

Zero Signal Fantasy

Core Concepts

- **Law vs. Chaos:** Cosmic forces shaping the world.
 - **Law:** Structure, memory, permanence.
 - **Chaos:** Change, freedom, transformation.
 - Characters can have ratings from 0–5 in each. Most begin unaligned.
 - **Resource Pools:**
 - **Vigor:** Body, passion, force.
 - **Instinct:** Gut, reflex, wildness.
 - **Reason:** Clarity, thought, will.
 - All characters start with **1 point in each** pool.
 - Each lifepath adds **+1 to one** of the pools.
-

Core Mechanic

- **Roll a pool of d6** equal to Ability.
 - **Each 4+ is a success:**
 - 1 = basic success
 - More = better results
 - 0 = failure or complication
 - **Edges:** Add +1 die per Edge.
 - **Contests:**
 - Both sides roll.
 - Highest number of successes wins.
 - Ties broken by highest single die; then stalemate.
 - **Losing a contest:** The loser may suffer a consequence appropriate to the stakes—loss of position, injury, setback, or narrative complication.
 - **Draw the Line:**
 - Each side declares a **goal** and a **risk**.
 - Winning by 2+ successes: achieve goal *and* impose risk.
 - Partial success: compromise or minor consequences.
 - 0 successes: your declared risk happens.
 - Losing a Draw the Line roll always has consequences—narrative, mechanical, or both. Stakes are binding once declared.
-

Character Creation

1. **Choose Species**
 - Each species has unique lifepaths and tendencies toward Law or Chaos.
2. **Choose Lifepaths**
 - **Born, Adolescent, and Early Career** — all species-specific.
 - Each grants:
 - +1 to relevant Abilities
 - +1 Pool dot
 - 1 starting Secret

3. Assign Abilities

- Start with 2 in one Ability, 1 two other Abilities.

4. Secrets & Keys

- Start with **3 Secrets** (1 from each lifepath).
- Choose up to **2 Keys** (beliefs that grant advancement).

5. Flesh Out

- Name, gear, appearance, ties, Law/Chaos rating (usually 0/0).
-

Lifepaths

Example lifepaths. Create your own.

Humans

Born: Crossroads Scion A child of no fixed destiny. Blessed by many paths, belonging to none.

- +1 Reason, Secret: *Fork in the Road*

Adolescent: Street Courier Fast legs, quicker mouth. Learned when to vanish and when to speak.

- +1 Instinct, Secret: *Loose Network*

Early Career: Border Captain Held the line where laws blur. Keeps peace with sword or word.

- +1 Vigor, Secret: *Hold Fast*

Elves / Fae

Born: Moon-Blooded Born under the waxing moon, with silvered skin and sharp perception.

- +1 Instinct, Secret: *Glimmerstep*

Adolescent: Hollow Court Page Served fickle lords, learned the arts of deceit and poise.

- +1 Reason, Secret: *Mask of Courtesy*

Early Career: Glamour Duelist Fought with words, blades, and illusions. All equally sharp.

- +1 Vigor, Secret: *Blade of the Self*

Dwarves

Born: Iron-Cradled Raised in stone halls with echoing songs and smelting fires.

- +1 Vigor, Secret: *Forge Bond*

Adolescent: Ledger-Keeper Numbers speak clearly. You made them sing.

- +1 Reason, Secret: *Balance Owed*

Early Career: Tunnel Ranger Mapped forgotten routes, faced darkness without flinching.

- +1 Instinct, Secret: *Torch Against the Deep*

Trolls

Born: Root-Eater Teeth made for stonefruit and bone. You chewed your way out of the cradle.

- +1 Vigor, Secret: *Gnash and Grin*

Adolescent: Mire Brawler Swamp-born, mud-blooded. You learned with fists first.

- +1 Instinct, Secret: *Slog and Swing*

Early Career: Bridge-Kin Trolls keep passage safe — for a price.

- +1 Reason, Secret: *None Cross Free*

Jotunn

Born: Ice-Touched Born with the storm still clinging to your breath.

- +1 Reason, Secret: *Still the Gale*

Adolescent: Cloud Herder You climbed like a goat and shouted down thunder.

- +1 Instinct, Secret: *Step Between Peaks*

Early Career: Glacier Sentinel You watched the deep freeze move — and held your ground.

- +1 Vigor, Secret: *Beneath the Ice, Stillness*
-

Secrets**Shared Secrets**

- **Whispers of Power** *Cost:* 1 point from Reason pool. *Description:* You have learned to listen to the hidden voices of the world, whether they come from the past, the spirits, or your own deepest thoughts. *Usage:* You may gain a hint or clue from a hidden source, either an oracle, a long-forgotten legend, or your own intuition. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Ghost of the Past** *Cost:* 1 point from Instinct pool. *Description:* You carry with you the weight of an old debt or past mistake. It haunts your every step but also drives you forward. *Usage:* You may gain advantage on a roll related to a past regret, whether it's confronting a ghost from your past or overcoming an old trauma. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Fleeting Fortune** *Cost:* 1 point from Vigor pool. *Description:* Luck is a fickle companion, but you know how to ride its wave when it appears. *Usage:* You may turn an unlikely event in your favor, whether it's finding a hidden treasure or getting a break in a dangerous situation. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
-

Humans

- **Fork in the Road** *Cost:* 1 point from Reason pool. *Description:* Blessed with many potential futures, you possess a unique ability to see and choose from different paths. *Usage:* You may gain insight into a difficult decision, gaining advantage on any roll related to that choice. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Loose Network** *Cost:* 1 point from Instinct pool. *Description:* You've learned how to move unseen and keep in contact with allies, even in the most dangerous environments. *Usage:* You may call upon a network of contacts to gain crucial information or resources. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Hold Fast** *Cost:* 1 point from Vigor pool. *Description:* You stand strong against the chaos of the world, unyielding in the face of adversity. *Usage:* You may choose to hold your ground, reducing any damage or negative effect for a short period. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
-

Elves / Fae

- **Glimmerstep** *Cost:* 1 point from Instinct pool. *Description:* Born under the waxing moon, you have an ethereal ability to move unnoticed. *Usage:* You may slip past unnoticed or make yourself invisible for a short period. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Mask of Courtesy** *Cost:* 1 point from Reason pool. *Description:* You know how to weave words and manners into a perfect mask, hiding your true intentions. *Usage:* You may avoid revealing your true thoughts or emotions in a conversation, gaining advantage on social rolls. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Blade of the Self** *Cost:* 1 point from Vigor pool. *Description:* Your skill with both words and weapons makes you a dangerous adversary in any conflict. *Usage:* You may perform a duel with a blend of rhetoric and steel, gaining advantage on a combat roll or a social conflict. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
-

Dwarves

- **Forge Bond** *Cost:* 1 point from Vigor pool. *Description:* Raised in the heart of stone, you share a deep bond with the earth and its strength. *Usage:* You may draw on the power of the earth, fortifying yourself against harm or giving you an edge in a crafting or forging task. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Balance Owed** *Cost:* 1 point from Reason pool. *Description:* You see the world through the lens of debts, both material and intangible. *Usage:* You may call upon a favor or debt owed to you, gaining a useful resource or piece of information. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Torch Against the Deep** *Cost:* 1 point from Instinct pool. *Description:* You've faced darkness deep below the earth, and you carry the light of your ancestors with you. *Usage:* You may use your knowledge of underground spaces to find hidden passages or avoid dangerous threats. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
-

Trolls

- **Gnash and Grin** *Cost:* 1 point from Vigor pool. *Description:* You have the strength to chew through stone and the attitude to laugh in the face of danger. *Usage:* You may gain temporary resistance to damage or pain for a short period, letting you shrug off harm. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **Slog and Swing** *Cost:* 1 point from Instinct pool. *Description:* Life in the swamp taught you to fight first, ask questions later. *Usage:* You may take a risky action to deal significant damage or disrupt an enemy's strategy with overwhelming force. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
 - **None Cross Free** *Cost:* 1 point from Reason pool. *Description:* You are the gatekeeper, and those who cross must pay the toll — or face the consequences. *Usage:* You may enforce a bargain or deal, forcing others to honor an agreement or suffer the consequences. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
-

Jotunn

- **Still the Gale** *Cost:* 1 point from Reason pool. *Description:* You are born with the touch of winter, a calming force in the chaos of the world's storms. *Usage:* You may calm a violent situation, turning it into a peaceful negotiation or resolving it without violence. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
- **Step Between Peaks** *Cost:* 1 point from Instinct pool. *Description:* You have the agility to move between the heights, feeling at home in the clouds. *Usage:* You may gain advantage on a climb or leap to an unreachable place, avoiding hazards or enemies. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.
- **Beneath the Ice, Stillness** *Cost:* 1 point from Vigor pool. *Description:* You can endure the cold and the quiet of the ice, remaining unmoving while others falter. *Usage:* You may remain unaffected by fear, cold, or distractions, allowing you to stay focused in perilous situations. This can be used as needed once the cost is paid.

Keys

- **Voice of the People:** You believe in speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves. When you use your voice to help others, you gain **Fate**.
- **Wanderer's Heart:** You are always drawn to new places and faces. When you venture into unknown territories, gain **Fate** for each piece of knowledge or experience gained.
- **Master of the Forge:** You are a true artisan, shaping the world with your hands. Gain **Fate** when you craft or repair something of great importance or power.
- **Moonlit Path:** The moon speaks to you in whispers. When you follow your intuition and sense the truth behind the shadows, you gain **Fate**.
- **Unyielding:** You stand firm, no matter what. Gain **Fate** when you hold fast in the face of overwhelming odds or when you resist an enemy's attempts to break you.
- **Teller of Tales:** Your stories shape the world. Gain **Fate** when you tell a story that influences someone's decision or inspires them to act.
- **Silent Blade:** Your skill with a blade is unmatched in silence. Gain **Fate** when you take down an enemy before they know you're there.
- **Keeper of Secrets:** You have knowledge that others would kill for. Gain **Fate** when you keep a secret or share it at a critical moment.

- **Bonds of Stone:** You form deep, lasting connections with those you care about. Gain **Fate** when you help a close companion or build a lasting bond with someone.
- **Eyes of the Storm:** You can see through chaos and confusion. Gain **Fate** when you can navigate or act with clarity in the midst of tumult or disorder.
- **Unseen Hand:** You operate from the shadows, making things happen without being seen. Gain **Fate** when you manipulate a situation or person without direct involvement.
- **Pillars of Stone:** Your presence anchors others. Gain **Fate** when you lead or support a group under pressure, stabilizing their resolve.
- **Nature's Way:** You trust the natural flow of life, believing that everything has its place. Gain **Fate** when you use nature or the environment to solve a problem or gain an advantage.
- **Watcher on the Edge:** You always know when things are about to shift. Gain **Fate** when you predict an important event or moment of change before it happens.

Advancement

- Gain **Fate** from triggering Keys.
 - Spend Fate to:
 - Improve Resource Pools
 - Learn new Secrets
 - Tempt Fate
 - Both success and failure mark progress.
 - To raise an Ability, you must accumulate both successes and failures equal to its current value. At least half of these must be failures, rounding up. These must come from meaningful situations where failure matters.
-

Downtime

Between missions or major events, characters take downtime to recover, reflect, and regroup. Downtime offers a structured way to heal, resupply, and pursue personal goals.

Core Downtime Rules

- After a session or story arc, each character gets **one Downtime action**.
- You may **refresh one Resource Pool** (Grit, Reflex, or Wit) by narrating how you tend to that part of yourself.
 - **Vigor:** Training, fighting, enduring hardship.
 - **Instinct:** Scouting, hunting, navigating danger.
 - **REason:** Research, scheming, solving problems.

Other Common Downtime Activities

- **Learn:** Spend 1 Fate to open a new skill.
- **Recover:** Heal long-term wounds or trauma.
- **Craft or Repair:** Build gear, reinforce defenses, fix tech.
- **Gather Intel:** Investigate a threat, uncover a secret.
- **Forge Bonds:** Strengthen a relationship with an NPC or PC.
- **Shift Focus:** Change one of your Keys or pursue a new goal.

Use downtime to reveal who your character is between the fights — what they value, what they fear, and what they're willing to do to survive.

Law, Chaos, and Balance

- **Cosmic Allegiance:** Each character may align with **Law**, **Chaos**, or **Balance**, tracked as a rating from **0 to 5** in **Law** and **Chaos**. Most characters begin at **0/0**.
- **Gain Points** by:
 - Taking action that clearly upholds a cosmic principle.
 - Fulfilling an oath or vow aligned with Law or Chaos.
 - Following a Key related to Law, Chaos, or Balance.
 - GM may award a point for especially meaningful acts.
- **Acting Against Your Alignment** may:
 - Temporarily suppress abilities tied to that force.
 - Cause inner conflict or loss of alignment (at GM discretion).
- **Balance** is not a separate score, but a path between forces. A character with 2 Law and 2 Chaos is *in balance*—but can be *torn* between ideals.

Effects of Alignment

- **Law-Aligned (3+ Law):**
 - Gain **+1 Edge** when acting to preserve order, tradition, or cosmic structure.
 - May call upon **ancestral memory, divine insight, or universal law** for guidance once per session.
- **Chaos-Aligned (3+ Chaos):**
 - Gain **+1 Edge** when acting to defy control, break limits, or spark change.
 - May **ignore one consequence** from a contest result once per session, as chance twists fate.
- **Balanced (Law = Chaos, both 2+):**
 - Gain **+1 Edge** when reconciling opposites or turning conflict into harmony.
 - Once per session, **treat a single die showing 3 as a 4 (success)** when acting in pursuit of balance.

Shifting Alignment

- Players may choose to shift Law or Chaos up or down by **1 during downtime** if their character has:
 - Undergone a crisis of belief,
 - Made a meaningful choice that redefines their role in the world, or
 - Pursued a Key aligned with the new direction.
- Alignment scores **cannot exceed 5 total points** between Law and Chaos. Raising one may require lowering the other.

Faction Framework: Law & Chaos

Factions in a fantasy world are cults, guilds, knightly orders, arcane cabals, or divine sects. They draw strength from alignment with cosmic forces — particularly the struggle between **Law** and **Chaos**. Use this framework to build mythic, goal-driven factions.

Faction Template

Name: **Symbols:** Heraldry, sigils, omens, colors **Belief:** What doctrine or mythic force do they serve? **Power Base:** Fortresses, temples, relics, lands, pacts **Leader/Face:** A pontiff, archmage, warlord, or seer **Alignment:** Law / Chaos / Balanced / Unknown **Agenda:** What immediate goal are they pursuing?

Faction Keys

Keys define a faction's story-driving motivations.

- **Key of the Spiral Eye** (*Chaos*) – When they sow uncertainty or undermine stability.
 - **Key of Binding Flame** (*Law*) – When they protect order or punish deviation.
 - **Key of the Cracked Mask** (*Chaos*) – When they expose lies or unleash repressed truths.
 - **Key of the Eternal Pattern** (*Law*) – When they preserve tradition or codify new laws.
-

Faction Secrets

These special abilities cost one resource point and affect the world or story significantly.

- **March of the Bound Legion** (*1 Might*) – Animate statues or ancestors to enforce divine order.
 - **Dream Blight** (*1 Lore*) – Induce chaos through prophetic nightmares or corrupt visions.
 - **Sealbreaker Rite** (*1 Lore*) – Shatter wards or unleash long-bound entities.
 - **Edict of Obedience** (*1 Influence*) – Compel a group or noble house to comply with divine law.
-

Faction Resource Pools

- **Might** – Armies, divine champions, monsters, or cursed legions.
- **Influence** – Political power, rituals, noble oaths, or fear.
- **Lore** – Forgotten truths, prophecies, arcane maps, divine will.

Factions spend from these pools to trigger Secrets or Threat Moves. Pools refresh after narrative victory or downtime.

Faction Clocks

- **Agenda Clock** – Tracks progress toward their immediate objective (6 segments).
- **Threat Clock** – Tracks hostility or attention toward the PCs (4 segments).

Faction actions can advance clocks, shift world events, or alter landscapes.

Example Faction: The Temple of Perfect Form

“All things flawed must be measured, sculpted, corrected.”

Symbols: Gold masks, geometric tattoos, runes of symmetry **Belief:** Reality is flawed — only perfect form honors the Architect **Power Base:** Hexagonal cathedral at a ley-line nexus **Leader:** Arch-Tetrarch Sevien, more construct than elf **Alignment:** Law **Agenda:** Reclaim the amphitheater of echoes from wild spirits

Keys

- **Key of Binding Flame** – When they burn heresy and disorder from the land
- **Key of the Eternal Pattern** – When they convert another group to the Great Pattern

Secrets

- **March of the Bound Legion** (*1 Might*) – Statues march in phalanx to suppress rebellion
- **Golden Edict** (*1 Influence*) – Enforce compliance in a noble court or settlement
- **Mirrorwork Insight** (*1 Lore*) – Reveal a key weakness in an opposing force

Resource Pools

- **Might:** 3
- **Influence:** 4
- **Lore:** 2

Clocks

- **Agenda:** Reclaim the amphitheater (6-segment)
- **Threat:** PCs viewed as ideological contaminants (4-segment)

Shape the world — or let it shape you.