

TEACH & SHIP

◆ BOOK THE FIFTH ◆

for the keeper — how to raise a Council game from nothing, and run it well

The first four books are the game. This one is the craft of it — how to stand a table up in an evening, and the three small arts that make a keeper of you: writing Seals, giving grace, and wounding without cruelty.

§ 5.1 SESSION ZERO — RAISING A GAME IN ONE SITTING

Council boots in a single evening. Five moves, in order:

- 1 **Rig the world.** Agree the fiction — the setting, its peoples, and what *Power* and *Standing* are made of here. This is the rigging; invent it freely.
- 2 **Seat the Council.** Decide who holds the final say, and set the dial of §4.2 — **narrow by default** (heads advise), or wide if you want the intrigue of a true vote. Name the standing heads.
- 3 **Lay the first Ledger.** Write two or three opening Works — an aim, its hands, its stakes each — so the tide has something to move on the very first session.
- 4 **Teach the Water.** Tell the crew, plainly, of Landis: real only in water, true always, dear always. They need not use him yet — only know he is there.
- 5 **Promise hope.** Say aloud the one creed (§5.5): the game will reward hope and never lock a door that a hopeful crew cannot come through. Then begin.

§ 5.2 THE FIRST ART — WRITING SEALS

This is the craft the whole game rests on. For any obstacle worth being stuck on, **write three clues before play and seal them**: the **Nudge** (a word or image, a turned head), the

Bearing (what to do, never why), the **Answer** (plain as porridge). Set them face-down and visible, in order. Write them *before* – never under the pressure of a stuck table, when your judgment is worst. A keeper who has written the Answer in advance can afford to be generous with the Nudge, because they know the crew can never be truly lost.

§ 5.3 THE SECOND ART – GIVING GRACE

You are the god of this small creation, and grace is your one free hand (Book the Second). Give it **quietly** – a detail noticed, a stranger who speaks first, a door found ajar – and do not announce it; let the crew feel merely lucky. Give it toward the **stuck and the hopeful**: a good-faith struggle invites your grace, though nothing may compel it. Do not tally it, do not let it be demanded, and never withhold it out of a sense of fairness – grace was never fair, and that is the mercy of it. Its one hard law is that a truly aground crew always receives it. Everything else, you give as the story moves you.

§ 5.4 THE THIRD ART – THE SIGNED SQUALL

When a Work's storm breaks, or a stake is wounded, do not narrate it from the clouds. Deliver it as a **report on the letterhead of whoever bore it** – a courier's field note, a healer's page, a quartermaster's tally. This is the standing house style of Council, and it does quiet work: it keeps consequence *concrete*, it hands the crew a voice to answer, and it makes even the worst news feel like the world speaking rather than the keeper punishing. In Council, bad news always arrives signed.

§ 5.5 ON HOPE & HARM – THE TONE OF THE GAME

Council is built to reward hope. Bend the world kinder to a crew that believes it can be bettered, and let grace run toward them like water downhill. The game **may wound** – it may cost dearly, and grieve truly; a table that risks nothing feels nothing. But it breaks only the one who has **stopped hoping**. So wound the hopeful with things they can yet answer, and reserve true, unanswerable loss for the moment a soul has abandoned hope entirely – for that is the only wound Council means to be final.

