THE GREYHAVEN CHRONICLES / BOOK ONE

ASH AND LANTERN 1

The Hollow Beacon



Three lights have failed. One keeper is missing.
Before you restore the flame, discover what holds it.

MARCUS DRAPER

AN ILLUSTRATED CHOOSE-YOUR-PATH ADVENTURE / REVISED EDITION 2.0

BEGIN HERE

Your story. Your choices.

You are a traveller carrying an independent lantern into a valley whose great watchlights are failing. This is a branching book: read a numbered section, choose an eligible action, and turn to its destination. Do not read straight through.

Section numbers stay fixed. Every choice includes both the section and its printed page number. In the PDF, click the choice box. On paper, turn to that page. The opening five pages are instructions and records; section 1 begins on page 6.

Choose one path

IRON WARDEN

Hold the line. You know tools, leverage, and the discipline of waiting before a blow. Your weapon is a watchblade.

THORN SCOUT

Find another way. You notice footing, blind spots, and the route others overlook. You carry a yew bow and a working knife.

EMBER KEEPER

Understand the light. You recognize old lantern signals and wards. You carry an ember staff and know when a flame should be lowered.

Choose once and keep that path for the whole journey. Give your traveller a name. Every path can reach every ending; the routes and preparations differ. You need no dice, hit points, combat arithmetic, or currency ledger.

A little light to carry

Lantern charges

Start with 3 charges. A charge is a deliberate magical burst, not ordinary lantern light. Spend one only when the chosen option says so. You cannot choose a paid option at 0 charges. Never pay twice for the same choice. Ordinary reading, travel and conversation cost nothing.

Your record

Tick a named discovery when instructed. It stays with you unless the text explicitly says to erase it. BREAD is a single gift that can be given away. The other marked discoveries are permanent. Choose only one outcome when a section tells you to choose once.

Conditions are real

An option beginning "If", "Only with", or a path name is available only when your record meets it. Unlabelled options are open to everyone. A section reached through an eligible choice has already had any charge paid; do not spend it again.

Rest and setbacks

Section 4 restores your charges to 3 for free. There is no hidden clock, hunger meter, or permanent injury. Risky choices can send you to section 39 and back to town. Evidence and resolved encounters remain intact. You may always return by the routes provided.

Revisits and endings

Never repeat a one-time gift or a resolved fight. Return visits are for rereading clues or choosing a travel route. At the final choice, record one ending. Begin a new journey with a fresh record to explore another.

Paper and PDF

Use pencil on paper. The record and journal fields can also be filled manually in a PDF reader that supports forms. The PDF does not enforce rules or update checkboxes automatically. Save a local copy after editing; some browser viewers do not preserve forms.

KEEP A BOOKMARK HERE

Your traveller's record

Traveller name

Choose one path:

☐ Iron Warden ☐ Thorn Scout ☐ Ember Keeper

LANTERN: CHECKED = AVAILABLE

☑ 1 ☑ 2 ☑ 3

Uncheck a box when spent. At section 4, check all three again.

☐ RECORD - Mill deliveries

☐ WITNESS - Nera's testimony

☐ CROSSING - Bridge route secured

☐ BRINDLE - Companion recruited

☐ WARNING - Courier's clue

☐ BREAD - One gift still carried

☐ HELPED - Shed repaired

☐ MERCY - Guardian stood aside

☐ SAFE - Return isolated; lens fitted

☐ LENS - Chapel lens

☐ PLAN - Safe sequence prepared

☐ OATH - Memorial words learned

☐ WARD - Borrowed brass ward

☐ SELLA - Innkeeper's story heard

☐ WOLF - Woodland encounter resolved

☐ GUARDIAN - Tower encounter resolved

☐ BATTLE - Guardian disabled

MILL OUTCOME: CHOOSE ONE

☐ KINDNESS ☐ PROMISE ☐ SILENT ☐ FORCE

STRONGBOX: OPTIONAL, CHOOSE ONCE

☐ WAGES: report / return

☐ TAKEN: kept the money

☐ KEPT: promise honoured at home

Ending

Print or save a fresh copy for each new journey. Journal: page 54.

The valley at a glance

This is a navigation guide, not a scale map. Short return routes in the story sometimes skip places you have already crossed. Use each section's choices to travel.

Greyhaven Briefing; free rest at 4.	1 / p. 6
Pilgrim Road Fork to the wood and mill.	5 / p. 10
Briarwood Brindle; optional wolf encounter.	8 / p. 13
Whispering Heath Oath at 14; ward at 15.	13 / p. 18
Glass Chapel Lens; several ways past its sentinel.	16 / p. 21
Drowned Mill Record; talk, sneak, or disarm.	20 / p. 25
Cinder Quarry Witness, then PLAN at 29.	26 / p. 31
Broken Span Secure a crossing suited to your path.	30 / p. 35
Hollow Beacon Resolve the guardian; find Elian.	35 / p. 40
Lantern Heart Hear Aster; repair before choosing.	41 / p. 46

At the gate: RECORD + LENS + WITNESS + PLAN + CROSSING.
Before any ending: complete the repair and mark SAFE.
For the covenant: learn OATH on the heath.

Your lantern is ready. Begin the adventure. Go to 1 / p. 6

The Last Warm Windows



"Find out what happened before you try to put it right."

The child at Greyhaven's gate is trying to light a candle from a dead watchlamp. She shields the wick with both hands, as though the trouble might be the wind.

Warden Mara takes the candle gently. "Inside, Lysa. Your mother is waiting."

Three watchlights have failed in three nights. Beyond the walls, mist climbs uphill against the wind. Your hooded lantern still burns: its small travelling flame is not connected to the beacon on the ridge.

Mara notices it. "Keeper Elian went north to repair the light. He has not come back. We sent a patrol as far as the broken bridge. They heard a bell where there isn't one."

She gives you Elian's last letter. Her hands are steady; the envelope is worn soft from being opened.

"Bring him home if you can. But find out what happened before you try to put it right."

Read Elian's letter. Go to 3 / p. 8

Ask at the inn about the missing keeper. Go to 2 / p. 7

Take the Pilgrim Road. Go to 5 / p. 10

Visit the Lantern House. Go to 4 / p. 9

What Sella Remembers

Sella sets a cup in front of you before she asks your name. Above the hearth hangs a row of little wooden birds, gifts from travellers who could not pay for their meals.

"Elian carved the crooked one," she says. "Good hands for machines. Terrible hands for birds."

For years he ate here on the first evening of each month. Lately he had come every night, carrying drawings he would turn face down whenever someone approached.

"He asked me whether keeping a promise could become a cruel thing. I told him it depended who had been allowed to make it. He didn't touch his supper."

She wraps bread in a clean cloth. "Nera helped him build something at the quarry. Ask her. And if you find him, tell him I expect that cup back."

For the first time, you imagine a man at the top of the ridge rather than a missing name.

RECORD Once only: mark SELLA and BREAD. Bread is a single gift; returning here does not replace it.

Read the letter with Sella's words in mind. Go to 3 / p. 8

Set out on the Pilgrim Road. Go to 5 / p. 10

Return to the town gate. Go to 1 / p. 6

A Letter Left Unfinished

Mara has unfolded the letter so often that a sentence has almost vanished along the crease.

"The north watch has begun drawing heat instead of giving it. I have found a fault older than any keeper living. Nera believes a separate channel could carry the load while I repair the heart."

The next lines are darker, written with a newly filled pen.

"If I fail to return, do not simply turn the old regulator back. Find the mill's deliveries. Find the lens I left in the chapel. Ask Nera what we intended. Each of them will tell you something the others cannot."

At the bottom, below a smear of rain: "The lights are not a wall. They are a lock."

There is no confession and no explanation. Only a request that you understand the machine before you touch it. You fold the paper along its old creases.

RECORD You may consult this letter again. It is a lead, not the RECORD required at the ridge gate.

Follow the letter north. Go to 5 / p. 10

Ask Sella what Elian was afraid of. Go to 2 / p. 7

Return to Mara. Go to 1 / p. 6

The Lantern House

The keeper of the Lantern House makes no speech about courage. She points to a chair, takes your wet coat, and sets a bowl of soup within reach.

Beneath a copper hood, an ordinary oil flame warms the room. Greyhaven has not forgotten how to make light without the beacon. It has forgotten how much work that used to be.

Your travelling lantern holds three measured chambers of bright oil. The keeper fills them, trims the wick, and checks the shutter. Rest eases your bruises; nothing you learned on the road is lost.

"We cannot mend the ridge from this kitchen," she says. "But we can make sure you don't go back hungry."

Outside, volunteers are stacking firewood against the wall. There is fear in the town, but it has not yet become helplessness.

RECORD Restore CHARGES to 3. Do not erase discoveries or decisions. Rest is always free and never replenishes the one-time BREAD gift.

Leave rested, by the Pilgrim Road. Go to 5 / p. 10

Talk to Sella before leaving. Go to 2 / p. 7

Return to Mara at the gate. Go to 1 / p. 6

The Pilgrim Road



"For a moment, the cold seems to have a direction."

Water fills the cart ruts. At the first rise you look back and see Greyhaven's remaining windows gathered inside its walls like cupped embers.

A fallen waystone pins a courier's satchel beside the ditch. Beyond it, two sets of marks run north: bootprints, and black circles burned into the mud at regular intervals. Whatever made them was carried low and set down often.

The road divides. Pines crowd the western path into Briarwood. Eastward, the mill wheel gives a slow groan. You cannot see the river from here, but the wheel seems to be turning the wrong way.

You lift your lantern. Its flame leans toward the ridge, then rights itself when you close the shutter. For a moment, the cold seems to have a direction.

Examine the courier's satchel. Go to 6 / p. 11

Study the burned circles. Go to 7 / p. 12

Enter Briarwood. Go to 8 / p. 13

Take the mill road. Go to 20 / p. 25

Return to Greyhaven. Go to 1 / p. 6

The Courier's Warning

You brace a branch beneath the stone and shift it just far enough to pull the satchel free. It takes patience rather than strength. Inside, water has blurred the address, but the courier protected the letter in waxed cloth.

"Second watch extinguished at the same moment the mill flume froze. Oil levels unchanged. This is not a shortage. Inspect the north regulator before feeding the lamps again."

A delivery docket is tucked behind it. The mirrored panels ordered by Elian are listed as REPLACEMENT PARTS. A century-old drawing is attached, showing the same chamber long before he was born.

Someone will have to answer for what happened on the ridge. You are less certain now that the newest signature explains the oldest wrong.

You place the satchel on top of the stone where a returning courier can find it, and keep a copy of the warning.

RECORD Mark WARNING. This clue is optional; it will give you a more precise question to ask Elian.

Compare the warning with the tracks. Go to 7 / p. 12

Find the mill's own records. Go to 20 / p. 25

Continue into the wood. Go to 8 / p. 13

A Burden Set Down

The black circles are not footprints. Each has a notch on one side, where a hot metal handle rested on the ground.

You walk between two marks, counting the steps. Twelve. Then nine. Then five. The carrier was tiring.

Beside the last circle, one boot has slipped. A handprint dents the clay. Whoever climbed this road was neither marching in triumph nor fleeing without a plan. They were hauling something heavy toward a task they could barely manage.

An Iron Warden recognizes the pauses of an overburdened worker. A Thorn Scout notices the drag of the right heel. An Ember Keeper feels the lingering heat in otherwise frozen mud. Each path leads to the same conclusion.

The tracks bend toward the quarry, not straight to the tower. Elian needed someone's help. You hope he listened when it was offered.

Follow the road through the mill toward the quarry. Go to 20 / p. 25

Explore Briarwood first. Go to 8 / p. 13

Return to the fork. Go to 5 / p. 10

Briarwood Holds Its Breath



"There is a creature here that cannot leave until someone helps it."

Rain hangs from the pines without falling. Your sleeve brushes a branch, and the drops break free all at once, ticking against the stones.

A dog whimpers from a bramble hollow. A loose chain around its collar has snagged on a buried root; every attempt to pull away tightens the thorns. Its black-and-tan coat is wet to the skin.

Farther along the trail, something larger moves between the trees. Grey ash clings to its fur. You hear a low growl, then the scrape of claws.

There is room to leave by another path. There is also a creature here that cannot leave until someone helps it. Your lantern warms the nearest thorns, and the dog lifts its head.

Kneel and free the dog. Go to 9 / p. 14

Investigate the ash-matted wolf. Go to 10 / p. 15

Take the side path to Whispering Heath. Go to 13 / p. 18

Go toward the Glass Chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return to the road. Go to 5 / p. 10

A Companion, Not a Prize

You put the lantern down and wait. When the dog stops pulling, you slide your hand beneath the chain and ease the last thorn away.

A small brass tag gives a name: Brindle.

He backs out of the hollow, shakes water over your boots, and watches you as though deciding something. You do not call or tug his collar. After a moment he comes close enough to press his nose into your palm.

Down the trail, a growl sounds again. Brindle's ears flatten. You move between him and the sound, and he stays at your heel.

You cannot promise him a safe road. You can promise that he will not be sent ahead to find danger for you. That seems a fair beginning.

RECORD Mark BRINDLE. He accompanies you from now on and reveals a safer route at the bridge. He never fights or dies in this book.

Approach the wolf with Brindle safely behind you. Go to 10 / p. 15

Walk together toward the heath. Go to 13 / p. 18

Seek shelter at the chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return to the woodland paths. Go to 8 / p. 13

The Wolf in the Coats

The wolf stands over a heap of torn watchmen's coats. Beneath one sleeve, a small empty lantern catches your light.

It is not stalking you. It is guarding the only patch of ground where the frost has melted. Each time the distant beacon groans, the animal shudders and snaps at something you cannot see.

The trail squeezes between a fallen pine and the hollow. Passing close would put you within reach of its teeth. Retreat is still possible.

You can make a controlled bright flash and give it room to escape, or you can watch its movements and use the fallen tree as a barrier. Charging into the hollow would corner it.

If Brindle is with you, he waits behind the tree. This is your decision, not his test of loyalty.

RECORD If WOLF is already marked, the trail is clear. Go directly to section 12 without spending a charge.

Spend 1 CHARGE: flash the lantern and open an escape route. Only if you have a charge. Go to 12 / p. 17

Read its movements and use the fallen pine. Go to 11 / p. 16

Withdraw without disturbing the hollow. Go to 8 / p. 13

Give It Somewhere to Go

The wolf lowers its head before each lunge. Its eyes stay on the lantern, not your feet.

You edge behind the fallen pine, keeping the warm hollow open on the far side. When the wolf springs, you let the trunk take the impact. Bark flies. The animal scrambles back, startled by the space where you ought to have been.

An Iron Warden can hold the loose branch across the narrow approach. A Thorn Scout can lure the wolf past the gap without being caught. An Ember Keeper can draw its attention with a brief, ordinary flicker of the shutter. None requires a charged burst.

The opening lasts only a moment. You could press forward now. Or you could give the frightened creature the distance it has been asking for all along.

Use your path's tactic, then step back and let it flee. Go to 12 / p. 17

Rush into the hollow while it is cornered. Go to 39 / p. 44

Withdraw while the trunk keeps you apart. Go to 8 / p. 13

An Empty Lantern

The wolf slips between the trees and is gone. After a while the forest begins to sound like a forest again: water falling, branches stirring, a bird objecting to the disturbance.

The lantern beneath the coats bears the initials of a watchman Mara sent home with frostbitten hands. He survived. You remember his bandaged fingers around a bowl at the Lantern House.

There is no secret key in the hollow. Only the remains of someone's work and a frightened animal trying to keep warm.

You set the lantern upright beside the trail. When the patrol returns, they will know the way is clear. If Brindle is with you, he sniffs the coats once, then follows you without looking back.

RECORD Mark WOLF. This encounter stays resolved for the rest of the journey.

Continue to Whispering Heath. Go to 13 / p. 18

Go to the Glass Chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return to the woodland paths. Go to 8 / p. 13

Whispering Heath



"Someone once meant this place to be listened to."

The trees give way to pale heather. On the ridge above you, a small brass bell hangs inside a split stone arch. It moves in the wind without ringing.

At the foot of the arch, names have been cut into the stone in several different hands. Keepers. Masons. People who carried oil up the same hill every winter. One shallow carving shows open hands beneath a flame; a later iron plate has been fastened across part of it.

A low cairn stands nearby. Its top stone is tilted, revealing the edge of something brass.

The voices in the grass are only wind until you stop trying to make out words. Then you hear a rhythm: a question, a pause, an answer. Someone once meant this place to be listened to.

Clean the carving and ring the memorial bell. Go to 14 / p. 19

Examine the keeper's cairn. Go to 15 / p. 20

Go down to the Glass Chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return through Briarwood. Go to 8 / p. 13

The Promise Before the Lock

You work the rusted plate loose. Beneath it, the carving continues: the hands are open, and the flame is leaving them.

The bell gives one clear note. For an instant the heath is crowded with the memory of lanterns. You hear many voices speak together:

"We shelter the valley; we do not own the light."

An Ember Keeper recognizes an oath preserved in the bell's metal. A Warden hears the limit of an authority. A Scout notices what the later plate was made to hide.

The old inscription promises shelter freely offered and a door that must remain open. It does not promise that a spirit will stay forever, or that people can avoid the work of keeping one another warm.

You write the words down exactly. A promise can be forgotten by those who inherit it. That does not make the forgetting innocent.

RECORD Mark OATH. It can halt the tower guardian and makes a new covenant possible at the end. It does not force Aster to agree.

Examine the nearby cairn. Go to 15 / p. 20

Carry the oath to the chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return to the heath paths. Go to 13 / p. 18

The Brass Ward

Beneath the tilted stone lies a small brass disk on a length of green cord. Around its edge, an old keeper has scratched: RETURN WHAT YOU BORROW.

It is a ward made to turn a single lash of the beacon's cold light. There are scratches where generations of hands have fitted it to a lantern. No name marks an owner.

You can leave it here for the next traveller. Or carry it to the ridge, accepting the obligation written around its edge. A tool left to be used is not a treasure chest waiting to be emptied.

If you take it, the disk fits your lantern hood neatly. If you leave it, you set the stone so that someone else will still see the edge of brass.

RECORD WARD is one item, never a repeat reward. At section 38 it can replace a lantern charge without being consumed. Record whether you return it in your ending journal.

Take the ward, mark WARD, and return to the heath. Go to 13 / p. 18

Leave it for another traveller and return to the heath. Go to 13 / p. 18

Listen to the bell before deciding. Go to 14 / p. 19

The Glass Chapel



"A watchman at a boundary.
Not every raised hand
is asking for a fight."

The roof has fallen in, but a surviving arch shelters the altar. Rain glitters on fragments of coloured glass. The floor is littered with stars that cannot shine on their own.

A lens rests in a brass cradle beneath the altar. Between you and it stands an empty watchman's coat, stiffened around a shape of pale glass and cold light. When you lift your lantern, the shape raises one hollow hand.

It does not pursue you to the doorway. It is guarding a boundary.

Something white is folded under the lens. A note, perhaps. Elian has left you a part that matters, but he has not left it unguarded. You must decide whether the watchman needs an enemy or an answer.

RECORD If LENS is already marked, the sentinel is gone. Go to section 19 to reread the note, or choose a travel route.

Lower your weapon and answer with light. Go to 17 / p. 22

Watch the sentinel, then confront it. Go to 18 / p. 23

Leave for Whispering Heath. Go to 13 / p. 18

Follow the path to the Broken Span. Go to 30 / p. 35

Return through Briarwood. Go to 8 / p. 13

A Watchman's Greeting

The sentinel holds its palm level, as if checking the height of a flame. Its gesture has the tired precision of someone performing a familiar duty.

An Ember Keeper knows the greeting: shutter closed, then open, then lowered. It is a signal that the visitor carries light for shelter rather than attack.

If you learned the first keepers' oath, speaking it while lowering your lantern serves the same purpose. Otherwise, a measured charge will make your small flame bright enough for the failing sentinel to recognize.

For a moment you glimpse the person this machine was meant to imitate: a watchman lifting a hand to a traveller arriving late. It would be a pity to answer that memory only with a weapon.

If you are an EMBER KEEPER or have OATH: give the greeting. Go to 19 / p. 24

Otherwise, spend 1 CHARGE to give a clear signal. Only if you have a charge. Go to 19 / p. 24

Try a careful physical approach instead. Go to 18 / p. 23

Step back into the doorway. Go to 16 / p. 21

Between the Flashes

The sentinel's raised hand fills with white light. You see the gathering brightness before it strikes.

You shelter behind the stone altar. The blast crosses the chapel and fades against the open doorway. Then the hand goes dark. Three small pulses flicker inside its chest as the mechanism recovers.

An Iron Warden can reach the exposed clasp in those three beats and break it with a controlled blow. A Thorn Scout can circle behind the coat and cut the binding wire. Anyone can use a lantern charge to overwhelm the recovering core.

There is another way to win this exchange: step back and reconsider the greeting. You have learned enough to know that attacking while its hand is bright would be a mistake.

WARDEN or SCOUT: wait for the flash, then disable the mechanism. Go to 19 / p. 24

Spend 1 CHARGE to interrupt its recovery. Only if you have a charge. Go to 19 / p. 24

Try speaking to it with your lantern. Go to 17 / p. 22

Attack while its raised hand is bright. Go to 39 / p. 44

The Lens and the Note

The sentinel's light dwindles to harmless sparks. Its coat settles on the wet floor.

You lift the lens from its cradle. It is not made to magnify the beacon's flame. Fine channels inside the glass divide a single beam into separate streams, each with its own shutter.

Elian's note is folded beneath it.

"The thing in the light remembers its name. I will not let it remain a prisoner. Nera says we must separate the warmth from the lock before we open it. This lens can do that. If the guardian stops me, take it to her."

The words answer one question and open another. Elian may have meant to repair a wrong. Meaning well did not stop the watchlights from failing.

You wrap the lens in dry cloth. It feels warm, even through your gloves.

RECORD Mark LENS. Keep it permanently. Revisiting this section gives no extra item or reward.

Take the lens to Nera at the quarry. Go to 26 / p. 31

Investigate the mill records. Go to 20 / p. 25

Go to the Broken Span. Go to 30 / p. 35

Return to the chapel paths. Go to 16 / p. 21

The Drowned Mill



"A quiet solution is not always a complete one."

Water laps at the counting-room step. The mill wheel turns once against the current, stops, then begins again with a noise like a tooth being pulled.

A young man in a patched coat stands between you and the desk. One hand holds a hooked knife; the other rests on a ledger.

"This place is closed," he says.

His eyes go to your pack. Behind him, a cold cooking pot sits beside a small pile of soaked flour. The knife is steady, but his face has the drawn look of someone who has been hungry long enough to stop admitting it.

You can see the wheel housing through a broken shutter. It would offer a quiet way in. The open floor offers a less quiet one. There may also be a way to ask for what you need without making him defend the only thing he has found worth keeping.

RECORD If RECORD is marked, the ledger is already yours. Go directly to section 24 or choose a travel route; do not replay the encounter.

Ask his name and offer a bargain. Go to 21 / p. 26

Investigate the wheel housing. Go to 22 / p. 27

Confront him across the counting-room floor. Go to 23 / p. 28

Leave for Cinder Quarry. Go to 26 / p. 31

Return to the Pilgrim Road. Go to 5 / p. 10

Tovin's Bargain

"Tovin," he says, reluctantly. "I worked the lower flume. Before it froze."

He took the ledger because wages were still owed, and because the deliveries written inside looked valuable. He cannot eat a ledger. He is afraid that once he gives it up, no one will listen to him at all.

If you brought Sella's bread, you can lay it on the table and tell him where it came from. Otherwise you can offer something he needs just as much: your name beneath a promise to bring his complaint to Mara.

Neither offer requires you to excuse the knife. You ask him to put it down before you step closer.

"Will you actually remember?" he asks.

You have been asked to save a valley. It would be easy to forget one person in it.

If BREAD is marked: give it to Tovin, erase BREAD, and mark KINDNESS. Go to 24 / p. 29

Promise to take his wage claim to Mara; mark PROMISE. Go to 24 / p. 29

Refuse the bargain and demand the ledger. Go to 23 / p. 28

Leave him space and step outside. Go to 20 / p. 25

Through the Wheel Housing

The wheel's backward turn leaves a brief gap below the shaft. On the far side, the counting-room window has lost its latch.

A Thorn Scout can judge the interval and slip through safely. Anyone else can spend a charge to warm the frost that keeps the wheel slipping; once it settles, the passage will hold still long enough.

Tovin's back is to the window. The ledger lies within reach. You could take it without confronting him, but he will still be hungry when you leave. A quiet solution is not always a complete one.

There is time to choose. The wheel groans again, and black river water spills through the lower boards.

SCOUT: take the ledger quietly and mark SILENT. Go to 24 / p. 29

Spend 1 CHARGE, take the ledger quietly, and mark SILENT. Only if you have a charge. Go to 24 / p. 29

Return to the door and talk to Tovin. Go to 21 / p. 26

Force your way through while the wheel is moving. Go to 39 / p. 44

The Hooked Blade

Tovin braces his knife against the edge of the desk. He wants you to rush into it. The floor between you is slick enough to make that a dangerous invitation.

You stop outside his reach. He shifts his weight, uncertain. The chair beside him has a broken leg; the ledger is under his free hand.

An Iron Warden can hook the blade aside with the guard of a sword and pin it to the desk. A Thorn Scout can pull the broken chair into his path, then take the knife when he stumbles. An Ember Keeper can flare a charge against the metal and make it too hot to hold.

There is no need to kill him. You need a book, not a body. Even now you can put your weapon down and offer a bargain.

WARDEN or SCOUT: disarm Tovin; mark FORCE. Go to 24 / p. 29

Spend 1 CHARGE to disarm him; mark FORCE. Only if you have a charge. Go to 24 / p. 29

Lower your weapon and negotiate. Go to 21 / p. 26

Charge straight across the wet floor. Go to 39 / p. 44

What the Records Prove

Elian's signature appears beside three recent deliveries: oil, copper channel, replacement mirrored panels. Under them, the old accounts list the same chamber, repaired again and again across generations.

The newest plan is different. A second channel runs around the old lock instead of through it. In the margin, Nera has written: "Test the separate return first. Do not connect under load."

A note from the mill foreman records the exact hour the flume froze. It matches the first failed test at the beacon.

Elian did not build the original prison. He bought parts to alter it. That distinction does not clear him of responsibility for the cold now spreading through the valley.

You take the relevant pages and the signed plan. What you carry is evidence, not a verdict.

RECORD Mark RECORD. Keep your chosen mill outcome: KINDNESS, PROMISE, SILENT, or FORCE. Do not collect another outcome by replaying the encounter.

Bring the records to Nera. Go to 26 / p. 31

Examine the mill's strongbox before leaving. Go to 25 / p. 30

Seek the lens at the chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Go toward the Broken Span. Go to 30 / p. 35

Return along the Pilgrim Road. Go to 5 / p. 10

Money with Names Beside It

A payroll sheet is pasted beneath the strongbox lid. The hinge is broken; no skill is needed to lift it. Inside, twelve crowns sit in six paper packets, each marked with a worker's name.

They are not forgotten treasure. They are wages someone expected to take home.

You can leave the box intact and tell Mara where it is. You can carry the packets back yourself, keeping the names with the coins. Or you can take them for your own use and decide not to mention the sheet.

No shop purchase will decide this adventure. What matters here is what you do when no one is standing over your shoulder.

The mill creaks. Behind the boards, the wheel begins its wrong-way turn again.

RECORD Choose once only. WAGES and TAKEN are mutually exclusive and cannot be changed on a revisit. No currency total is used in this book.

Carry the named packets for Mara; mark WAGES. Go to 24 / p. 29

Leave them intact and note the location; mark WAGES. Go to 24 / p. 29

Take the money for yourself; mark TAKEN. Go to 24 / p. 29

The Engineer in the Quarry



"A rescue is not the same thing as a repair."

The quarry cranes stand motionless against the sky. Stone dust has turned the puddles grey. You knock on a tool-shed door, and a shutter opens the width of a finger.

"If he sent you for another part, tell him no."

Nera's voice is hoarse. When you say Elian is missing, the shutter opens farther. A russet scarf is knotted around her throat; there is a fresh bandage on one wrist.

"I told him the return wasn't ready. He said there was no time. Now I can hear the regulator from here."

A brace slips behind her. The shed wall has cracked where a crane cable pulled loose, and she has been holding it with stacked tools.

You could show her what you found. You could also help with the wall before asking her to tell you anything.

RECORD If WITNESS is already marked, Nera trusts you. Go directly to section 28 or 29; she does not need to be persuaded again.

If RECORD or LENS is marked: show Nera your evidence. Go to 28 / p. 33

Help secure the damaged shed. Go to 27 / p. 32

Return to the mill for evidence. Go to 20 / p. 25

Go to the Broken Span. Go to 30 / p. 35

A Brace That Holds

Nera points to a loose beam. "Under the crosspiece. Not against the door. If we pin the door, neither of us gets out."

An Iron Warden can lift while she wedges the support. A Scout can rig the shed's little pulley so the weight is shared. An Ember Keeper can warm the frozen joint with a measured charge, allowing the beam to settle into place.

If none of those suits you, you can fetch three smaller props from the yard. It will take longer, but together you can carry them. Nera watches you consider that unglamorous answer and almost smiles.

The work gives you both something useful to do with your fear. When the wall finally holds, she puts down the hammer.

"All right," she says. "Ask."

RECORD Mark HELPED when you finish any of these approaches. The slower choice is safe; this book has no hidden time limit.

WARDEN or SCOUT: use your training to secure the brace. Go to 28 / p. 33

Spend 1 CHARGE to free the joint. Only if you have a charge. Go to 28 / p. 33

Work together with the smaller props; no charge needed. Go to 28 / p. 33

What Nera Saw

"The cage was already there," Nera says. "Elian found records of it behind the keeper's wall. He heard someone speak inside. After that he could hardly bear to go down to town and let people thank him for the light."

She built a separate return channel so the valley could be warmed without pulling through the lock. It needed the chapel lens to divide the flow safely.

"He tested the connection before I finished. The old regulator fought the new one. It began taking heat out of the fields. When he tried to stop it, the guardian treated him as a saboteur."

She will testify to all of it, including her own part. But she will not pretend that a rescue is the same thing as a repair.

"Bring the record and the lens. With both, I can show you what must happen before anyone opens anything."

RECORD Mark WITNESS. Nera's account is permanent. You still need RECORD and LENS before you can prepare the regulator safely.

If RECORD and LENS are marked: work through the safe sequence. Go to 29 / p. 34

Find the mill record. Go to 20 / p. 25

Find the chapel lens. Go to 16 / p. 21

Inspect the Broken Span first. Go to 30 / p. 35

Three Things in the Right Order

Nera spreads the signed plan across her bench. You set the lens beside it. With the parts together, what looked like a maze becomes a route.

"First, isolate the old return. That stops the machine taking heat from the valley. Second, fit this lens into the separate channel. Third, open the shutters slowly. Only then do you touch the cage."

She makes you repeat the sequence. Not because she doubts your courage; because courage cannot make a reversed valve harmless.

If you carry OATH, she reads it twice. "An agreement with a way out. I can build for that. I cannot build a person's consent into a machine."

She packs her tools. "I'll come as far as the gate. After you make the crossing safe, I'll follow. Someone needs to watch the return while you deal with the guardian."

For the first time since Greyhaven, the work feels shared.

RECORD Requires RECORD + LENS + WITNESS. Mark PLAN. Nera waits at the near side of the span while you finish any preparations. PLAN is required at the ridge gate.

Set out for the Broken Span. Go to 30 / p. 35

Visit the memorial first, with Nera's questions in mind. Go to 13 / p. 18

Return to Greyhaven for a full lantern before the climb. Go to 4 / p. 9

The Broken Span



"A safe road is a kindness to the person who comes after you."

The gorge is narrower than you expected and deeper than you wanted. Half the bridge has fallen away. Across it, a brass gate bears three words: RECORD. LENS. WITNESS.

You can inspect the crossing before your evidence is complete, but the far gate will not open without the record, lens, Nera's testimony, and the safe plan prepared with her.

Fallen timbers lie beside the road. Below the parapet, a narrow ledge follows the cliff. Old ward-stones are set into the surviving arch.

If Brindle walks with you, he sniffs a dry line of stones leading to the ledge. You secure his lead before going near the edge. He will cross only after you have fixed a safe line.

Wind rises out of the gorge. Beyond it, the Hollow Beacon waits without a flame.

RECORD If CROSSING is already marked, go directly to section 34. The secured route stays open on return trips.

Consider bracing the gap with timbers. Go to 31 / p. 36

Inspect the cliff ledge. Go to 32 / p. 37

Examine the old ward-stones. Go to 33 / p. 38

Return to Nera for evidence or the plan. Go to 26 / p. 31

Return to the chapel. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return through Briarwood. Go to 8 / p. 13

Weight and Counterweight

The nearest beam is sound. The cable around it is not. You cut away the frayed length and test what remains before trusting it with your weight.

An Iron Warden knows how to brace the far end against the broken arch. Anyone else can spend a charge to reveal cracks in the stone and find a safe seat for the timber.

There is no need to leap. You crawl out with the line around your waist, secure the far end, then return for your pack. Once the second beam is bound beside the first, there is room for Nera to follow with her tools.

You test the crossing one more time. A safe road is a kindness to the person who comes after you, especially when that person is carrying the equipment you need.

WARDEN: finish the brace and mark CROSSING. Go to 34 / p. 39

Spend 1 CHARGE to find safe anchors; mark CROSSING. Only if you have a charge. Go to 34 / p. 39

Choose another crossing method. Go to 30 / p. 35

The Builders' Ledge

The ledge was made by the bridge builders. Iron rings remain in the rock, hidden from the road by ferns.

A Thorn Scout can find the secure handholds. With Brindle beside you, his earlier discovery points out the dry approach; you examine it carefully and find the same route. Otherwise a charge of lantern light will pick the sound rings out from the rusted ones.

You leave your pack and any companion on the safe bank while you fix the line. Then you cross back to guide the others. Brindle, if present, wears a spare sling beneath his chest; Nera keeps him close while you manage the rope.

At the far end, you tie off the line where someone returning in poor light will be able to find it.

If SCOUT or BRINDLE: secure the route and mark CROSSING. Go to 34 / p. 39

Spend 1 CHARGE to locate sound rings; mark CROSSING. Only if you have a charge. Go to 34 / p. 39

Return to the bridge and choose another method. Go to 30 / p. 35

Names in the Stone

The ward-stones carry names, not commands. You brush away the grit and uncover the marks of the masons who raised the bridge.

An Ember Keeper understands how to give those names back to the waiting arch. Anyone else can spend one charge, letting the lantern carry the pattern when the words will not come.

Amber threads gather between the broken stones. They do not rebuild the whole bridge. They hold a narrow path, just wide enough for a careful crossing. You fasten a guide rope along its edge.

The ward is not a thing you have conquered. It is old work being asked to do its purpose once more. You thank the names before you step onto the light.

EMBER KEEPER: wake the ward and mark CROSSING. Go to 34 / p. 39

Spend 1 CHARGE to wake the ward; mark CROSSING. Only if you have a charge. Go to 34 / p. 39

Choose another crossing method. Go to 30 / p. 35

The Gate That Asks Why

The brass gate has no keyhole. It was built to keep a stranger from reaching the heart with a tool in one hand and no understanding in the other.

The record fits beneath a glass plate. The lens lights the second seal. When Nera speaks her account through the grille, the third seal warms beneath your fingers.

If anything is missing, the gate stays shut. The crossing remains safe, and you can return without paying its cost again.

If you have also prepared the safe plan, Nera checks the sequence with you one last time. The gate opens inward. Far above, something heavy moves on the stairs.

"I'll watch the lower return," she says. "Don't let anyone persuade you to hurry the valves. Not even Elian."

Only with RECORD + LENS + WITNESS + PLAN + CROSSING: enter the tower. Go to 35 / p. 40

Return to Nera for testimony or the safe plan. Go to 26 / p. 31

Return for the mill record. Go to 20 / p. 25

Return for the lens. Go to 16 / p. 21

Return to the near side of the span. Go to 30 / p. 35

The Unlit Warden



"Shield. Strike. Darkness."

The guardian fills the stairwell. Cold light runs through the joints of its metal armour, and its blade leaves a white line in the air when it turns.

Behind it, a man grips the upper railing. His beard is grey with stone dust. "Stay back," he calls. "It doesn't know me anymore."

The Unlit Warden was made to defend the heart against damage. Now it cannot distinguish a repair from an attack on the prison inside. Elian's attempt to open the lock has made him an intruder in his own tower.

The guardian lifts its weapon. Then it waits. You notice the lantern in its chest shuttering in a fixed rhythm: shield, strike, darkness.

If you learned the original oath, you may be able to remind it of an older duty. Otherwise you will have to get close enough to stop it.

RECORD If GUARDIAN is already marked, it remains resolved. Go directly to section 40.

If OATH is marked: speak the first keepers' words. Go to 36 / p. 41

Study the guardian's pattern before engaging. Go to 37 / p. 42

Withdraw through the gate to prepare. Go to 34 / p. 39

An Older Instruction

"We shelter the valley; we do not own the light."

The guardian's raised blade stops. You speak the words again, slowly, and hold your lantern low. This is not a threat for it to answer.

Inside its chest, two patterns of light struggle against one another. The newer order commands it to protect the closed chamber. The older oath describes something the chamber was never meant to become.

One metal finger uncurls. Then another. The blade lowers to the step with a sound like a bell heard through a wall.

Elian comes down the stairs carefully. He does not touch the guardian as he passes.

"I stopped reading the old instructions," he says. "I thought I knew what they meant."

The machine steps aside. You wonder how many people have made the same mistake without ever being built of brass.

RECORD Requires OATH. Mark GUARDIAN and MERCY. No charge is spent. This encounter stays resolved.

Join Elian on the stair. Go to 40 / p. 45

Shield, Strike, Darkness

The guardian turns its chest away while its blade rises. Then it strikes across the entire stair. After the blow, its inner lantern goes dark for three beats.

You shelter behind a stone pier through the first sweep. Chips strike your coat. Elian calls out, "The chest clasp! While the shutter is closed!"

If you rush now, you will meet the second stroke. If you wait, there will be an opening.

An Iron Warden can brace the fallen railing across the blade's path. A Thorn Scout can move under the sweep and reach the service catch from behind. An Ember Keeper can echo the rhythm of the shutter, making the machine pause long enough to expose its clasp.

Any of these methods needs patience. Raw force against the guarded chest would only teach the machine where you stand.

Use your chosen path's tactic after the sweep. Go to 38 / p. 43

Rush the guardian while its blade is rising. Go to 39 / p. 44

If OATH is marked: abandon the attack and speak it. Go to 36 / p. 41

Withdraw to the entrance. Go to 35 / p. 40

The Exposed Clasp

The clasp opens. Cold light spills through the gap, searching for the nearest warmth: yours.

A lantern charge can turn it aside. So can the brass ward, if you carry it. Without either, you must duck behind the pier and wait through another full sweep before reaching back in with the fallen iron hook. The slower approach is dangerous to watch, but safe if you keep the stone between you and the beam.

You pull the locking pin free. The guardian's blade falls from its hand, and its great frame settles onto one knee. The light inside it shrinks to a thread, then disappears.

You stand still until the last movement stops. Elian descends the stair. Below you, Nera calls that the lower return is holding.

The path to the heart is open. That is not yet the same as putting things right.

If WARD is marked: turn the beam aside, then mark GUARDIAN and BATTLE. Go to 40 / p. 45

Spend 1 CHARGE to turn it aside; mark GUARDIAN and BATTLE. Only if you have a charge. Go to 40 / p. 45

Use the stone pier and iron hook; mark GUARDIAN and BATTLE. No charge needed. Go to 40 / p. 45

The Price of Hurrying

The opening closes before you reach it. You pull back too late, hit stone, and feel the world tip sideways.

You are not left for the mist. On the low roads, Mara's patrol finds you by your lantern. Beyond the gate, Nera gets you clear and calls the patrol across the route you secured. If Brindle is with you, he stays close enough to trip every rescuer in turn.

At the Lantern House you wake beneath a rough wool blanket. There is a bruise where your courage outran your judgment. The keeper puts a cup beside you and says nothing until you have drunk it.

You keep your evidence, your companion, and everything you learned. The encounter you failed is still waiting unless you had already resolved it. This time, you know what warning to listen for.

RECORD Record one SETBACK in your journal. No items or discoveries are lost. Section 4 refills your lantern to 3. There is no death ending or currency penalty in this book.

Rest fully at the Lantern House before trying again. Go to 4 / p. 9

Elian's Part in It



"I thought being sorry quickly was better than being careful slowly."

Elian's hands shake too badly to hold the cup you offer. You set it on a step between you.

"I heard Aster speak," he says. "I had spent my whole life tending a light. I never asked whether the light could hear me."

He found the old records and asked Nera for a separate channel. Then, afraid he would lose his resolve, he tested it before she was ready. When the regulator reversed, he removed the lens and hid it at the chapel so the guardian could not destroy it. His attempt to reach the cage locked him upstairs.

"I thought being sorry quickly was better than being careful slowly."

Nera reaches the landing with her tools. "You meant to free someone. You still made the valley pay for your haste."

He does not argue. For once, he seems ready to hear the answer before deciding what to do.

RECORD If WARNING is marked, you show the matching test times. Elian accepts the record. If SELLA is marked, you give her message; he remembers the unfinished cup and the town waiting below.

Ask to hear Aster's own account. Go to 41 / p. 46

First review the repair with Nera. Go to 42 / p. 47

Aster Has a Name



"Is that better?"

The mirrored chamber is bright enough to hurt your eyes. When you shield them, the light inside dims.

"Is that better?" a voice asks.

You had prepared for a power, perhaps a monster. The courtesy leaves you without an answer for a moment.

"Aster," it says. "That is my name. You may use it."

Long ago, Aster offered shelter through a hard winter. The first keepers left the door open. Later keepers shut it, afraid that a gift might end. Their children inherited warmth without being told what held it there.

"I remember people bringing me stories," Aster says. "After a while they only brought instructions."

You explain the valley's danger. Aster listens, then asks whether you intend to repair the cage or open it.

It is a fair question. You will not answer it on Elian's behalf, or let him answer it on yours.

Ask Nera to separate the dangerous return before any final choice. Go to 42 / p. 47

Ask Elian what he will tell the town afterward. Go to 40 / p. 45

Repair Before Judgment

Nera takes her place at the lower wheel. Elian stands at the shutters, waiting for her signal. You fit the chapel lens into the separate channel.

First, isolate the old return. The floor stops drawing warmth through your boots.

Second, seat the lens. Fine lines of amber divide across its surface.

Third, ease the shutters open. The machine's harsh vibration settles into a steady hum. Outside, the mist begins to loosen its grip on the ridge.

The danger caused by the failed test is contained. No final choice now requires an uncontrolled release of heat. But the valley's future supply still depends on what happens to Aster: continued binding, full release, or a freely offered agreement.

Nera takes her hands from the wheel. "The repair is ready. That is my work. The next part needs all of us to speak plainly."

RECORD Mark SAFE. You must complete this sequence before choosing an ending. Returning here never consumes charges or repeats rewards.

Discuss the three possible futures. Go to 43 / p. 48

Hear Aster before deciding. Go to 41 / p. 46

What You Can Ask

Aster waits within the mirrors. Below, Greyhaven's few ordinary lights are visible through a broken window.

You can restore the old watchlights. They will shelter the valley immediately, but Aster will remain bound. Knowing the truth will make that choice harder to hide from the town.

You can open the cage and release Aster. The dangerous return is already isolated; the killing fog will lift. The watchlights will lose their source, and Greyhaven will need ordinary fires, patrols, and work shared through the winter.

If you learned OATH, you can offer its original terms: shelter freely given, an open door, and the right to leave. Aster may accept an agreement, but not another command dressed in gentler language.

Elian does not reach for a lever. Nera does not tell you which future is yours to choose. You turn toward the light and speak.

RECORD Requires SAFE. This is the final choice. To try another ending later, start a fresh journey or keep a separate copy of your record.

Restore the watchlights and keep Aster bound. Go to 44 / p. 49

Open the cage and release Aster. Go to 45 / p. 50

Only with OATH: offer a new covenant with an open door. Go to 46 / p. 51

Ask Aster again before committing. Go to 41 / p. 46

A Light That Never Leaves



"You do not call the silence agreement."

You return the old lock to its working position. The repaired lens steadies the flow. One by one, the watchlights brighten along the ridge.

Below, someone rings Greyhaven's alarm bell in relief. You hear the sound thinly through the open window.

Aster grows quiet. It does not curse you or make the choice easier by becoming cruel. The mirrors simply close around a living light that has asked to leave.

Elian looks toward the town. "They must know," he says.

"All of it," Nera answers.

The valley will be warm tonight. That matters. So does the person who will not be allowed to see the sky. You have chosen a certain shelter, and you will have to carry its cost into the place that thanks you for it.

When you leave the chamber, you do not call the silence agreement.

RECORD ENDING: BOUND. Record "A Light That Never Leaves" on your journey record. This preserves the bound outcome of the web adventure.

Return to Greyhaven with the truth. Go to 47 / p. 52

A Sky Without a Cage



"The sky is only sky, and yours to look at without a lock."

You open the mirrored door.

Aster waits at its edge. For one impossible moment, after so long spent imagining this movement, it seems unable to make it.

"You may go," you say.

Light rises through the broken roof. It does not burn the stone or sweep you aside. It passes into the cloud like a warm breath, and the killing fog begins to lift from the fields.

The watchlights go out. This time they are empty, not failing. The separate return is quiet, and no cold reaches from the tower to take their place.

On the road below, Mara's volunteers are already stacking wood. Freedom has not repaired every roof or gathered the winter fuel. People will have to do those things for one another.

At the edge of the cloud, a small light turns once toward the valley. Then the sky is only sky, and yours to look at without a lock.

RECORD ENDING: FREE. Record "A Sky Without a Cage" on your journey record. This preserves the free outcome of the web adventure.

Return to help the town prepare. Go to 47 / p. 52

The Lanterns We Choose



"Because the door cannot close."

You speak the first keepers' oath and open the door before asking for anything.

Aster rises to the broken roof. You wait. If the answer is departure, you must let it be departure.

At last the light turns back. "I will share the winter," it says. "Not because the door can close. Because it cannot."

Nera adjusts the separate channel so each lantern can receive a freely offered flame without holding it. Elian removes the locking bar and lays it on the floor where everyone can see it.

Small lights drift toward the valley. They settle in windows, on walls, beside the tired hands of people carrying wood. Aster remains a presence among them, not a prisoner at the top of the ridge.

There will be ordinary fires too. There must be. A promise becomes a cage again if the people receiving it arrange their lives so that no one is ever allowed to stop giving.

RECORD Requires OATH + SAFE. ENDING: COVENANT. Record "The Lanterns We Choose." This preserves the accord outcome of the web adventure.

Carry the covenant home. Go to 47 / p. 52

The Town That Must Hear

Mara meets you outside the gate. Before she asks whether the beacon will burn, she counts the people coming down the road.

Elian steps forward. His account takes longer than the town wants and less time than he fears. He names the old imprisonment, his rushed test, and Nera's warning. No one is asked to turn a mistake into a secret so that a keeper can remain admirable.

Nera describes what the machines can safely do now. Mara writes down what the people must do next. Sella brings cups without interrupting.

If PROMISE or WAGES is marked, you place Tovin's complaint and the payroll information before Mara. She promises to trace the workers and settle the claim. Mark KEPT. If KINDNESS is marked, Tovin is already at the inn, helping carry firewood. If SILENT or FORCE is marked, you can still tell Mara where he is.

If TAKEN is marked, the missing wages are part of the truth you owe. Decide whether to return them; write that decision in your journal.

RECORD Resolve your smaller promises here. If you carry WARD, arrange its return to the cairn and record that choice. Brindle, if recruited, stays beside you through the homecoming.

See what morning brings. Go to 48 / p. 53

Beyond the First Ridge

Morning does not arrive with a trumpet. It comes as colour returning to wet stone.

If Aster remains BOUND, the watchlights shine through the pale dawn. Mara has called a public meeting about the truth behind their warmth. Gratitude has not settled the question.

If Aster is FREE, smoke rises from ordinary hearths. The first volunteer patrol returns with cold fingers and a story to tell. Sella opens the door before they knock.

If you made a COVENANT, little flames wait in open lanterns. Beside them, the town stacks wood anyway. The right to leave is being made practical.

If Brindle came with you, he sleeps across your boots while you write. Otherwise a chair beside the hearth waits for your pack.

A courier arrives from Meridian. On roads far beyond this valley, mornings have begun to lose their warmth. Mara sets the sealed message beside your cup. It can wait until you have finished this page.

RECORD Chapter I is complete. The message points toward Chapter II, The Roads Without Dawn. Keep your ending and key decisions for the next book; PDF records do not automatically import into the web games.

Complete your traveller's journal. Go to 49 / p. 54

Begin again: clear your record and choose a new path first. Go to 1 / p. 6

The traveller's journal

The ending tells what happened to the light. These notes tell what happened to you. Keep this page with your record for the next chapter.

Which ending did you choose, and why?

Who did you help? Did Brindle walk with you?

What happened to Tovin, the wages, and the borrowed ward?

What did a setback or a difficult choice teach your traveller?

What promise will you carry toward Meridian?

Setbacks: 0 Completed on:

A story made for choices

Ash and Lantern: The Hollow Beacon
The Greyhaven Chronicles, Book One
By Marcus Draper / Deskatur
Illustrated gamebook, revised edition 2.0 - November 2026.

This book adapts the first web adventure into a dice-free reading experience. It preserves Greyhaven, Elian, Nera, Aster, Brindle, the core discoveries, and the three established outcomes. Scenes, dialogue, tactical choices, and smaller consequences have been expanded for the book.

The book follows the web adventure's central history: Aster's confinement predates Elian. His attempt to release Aster goes wrong when an unfinished regulator draws heat from the valley. Nera's sequence makes the final choice safe to carry out; it does not remove its consequences.

The character record intentionally differs from the web game. There are no numeric combat statistics, shop prices, or automatic damage rolls here. PDF choices and fields are manual. A completed book record is not a web-game save file.

Illustrations
Eight illustrations are retained from the supplied draft. Six new AI-generated illustrations depict Greyhaven, the mill, Nera, the memorial bell, the span, and Elian. New art was created with OpenAI image generation; it is not presented as hand-painted commissioned work.

Continuing the series
Chapter II: The Roads Without Dawn
Chapter III: The Bells Beneath the Sea
Chapter IV: The City That Waited
This book has a complete ending. The Meridian message is an invitation to continue.

Play the original web adventure
deskatur.com/ashandlantern/
For duplex home printing, use actual size and flip on the long edge. This edition uses US Letter pages; printer-specific trimming and commercial binding setup are not included.



Some lights are not ours to keep.

Three watchlights have failed. A keeper has vanished. A hungry stranger guards a ledger, an engineer waits behind a broken door, and an old oath lies hidden beneath rust.

Carry your lantern through Greyhaven's valley. Learn what was promised, what was taken, and what it would mean to give the light a choice.

48 STORY SECTIONS / 3 ENDINGS
14 ILLUSTRATIONS / CLICKABLE CHOICES
FILLABLE RECORD AND ENDING JOURNAL

DESKATUR ORIGINALS / MARCUS DRAPER