

The Reward of Cleverness

*When a crew solves an obstacle wholly on its own – seals unbroken, no price paid, no grace needed – what, if anything, does the game give back? Three roads below. Each shows the exact prose it would set into \u00a7 2.6. Tell me which by its tag (say “go with **ib**”), or ask me to blend them.*

1a Inclines grace – **current text**

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Sometimes a crew solves a thing wholly on its own – seals unbroken, no price paid, no grace needed. This is never wasted, but neither is it a coin to be hoarded. A crew that strives and succeeds by its own wit is simply **remembered**: the maker, having watched them try, is the readier to give in the days ahead. Cleverness does not fill a purse. It **inclines grace** – banked, if anywhere, in the keeper’s regard: untallied, unspendable, and worth more than any token for exactly that reason.

The clever are not owed. They are favoured – which lasts longer.

WHAT IT DOES

No token, no tally. Purest to the ethos – grace stays free and uncompelled. Cost: the reward is invisible, so players may not feel it landing.

1b The Boon – a counted token

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Sometimes a crew solves a thing wholly on its own – seals unbroken, no price paid, no grace needed. Such wit earns a **Boon**: one free asking, set aside and held. A Boon opens the next Seal of any obstacle at no price and no wait, spent whenever the crew declares it. It is **counted openly**, like a watch – a crew always knows how

many it holds – and a crew may hold no more than three at once, lest the purse grow fat and the game go slack.

What you earned by wit, you may spend at will. Grace you still may not.

WHAT IT DOES

A real, spendable currency – tangible, motivating, playable. Cost: adds bookkeeping and draws a hard line between earned "boons" and free grace, which slightly hardens the soft heart of the system.

1c Cut it – virtue is its own reward

\u00a7 2.6 THE REWARD OF CLEVERNESS

Sometimes a crew solves a thing wholly on its own – seals unbroken, no price paid, no grace needed. The game keeps **no further account of it**, and means to. The reward of cleverness is the thing itself: a truth won clean, a self unspent, a Seal left sealed for a darker hour. A crew that needed no clue has already been paid – in the pride of it, and in the coin they did *not* have to give. Council adds nothing on top, because there is nothing it could add that would be worth as much.

The clever kept their price in their pocket. That was the prize.

WHAT IT DOES

Simplest – no mechanic at all, one fewer thing to teach. Cost: some players want a felt reward for a clean solve; this gives none beyond the fiction.

1d A Due from the Water – **your old mission-clear rule, revived**

\u00a7 2.6 THE REWARD OF CLEVERNESS

Sometimes a crew closes out a whole labour – a Work, a mission, an obstacle worth being stuck on – with its Seals never broken: no price paid, no grace needed. Each Seal left closed is banked not as a free asking anywhere, but as

a **due at the Water**: the next time the crew comes to Landis, that many of his usual prices are simply **waived**, and he throws in something past the ordinary menu besides — a thing he judges cool enough for the doing, never named in advance. It is spent only there, only with him, and it does not linger forever unspent.

Solve it yourself, and the madman remembers you the next time you're wet.

WHAT IT DOES

Keeps the reward concrete and felt (a real perk at the Water) without becoming a generic spendable currency everywhere else. Ties cleverness back to the game's one fixed character, which **ib**'s "Boon" didn't. Needs a real name besides "a due" — open question.

◆ *My lean, updated: **id** is the closest to what you actually ran before and remembered fondly — concrete, Landis-flavored, and still untallied everywhere else. It just wants a name. Candidates: a **Due**, a **Debt**, **Owed Water**, **Slack** (as in cut him some) — or your own word.*