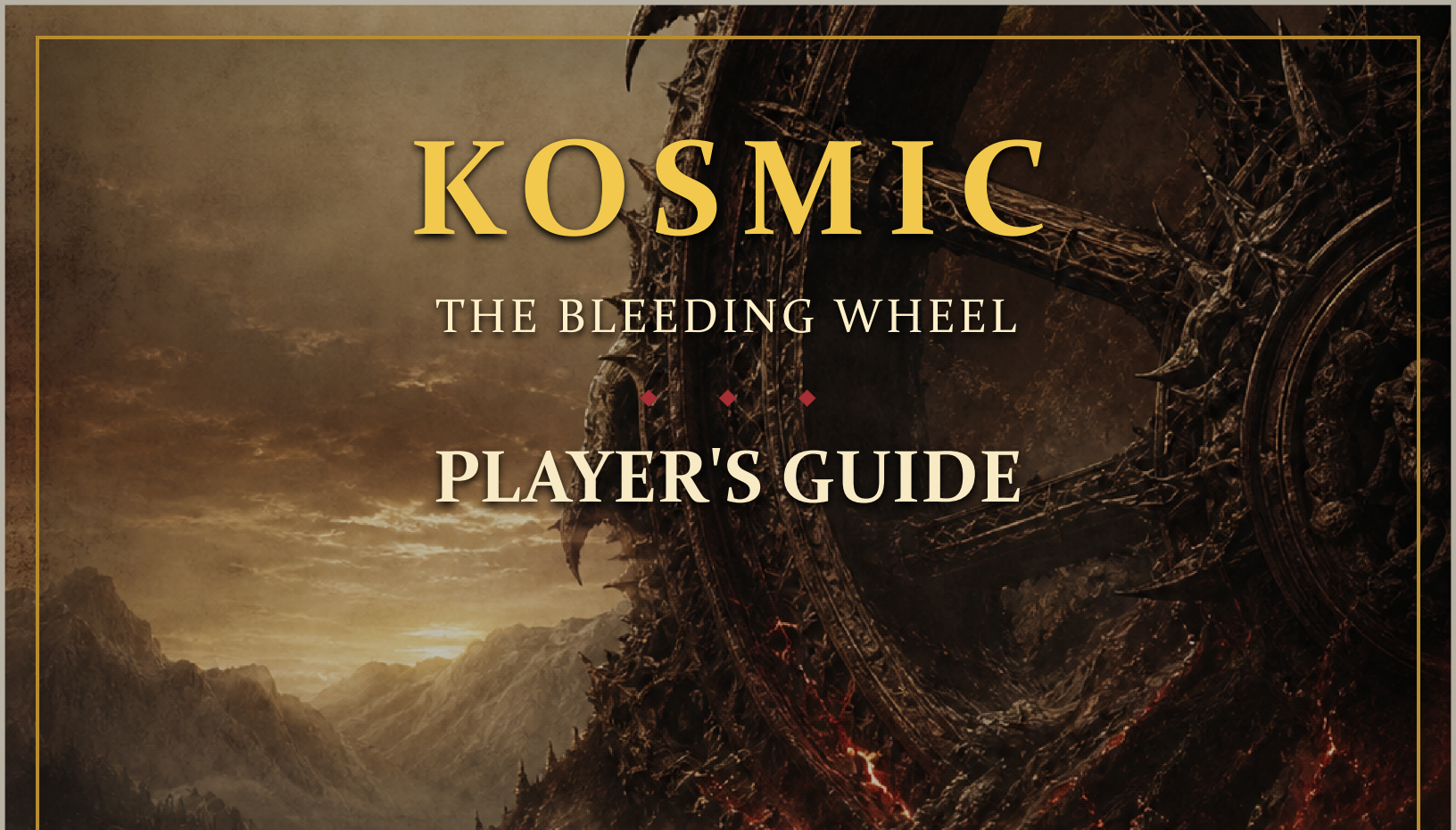




KOSMIC

THE BLEEDING WHEEL

♦ ♦ ♦
PLAYER'S GUIDE

Want something on the frontier. Pay for it. Come home.

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REVISED COMPANION · 2026-10-03

Player's Guide

Spoiler-safe rules, character prompts, worksheets, and pocket cards.

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oo — Welcome to Hearth



This guide is yours. It contains the common knowledge, character prompts, safety tools, and campaign records needed to play without revealing the Game Master's secrets.

Hearth is the mortal world with the lights still on.

The **Wheel** is the cosmos turning too close. Where one of its realms presses hard enough, the world tears. Those tears are called **bleeds**. A bleed is not merely a monster lair. It is a place where the rules change: a valley becomes glass and heat, a town loses color, a forest makes promises literal, or a cathedral schedules choices before anyone makes them.

You live on the edge of that change. You might be a Warden with chalk on your sleeve, a Guild cutter with coin in your pocket, a refugee with an ugly skill, a saint with doubts, or an ordinary person who stood up because the cellar hummed wrong and nobody else was coming.

The tone is **frontier wonder laced with dread**. Warped places are beautiful and terrible. Safe places are never perfectly safe, but they matter. A bowl of stew, a lit lantern, a true name spoken kindly, and a road kept open one more week are heroic here.

WHAT EVERYONE KNOWS

- A **bleed** is a wound where another realm overwrites Hearth.
- A bleed has a **Seam** at its heart. Close it and the region can begin to heal.
- Bleeds spread when ignored. A catastrophic bleed is called a **Maw**.
- The gods still answer, but their voices weaken near some wounds.
- Bleed-matter is valuable, useful, watched, and never morally weightless.
- Nobody agrees why the Wheel is bleeding. It may be dying, ascending, or in pain.

WORDS FOR THE ROAD

WORD	PLAIN MEANING
Hearth	The mortal world — home
bleed / wound	A tear where another realm overwrites the land
Seam	The heart of a bleed — what can be closed
spoke	One of the realms of the Wheel
Quickening	The sense that the world is failing faster
Mark	A lasting sign of a spoke's influence
Outside / Unwheel	Campfire horror about what the Wheel holds out

The rule of the setting: ask what is wondrous here, and what it costs.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

What sounds wondrous to me?

What kind of cost sounds interesting to explore?

One thing I hope my character gets to protect:



01 — The Four Verbs



Every major wound asks what kind of person you are. Hearth has three famous answers and one quiet one.

VERB	WHAT IT MEANS	WHY IT TEMPTS
Seal	Close the Seam so the region can heal.	Saves people; costs chalk, pain, time, and sometimes comfort.
Harvest	Cut valuable matter from the bleed.	Pays well and makes relics; the wound is fed.
Worship	Accept the spoke as holy and invite its change.	Works immediately and can offer belonging; it leaves a Mark.
Walk	Retreat, escort, witness, refuse, or seek a fourth road.	Keeps someone alive tonight; may leave others holding the cost.

None is a fake choice. Sealing is not always clean. Harvesting is not always cartoon evil. Worship is not always foolish. Walking is not always cowardice. **The world remembers all four.**

When you choose, say it plainly if you can:

- *I seal this.*
- *I take one load and own the price.*
- *I kneel for one breath, not forever.*
- *I walk out with the children first.*

YOUR VERB LEAN

Circle one at the beginning of a session. You may change it. Changing is part of the story.

SEAL	HARVEST	WORSHIP	MIXED	WALK
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tonight I believe:				
After the session, what did my verb cost?				
Who paid besides me?				
Next session I may lean: Seal / Harvest / Worship / Mixed / Walk				



02 — Make a Cosmic Character



Use any familiar fantasy class and ancestry your table permits. A Cosmic character becomes part of the setting by answering six questions, not by selecting a special rules option.

THE SIX QUESTIONS

1. **Where are you from?** A holding, the Pale Marches, the Hearthlands, or somewhere a bleed already took.
2. **What did a wound take from you?** A home, a person, a year, a color, a name, or something harder to explain.
3. **What are you?** An old kindred, one of the bleed-touched, or one of Hearth's newer peoples.
4. **Where do you stand?** Seal, harvest, worship, mixed, or walk — and why?
5. **Why the frontier?** What pulled you away from safety?
6. **What should the world become?** Saved, repaired, profited from, transformed, or something new?

CHARACTER SPARK WORKSHEET

Name / pronouns: _____

Home: _____

What the bleed took: _____

Why I came to the frontier: _____

What I want the world to become: _____

Who in Lastlight notices if I do not return: _____

Deeper cuts — choose one

- What do you still love that the frontier could take?
- What would you harvest if nobody found out?
- What would you seal even if it cost you?
- Whose hymn have you already half-believed?
- What lie do you tell about why you came here?

My answer:

What could tempt me to change my mind?

03 — Class and Ancestry



FAMILIAR CLASSES IN HEARTH

- **Fighters** hold doors, passes, walls, and promises.
- **Barbarians** spend blood, and the wound notices.
- **Clerics and paladins** feel the gods flicker near deep bleeds.
- **Wizards and artificers** argue with laws that are not spells.
- **Rogues** invoice, steal invoices, or cut value from danger.
- **Bards** make holdings remember themselves; Revel listens.
- **Rangers and druids** watch ecology rewrite itself overnight.
- **Warlocks** should be honest at session zero if a patron smells like the Outside.

You do not need a Kosmic subclass to matter. A plain fighter who loves one town can carry the entire campaign.

KOSMIC-FLAVORED DIRECTIONS

OPTION	CHARACTER FANTASY
Path of the Bleed	A barbarian who lets a wound into their rage without being consumed
Oath of the Seal	A paladin who places sigils where the world is coming apart
Way of the Thread	A monk who steps through the cracks between worlds
Patron: the Outside	A warlock bound to wrong questions and bent fate
College of the Wound-Song	A bard whose music can teach or quiet a spoke
Circle of the Marches	A druid wearing the frontier's altered ecology
Scout of the Pale	A ranger who reads bleeds like weather
Riftcutter	A rogue who knows how to extract value and how dirty that is

Ask the Game Master which options are open.

ANCESTRY QUICK PICKS

THE PEOPLES OF HEARTH

the bleed-touched, and the kindreds the Wheel itself made



Ashborn
Forge-touched



the Mourned
Gloom-touched



Revelkin
Revel-touched



the Hollowed
Outside-touched



Sealkin
the Warded



Cogfolk
the Wound-Clad



Driftkin
the Stepped



Reavekin
the Maw-born

If you want...	Consider...
A classic frontier hero	Human, elf, dwarf, or another old kindred
Fire in the blood	Ashborn
Calm tragedy or death-sight	Mourned
Beauty, charm, and dangerous promises	Revelkin
Strange maps and uncertain edges	Hollowed or Driftkin
Warden marks beneath the skin	Sealkin
Brass-and-breath made people	Cogfolk
A Maw-edge survivor	Reavekin

Name the night the wound touched you, even if your ancestry is ordinary. Everyone in Hearth has a scar. Some are simply easier to see.

VISIBLE TELLS

- One ordinary detail about me: _____
- One sign the frontier changed me: _____
- What strangers assume when they see me: _____
- What they usually get wrong: _____

04 — Factions at a Glance



Faction	They Say	The Plain Version
Wardens	“Close the wound.”	Brave, under-supplied, political, and not always right.
Riftguild	“Stabilize. Survey.”	They sell pieces of wounds and call it stabilization. Their coin spends.
Chorus	“The spoke is holy.”	Some are cults, some are shelters, and some save people before they take them.
Crowns	“Hold the road.”	They want roads open, taxes paid, and panic managed.
Wheelwrights	“Mend the turning.”	Rare craftspeople who speak about the cosmos like a damaged machine.

You may work with several factions. The world will ask you to choose when the cost becomes visible.

Faction Lean

Faction	Trust 0-3	What they want from me	What I want from them
Wardens	—	_____	_____
Riftguild	—	_____	_____
Chorus	—	_____	_____
Crown / local power	—	_____	_____
Other	—	_____	_____

05 — Lastlight Hold



Lastlight Hold sits where the road gets tired. It smells like wet wool, iron, stew, and chalk. The **Sealed Lantern** keeps lamps burning because Grenna says a light you can see is a promise you have to answer. Borgrim's forge rings too early and too late. Gate-warden Doss knows which boots went west. Children play at sealing cracks with sticks until adults stop laughing.

The lower well has been wrong before. The cellar has hummed before. People still eat, argue, flirt, repair shutters, and ask who is on watch. Lastlight matters not because it is grand, but because it is warm.

PEOPLE YOU CAN KNOW

- **Grenna:** stew, judgment, and a spare bunk for someone who admits they are tired.
- **Doss:** boots, road truth, and the patience to recognize a lie told from fear.
- **Borgrim:** a smith who counts what adventurers break and what breaking costs.
- **Vane:** a Guild smile, a clean contract, and hazard pay that arrives early.
- **The Quiet Woman:** an unfinished hymn and a place near the wall nobody claims.

THREE THINGS TO DO BEFORE GOING BELOW

1. Eat at the Sealed Lantern and leave a coin if you have one.
2. Ask Borgrim what your weapon broke last.
3. Learn who is missing.

ONE RUMOR YOU ALREADY KNOW — CHOOSE ONE

- The well under Lastlight went grey.
- The Guild pays hazard rates for “surveys.”

- The Grey Quiet offers bowls on the west road.
- Vigil chalk is running short.
- A legend held the Red Pass for nine days.
- Something west of here answers journals.

The person or place I care about here:

LASTLIGHT CONTACTS

NAME	WHAT THEY NEED	WHAT I OWE THEM	TRUST 0-3



o6 — Play the First Session



Kosmic works best when characters do useful things before explaining themselves. When the Game Master describes a warped place, ask one concrete question:

IF YOU SEE...	ASK...
A mark, sigil, or chalk line	Who made it, and is it holding?
A smiling stranger in a bad place	What do they want me to accept?
Valuable bleed-matter	Who gets paid if I take it?
A locked door or closed gate	Is this keeping danger out or people in?
A changed name, color, memory, or schedule	Who benefits from this version?
A frightened crowd	What do they need in the next five minutes?

Then take a small action. Help somebody stand. Check the seal. Taste the air. Ask the price. Put your body between a child and a door. The setting is large; sessions move through specific choices.

SPOTLIGHT CUES

- If you carry chalk, say when your hand shakes.
- If you want coin, say what the coin is for.
- If a hymn tempts you, say what part sounds kind.
- If your ancestry marks you, show one social tell before it becomes mechanics.
- If you are afraid, name one ordinary thing you miss.

PLAYER PROMISES

- Build a character who can stay with the party after a hard disagreement.
- If you accept a dark bargain, tell the table why exploring it will be fun.
- Do not hide every motive. Secrets should create scenes, not block them.
- Let consequences land before defending yourself from them.
- Give the world one person or place you refuse to see overwritten.

AFTER THE FIRST SESSION

The moment I understood the setting:

A choice another character made that I want to follow:

The ordinary thing I want to see again:



07 — Bonds and Party Ties

Pick or roll one bond, then connect at least one answer to another player character.

D12	BOND
1	Grenna gave you stew the night you nearly left the marches.
2	A Warden taught you chalk, rode west, and stopped writing.
3	You sold one harvest sample and still remember the pay.
4	A Chorus hymn helped you survive a night you do not discuss.
5	Borgrim fixed your blade and said, “Count what you break.”
6	You owe a refugee family passage east. They think you are better than you are.
7	Someone in Greywater knows your name and smiles too calmly.
8	The Cogspire printed a schedule for someone you love.
9	You carry a letter from the Cinderwastes with burned edges.
10	A court record says your family served a crown you hate.
11	You left a grief in a bowl once. You are unsure what changed.
12	You promised another character you would not let a wound make them useful.

PARTY TIES — ANSWER TWO

- 1. Who has seen you scared?
- 2. Who knows your old name, nickname, or title?
- 3. Who did you save in a way they did not ask for?
- 4. Who did you disappoint and never apologize to?
- 5. Who would you trust with the chalk?

My bond:

Tie one: _____

Tie two: _____

The promise between us:





o8 — Safety and Tone

Kosmic uses grief, body change, cult pressure, loss of identity, hunger, and disaster. A table can play hard without ambushing its players.

- **Lines:** content that does not appear.
- **Veils:** content that may exist but fades to black.
- **Pause:** anyone may stop and reframe a scene without explaining why.
- **Open door:** anyone may step away when needed.

BEFORE PLAY

TOPIC	TABLE DECISION
Personal grief	☐ specific fiction ☐ abstract only ☐ line
Children in danger	☐ shown ☐ implied ☐ off-screen ☐ line
Body transformation	☐ vivid ☐ light description ☐ veil ☐ line
Religious pressure / cults	☐ full theme ☐ lighter ☐ veil ☐ line
Loss of agency	☐ careful use ☐ veil ☐ line

Other lines:

Other veils:

Pause signal or word: _____

The best horror is specific to characters, not players. A fourth place setting at supper is enough. **The Wheel can wait; a person cannot.**





09 — Character and Campaign Record

MARK RECORD

SPOKE / SOURCE	1	2	3	WHAT CHANGED?
_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
_____	☐	☐	☐	_____

PROMISE LEDGER

I PROMISED...	TO...	KEPT / BROKEN / CHANGED	CONSEQUENCE
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

WHAT THE WORLD REMEMBERS

A wound we sealed: _____

A thing we harvested: _____

A power we worshipped or refused: _____

Someone we walked away with: _____

How Lastlight changed:

The home we are trying to preserve:



10 — Pocket Cards

VERB CARD — CUT OUT

Tonight I lean: Seal / Harvest / Worship / Mixed / Walk

I chose: _____

It cost: _____

The world noticed: _____

SAFETY CARD — CUT OUT

LINE — do not include it.

VEIL — fade to black.

PAUSE — stop and reframe; no explanation owed.

OPEN DOOR — step away whenever needed.

The dread is fiction. The Wheel can wait.

KOSMIC RULE OF THUMB — CUT OUT

If a wound offers power, ask who pays.

If a town looks normal, ask what it refuses to name.

If you seal, bring chalk home dirty.

If you harvest, count the clock.

If you worship, mark the sheet.

If you walk, take someone with you.

POSTCARD FROM THE FRONTIER — HAND TO A NEW PLAYER

*Hearth is still warm in the middle. The edge is tearing. Wardens close wounds. The Guild sells pieces of them. The Chorus prays them wider. Nobody knows why the Wheel bleeds. **Pick a reason to walk toward the tear anyway.***

11 — Player FAQ

I s this grimdark?

No. It contains dread, grief, and hard choices, but warmth matters. If everything is hopeless, the table has missed the target.

Do I need a Kosmic subclass?

No. Familiar fantasy characters belong here.

Are the Wardens the good faction?

Often, not always. They save towns, ration chalk, conceal failures, and sometimes confuse doctrine with truth.

Is harvesting evil?

Not automatically. It is always costly. Sometimes a harvest buys food or saves a life. The honest part is admitting that the wound is fed.

Can I play someone tied to the Chorus?

Yes. Tell the table whether you are curious, tempted, loyal, or recovering. Worship should create scenes, not destroy party trust for free.

Can the party disagree about the verbs?

Yes. That is the game. Argue in character, protect each other's spotlight, and keep the disagreement playable.

What happens if we fail a seal?

The story continues. The wound grows, somebody pays, and you decide what happens next. Failure is not a loading screen.

Can we invent a fourth answer?

Try. The world has patterns. Heroes are allowed to make patterns bend.

How much lore should I read?

For the first session: this packet, your class, your ancestry, and whatever the Game Master gives you. Learn the rest by walking into it.

Want something on the frontier. Pay for it. Come home.

Player packet for Kosmic: The Bleeding Wheel. Personal table use and printing permitted. Setting and original text © 2026 Lee Richard Berman.



12 — Notes from the Road



Campaign: _____
Character: _____ Current level: _____

The question I am carrying:

People, places, promises, and wounds:

Want something on the frontier. Pay for it. Come home.

