Everyone, including the townsfolk, will hear the shout, but **have each PHC make a Listen Check** to discern more specific information:

- ♥ **Fumble (Fail and multiple of 10).** The character does not actually hear the distant shout, but will still take notice if other characters move to investigate.
- ♥ **Failure.** The character hears the distant Shout-amplified call; they hear a bit of excitement in the tone, but don't make out the words. Sounds like someone on the next farm over made a big find!
- ♥ **Success.** A single Success makes out some of the fading words. The magic-amplified call is for some extra hands or help; they must have found something big in a paddy and needs more hands to pull it out!
- ♥ **Hard Success (Roll half or less of Listen Skill).** With two (2) Successes, the message also carries a tone of minor distress or tension. Perhaps a big and heavy find, and someone got hurt trying to pull it out or move it.
- ♥ **Heroic Success (Succeed and multiple of 10).** With at least three (3) Successes, you pick up a sound of pain in the caller's voice. Someone is hurt and calling for help.

Most of the townsfolk, including the local Smith-Guard in the area, will hear the distant Shout-magic as well. A few, such as Guard Buldric, will naturally Succeed to notice it is a call for assistance. The general response of the town is mild curiosity, some grumbling that the Fallowfields must have gotten a 'neat find before them,' and the like. Guard Buldric will begin to ask for volunteers to go offer the Fallowfields a help with their new find.

As the volunteer group (which would likely include the PHCs) is put together, the town alarm bell will begin to sound behind everyone. Every PHC that has been in Wakare for more than just the winter season will immediately understand:

*The Town is under threat, move to safety*

The Smith-Guard (24 total soldiers, including Buldric) will quickly jump to action: They direct the townsfolk to hunker down and shelter in the fields while they form up and charge into town to deal with the threat. Buldric will make a statement along the lines of "The Fallowfield's find will have to wait, the town is under threat."

If pressed (by a PHC with greater Successes, above), Buldric will tell them to "grab Asavellana and Abelard to go check and to be careful!"

(Keep in mind: The Guard are there to deal with town-threats, and the PHCs **are not**. Remind them, if needed, they are not *Adventurers*; they are *Townsfolk*.)

After a few minutes, another Shout-magic drifts from the Fallowfield farm, this time a little weaker.

## A Note about NHCs

*Non-Hero Characters are often categorized into Apathetics. This means they are "Apathetic to the wants, goals, or desires of the PHCs and have no distinct motivation to assist them in favor of going about their life for their own purposes and intents."*

*In this Quick-song, all of the townsfolk (including the Smith-Guard) are Apathetic to the PHCs. As far as any townsfolk are concerned, they are just other people going about their business as well. This is the 'standard' stance of any NHC in the game.*

*They do what they do, without specific motivation to help (Ally) or hinder (Adversary) the Player Hero-Characters.*

*Furthermore, NHCs are not dullards or bumbling idiots. Always play your Non-Hero Characters as competent in the things and ways they should be competent. Town guard are competent combatants, a pack of wolves will try to isolate and overwhelm a target, etc.*

## Apathetic NHCs Quick Notes

- ♥ Smith-Guard Buldric, Pavar-blooded (large, muscular, and hairy male), is a Steadfast/Cautious soldier that is a bit nervous in conversation but falls back on his training when he hears the town alarm bell.
- ♥ The Fallowfields, Jonatan and daughter Celine, are both known to be rather Altruistic bastions of the community. Jonatan (42 years old) has earned a reputation of being a bit too Impulsive for his own good, while his daughter Celine (17 years old) has grown into a Confident youth with a knack for making horseshoes for her pa in an improvised farm-forge.

*Smith-Guard Buldric, waving the townsfolk to say safe until the Guard gives the all-clear.*



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## A Note about Pacing and Time

When interacting with Celine, Asavellana may naturally want to perform Chirurgy with her Healer's Kit to save the girl, but let the full party discuss whether sitting for an hour when her father is missing, injured, and chased would be a worthwhile decision.

If the PHCs decide to split up (some go after Jonatan, Asavellana stays to perform Chirurgy), that's fine!

♥ Give Asavellana's Player another Pre-gen to use (assume they silently came along as well).

♥ If all Pre-gens are currently in use, then lean on Celine's Confident and Altruistic nature: She will ardently argue that she will be fine, just please find her father. Asavellana can work on her when her dad is by her side and safe.

## A Reminder of Tenacity and Twisting Fate

Each of the PHCs has a few points of Tenacity, which can be used to add 1 Success to any Check they make. Tenacity slowly recovers, at a rate of +1 Tenacity/Game Session.

As Humans, all of the PHCs are able to weaken their Heart to Twist Fate around them. This allows them to reverse their 1D100 result on any Check, at the cost of (-1) Heart. Ex: a '61' can be twisted to a '16' at a cost of 1 Heart.

These are powerful tools, and Tenacity is the only actual mark that the PHCs are Heroes. They are intended to be used to Succeed where otherwise they might have failed.

All characters in this Quick-song have decent odds of succeeding the Spot/Hunt Checks to pick up Jonatan's trail. This 'hard-stop' Check only exists in this Quick-song to give a showcase usage for Tenacity/Twisting mechanics and should otherwise never be an expectation in wider gameplay in The Ballad of Heroes.

## Answering Questions

The PHCs will likely ask if they recognize the creature's description. This will be a Folklore Check, adjusted to Difficult for Asavellana, Thaddeus, and Niklaus (these creatures are unfamiliar to their homelands). For each Success, give them the name (Water-Eaters, next page) with decreasingly vague information with some possible falsehood; e.g. 'It sounds like maybe Water-Eaters aren't visible in sunlight though' or 'Water-Eaters normally drown their victims, so this is abnormal'.

## Apathetic NHCs

Celine Fallowfield (17 yrs old, she/her)						NHC Notes	
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has 5/5 Daze and 1 Wound.  If PHCs arrive after first Shout, or Rush to farm on second Shout, she is not Down.  If PHCs do not Rush after Second Shout or arrive later, she is unconscious and Dying.	
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)					
Willpower	45	Altruistic	14	6	Egoistic		
Endurance	45	Confident	14	6	Humble		
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits		
Makes her Willpower (to avoid going Down) and Endurance (to resist Dying) Checks augmented with her Confident (14).							

## The Fallowfield Farm

Whether the PHCs travel to the Fallowfield Farm aware of distress or just bored from hunkering in a mushy paddy field during a town alarm, ask their Travel Pace.

- ♥ At a regular Pace, it will take them about 10 minutes to get to the farm proper.
- ♥ If they Rush, they can get there in about 5 minutes due to the marshy ground and will need to make an Endurance Check or gain 1 Fatigue from exertion.

Either way, arriving at the Fallowfield Farm reveals a terrible sight: they have been attacked. Use the following descriptive notes:

- ♥ There are the torn bodies of multiple townsfolk strewn about the paddy nearest the farmhouse, their blood mingling with the mud. They are clearly dead.
- ♥ There is a dead horse with a broken leg and torn out throat. The wagon it was attached to is tipped over on its side.
- ♥ A dredge-comb is halfway through the bloody paddy, and looks to be damaged.
- ♥ From the direction the party approaches, they will see Celine Fallowfield weakly sitting against the overturned wagon. She is missing her left arm in a ragged tear just above the elbow and is covered in blood.

→ If the PHCs set out after the first Shout at any Travel Pace, or Rushed after the second Shout called out, she will be conscious and trying to complete the ritual to weakly Shout once more for help.

→ If the PHCs moved at a regular pace after the second Shout, she will be unconscious from the severity of her Wounds and Dying.

Celine is heavily Wounded and Dazed (see sidebar). Isabet and Asavellana are well trained in First Aid to recover at least 1 Daze to keep her conscious (and, subsequently, stable for now). If she is unconscious, this will also rouse her enough to weakly speak.

She will thank her saviors, and describe the comb getting caught on something in the paddy. The dredgers pulled hard, and stinking fish-like monsters lunged out and attacked. One tore at her arm (she's unaware it is missing), but her father Jonatan hit it with a shovel. He then shouted loudly at the things, drawing them away from her and he led them away. She is worried for her father.

- ♥ Asavellana *could* perform Chirurgy to fully stabilize Celine (removing her Wound); however, be sure to inform this will take 1 hour.

A Easy Hunt (or Normal Spot) Check can find Jonatan's trail. Additional Successes will note (in order): He is also injured (blood trail), he is pursued, and there are three pursuers.

Celine is the only living person at the Farm, and a Spot (or Easy Appraise) Check will estimate that she should be safe here for now as long as she is stabilized.

# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## The Hunt for Jonatan

Jonatan's trail leads a brisk 5-minute walk to the northeast into some nearby woods commonly used by local hunters. The ground is a bit rockier and more sturdy than the sweeping marshlands leading back to Fallowfield Farm, so the terrain will be easier to traverse. The ringing of the town alarm bell continues to drift on the warm spring air.

Have the party make another Difficult Spot (Normal Hunt) Check to mark the trail of Jonatan and his pursuers into the woods. If no one Succeeds, they are still able to guess the general direction; with any Success, they will notice that one set of tracks seems to diverge to the right.

As the party moves into the woods, ask them 'how:' Are they moving Deliberately or Cautiously? Depending on their choice have them each make a Lightfoot Check with the appropriate Trait (Deliberate or Cautious).

- ♥ For the party to be completely unnoticed, they must score a minimum of 1 Success per party member. E.g. 5 characters need a combined 5 Successes to be unnoticed as a whole.
- ♥ If there are not enough Successes for each PHC, then each one that Failed (or Fumbled) will be at risk of detection. Those that individually Succeeded will still be unnoticed, unless by happenstance of proximity of their louder compatriots.

As they travel in the woods, they have three separate occurrences:

- ♥ First, call a Listen Check. Success hears a commotion up ahead in the distance.
  - If the party did not spend time performing Chirurgy on Celine, extra Successes will pick up some distinctly human cursing. Jonatan is still alive!
- ♥ Second, further along, call a Sense Check (smell). Success picks up a fetid/rotting swampy smell coming up ahead. Extra Successes will catch a hint of blood on the air.
  - If characters determined these are likely Water-Eaters (Folklore Check, see Answering Questions sidebar previous page), they will note the 'smell is wrong' for Water-Eater presence.
- ♥ Third, as they are getting closer to the sounds, they call a Spot Check. Success let's them get a view of two Water-Eaters around a tree in the distance. A Heroic Success will notice a third Water-Eater off to the right hiding in some distant brush.

→ If Jonatan is still alive, he can be seen in the upper branches of the tree with 2 Successes. He is bloody and clearly wounded. Otherwise he is unseen.

At the point of the Spot Check, the party will be roughly 30 Paces from the two Water-Eaters at the tree (with a third hiding about 15 paces forward and to their right).

## The Consequences of Time

*Jonatan Fallowfield will be alive in all cases except where the entire party takes time to ensure Celine receives Chirurgy from Asavellana. However, the more delays taken (Second Shout, regular Pace, exploring the farm for other survivors, etc) will increase his level of injury. See his NHC card for more.*

## Stealth, Ambush, Combat

*It is a clear morning, and the woods have minor underbrush. Stepping lightly provides more benefit than hiding in shadows to sneak to the Water-Eater's position.*

*Each character that has a Lightfoot Success will not be targeted by the third Water-Eater in the opening rounds of Combat; if it targets none, it will instead try to move back toward the Farm (not directly noticing the PHCs until it does so) and counts as Ambushed with the other two Water-Eaters.*

## NHCs with Fatigue and Wounds

*NHCs generally use simplified blocks of information. The Ballad-Singer is a player with many characters, but few are ever fully developed to the granularity of a Player-Hero Character.*

*For Apathetic human NHCs and all Beast/Creature/Monster Adversary NHCs, use the following 'quick tracks' for the effects of Fatigue and Wounds:*

- ♥ *Beasts, Creatures (such as Water-Eaters), and Monsters make an Endurance check to ignore Fatigue gains. If they fail, their Combat Actions are (+1 Challenge) for their next turn (Normal→Difficult, etc)*
  - A Wound gives (-10 all Skills), and unless a mindless being will likely try to flee if possible.
- ♥ *Humans follow 5/5/Daze/Wound → use tally marks on their card for the first 5 Fatigue they may gain (from magic or effects), then give a cumulative (-5 all Skills, to a maximum of -25 all Skills) for the next 5. After that, mark a Daze instead; if they have no Daze to mark, mark a Wound.*
  - A Wound also gives 5 Fatigue, and unless they have sufficient reason (such as to save their home or town, or supported by comrades) will attempt to yield, flee, or otherwise avoid further risk of death.

## Apathetic NHCs

Jonatan Fallowfield (42 yrs old, he/him)						NHC Notes	
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has 1/5 Daze and 1 Wounds.  Each delay (Second Shout, Not Rushing, Searching the Farm) adds 1 Daze.	
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)				If time was taken to perform Chirurgy on Celine, he has 5/5 Daze, 1/3 Wounds. He is about to collapse under his injury and fall from the tree.	
Athletics	45	Altruistic	14	6	Egoistic		
Endurance	45	Impulsive	14	6	Deliberate		
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits		
Will make Impulsive Athletics checks to climb higher in the tree (he didn't think this far ahead for survival) and makes Steadfast Endurance/Willpower Checks (wants to live to see Celine again).							



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Conflict & Combat

There is one goal for the PHCs:

Save Jonatan Fallowfield!

The most straightforward approach is 'Do or Die' Combat, but this will likely result in one (or possibly all) PHCs dying.

These Adversaries are difficult to kill without specialized equipment (Silvered weapons, or specific magics).

As their Ballad-Singer, work to establish 'These Things are Very Dangerous and Not to Be Underestimated.' State this directly if needed.

Let them take a moment here (especially newer Heroes) to consider options to eliminate the Water-Eaters; some options may include an ambush strike then attempting to scare them via Coerce, Thaddeus Invoking the Pale Flame to affect all three Water-Eaters (risky), or even having Abelard/Isabet/Heydar draw them away as an easier meal (all three are just fast enough to outpace them).

Entertain any reasonable ideas the PHCs come up with, and determine Skill Checks that logically apply with Challenge Modifiers (Easy, Difficult, etc) based on 'How Challenging is this based on the circumstance', not 'What is the PHC's Skill Level'?

## Play your Water-Eaters Smart

Water-Eaters are High-Mundane Creature; they are intended to be 'Generally Challenging if Careful; Lethal if Reckless.' Play them as competent, hungry, violent ambush predators that are absolutely interested in making easy kills and absolutely prefer to escape alive if the meal requires too much risk.

## Adversary NHCs

Water-Eater #1						Notes  Coastline ambush monsters, exceptionally vicious with primordial Water-borne flesh to protect them. Flee when Wounded, and can be Coerced to flee if they are outnumbered.  Recovers 1 Daze on Bite Attacks that deal at least 1 Daze to a target.		
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			3 AV
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Threshold	14 Damage			
Skills		Attack	DMG	Type	Effect			
Attack	60	Claws	4D6	S	Bleed			
Dodge	60	Bite	4D6	P	Puncture			
Brawn	60	Defense	AV			Special		
Athletics	60	Creature	3	-1 damage dice from weapons, regenerates each Round.				
Others	40	Move Rate	10	11	Knockdown (Succeed Brawn or go Prone)			
Focus (D6 at Start of Round)								
Even	Frenzy. Makes 2 Attacks per Action, will not Dodge/Deflect.							
Odd	Drown. Those engaged must succeed Endurance or take 1 Daze and lose 1 Action this turn.							

Water-Eater #2						Notes  Water-Eater #3 will attempt to Charge and Attack any character that gets separated. Otherwise, it will attempt to gang up on a character that is Engaged with other Water-Eaters.  If outnumbered Water-Eaters can be Coerced to flee. Reduce the Challenge if they are Wounded, and again if one or more is Dead.		
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			3 AV
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Threshold	14 Damage			
Water-Eater #3								
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			3 AV
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Threshold	14 Damage			

## The Fight for Jonatan

The Water-Eaters are clawing at the tree Jonatan has climbed to escape being eaten. Depending on the delays the PHCs may have taken to reach Jonatan, he will be in various states of injury.

Regardless, he is midway up a scraggly and barren deciduous tree (they lose their leaves in winter!) and currently out of jumping reach of the Water-Eaters. Their forearms end in three-clawed, webbed appendages that are poorly formed for climbing. If given time, they will be able to tear down the tree (AV: 3, Threshold: 15, Needs 5 Wounds to tear it down), or Jonatan may go Down and fall from the tree incapacitated from his injuries.

Take a moment to describe the following scene, in your own words as preferred:

- ♥ **The Scene.** 2 Zones (30 Paces) ahead within a small, rocky clearing are two Water-Eaters clawing at a tree. Jonatan weakly clings to the upper branches of a barren willow tree, blood dripping from a gash across his back down to the creatures below. A third Water-Eater is in the woods to the right (1 Zone away from the party). See the Map on page 30.
- ♥ **The Adversaries - Water-Eaters.** Standing nearly 2 meters/6 feet tall with rubbery, ethereal hide that resembles brackish swamp water, these coastal creatures stink of rotten plant matter. Their heads only slightly protrude from their shoulders and host a mouth of sharp, piranha-like teeth that seem to twitch and move independently as they snap and gurgle at the injured and Wounded figure of Jonatan in the upper branches. Their vaguely humanoid form has two arms ending in long, batwing-like appendages struck with bone-talons to rip, tear, and swim. Lucky for Jonatan, they make climbing Difficult. Three legs bow outward with symmetry, providing exceptional power to ambush and lunge from the tides but providing little assistance on dry land.
- ♥ **The Tale - A Father Saved.** Jonatan Fallowfield, father of Celine, is in great peril. Injured, outnumbered, and tired, he has drawn creatures away from his farm to save his daughter. Now, his only hope to return to Celine is in the hands of local neighbors or passers-through.

Use the Combat Rules (see following pages) as the primary method of resolving the scene. This does not necessitate that "to the death" combat is expected or necessary (see sidebar, left); rather, Combat Rules are most applicable as they focus on semi-ordered resolution of actions and responses.

Plus, it is highly likely someone (or, preferred by the PHCs, something) will take damage, become Dazed, possibly go Down, take one or more Wounds, and maybe even die.

Resolving this is the goal and focus of Combat.

Combat ends when the threat of Water-Eaters is eliminated, or at least reduced to a point where Jonatan can be safely carried out of the woods and back home.

(It is recommended to share the Actions and Effects pages)

# How to Play: Combat

## Combat is Dangerous

Characters hit hard enough to potentially kill each other in a single attack without armor. Even with armor, fighting multiple combatants at once will quickly see a character go Down or start Dying. Daze and Fatigue are taken quickly and removed slowly; Wounds linger and are difficult to recover.

Death is final.

Always, always take the extra moment to determine if an instance of combat is necessary. As a Hero, even an unexpected one, the answer may often be 'yes.' So make an effort to set advantages for decisive victory instead of pyrrhic attrition.

## Positioning and Range

*The Ballad of Heroes* is built from the foundation to not require a battle map or grid for combat (but works fine with one, if preferred). In basic combat, characters are abstractly related by **Zones**; each has an equal width of **1 Move Rate**.

When not using a grid, any character in the same Zone as another is assumed to be **Adjacent** from each other if not **Engaged (in melee)**. To move from one Range Zone to another requires 2 Move Rate: one to 'straddle' (Adjacent in both Zones), and one to 'enter' (only Adjacent in new Zone). When entering a new Range Zone in this way, a character may choose whether to be Engaged with another character or group (if reasonably able). *See the diagram on the next page.*

Ranged weapons such as javelins, bows, and crossbows, list a number of 'Z' for their standard range. This is the number of zones it can normally reach (15 Paces/Zone on a grid), and firing beyond this makes the ranged attack Harder. Throwable weapons without a listed Range become Harder for each Range beyond Adjacent (Ex: *Javelins have a Range of 1Z, so are Difficult to hit at 2Z, Heroic at 3Z; a Dagger has no Range, so is Difficult at 1Z and Heroic at 2Z.*)

## Declaring Intent

The Ballad-Singer starts each Combat Round by giving a brief review of general character conditions and positions. They then give a general sense of what each adversary is planning for the current Round.

- ♥ Sufficient information must be given for the Player-Heroes to make informed decisions.
  - 'The first Water-Eater is turning toward Abelard as it gurgles and prepares to attack.'
- ♥ Specific information is not required to be given.
  - 'The Bandit about 3 Ranges away is beginning to mutter and do some hand motions while reaching into a component bag to Cast a Spell toward Isabet.'
- ♥ PHCs must choose to Focus or Stay Open before any resolution occurs, and are locked into their choice for this Round.

## Combat Round Flow

- ♥ Declare Intents and Responses
  - Evaluate if any characters are Ambushed.
  - Set the Scene and what the Adversaries are getting ready to do
  - PHCs state if they are going to Focus or stay Open.
- ♥ Resolve Responses
  - Focused PHCs, then Focused Adversaries
  - Environmental
    - Dying characters make Endurance Checks
  - Open PHCs, then Open Adversaries
  - Ambushed characters

## Type of Combat Response

- ♥ Focused
  - Goes before Adversaries and Environment, but only gets 1 Action (+Bonus, if applies).
  - If the Action has a Skill Check, it is (-1) Challenge (Normal → Easy, etc).
- ♥ Open
  - Goes after Environment and Focused Adversaries, but has 2 Actions (+Bonus, if applies).
  - When taking **any Action**, may freely move up to your Move Rate. This is cumulative across all actions taken by you for the Round.
- ♥ Ambush
  - Failing an appropriate Perception (Listen, Sense, or Spot) Check at the start of a surprise combat encounter forces this Response.
  - Some Combat Effects can push a character into this Response, or force them into this Response on a subsequent Round.

## No Initiative

All characters involved in a single Response (such as Focused PHCs) resolve their actions together. They may act simultaneously, coordinate efforts, or alternate as they see fit. When all members of a Response have finished their Actions, the next Response begins.

# How to Play: Combat

## A Painful Example

Isabet gets attacked by a frenzied Water-Eater, which overwhelms her attempt to Deflect with a net Hard Success (+1D6 Damage, 1 Combat Effect).

It bites her torso for 4D6, rolling (2, 5, 5, 6) for 18 Damage. It adds the Impale Combat Effect, and reduces her Wound Threshold by (-4) for this attack.

Her Cloth Vest has AV 2, reducing this to 16 Damage against her Wound Threshold of  $(10 - 4) = 6$ . This means she will take 2 Wounds and 1 Daze (2 Wounds = 12 Damage, the remainder becomes 1 Daze).

Isabet decides to use her Vest to downgrade both Wounds into Daze. This costs 2 AV, completely breaking her cloth Vest (0 of 2 AV), but reduces the 2 Wounds → 2 Daze.

She will mark 3 Daze (out of 7 on her Daze Track), and her cloth Vest armor is broken and provides no further benefits until repaired.

The end result of the attack is then:

- ♥ Isabet is scraped, bruised, and lightly bleeding with 3/7 Daze as the Water-Eater pulls its jaw away.
- ♥ Her cloth vest armor is ruined. It will provide no additional defense, despite still taking up Carry Capacity, until it can be repaired.
- ♥ Any subsequent damage she takes will not be reduced from her armor now, so she is at extra risk of injury or death.

**Ammunition.** When making Ranged Attacks, the ones place (e.g. the '2' in a roll of '72') is compared against the ammunition Quantity/Uses as a 1D10 Consumable Check.

- ♥ If the Consumable Check fails ( $>$  Quantity), reduce the Quantity/Uses by 1.
- ♥ If ammunition Quantity/Uses is 0, you are out of ammunition and cannot make Ranged Attacks with that weapon.
- ♥ A '0' is read as a '10' for Ammunition checks, and always reduce Quantity/Uses.

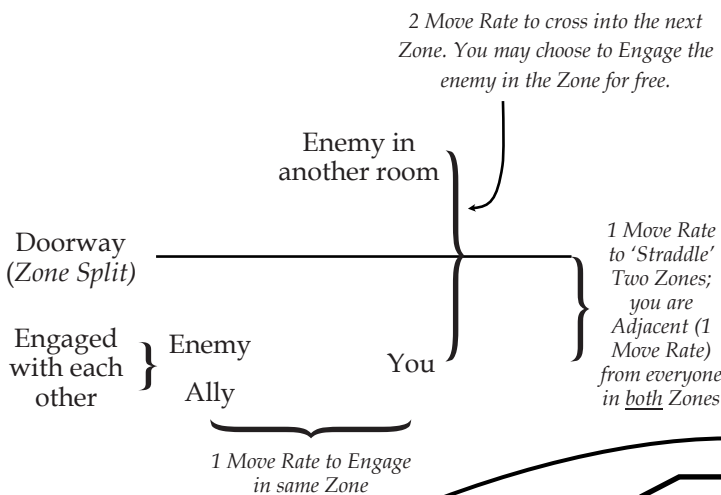
**Cover.** Cover only applies to Ranged Attacks.

- ♥ **Body Blocked.** If the character is Engaged with another character, Ranged Attacks against them are (+1) Challenge (Normal → Difficult, etc)
- ♥ **Silhouette.** If the character is obscured by fog, darkness, or at least half of their body is covered, Ranged Attacks against them are (+2) Challenge (Normal → Heroic, etc)
- ♥ **Nearly Hidden.** If only the general location is known, Ranged Attacks against the target are (+3) Challenge (Easy → Heroic, etc)

**Dual Weapons.** Dual wield weapons typically requires a high Skill to be effective.

- ♥ **Double Strike.** Add +1D6 Damage, but must use the lower weapon Skill (if different weapon types).
- ♥ **Extra Parry.** Gain 1 free Deflect, using the off-hand weapon. This Deflect is made at (+1) Challenge (Normal → Difficult, etc)

## A Visual Example of Zone Movement and Distance

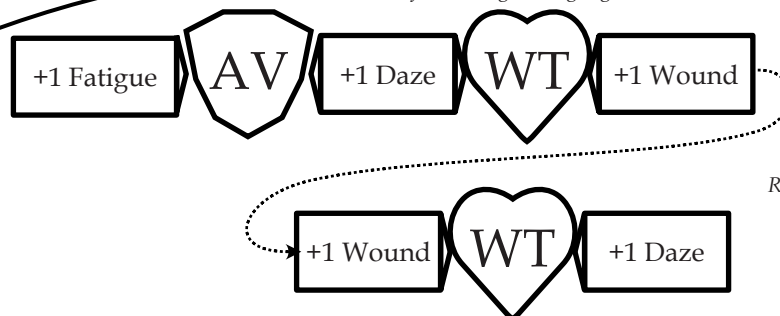


## Dealing Damage and Getting Hurt

On a successful strike, roll the appropriate number of D6 to determine Damage.

- ♥ Damage is compared to the target's Knockdown Threshold to see if they are thrown off their feet.
  - ♥ Damage is then reduced by any Armor Value of the target, and compared to Wound Threshold (WT).
- $\leq$  **Armor Value.** Target gains 1 Fatigue.
- $<$  **Threshold.** Target marks 1 Daze.
- $=$  **Threshold.** Target marks 1 Wound.
- $>$  **Threshold.** Target takes 1 Wound for every multiple of the Threshold met, with any remainder giving them 1 Daze.

Visual of Resolving Damage against Armor and Wound Thresholds



Repeat as needed until no damage remains



# How to Play: Combat Actions

All Combat Actions take 1 Action to perform, unless stated otherwise.

**Move.** The character moves up to their full Move Rate and gains (+1) Running.

- ♥ **Running.** Each stack of Running causes Ranged Attacks made by you, or targeting you, (+1) Challenge harder until the start of your next turn. (Normal → Difficult, etc)

**Attack.** The character makes an attack with a weapon to a target in range.

- ♥ Melee weapons can reach only other characters that are Engaged with the attacker.
  - Melee weapons may show a damage type in parentheses, e.g. 'S (P)'; attacks using the parenthetical damage type are +1 Challenge Harder and must be stated before rolling.
  - Each Move Rate spent to reach the target before attacking adds +1D6 Damage (max: double normal damage dice).
- ♥ Ranged weapons cannot be used if currently Engaged, but otherwise can reach any character within its stated Range.
  - Characters beyond the stated range can be targeted at (+1) Challenge (Normal→Difficult, etc)
- ♥ Attacks are an Opposed Check against the Defender's Deflect or Dodge (if taken).
  - Each additional net Success adds +1D6 Damage and 1 Combat Effect (see next page)
  - A tie results in ½ Damage dice, rounded up (minimum -1D6).

**Reload.** Using Bows and Crossbows requires spending actions to draw and nock a fresh arrow, reset the crossbow's firing mechanism, etc. Each Bow and Crossbow has a Reload value, which is the number of Actions that must be spent before attacking with that weapon again.

**Brace.** Take a defensive stance to counter the momentum of oncoming attacks.

- ♥ Reduce the Challenge of Brawn, Endurance, and Parry Checks by (-1). This lasts until the character moves, is moved, attacks, goes Prone, Down, or dies.

**Rally.** Inspire allies and call out weak points. Make an appropriate Skill Check based on how you rally your allies. Each ally within 1 Range Band gains +5/Success to their next Skill Check.

- ♥ **Commanding.** Using the Command Skill to Rally increases the reach by +1 Range Band/Success.

**Use Item or Skill.** Use another Skill, or use/interact with an Item. This includes picking a lock, intimidating an adversary, etc.

- ♥ The Ballad Singer may dictate that involved Skills, such as First Aid to resuscitate an ally, must be either a Focused response or take 2 Actions to attempt.

**Use Magic.** This may be casting Ritual Magics, opening a conduit to channel Invocations, or performing complicated calculations to locally derive a Form. Action cost varies depending on the type of magic and is specified in the spell description or Form cost.

**Dodge.** Being in combat assumes a character is naturally trying not to be hit; sometimes an active choice is required to avoid a deadly blade. Dodge is used to avoid incoming damage.

- ♥ Can only be taken in reaction to being targeted with an attack.
- ♥ Renders you Prone and gives no Effects on additional Successes in the defender's favor.

**Deflect.** Use a weapon or shield to interpose and knock away an incoming strike.

- ♥ Can only be taken in reaction to yourself or an ally you sufficient Move Rate to reach is targeted with an attack.
- ♥ Additional successes in the defender's favor may apply Defensive Effects.
- ♥ Ranged Attacks can only be Deflected by a Shield.

**Reactive Strike.** Make an Attack at an adversary that attempts to move out of your reach. Melee weapons only.

**Reactive Magic.** Some Ritual Spells may be used in response to actions taken by another character. Applicable Spells will have the Reactive tag.

**Assist.** Help an ally perform an Action, or distract the target during their Action.

- ♥ Must be able to reasonably offer assistance or hindrance, both in the action and from relative position.
- ♥ If assisting, increase the ally's Skill as per 'Helping on Checks' (pg. 3)
- ♥ If hindering, reduce the target's Skill as per 'Helping on Checks' (pg. 3)

# How to Play: Injury & Recovery

## Breaking Armor

Whenever a character takes Damage that exceeds their Armor Value, they may choose to 'Break' any worn armor to reduce the severity. Spend (reduce) AV in the order of **Outer→Inner→Helm→Other Armors** to reduce the severity of incoming Daze and Wounds.

- ♥ Each 1 AV spent may downgrade 1 Wound or 1 Daze.
  - A Wound downgrades to Daze
  - A Daze downgrades to Fatigue
    - If a character's Overload Capacity is filled, they cannot break armor to downgrade Daze to Fatigue.
- ♥ AV is only recovered through repair, either by an appropriate crafting skill or spending time and money at an appropriate craftsman in a town.
- ♥ AV spent in this manner no longer provides damage reduction. Broken armor (0 AV) offers no worn benefits, only any associated penalties.

## Going Down

A character is at risk of going Down when one of two conditions are met:

- ♥ The character's Daze Track fills, or
- ♥ The character takes any hit while their Daze Track is full

To avoid going Down in these cases, the character must succeed on a Willpower Check.

- ♥ **Normal Success.** Gain 2 Fatigue but stay up.
- ♥ **Hard Success.** Gain 1 Fatigue but stay up.
- ♥ **Heroic Success.** No Fatigue gained and stay up.
- ♥ **Failure.** Go Down.
- ♥ **Fumble.** Gain 1 Fatigue and Go Down.

**High Stress.** The following add (+1) Challenge to the Willpower Check to avoid going Down (Normal→Difficult, etc):

- ♥ If the hit causes at least 1 Daze
- ♥ For each Wound caused by the hit

**Down, not Out.** If a character goes Down, they also become Prone (Daze, pg. 4).

## Death and its Refusal

**Fading Light.** If a character has a full Daze Track and has at least 1 Wound, they are dying. Dying characters:

- ♥ Make an Easy Endurance Check during Environmental Response, gaining 1 Wound on any Failure.
  - The Challenge of this Check increases by (+1) for each Wound they currently have. (Easy→Normal, etc)

**Hold On!** While a character is Dying, they survive as long as they continue to make any success on their Endurance Check. Get to them quickly.

**Darkness eternal.** A character dies if they fill their Wound Track and take at least 1 additional Wound, for any reason. There is no resurrection in *The Ballad of Heroes*, but retreat is always an option.

## Health and Healing

There are six (6) ways to recover Daze or Wounds:

### Recovering Daze.

- ♥ **First Aid.** Recover 1 Daze/Success when receiving First Aid from another character. Can be performed in Combat either Focusing (1 Action) or Staying Open (2 Actions, but can Move to the wounded).
  - A character that has First Aid attempted on them must receive at least 1 Daze before it can be attempted on them again.
- ♥ **Potions.** There are two types of curative potions, Infusions and Decoctions. A character must be conscious and aware (not Down) to drink a potion.
  - **Infusion.** Removes 1 Daze and 1 Fatigue
  - **Decoction.** Removes 1D6 Daze.
- ♥ **Rest.** A good and safe night's rest, such as at home or an inn, allows a character to remove Daze and Fatigue in any combination equal to their Recovery Rate.

### Recovering Wounds.

- ♥ **Chirurgie.** A character trained in Chirurgie may use a Healer's Kit to convert 1 Wound→Daze/Success to a target. Not usable in combat, as it takes 1D6 Hours per Wound converted in this way.
- ♥ **Arcanism.** Heydar-Breathless-Face knows Arcanism, and may reverse the Exhuira Commuto Form to remove Wounds from characters.

# How to Play: Combat Effects

Combat Effects Table

General		
Name	Requires	Result
Cow	Target must be at clear disadvantage	Cannot cause a Wound. Make a Coerce Check opposed by target's Easy Willpower. They resist at (+1) Challenge per Wound the attack would normally cause. If you succeed the Opposed Check, they will flee or surrender (whichever is easiest or in their best interest).
Disarm	--	Target drops the chosen held item. Resisted by Brawn.
Rise	Prone	Remove the Prone condition from self.
Shove	--	Target is moved Paces equal to your base Damage. Resisted by Endurance.
Stagger	--	Knock target off-center, making them Dodge/Deflect at +1 Challenge for the rest of the round.
Trip	--	Target falls Prone. Resisted by Athletics.
Attacker Only		
Exhaust	--	Target gains 1 Fatigue for each damage die rolled. Any Sustained or in-casting Magics are interrupted/ended. Resisted by Willpower.
Bleed	(S)lash Damage	Deal an additional 1 Damage for each damage die rolled. Resisted by Endurance.
Impale	(P)ierce Damage	Reduce the target's Wound Threshold by 1 for each D6 rolled for damage for this attack. Resisted by Endurance.
Crush	(B)ludgeon Damage	Break the target's armor for (-1 AV). If they Deflected, this target's their Shield/Weapon instead.
Defender Only		
Riposte	Any Melee	Deal your Weapon Damage to your Attacker.
Disengage	--	Move 1 Pace away from your Attacker.

Stacking Effects will increase the Challenge (Normal → Difficult, etc.) if the Resist check is the same.

## Short Combat Example: A Charging Bull and Daring Duelist

Abelard Engages the Water-Eaters, rocketing through contracted space from Heydar-Breathless-Faced's Arcane Laxame Form. Carrying his momentum into a Bold(12) Attack, helps him score a Hard Success! The Water-Eater fails to deflect with its Claws.

Abelard deals his full 6D6 Maul Damage (1 Success) + 3D6 (3 Move Rate spent to engage) + 1D6 (from Hard Success) - 1D6 (Water-Eater's hide) for a total of 9D6 damage + 1 Combat Effect. He chooses to Stagger the Water-Eater, setting it off-center from his momentum. He deals 37 Damage and the Water-Eater fails their Knockdown check and falls to the ground. With 3 AV it would mark +2 Wounds and +1 Daze, but breaks its hide for (-2AV) to take 3 Daze instead. In a single turn, Abelard has injured, staggered, and knocked down a strong creature while coming to support an injured Isabet.

The other Water-Eater attacks in a Frenzy against Abelard, scoring a Hard Success. Isabet, Adjacent with Abelard and the attacking Water-Eater, has taken an Open Response this round; she can move up to her Move Rate while taking any Action. She decides to Deflect on Abelard's behalf, costing 1 Move Rate as she lunges between Abelard and his assailant with her blade raised defensively. She scores a Normal Success, only partly stopping the creature's claws from rending into Abelard's blindside; the Water-Eater only scores a normal strike with its claw.

The Water-Eater rolls 4D6 (Claws) - 1D6 (Mail reduces Slash) = 3D6 Damage and no Effect. It rolls 9 damage, barely penetrating Abelard's 8 AV to mark 1 Daze. He can easily recover with a good night's rest.

It makes another Claw attack from its frenzy, and now that she is Engaged with the Water-Eater, Isabet uses the Free Parry Trait of her Sword to Deflect without spending an Action. The Water-Eater scores a Normal Success against Isabet's Hard Success; with one net success in her favor, Isabet manages to fully negate the Water-Eater's second attack from doing any damage.



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## It's a Chase! (Maybe)

*There is a slight possibility of the circumstances in the woods resulting in the party being chased by Water-Eaters.*

*This is not a focus of this Quick-Song, so the full Chase Rules are not included. Instead, let the PHCs get creative about finding ways to delay, slow down, or distract the Water-Eaters to help the slower members of the party to escape.*



Artist: Dean Spencer

## Return to Fallowfield Farm

Once the conflict with the Water-Eaters is resolved, the PHCs will need to return Jonatan (or his body, if the situation went poorly) to his daughter and farm.

- ♥ **Fallen.** There is a distinct possibility for one or more characters to die in the conflict with the Water-Eaters, especially if they are reckless. If available, hand the player an unused pre-gen character.
- ♥ **Chased.** There is a curious case where the PHCs may devise a reckless gambit to distract the Water-Eaters long enough to gather Jonatan and flee back toward town. The Chase rules are not included in this Quicksong, so instead consider the following:
  - Abelard is the only character Hale enough to carry Jonatan without issue, although Niklaus can carry him with (-2) Movement. This would make Niklaus slower than the Water-Eaters, however.
  - To outrun the Water-Eaters (Move Rate 10) Asavellana, Niklaus, and Thaddeus will need to push themselves.
    - They should make an Athletics Check, increasing their Move Rate by their Successes (or reducing by 1 on a Fumble).
  - Every PHC in the chase will gain 5 Fatigue, reduced by the number of Successes scored on an Endurance Check.
  - Anyone who still has Move Rate < 10 will be caught by the Water-Eaters and attacked.
    - One person who is caught may choose to sacrifice themselves. The Water-Eaters are more than happy to take a single person as an easy meal and let the others escape. This also may provide Thaddeus the opportunity to make a sacrificial Invocation to the Pale Flame that will save the others and likely inspire some religious conversions as people hear the story.

As the PHCs near the Fallowfield farm and return to Celine, the distant ringing of alarm bells from Wakare will fade. Whatever the worry was, it has been dealt with.

During the reunion (happy or sad) with Celine, Guard Buldric and Guard-Sergeant Hafting will arrive. They look worn but alert, and each has various minor injuries and blue-black ichor splattered on their chain haubers.

If asked, they explain the town was attacked by eight (8) Water-Eaters. There are multiple injured, and Guard Spaldre was killed while protecting the smashed front door of the Waterway Inn. They will assist in escorting the PHCs, Celine, and Jonatan into town to see Life-Maker Steddyand; they will ask Asavellana to assist Steddyand, as he is overwhelmed.

## Apathetic NHCs

Celine Fallowfield (17 yrs old, she/her)						NHC Notes
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If she was attended, she is asleep under the overturned wagon and will call for her father upon waking.
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)				If she was not given any medical attention, she will have died from her wounds.
Willpower	45	Altruistic	14	6	Egoistic	
Endurance	45	Confident	14	6	Humble	
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits	

# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Questions Arise

The PHCs may be curious to the nature of the attack, as are Alderman Lazul and Sergeant-Guard Hafting. Abelard, Heydar, and Isabet can determine with a Folklore Check (Difficult for others) that the Water-Eaters are:

- ♥ **Not native to Vardaren lands.** They are coastal by nature, and more a sea-sailor's nightmare than anyone inland. Why are they here?
- ♥ **The smell was wrong.** Water-Eaters are creatures of corrupted Water and Darkness, and as ambush creatures normally smell of strong seawater. Why did these Water-Eaters smelled of rotting plant matter and brackish marsh?
- ♥ **They acted strange.** Water-Eaters are ambush creatures of the sea, not land. Why were some in an isolated paddy field? Why did they stalk onto land so readily?

Lazul and Hafting are interested in compiling information from the PHCs, as well as internal discussions.

However, much of this day will be spent rebuilding damaged property and administering medical treatment. There is a funeral pyre needed for Spaldre, the dead townsfolk at Fallowfield's Farm, and possibly for others (Jonatan or any PHC that died).

The players should be encouraged to pursue points of personal interest and light inquiry of the town attack if interested and relax from the day's chaos and terror at the local tavern (Fogwater Pub: 'Stocking Black Dragon Ale using the crystal waters of the Split-Tail itself! It may split the nations, but our ale brings friends together!').

Every character has a place to stay:

- ♥ Niklaus and Asavellana have a nice turf-roofed home in the city center, and Isabet has been staying in their spare room.
- ♥ Thaddeus has a modest home afforded his position as foreign emissary on the north side of Wakare (chosen by Alderman Lazul so he can at least finish breakfast before Thaddeus arrives to discuss politics).
- ♥ Heydar has a long-stay reservation at the Waterway Inn on the first floor, close to the stable. He likes to chat with his zebra, Sparkle, rather than other people to clear his mind when marking his notes as a scholar.
- ♥ Abelard has a standing reservation at the Waterway Inn, on the upper floor in what can be described as a "Pretend Penthouse." Effectively a small apartment, it is held for the representative of the Valgard Watch per a contract made over a century ago.

These all provide a Safe Night's Rest (the inn's door is repaired by bedtime) for the characters. They may remove a combined number of Daze and Fatigue equal to their Recovery Rate as they rest through the night.

On the following day, Alderman Lazul and Sergeant-Guard Hafting will want to meet with them in the early afternoon (as they finish up pressing security matters). Until then, the characters can ask around about yesterday's events.

## Distant Hooks

*It is okay if the party is unconcerned with delving deeper into the situation; they are, after all, not the people in charge of solving it!*

*However, as TTRPG players can often be quite curious folk much like the characters they play, it is likely someone will have a thought to poke around about something.*

*As the characters will have at least a half day left to their own whims (recovery on the day of the attack, plus most of the following morning), be sure to ask them 'What is <Character> probably going to do for the <afternoon>/<morning> while the other townsfolk and guards are calming down from the recent excitement?'*

*Some may want to check in on Jonatan/Celine, who are doing well enough (though obviously grieving if one of them died).*

*Asavellana may be requested to assist Life-Maker Steddyand with those that are injured. Niklaus may want to check in on local friends or neighbors. Thaddeus may perform a service and assist with the funeral pyres of the dead (No one is buried, everyone is cremated in the Free Lands).*

*Abelard might help move bodies or do some physical labor, or just go grab a drink. Isabet may likely grab a drink and start telling the grand story of how they saved (or heroically tried!) Jonatan Fallowfield and his daughter Celine. Heydar may start compiling notes about the Water-Eater attack.*

*These are all simple offers of activity if the character's players are unsure of what they might want to do with the time. Remind them that they are not professional adventurers, just Unexpected Heroes in their own small way. They don't need to solve every problem, just the ones they are drawn into.*

## Apathetic NHCs

Alderman Benedict Lazul (47 yrs old, he/him)						NHC Notes
Daze	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>					Has been Alderman of Wakare for about 15 years. Considered a well-intended, if a bit nervous, man.
Wound	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>					
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)				Never married, beyond his work as a Miner-Caste clay-worker.  Treat him as always a little tired, but with a jumpy demeanor or eyes that keep darting around for threats.
Brawn	55	Cautious	14	6	Bold	
Statecraft	55	Altruistic	14	6	Egoistic	
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits	
Thaddeus approaching is considered an “administrative threat” to Lazul, although Thaddeus considers him a “future convert” to his Vardaren flock (of currently no one).						

Guard-Sergeant Lula Hafting (29 yrs old, she/her)						NHC Notes
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lula comes from a well-respected Militant-Caste family, and has grown to be her grandparents' grand-daughter.	
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)				She knows how to prioritize, keep people safe, and sits in her position with a casual certainty.  She is working on a way to give Guard Spaldre proper honors for giving their life to defend the town and slightly distracted.
Command	55	Steadfast	14	6	Adaptable	
Athletics	55	Confident	14	6	Humble	
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits	
Has definite concerns about road travel to and from Wakare without a proper escort, but is also conflicted with ensuring the Guard are available to keep protecting Wakare in the meantime.						

# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Why Us?

*This is a reasonable question for the party to ask:*

*'Why are we being sent to Hirno to deliver the report and request for assistance?'*

*Answer:*

*Niklaus is a Monetarist-Caravanner Caste member. With the Fallow (winter) falling behind, he will naturally be expected to prepare to start running trade routes. So, he is an easy choice to deliver the report to the Anderman Grayson in Hirno along the way.*

*Asavellana normally travels with Niklaus on his route, hunting and selling boar-skins and other small finds along the way. The injuries were sufficiently mild that Steddyand can keep calm care of them.*

*Heydar is a Scholar, right? Well, having someone with good literacy and knowledge will help clarify any questions in Hirno!*

*Abelard needs to wait for the wider routes to thaw anyway, and he is a capable soldier to provide extra security.*

*Isabet is believed by most in town to be a Moko soldier (she is not), so added security. But really, she has no free lodging with Niklaus/Asavellana out of town, so might as well go along if it gets the ferries open faster.*

*Thaddeus has a wonderful opportunity to extend the reach of Parani influence... or something. Lazul will offer any pandering to get him out of town for a bit.*

*'Why not send some Guards?'*

*Answer:*

*The town was recently attacked by dangerous creatures, resulting in the death of a few townsfolk and one of the Guard. Hafting is running the Guard on hard shifts and long patrols around town to make sure the town is truly safe.*

*She would send at least one Guard to escort in other times, but the best she feels comfort in offering advice to stay clear of the Split-Tail River if possible, and keep a strong sentry on the road.*

## Odd Answers

There are a few points and areas of inquiry the PHCs may seek. Some examples are:

- ♥ **Carousing.** Carouse is the skill of sociability and spreading good cheer. It is also the ability to collect interesting rumors, gossip, and information in the process.
    - The Fogwater Pub currently has a few travelers that arrived in the evening. A successful Carouse will reveal:
      - A married couple was trekking back to Wakare from the northeast to catch the ferry to Croswin, Valenia. They camped in a small wood just east of Hirno, but had to flee due to a late-night infestation of Creakers.
      - They thought it was odd, since Creakers normally grow in the thick forests of the Nystearn Marches to the west.
      - Some of the little creatures ran right through the campfire! They didn't even seem to react to fire!
  - ♥ **Robeart Harback.** The laborer that pulled alarm duty yesterday is the only person to see the Water-Eaters as they came out of the Split-Tail and attacked the town. He's pretty open to talking, although acquaintances (Thaddeus, Heydar, and Isabet) need a Sincerity check to put him at ease:
    - He counted about seven of the 'boggy devils' come out on the western river-edge.
    - It was odd, though. They moved in two rows of three, like a formation, with one off to the side like when Sergeant Hafting runs drills.
    - They then split into two groups and went north/south to search the town or something.
  - ♥ **Other Caravanners/Merchants.** A merchant-caste caravanner has pulled into town from a jump-start on trade from Rujair, the clay quarry town to the east. A Bargain (or Difficult Carouse) check can get them talking while they market their wares:
    - A night sentry noticed what looked like a figure dancing in the moonlight atop a boulder a few hundred paces away about two nights ago.
    - The merchant figures it was a Horizon-Dancer, and broke camp to put some distance from the creature.
    - They normally form from windstorms on the Blade-glass Plain to the south across the river, so now that they think about it... yeah it is odd to see one around here. (Heydar, a Carvo of the Plain himself, can determine this automatically given the other information)
- As the characters finish their morning, they meet with Alderman Lazul and Sergeant-Guard Hafting to clarify what happened at the Fallowfield Farm. Lazul will ask Niklaus to be escorted to Hirno to deliver Lazul's report to the Mystics.

## Apathetic NHCs

Robeart Harback (57 yrs old, he/him)						NHC Notes	
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				Likely already a few ales deep by the time a PHC would encounter him, this old coot has a bad leg but sharp eyes.  He talks a bit slow, carefully choosing his words (or trying to remember the rest of the sentence) as he goes.
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)					
Spot	55	Deliberate	14	6	Impulsive		
Carouse	55	Humble	14	6	Confident		
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits		
The whole thing was a big bucket of excitement for Robeart! Although seeing scary creatures like that have given nightmares to scare his grandkids at bedtime with!							



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Heading to Hirno

Hirno is the local capital of southwestern Vardare. It is a large farming city about seven (7) travel days by foot to the north along the main road.

There are realistically only two general routes to reach Hirno from Wakare:

- ♥ **Stick to the Road.** The main road wends northward following the Split-Tail River toward its source in the Dragonhold Mountains for about four (4) days before turning eastward between low marshy hills and reaching Hirno from the west. Taking the road the whole time is about eight (8) Standard Travel days.
- ♥ **As the crow flies.** It is possible to cut a direct north-eastern past and reach Hirno from the south by cutting through the open bogs and marshland of Vardare. The land will be especially muddy and wet, but there will likely be some crumbling ruins or occasional boulder fields to make a somewhat dry camp. Cutting cross-country prevents the use of carts or wagons, is marshy swampland, but should be about six (6) Standard Travel days in the best case.
  - Non-road travel often ends up a few days longer than the Standard Travel day estimation.
- ♥ **A bit of both.** The party may decide to cut cross-country for the first part to avoid being near the Split-Tail River given recent events. They can swing up to the eastward road after four (4) days in open marshlands, and catch three (3) days on the road into Hirno.

**Getting Gear.** It is early Planting Season (first week of Spring) so the nights and days are still often cold and wet, especially in Vardare.

- ♥ Isabet and Asavellana may be interested in getting some non-Light Clothing to better insulate on the road.
- ♥ Some characters may be interested in a cloak in case of high winds or rain.
- ♥ Thaddeus has a penalty to travel fatigue (due to small size), but can ride Sparkle, Heydar's zebra, to eliminate this if so desired. Otherwise, he will gain extra Fatigue when arriving in Hirno.
- ♥ Finer details such as Travel Food are ignored for this Quick-song. A future Quick-song will showcase the deeper logistics of Travel and Expeditions.

## On The Road

*In Eiras, the default world setting of The Ballad of Heroes, the Human population is small and spread thin across a continent roughly the size of Asia on Earth.*

*This results in most towns being multiple days walk from each other, at a minimum. While most roads are generally safe to travel, most folk tend to stay in their home town and do not travel casually.*

*Most travelers are merchants, couriers, scholars, and the various wayfarers such as herders. It is uncommon for a person from one town to travel to another without a serious cause or need.*

### What about Random Encounters?

*As combat is dangerous in the Ballad of Heroes, the use of Random Combat Encounters are limited to Expeditions. There is no Expedition gameplay in this Quick-song, so midnight ambushes, highwaymen, creature encounters, etc. are instead abstracted into Notable Travel Events.*

*Travel Events are noted with the rest of general Travel on the following pages, and are opportunities for affected players to describe occurrences while on the road and why it was noteworthy.*

# How to Play: Travel

Travel occurs when the party is heading toward a known location in a mapped region; often, this will be a town or place of interest in the Free Lands. The party will have a map or personal knowledge, such as being raised in the region, to guide them.

The travel rules, then, apply when the party will not risk becoming lost and they know how to reach their destination. The purpose of Travel is to provide a small procedure to give a sense of journey and time, and the natural weariness that arises with spending multiple days on the road.

Travel is a simplification of an Expedition. Expeditions are not included in this Quick Song.

## Hitting the Road

Travel occurs in three (3) phases: Get Ready, Get There, and Get Tired. The general procedure is listed below.

### ♥ Get Ready

- Set the Route and Pace
- Prepare Supplies
- Set Travel Roles

### ♥ Get There

- Navigator Roll
  - Check the Weather
- Travel Event
  - Determine Role Affected
  - Determine and Resolve Role Event

### ♥ Get Tired

- Adjust Fatigue

### Setting Out

*Niklaus the Caravanner takes the Lead as the party begins to travel to the next town at a Standard Pace. According to the Ballad Singer, it'll be about 7 Travel Days by foot along the road.*

*As they set out, Niklaus makes a Difficult Navigate Check (51→26 Navigate Skill) due to the muddy springtime roads. Rolling a 73, he scores 0 Successes meaning it will be (2+0) = 2 Travel Days until the first event occurs.*

*The '3' from his roll is reduced by (-2) due to the time of year (early spring) and location (marshlands), for a '1' to set the initial Weather. Checking the Travel Weather Table, the BS-er informs the party that as they set out they are beset by Heavy Snowfall. Everyone must make a Heroic Endurance Check (modified by bonuses/penalties relating to Cold weather) or they will mark an additional +2 Fatigue on the next Travel Event.*

*Hopefully everyone has a nice cloak and warm clothes!*

## Get Ready

**Set the Route.** The party decides the Route they will take, in discussion with the Ballad-Singer. This can be as simple as the BS-er estimating how many days to go down the road to the next town to as complex as mapping out each day's travel path on a map using hexes, grids, or even a ruler.

- ♥ The BS-er will state how many Standard Travel Days the chosen route will take. This is "as the crow flies" travel days, and may shift depending on terrain and mounts.

**Set the Pace.** Unless otherwise stated, the party will travel at a Standard Pace (8 leagues/day).

- ♥ **Easy Pace.** The party may also choose to travel at half speed (4 leagues/day).

- Increase the Standard Travel Days by ½
- Reduce the Navigation Check by 1 Challenge (Normal→Easy, etc.)
- (-1) Fatigue gained from Travel Events

**Prepare Supplies.** Make any important purchases before heading out, if able. Purchase mounts, saddles, cloaks, restock arrows and bolts, etc. that may be useful on the road ahead, or at the destination.

**Set Travel Roles.** There are four (4) Travel Roles that must be filled: Lead, Scout, Sentry, and Quartermaster. Each Role must be filled, but not all party members must take a Role. Only one character may be the Travel Lead.

- ♥ **Lead.** Determines rate of Travel Events and Weather.
  - Uses either Navigate or Difficult Folklore Checks.
- ♥ **Scout.** Looks for hazards and hunts during the day.
  - Uses either Hunt or Difficult Spot Checks.
- ♥ **Sentry.** Patrols the camp at night and forages.
  - Uses Forage or Difficult Listen Checks.
- ♥ **Quartermaster.** Manages camp, animals, and supplies.
  - Uses Fieldcraft or Difficult Carouse Checks.

# How to Play: Travel

## Get There

**Navigate Check.** At the start of a period of Travel, or after resolving a Travel Event, the Lead makes a Navigate Check (or Difficult Folklore). If not traveling on a road since the last Event (or since heading out), increase the Challenge by 1 (Normal→Difficult→Heroic, etc)

♥ The next Travel Event occurs after (2 + Successes) Standard Travel Days.

♥ **Check the Weather.** Every time the Lead makes a Navigate (Folklore) Check, the ones-place from the 1D100 roll is read to determine the weather as follows:

→ **Initial Set-out.** Refer to the Result→Weather columns on the Weather Table (see Adventure)

→ **After Event.** Refer to Result→Modifier columns of the Weather Table (see Adventure). Shift the last Weather result up (+) or down (-) based on the Modifier.

**Travel Event.** If the number of travel days until the next event is less than the remaining days, there will be a brief event to resolve. This is an abstract representation of notable occurrences on the road; other days are assumed to pass without significant incident.

D6	Event Role
1-2	Quartermaster
3-4	Sentry
5-6	Scout

♥ **Determine Role.** The BS-er rolls a 1D6 to find which Role has a notable event.

♥ **Determine Event.** The BS-er rolls a 1D6 to find what the notable event was. The Role will make their check, the party will note their accumulated Fatigue, and additional effects will resolve per the Event Outcome.

### Tracking Travel Fatigue and Weather

The Travel Events and Weather Tables are set close to the page edge so you can mark them using a paperclip!

If you are using this electronically, use the boxes to mark the current Weather and tally box for Events!

### Abstracting Events

Travel Events are only described as a Type (e.g. Risky Gambit), as they can be resolved by any Role and during any type of Travel.

Any player, most often the Ballad-Singer or affected Role, can give a flavor description of the Event and its Outcome; it is encouraged! Example below:

'Asavellana was Scouting ahead and encountered a wild boar grazing near the road. She tried to clear the road and get some free meat with her crossbow in a Risky Gambit; she only angered the boar and got attacked while reloading. It took time to patch her up, building some Fatigue and giving her 1 Daze.'

## Get Tired

**Adjust Fatigue.** Once the party reaches their destination, the fatigue of traveling sets in their body.

♥ Start with the Fatigue gained by all party members from Travel Events.

♥ Add (+1) Fatigue for every seven (7) days of Travel.

→ Add 1 Day for every 2 traveled off-road.

♥ This is the total travel Fatigue gained by each character. Each character then adjusts this value, personally, based on the following:

→ **Smooth Ride.** If the character rode a mount or vehicle, they reduce the Fatigue they take by the mount or vehicle's Quality.

→ **Grin and Bear.** Each character may then make an Endurance Check, and reduce the Fatigue they will take by (-1 Fatigue)/Success.

Travel Weather Table

Result	Modifier	Weather
≥ 9	+2	<b>Hot.</b> Unreasonably sweltering. Difficult Endurance or +1 Fatigue/Event gained.
8	+1	Buffeted by constant heavy winds. Willpower Check or Event is +1 Challenge.
5 - 7	+0	Weather is mild and decent for traveling.
4	+0	<b>Cold.</b> The wind howls and cuts deep. Willpower Check or Event is +1 Challenge.
2 - 3	-1	<b>Cold.</b> Heavy rainstorms. Difficult Endurance or +1 Fatigue from next Event.
0 - 1	-1	<b>Cold.</b> Heavy snowfall. Heroic Endurance or +2 Fatigue from next Event.
< 0	-2	<b>Cold.</b> Blizzard and strong winds. Heroic Endurance or Event is +1 Challenge and gives +1 Fatigue.

Travel Event Table

D6	Event Type	Outcome	Fatigue
≤ 1	Terrible Danger	Role takes 1 Wound on any Fail.	3
2	Heavy Weariness	Role makes Heart Check or loses 1 Heart.	2
3	Risky Gambit	Party takes 1 Daze on any Fail.	2
4	Possible Opportunity	+1 Travel Days and Fatigue on any Fail.	2
5	Potential Shortcut	-1 Actual Travel Days per Success.	1
≥ 6	Momentary Respite	Party gains +1 Heart/Success (up to max).	0



# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## A Discussion of Travel

*The Ballad of Heroes takes general Travel (used here) as a way to mark the passage of time while also providing a sense of distance. Player-Heroes are intended to arrive in town, gain some Fatigue, and mostly have a sense of "I want a soft bed and a warm meal."*

*There are no hard deadlines in this Quick-song, so the PHCs are free to move at their own pace. Travel gives PHCs an opportunity to evaluate Time vs. Fatigue, especially in cases of trying to warn someone of impending danger before it arrives!*

*Most general towns and Travel periods come out to at least one week (7 days), which allows characters to Advance skills during their inn rest upon arrival.*

*Skill Advancement is not performed in these Quick-songs, so the Travel in these cases is a simple showcase of common game mechanics.*

*General Travel (from town to town, as here) is also an opportunity for Player-Heroes to engage in some light role-play, discuss and plan who will deliver the report and who will go Carousing instead, etc.*

## Murder is Illegal

*Remind, if necessary, that harming or killing other people is illegal. Doing such a thing will definitively result in the offender being arrested by the local Smith-Guard if found, and possibly killed if they attack the guards. This is a game of Unexpected Heroes, not Villainous Vagabonds.*

## Apathetic NHCs

Magistrate Paul Hystora (32 yrs old, he/him)						NHC Notes	
Daze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A mild-mannered but very pedantic member of the Magi-caste (administrators, historians, etc). He means no ill will to PHCs, but also has no legitimate reason to bow to their wishes or wants if they conflict with well-structured order and process.	
Wound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Skills		Personality Traits (default at 10)					
Literacy	65	Deliberate	14	6	Impulsive		Will immediately use the Shout Spell (Skill: 70) to call guards if attacked or threatened with violence. He has no time for riff-raff.
Willpower	50	Confident	14	6	Humble		
Others	25	Other	10	10	Traits		
Easy Play Approach: Consider the most frustrating administrative experience of your life, and do your best to remove any active malice as you channel that memory.							

## Welcome to Hirno!

It will be late afternoon when the party enters the small city of Hirno. This is the local capital and more a large farming town than a metropolis. The main thoroughfare shapes along an upside-down capital letter 'T' of wide stone-packed wagon road; the major Maker (tradesman) and Monetarist (merchant) businesses line the streets.

It is built within what was once an expansive pasture; the low walls made of stacked and knapped stone marking ancient grazing lands now covered in simple buildings and roadways. At the main intersection is a small temple shrine, built atop the aged foundation of a shieling (shee-lung: rough shelters used by cattle tenders at distant pastures). The local inn is across the street and made from a converted stable-barn ("The Sleepin' Sheep: A great place to *Sheep In!*" is painted on a sign under a wood-etching of a sheep bundled in thick wool blankets). Rice and taro paddies extend a wide swath around Hirno, as well as large herds of managed sheep farms.

**Getting to Business.** The party may want to immediately head to deliver the incident report from Wakare, but it is late in the day and they will need to schedule a meeting with the local Magi representative. The party should endeavor to take a rest and shake off the road, first.

Their report is being delivered to Mystic-Oracle Aoife Grayson, who is the acting Anderman of the Hirno-Sayr (Governor of the local Vardaren state).

Unfortunately, their primary Administrator is Magi-strata Paul Hystura, a Confident (14) and Deliberate (14) man that takes the concept of proper paperwork a little too seriously. He does not question the legitimacy of the report, or the need to deliver. No, he is more concerned with proper paperwork completion (Difficult Literacy, or Normal Statecraft) and will then explain it will be resolved in order of arrival. By his estimation, the request and report of Wakare will be presented to Anderman Grayson by mid-Harvest (Autumn, or roughly 8 months).

**Fine, whatever.** The party is quite free to leave it at that; they were asked to deliver a report and request on behalf of their friends and neighbors (excluding Isabet, possibly) and have done just that. This Quick-song will conclude with them making an additional Travel back to Wakare (see prior Travel for marking the way back), and Alderman Lazul and Sergeant Hafting grumbling about Magi-caste members and their paperwork.

**No, people died. Screw your paperwork!** If the party is not content to let the wheels of bureaucracy slowly spin to fruition, they can attempt to push the issue. This may be as simple as getting the report to the top of the pile (and seen within a day) or even to convince Magistrate Hystura to take them to Anderman Grayson immediately. In either case, this is a Social Interaction (an attempt to sway an NHC for a significant purpose) as outlined on the next page. Hystura will be either Apathetic if a Small Ask (put on top of pile) or Dismissive if a Large Ask (take us to Grayson).

# How to Play: Interactions

There are times when Player-Heroes attempt to sway a significant Non-Hero Character (NHC). This is referred to as a Formal Interaction, and allows **shifting or swaying** a character's (or multiple characters') bearing rather than the simpler binary social case of Yes/No.

Interactions are a simplification of a Formal Audience. Formal Audiences do not appear in this Quick Song.

## Resolving Formal Interactions

**Set the Stage.** Before making any statements, checks, or other major efforts, the stage must be set properly.

### ♥ The Player-Heroes will

→ State which of them are 'there,' if it is unclear. This may be as simple as "I'll go talk to the merchant while everyone else checks into the local inn."

◦ PHCs not present cannot contribute, but also prevent bringing 'too many cooks.'

### ♥ The Ballad-Singer will

→ Determine the initial Bearing (see right) based on a reasonable guess of the NHC's mood and feelings. This may be due to their position, recent events, and positive or negative affect toward the approaching Player-Heroes.

◦ NHC's are typically Apathetic to the Player-Heroes on approach, unless they have a shared history or other reason to vary.

◦ If the PHCs outnumber the NHCs by more than 1, the NHCs will assume a defensive stance and reduce their Bearing by 1 in response.

→ Determine the initial Concern based on the general attitude and circumstances of the Interaction.

◦ NHC's typically have a Low Concern (1) about most topics, unless they are made suspicious or being asked to do something against their character or duty.

◦ If the PHCs outnumber the NHCs by more than 1, increase their Concern by 1.

**Play the Part.** Once established, each involved Player-Hero chooses a Personality Trait and Skill to form their efforts around. They must explain, however they find most comfortable, the manner in which both apply in their effort to sway the NHC(s).

♥ Count the total number of Successes scored by the Player-Heroes, and subtract the total Concern.

**Resolve Response.** Adjust the NHC's overall Bearing based on the final result (for better or worse). See right for general guidance. Negative results reduce Bearing at 1:1 rate.

## Formal Interaction: NHC Bearing

### ♥ Agreeable

→ Checks are Easy. Need 1 net Success to keep Bearing.

### ♥ Considerate

→ Checks are Normal. Need 1 Success/Participant to shift Bearing.

### ♥ Apathetic

→ Checks are Difficult. Need 2 Success/Participant to shift Bearing.

### ♥ Dismissive

→ Checks are Heroic. Need 3 Success/Participant to shift Bearing

### ♥ Hostile

→ Checks are Impossible. Participants are rebuked.

## Formal Interaction: Resolution

### ♥ Agreeable

→ The NHC is fully willing to assist as much as able.

### ♥ Considerate

→ The NHC will offer minor assistance, or require a small favor otherwise.

### ♥ Apathetic

→ The NHC is unmoved to assist without equitable compensation or favors.

### ♥ Dismissive

→ The NHC is nonplussed and unwilling to provide assistance unless compelled from their authorities.

### ♥ Hostile

→ The NHC is actively aggravated against the Participants. They will take hostile action, such as calling the local guard and authorities, calling for security to remove them from the premises, or even attacking if the context is appropriate and they believe it possible to win.

# Adventure: Wakare Water Woes

## Further Adventures

*If you enjoyed the gameplay and want to keep playing, that's the best compliment we can receive!*

*You have some basic NHC blocks to use or hack as your heart's content, as well as basic Travel and Interaction rules to give a full sense of different types of adventure. Magic Items and Money are not really a progression tool or reward as default in The Ballad of Heroes, but your playgroup are free to expand on this little introduction however you find most enjoyable!*

*Each year a character spends in downtime just working at home increases their Wealth by 1, up to a maximum of 10.*

## Character Progression

*So what is character progression? In full play (and not a quick little ditty like this Quick Song), characters will check-mark each Skill and Trait they roll any success with. It must be a rolled success, so using Tenacity does not count!*

*Then, once each in-game week (typically the time to walk from one town to another, for convenience) they can check for advancement of each checked Skill or Trait. This requires them to spend the day resting, which also naturally aligns with recovering from travel fatigue.*

*For each Skill, the player rolls a 1D100. If they roll above their current Skill level (or roll '00'), they increase it by 1D6+3. If they roll equal or under their Skill, they increase it by +1 until it hits 100.*

*For Traits, the player rolls a 2D10 and treats it the same way as improving a Skill above, with two exceptions. A Trait cannot be raised above 20, and if a Trait increases, then it's Pair (e.g. Confident↔Humble) must decrease.*

*That is gist of Character Progression (no classes, no levels).*

## Other Items and Notes

*If you want Horses/Mounts, use the base information for Heydar's Zebra, Sparkle. Assume a Horse has a Value of 4, and a riding saddle has a Value of 1.*

*Restocking Crossbow Bolts is Value of 1, and restocking any Kit (Healer's, Alchemy, etc.) is Value of 2.*

## A Simple End

**If Magistrate Hystura is moved to at least Considerate**, he will be willing to put the Wakare report on the top of the pile. Each PHC that was involved in the Interaction will need to make a Wealth Check 'for expedited administrative fees.' It will be reviewed by the Anderman within the next week.

They will send a reinforcement of six (6) Smith-Guardsmen along with an apprentice Life-Maker. They arrive with a wagon carrying some basic supplies to help ease the stresses on Wakare.

If the party is still in Hirno after a week, they can freely travel under the additional security.

**If Magistrate Hystura is moved to Agreeable**, he will be flustered and exasperated but take them to Anderman Grayson directly. They can hand deliver the Wakare report, which gives the same results as Considerate above (although happening within a day instead of a week).

The PHCs are also able to bring up further information about the additional Creaker and Wind-Wisp activity in the area. This will raise additional concerns, and spur Anderman Grayson to write her own reports to take to the Blackstone Cliffs (not necessarily by the PHCs, as they are already far from home and have their own duties most likely).

**If Magistrate Hystura is unmoved or at most Apathetic**, he will rebuff the PHCs and dig into his bureaucratic formalism. The PHCs will be left to return to Wakare under their own means and security to inform Alderman Lazul and Sergeant Hafting of their technical, disappointing, success.

See (Fine, whatever) on the preceding pages.

**This concludes the introductory Quick-Song Wakare Water Woes, a simple first look at some gameplay elements of The Ballad of Heroes TTRPG.**

**We wholeheartedly thank you for taking a look, playing this far, and look forward to your thoughts (tag us on BlueSky @armen-legg-games.bsky.social with all your love, hate, or indifference!)**

**The following pages are the Pre-Generated Characters.**

**Some, such as Thaddeus Ombrefeu, have access to unique magic systems. Simplified rules and mechanics for these are detailed on the specific character sheet.**

## And Remember:

*Being a Hero is hard, and often we are thrust into such situations against our will and/or comfort;*

*Most of us will falter, will freeze, or will turn and hope someone else deals with a rising point of darkness;*

*When times become more interesting than you would prefer, and wish for it all to go away;*

*Turn back to acknowledge the face of it;*

*Take an action regardless of size or measure;*

*Perhaps one day it will be part of the Ballad of Heroes.*



# Appendix A: Common Skills

## Physical Skills

**Athletics.** Body coordination and control. Used for jumping, climbing, grappling, and avoiding being tripped.

- ♥ Opposes Trip effects
- ♥ reduces Fall Damage by 1D6/Success

**Drive.** Ability to manage and control land-based wagons and carts in extraordinary circumstances.

**Ride.** Ability to manage and control a mount in extraordinary circumstances.

## Mental Skills

**First Aid.** Emergency trauma care.

- ♥ **Daze Recovery.** Restore 1 Daze per Success to the target. May not be attempted to the target again unless they take new damage (at least 1 Daze).
- ♥ **Get 'em up!** Remove the Down condition from a target for 1 Success, but give them 1 Fatigue in exchange.

**Folklore.** Recall local history, gossip, rumors, superstitions, and customs.

- ♥ Gain 1 true piece of information and 1 false piece of information.
- ♥ Successes provide more true information with greater specificity, per success.

**Literacy.** Ability to read and write, and understand complex texts and contracts.

**Hide.** Ability and awareness to effectively use shadow, obstruction, and line-of-sight to avoid visual notice.

- ♥ Opposes Spot, or Sense (smell) in pure darkness.

## Perception Skills

**Lightfoot.** Ability and awareness of one's own motions and local materials to avoid audible notice.

- ♥ Opposes Listen, or Sense (vibration) in loud environments.

**Listen.** Awareness for hearing and comprehending specific sounds and voices.

**Sense.** Awareness and processing of sensory information other than sight or sound.

**Spot.** Awareness for sight and comprehending specific sights and motions.

## Social Skills

**Carouse.** Ability to have a good time, help others have a good time, and gather information at the same time.

**Coerce.** Ability to influence others through threat, either implicit or explicit.

**Convince.** Ability to influence others through argument, whether logical or circular.

**Sincerity.** Ability to influence others through trust, whether warranted or feigned.

## Resistance Skills

**Brawn.** Ability to perform feats of strength, or resist effects through such means.

- ♥ Used to prevent Knockdowns, and break free of restraints/grapples.

**Dodge.** Ability to place oneself wherever physical danger is not.

- ♥ Used when actively diving out of the way of an attack or effect, but leaves you Prone.

**Endurance.** Ability to weather physical effects when unable to avoid them.

- ♥ Reduces road-weariness and Exhaustion from Travel.

**Willpower.** Ability to weather mental effects when unable to avoid them.

- ♥ Taking any hit while Using/Sustaining Magic requires a Willpower Check or it fizzles.
- ♥ Each 1 Daze and Wound taken increases the Challenge of the Willpower Check by 1.

# Appendix A: Trained Skills

## General Trained Skills

**Appraise.** Establishing the worth of an item.

- ♥ When making a Purchase, reduce the total Value of your purchase by the number of Successes rolled for the purpose of determining whether or not you make a Wealth (Consumable) Check.

**Bargain.** The art of nuanced compromise, haggling, and negotiation.

- ♥ When making a Purchase, increase your effective Wealth by the number of Successes rolled. This affects total purchasing power, determining whether or not you make a Wealth (Consumable) Check, and the target for your Wealth (Consumable) Check.
- ♥ Can be used in an Audience to guarantee the party is not Forcibly Removed, but prevents Full Support in return.

**Chirurgy.** The knowledge and training to put a Human back together.

- ♥ Converts 1 Wound → 1 Daze per Success, and takes 1D6 Hours/Wound converted.
- ♥ May only be attempted once/day per target.

**Command.** The formal art of giving orders and public speaking.

**Courtesy.** Knowledge of the pedantic formalities of interacting with nobles and courts.

**Disguise.** Knowledge and training in the use of make-up and clothing to obscure one's identity.

**Locksmith.** Understanding and training in lock construction and defeat.

**Mechanisms.** Understanding and training in building, setting, and safely clearing traps and other contraptions.

**Sleight.** Practice and training in discreet hand-motions and maneuvering.

**Statecraft.** Ability to navigate the bureaucratic complexities of formal, administrative, or political structures.

**Streetwise.** Ability to navigate the micro-cultural complexities of local neighborhoods and city districts.

**Fieldcraft.** Ability to navigate the logistical complexities of wilderness life and establish safe expeditionary camps.

**Forage.** Knowledge and training to seek, find, and identify safe or useful plants for eating or ingredients.

**Hunt.** Knowledge and training to identify and follow tracks, as well as harvest animals for food and ingredients.

**Navigate.** Knowledge and training to read maps, use compasses, and orient using natural landmarks, stars, or sun position.

**Alchemy.** Knowledge and training to use Alchemy Kits to create decoctions, infusions, acids, and poisons.

**Gold-smithing.** A form of the Crafting Skill focused on fine metalwork and jewelry making. Useful for repairing Crossbows and Mail-type Armors made from metal.

## Mysticism Skills

**Arcanism.** The rare knowledge of the Fundamental Calculus which describes the fabric of reality, and how to reshape it around you. Allows the use and derivation of Arcane Forms.

**Invoke.** The ability to relax your essence and become a conduit for raw power from a primordial being to flow through you. Allows you to channel Invocations related to your Pact-Keeper's elemental structure.

## Weapon Skills

These skills represent knowledge and proficiency to use a category of weapon with a trained competence. Or, at least, to know where the pointy end is supposed to go.

- ♥ **Basic.** Fists, kicks, chair legs, and table knives. Uses your Brawl Damage instead of Weapon Damage, making them preferable to physically weaker characters.
- ♥ **Blades.** A small handle with a long cutting or stabbing blade. Provides 1 (2-handed) or 2 (1-handed) Deflects per Combat Round without spending an Action.
- ♥ **Hafted.** A large handle with a weighted striking head, such as an axe or mace. Scoring a Heroic Success on an Attack Action adds +1D6 (1-handed) or +2D6 (2-handed) additional damage.
- ♥ **Flail.** A linkage-based weapon, often with a weighted head and handle. Adds 1 free Disarm Effect on any instance of dealing damage to a target.
- ♥ **Spear.** A long handle ending in a piercing tip. Successful and Partial Deflects against a Charging attacker reflects their Charge damage back to them.
- ♥ **Bow.** Favored by hunters for quick projectile firing, relies on the user's strength to draw. Gains +1D6 per Range Band (15 Paces) closer to the target than the weapon's standard range. Unusable when Engaged in melee.
- ♥ **Crossbow.** Slower than Bows, but devastatingly powerful and does not rely on the user's strength. Crossbow projectiles are +1 Challenge more difficult to Dodge or Deflect (Normal → Difficult, Difficult → Heroic, etc). Unusable when Engaged in melee.

# Appendix B: Characteristics and Effects

**Daze.** This is how many physical-scrapes and ego-bruises you can ignore.

- ♥ **Dazed.** When this track fills, you are Dazed. Make a Willpower Check or go Down.
  - Each subsequent hit you take causes another Willpower Check. This is **Difficult** (1/2 Skill) if it would cause at least 1 Daze and **Heroic** (1/10 Skill) if it would cause at least 1 Wound.
- ♥ **Down.** If you fail a Daze-related Willpower Check, you fall Prone and are Down.
  - **Prone.** You are on your belly or back. Attacking, Dodging, Deflecting are +1 Challenge harder and your Wound Threshold and Move Rate are halved. Your Knockdown Threshold does not apply.
  - **Down.** You are incapacitated, either knocked out, writhing uselessly in pain, or otherwise unable to take Actions, speak coherently, or use consumables.
- ♥ **'Tis but a Scratch!** Can be recovered with a good, safe night's rest. Or multiple.

**Wounds.** This is the limit to severe, life-threatening injuries you can sustain before you die. If you have at least 1 Wound when your Daze track fills, you begin Dying. If you exceed your Wound track, you die.

- ♥ **Dying.** If your Daze Track is full and you have at least 1 Wound, you are at risk of bleeding out or otherwise dying.
  - Make an Endurance Check during the Environmental Response period of the Combat Round (or just every 10 seconds if not in combat), increasing the Challenge by 1 for each Wound.
    - On a Failure, gain 1 Wound.
- ♥ **Weakness.** Each Wound gives a constant minimum of 5 Fatigue in your Inventory and reduces Recovery Rate by 1.
- ♥ **Lingering Pain.** Only recovers from Chirurgy and rare magic.

**Wound Threshold.** This is your natural resilience to shrug off a hit to your body or mind. Taking this amount of damage marks 1 Wound, while any amount less is 1 Daze.

- ♥ Taking less Damage than your Threshold marks 1 Daze
- ♥ Taking Damage equal to your Threshold marks 1 Wound
- ♥ Taking Damage exceeding your Threshold marks 1 Wound and 1 Daze
- ♥ Sufficient Damage can mark multiple Wounds.

**Tenacity.** Your ability to grasp success from the jaws of defeat.

- ♥ Adds +1 Success to any rolled Check you make. You can spend Tenacity any time you roll dice on any Check.
- ♥ You can spend more than 1 Tenacity at a time.
- ♥ Regain 1 Tenacity at the beginning of each Game Session.

**Carry Capacity.** This is how strong and resilient your back is; it limits how much you can carry, and how much Fatigue you can build up before taking penalties to your Skills. Has two values: Capacity and Overload.

- ♥ Capacity is measured in Encumbrance Points (ENC) limit before you suffer a Skill penalty.
- ♥ Overload Capacity applies (-5 to All Skills) per ENC filled. ENC exceeding this becomes Daze, then Wounds.
- ♥ **Fatigue.** Takes up 1 ENC of Carry Capacity and is gained from various actions and effects.

→ Can be recovered with a good, safe night's rest.

**Damage.** How hard you hit things.

- ♥ Weapon is the raw damage dice (e.g. '3D6') dealt on a Normal Success with swords, axes, polearms, etc.
- ♥ Most characters punch/kick for 3 points of damage; exceptions are Asavellana, Heydar, and Thaddeus (all are physically weak from birth or age).

**Bonus Actions.** Some characters are exceptionally quick of body and mind, and gain an additional action during each round of combat.

- ♥ Most characters are not quick enough to have Bonus Actions, so they are a rare marvel to behold!

**Move Rate.** How far you can move in a single Move action in a combat round, and determines your speed during Chases.

- ♥ Listed as Steps (for Zone moving), and Paces (for Grid moving).

**Recovery Rate.** How much a good, safe night's rest does your body. You can remove a combination of Daze and Fatigue equal to this number.

- ♥ Most characters can recover any combination of 3 Daze or Fatigue per safe night's rest.

**Knockdown Threshold.** Your ability to keep your feet against a heavy strike.

- ♥ Taking a single instance of damage equal or greater than your Knockdown requires a Brawn Check to keep your feet, else fall Prone.



# Appendix C: Combat Zone Map

