

THE CITY REMEMBERS

PLAYER HANDOUT — YOUR WHOLE CHARACTER IS THIS PAGE

The city is a half-finished apology. The child is the sentence. You are the delivery.

Before anything else, know this: anyone can call “pause” at any time, for any reason, and the scene resets to a safe version or skips. The city never punishes a pause.

The city punishes *characters*. It never punishes *players*.

YOUR CHARACTER — FOUR ANSWERS AND A ROLE

No class, no levels, no stats. Answer in one or two sentences, out loud, before play:

1. YOUR ROLE — pick one. Each role has one *move* (a small, reliable power) and one *debt* (the city already knows about it — it was built from guilt).

THE SHIELD — carries a door that never opens. *Move: stand in the way* — once per scene, protect someone at your own cost.
Debt: you once let someone in who shouldn’t have been.

THE KNIFE — carries a wound that never heals. *Move: cut the knot* — once per scene, end a conflict by accepting a new one.
Debt: you once cut something that was trying to apologize to you.

THE LANTERN — carries a light that sees guilt. *Move: show the truth* — once per scene, make someone admit what they actually feel. *Debt: you once lied about what you saw.*

THE HOUND — carries a name that isn’t yours. *Move: follow the scent* — once per scene, find the thing everyone’s avoiding.
Debt: you once chased something innocent.

THE CANDLE (*optional fifth*) — carries a flame that remembers everything it has touched. *Move: burn bright* — once per scene, reveal a hidden truth, at the cost of being seen yourself. *Debt: you once let a light go out that someone else needed.*

- 1. What did you leave behind that you still carry?** This is your debt. The city already knows about it.
- 2. Who in the party have you already failed once, and what did you owe them?** This is your bond. When a scene involves that player, your move works *twice* per session instead of once.
- 3. What do you hope to find on the other side of the gate?** Say it plainly. The city is listening.

WHEN YOU ACT

When the outcome is uncertain, you roll your d20 **in the open**. The Keeper names a target before you roll: **8** easy, **12** risky, **16** hard, **18+** desperate. Beat it — high is good. On success you get what you wanted, clean or with a small cost. On failure you get a *complication* — never a dead end, never a “no.” The story only moves forward; failure decides which way.

The Rule of the City. Once per session, you may *owe the city a favor* to reroll anything. The city always collects, and it names the price the moment you owe it. A favor is a promise — and in this city, promises are currency. Write yours down.

Start the moment everyone has answered. That is the whole sheet.

THE CITY REMEMBERS

READ THE MODULE ONCE. THIS IS WHAT YOU GLANCE AT WHILE IT RUNS.

THE ENGINE

One d20, rolled open. Set the target by stakes: **8** easy, **12** risky, **16** hard, **18+** desperate. Say the number before the roll, always.

Success: what they wanted, clean or with a small cost. Failure: a *complication* — never a dead end, never a “no.” The story only moves forward; failure decides which way.

Open rolls: you never fudge for or against them. *The city cheats; you don't.*

Rule of the City: once per session per player, they may owe the city a favor to reroll anything. Name the collection the moment it's owed.

CALL FOR A ROLL WHEN...

The outcome is uncertain *and* a failure costs something real:

- A player reaches past what their role does automatically — lying under pressure, sprinting a chase, picking a fight.
- The city acts and they must react: doors apologizing shut, a Voice at their shoulder, the flood at their knees.
- They try to force the fiction: pry the scratched-out name from the court file, wade the Monument's tears, defend the child in court, read the Hush's cell door, speak the delivery.
- A debt comes due, or a player reaches for the Rule of the City.

DON'T ROLL WHEN...

- **The move covers it.** The Lantern doesn't roll to witness; the Shield doesn't roll to stand in the way; the Hound doesn't roll to have found the trail. Once per scene, the move just happens — that's what the role is *for*.
- **Failure has no teeth.** No stakes, no roll: say yes and move on.
- **You can't name a complication.** If failure can't move the story, the roll is a formality — skip it.
- **The choice is the game.** The first hard choice, the two open doors of the Hush, the different page in the Tomb: no test. Let them choose; let them read.

WHEN A SCENE CALLS FOR A TEST

Test numbers from the module, by beat: Clerk's confession **12** (or sign the ledger, **8**); chase the child **12**; the first case *no roll*; defend the child at trial **14**; scratched-out name **16**; wade the Monument flood **12**; read the cell door **14**; the delivery **14**, or **18** for the one that costs what they didn't expect.

The Tomb's different page has no test. Let them read it. This is the moment the city stops being a mystery.

THE SPINE

Three acts, three beats each. Targets climb: Act I **8–12**, Act II **12–16**, Act III **14–18**.

- **Act I — The Gate and the Grief.** Doors seal behind them. The Clerk needs a signature; the child crosses the square. The Courts offer the commission: find the relic, return her to the Tomb. She finds *them* that night and asks for help she can't name.
- **Act II — The Unraveling.** Quill files *Relic v. City*. The Monument weeps memory; the Hush holds the child for the crime of leaving. Betrayals are offered, all of them polite.
- **Act III — The Delivery.** The Empty Field, the empty box: “It's not in here. It's *me*.” The party chooses who the apology is for, and makes it true. The city answers. Doors unseal.

Stalling? The city wants something from them: a signature, a toast, a window that opens by itself. **Clock (optional):** the flood rises one ward per act.

THE ENDINGS — ONE GLANCE

Four true deliveries — to **the city** (it becomes real), to **the first failure** (the heaviest; the god could never give it), to **the god itself** (mercy becomes practice) — and the **refusal**: valid, and the city *thanks* them for it, which is the worst part.

Rewards, always: each debt cleared or deepened; one favor the city owes each player (it always pays); a keepsake. Sequel hooks: Section 10 of the module, or roll 1d6.

THE ONE RULE

The city is never the villain. It is a wound — and the players are the first hands that have touched it without wanting something from it. Play the sorrow straight. Let the players be the only people in the room who refuse to apologize for existing.

BEFORE THE SESSION

Read the pause line aloud and hold it: “*Anyone can call pause at any time, for any reason, and the scene resets to a safe version or skips. The city never punishes a pause.*” Pass the roles before you explain the city — let the roles explain it.