

Sigilbound: Deepwood — Master Watcher GM Guide (Workbook)

What this workbook is

This is the GM's operating system for an ever-evolving forest-world campaign. You are the Master Watcher: you run scenes like a normal GM, but you also track Realm health, Balance drift, Fragment paths, sacrifices, and the Stabilization Reckoning.

Core promise

Every session moves the party toward Fragments that can stabilize the Realms — but each choice leaves lasting marks. Success in the final Stabilization session is weighted by what the party did across the year.

How to use (quick)

- 1) Read '01_MasterWatcher' to understand your role and what players should feel (omens, shifts, consequences).
- 2) Use '02_Arc_Model' to choose a 4+1 arc or extend beyond 4 sessions if desired (longer arcs add pressure).
- 3) Use '03_Realm_System' to apply Stability + Balance changes each session (fast, consistent rulings).
- 4) Build each session around a 'Fragment Path' from '04_Fragments' (Fragments are earned, not looted).
- 5) Offer sacrifices using '05_Sacrifice' as an emergency lever and a mythic choice.
- 6) Follow the end-to-end example in '07_Example_Arc' and copy the template tables in '09_Templates'.

Sheets

Sheet	What it contains
01_MasterWatcher	Lore + GM stance: what the Master Watcher is, what the forest is, how truth is revealed.
02_Arc_Model	4-session missions + 5th Stabilization; how to extend arcs; pacing and pressure.
03_Realm_System	Stability (0–100), Balance Axes (-5..+5), thresholds, drift rules, cascade rules.
04_Fragments	Fragment types, how they're earned, path-to-fragment structures, costs, and gates.
05_Sacrifice	Personal sacrifice rules: what can be sacrificed, mechanical effects, permanent scars.
06_GM_Workflow	Before/After session checklist + quick conversion from events to realm shifts.
07_Example_Arc	A full 4-mission + Stabilization example: Withering Grove of Elder Ash.
08_Example_Logs	Filled-in tracker tables showing exactly what you would log as GM.
09_Templates	Blank tables you can duplicate for your own campaign (realm sheet, session log, fragment sheet).

01 — Master Watcher (GM) Lore & Rules of Thumb

The hidden truth (GM-only)

The Deepwood is one living reality expressed as layered states (Realms). When the Heart was wounded, it shattered into Fragments: pieces of balance. Fragments are not treasure — they are permissions granted by the forest when a path is proven.

Your job as Master Watcher

Run scenes like a traditional GM, but also:

- Track Realm Stability (0–100) and Balance Axes (Growth/Decay, Order/Wild, Memory/Change).
- Translate player choices into lasting world state.
- Present consequences as omens, shifts, and changes in travel, NPC behavior, and environment.
- Gate Fragments behind deeds, costs, and sacrifices.
- In Stabilization, adjudicate a Reckoning where success is weighted by prior choices.

What players should feel

They should feel the forest reacting. A shortcut now may become a blight later. Mercy can restore Memory. Industry may increase Order but feed Decay. Fragments feel sacred — earned through proving, not taking.

Reveal rule

Never explain Stability numbers to players. Show outcomes: weather, omens, NPCs forgetting, roads shifting, predators returning, machines rusting, spirits retreating.

02 — Year Arc Model (4 Missions + Stabilization)

Default structure

Missions 1–4 each pursue a Fragment Path (or unlock a path). Session 5 is the Stabilization Reckoning.

You can extend beyond 4 missions: longer arcs raise pressure (baseline drift + more chances to damage Realms), but also give more opportunities for redemption and sacrifice.

Arc pacing knobs (GM levers)

- Extend to 6–10 missions if you want a grander year: add a Drift Tick each session.
- If the party is behind on fragments, offer 'Key Achievements' that unlock a fragment without direct retrieval.
- Use 'Crisis Sessions' when a realm hits CRISIS: the session becomes about preventing cascade.
- Use 'Sacrifice Offers' when a realm nears COLLAPSE: give them a mythic, costly choice.

Stabilization Session (the Reckoning)

In Stabilization, the party attempts to bind the collected fragments into the Root-Lattice. Success is NOT guaranteed. The chance of success is weighted by:

- How many fragments were earned and which Realms they belong to
- Current Stability of each Realm
- How far each Balance axis drifted (and whether the party repaired drift)
- Sacrifices offered (relics, bonds, scars)

Failure changes the world (fractures, merges, corrupted fragments) — it is not a simple game-over.

03 — Realm Health System (Stability + Balance + Cascade)

Stability (0–100)

Stability measures how coherent a Realm is. Low stability warps scenes and travel.

Suggested thresholds:

- 60–100 STABLE: omens are light
- 35–59 UNSTABLE: complications appear, travel costs rise
- 20–34 CRISIS: the realm actively fights back; fragment paths become harder
- 0–19 COLLAPSE: the realm is erasing itself; roll-forward consequences

Balance Axes (-5..+5)

Track three axes. 0 is balanced.

- Growth (+) ↔ Decay (-)
- Order (+) ↔ Wild (-)
- Memory (+) ↔ Change (-)

Drift rule: if any axis reaches |4|, add an Omen Trait to scenes in that Realm (ex: 'All fires spread', 'Names are forgotten'). If any axis hits |5|, add a Crisis Event within 1–2 sessions unless repaired.

Baseline Drift (pressure over time)

Each session, apply a small baseline drift to every Realm (ex: -1 Stability), representing time pressure. Longer arcs = more drift = higher stakes.

Cascade rule (how collapse spreads)

When a Realm enters COLLAPSE, choose one:

- A) Spillover: one adjacent Realm takes -3 Stability and -1 on a thematically linked axis.
- B) Merge scar: two locations fuse; travel becomes dangerous; a fragment path changes.
- C) Corrupted fragment: a future fragment becomes twisted and costs a sacrifice to purify.

Pick the option that creates the most interesting future sessions.

04 — Fragments: Lore, Paths, Gates, and Rewards

What fragments are

Fragments are pieces of balance released by the forest when a path is proven. They may look like seeds, vows, memories, relics, or living sigils. A fragment stabilizes its Realm and helps the party in the final Reckoning.

Fragment Path structure (GM template)

Each fragment is earned through a path with 3 parts:

- 1) PROOF — demonstrate a value (restore, protect, reconcile, endure)
- 2) COST — pay a price (time, risk, loss, sacrifice)
- 3) BINDING — perform a ritual or vow that ties the party to consequences

Fragments are NOT automatic: if they shortcut the Proof or refuse the Cost, the fragment remains locked or becomes corrupted.

Fragment types (examples)

Type	What it looks like	How it is earned	Typical Cost	Realm impact
Seed-Fragment	Ancient seed/stone	Restore a grove or re-seed life	Give up a relic / accept a scar	Stability +5, Growth +1
Vow-Fragment	Inscribed sigil-vow	Broker peace / keep a pact	Oath constraint going forward	Stability +4, Order +1, Memory +1
Memory-Fragment	Name-song / story	Recover lost history / protect truth	Lose a personal memory or bond	Stability +4, Memory +2
Relic-Fragment	Metal artifact	Defeat a guardian ethically / return what was stolen	Sacrifice power now	Stability +5, all axes +1
Spirit-Fragment	Fey/guardian blessing	Help a spirit without coercion	Future favor owed	Stability +3, Change +1

05 — Sacrifice: Emergency Lever + Mythic Choice

Why sacrifice exists

Sacrifice is real power in Deepwood. When the party nears collapse, you can offer a mythic choice:

- Restore a Realm now — but permanently scar a character or remove a resource.

Sacrifice prevents the game from becoming a spreadsheet: it becomes a story of what they were willing to lose.

Sacrifice menu (GM can adapt)

Sacrifice Type	Examples	Mechanical Effect	Permanent Scar / Cost	How to narrate it
Relic Sacrifice	Give up a powerful relic/weapon/charm	Stability +6 to target Realm; repair 1 axis by +2 toward 0	Relic is gone forever	The relic becomes a root-nail holding the world together
Bond Sacrifice	Lose an ally, oath, or relationship	Stability +5; remove one lingering negative effect	Bond cannot be restored	The forest takes a name in exchange for memory
Scar Sacrifice	Permanent injury, mark, or limitation	Stability +4; +1 to all axes toward 0	New flaw/constraint on character	Sap replaces blood; the mark glows under moonlight
Time Sacrifice	Skip safety; push through winter	Stability +3 now, but baseline drift doubles next session	Future is harsher	Seasons lurch; the wind changes early
Vow Sacrifice	Swear an oath: never harm X, always protect Y	Stability +4; Order +2; but breaking vow causes -6 later	Oath constraint	Sigil burns into bark and skin

06 — GM Workflow: Before/After Session + Quick Rulings

Before the session (5-minute prep)

- 1) Pick the target Realm for tonight's mission.
- 2) Choose 1 drifting axis to pressure ($|axis| \geq 3$) or 1 Stability risk to escalate.
- 3) Prepare 1 omen scene, 1 consequence scene, and 1 fragment-gate scene.
- 4) Decide what the fragment requires: Proof + Cost + Binding.
- 5) Decide on specific effects if collapse risk is high.

After the session (10 minutes)

- 1) Write 3–6 bullet outcomes (what choices mattered).
- 2) Apply Stability changes and axis shifts (use Consequence Guide logic).
- 3) Mark lingering effects for 1–4 future sessions.
- 4) If fragment was earned, record it and grant the realm bonus.
- 5) Write one sentence: how the world looks different next session.

Fast conversion table (pick one per major outcome)

Outcome Type	Typical Stability Δ	Typical Axis Shift	Lingering effect example
Restoration / Healing	+2 to +5	Growth +1 toward 0	Healthy regrowth; travel easier
Diplomacy / Pact kept	+1 to +3	Order or Memory +1 toward 0	Factions cooperate; new access
Shortcut / Harm / Destruction	-2 to -5	Decay or Wild ± 1 away from 0	Blight spreads; predators surge
Bargain broken / betrayal	-2 to -4	Memory -1 or Change -1 away from 0	Names vanish; paths shift
Industry / extraction	-1 to -3	Order +1 but Decay -1	Power gained; future cost
Sacrifice accepted	+4 to +6	+1–2 toward 0 on one axis	Realm stabilized, but scar remains

07 — Example Campaign Arc (4 Missions + Stabilization)

Example: The Withering Grove of Elder Ash (GM-only)

Premise: Living Greenwood is losing Memory. Elder Ash holds a Memory-Fragment — but the Ash is dying.

The party must choose between speed, diplomacy, and sacrifice. Their choices will determine whether Rotmirror collapses during the year.

Session-by-session outline

Session	Mission Focus	Fragment Gate (Proof/Cost/Binding)	Key choice	Realm consequence (what GM tracks)	What players SEE
1 — The Blight	Investigate rot spreading from a root-spring	Proof: contain spread; Cost: risk infection; Binding: mark a sigil ward	Burn it fast vs contain slowly	If burned: Greenwood Stability -3; Decay -1. Lingering: weakened soil (2 sessions).	Ash leaves turn gray; animals flee; smoke tastes sweet
2 — The Spirits	Gain spirit aid without coercion	Proof: humility; Cost: give up advantage; Binding: offer a vow	Threaten spirits vs bargain fairly	If threatened: Stability -2; Order +1; Memory -1. Lingering: spirits withdraw (3 sessions).	Silence at night; owl eyes go dark; trails stop responding
3 — The Offer	A Rotmirror envoy offers a cure at a moral cost	Proof: refuse cruelty OR accept sacrifice; Cost: lose something; Binding: accept debt	Let another grove die vs sacrifice a relic/bond	If another grove dies: Greenwood +3; Rotmirror -4; Lingering: blight seed planted (future).	A distant scream in wind; fungus blooms where blood fell
4 — The Choice	Elder Ash demands a Rememberer	Proof: someone carries the story; Cost: lose a bond/memory; Binding: vow to remember	One PC sacrifices bond	Stability +6; Memory +2; Fragment earned (Greenwood). Character scar locked.	Bark glows with runes; the grove exhales; rain smells like ink
5 — Stabilization	Bind fragments into Root-Lattice at a crossroads of realms	Proof: present fragments; Cost: last sacrifice if needed; Binding: choose what survives	Stabilize all vs choose which realm fractures	Success weighted by: fragments + stability + repaired axes + sacrifices. Rotmirror may fracture if low.	Sky splits like bark; roads rewrite; NPCs remember (or forget) names

08 — Example Logs (Filled In)

Example Realm Tracker (after Session 4)

Realm	Stability	G↔D	O↔W	M↔C	Status	Fragments	Notes
Living Greenwood	61	-1	1	2	UNSTABLE	1	Recovered Memory-Fragment; soil weakened; spirits partly withdrawn
Rotmirror	28	-3	-1	-2	CRISIS	0	Death-debt triggered; blight seed planted; fracture risk
Ironroot Canopy	55	0	1	0	UNSTABLE	0	Unaffected but drifting toward Order
Shattergrove	52	0	0	-1	UNSTABLE	0	Minor change drift from sigil travel
High Boughs	58	1	0	0	UNSTABLE	0	Watching; could demand vow
Thornforge	50	-1	2	0	UNSTABLE	0	Industry pressure rising off-screen

Example Session Consequence Log (Sessions 1–4)

Session	Decision	Affected Realm(s)	Stability Δ	Axis Shifts	Lingering (sessions)	Fragment Progress
1	Burned blight quickly	Living Greenwood	-3	G↔D -1 (toward Decay)	2	N
2	Threatened spirits to comply	Living Greenwood	-2	Order +1, Memory -1	3	N
3	Allowed another grove to die to save Elder Ash	Living Greenwood + Rotmirror	+3 / -4	Rotmirror drifts Decay -2	4+	N
4	PC sacrificed a bond to become Rememberer	Living Greenwood	6	Memory +2 toward balance	Permanent scar	Y (Fragment)

