THE CAMPAIGN GM ONLY

Campaign Guide

How the four cases and the finale fit together, and the secret behind them all.

Campaign Overview

Gale’s Landing is a campaign of four standalone mysteries, playable in any order, followed by a much scarier finale that ties them together. Two of the mysteries are truly paranormal and two turn out to have ordinary explanations, so the players never know which kind they’re in until the end.

The frame: Ada’s case board

Ada Finch, who runs Finch’s Books & Tea and the Gale’s Landing Historical Society, has noticed that strange things are happening all over town this autumn. In the back room of her shop she keeps a corkboard with four case folders pinned to it. The heroes become her investigators.

At the start of each mystery, lay the remaining folders on the table and let the players point at the one they want to open next. After each mystery, they pin that case’s clue cards to the board. The board is a real corkboard or a sheet of poster paper, and arranging clues on it is a great job for a player who prefers to work quietly.

CASE FILE	WHERE	REAL OR NOT?	SESSIONS
The Lighthouse Mystery	Whisper Island	Paranormal	3
The Midnight Bell	The Old Meeting House	Paranormal	3
The Beast of Saltmarsh Cove	The cove north of the harbor	Not paranormal	3
The Whispering Inn	The Harbor Inn	Not paranormal (mostly)	3
Finale: The Hundredth Night	All of Gale’s Landing	Very paranormal	3–4

The four mysteries can be played in any order. The finale unlocks only after all four are solved.

Adapting to order

- Whichever mystery comes first, use its opening scene to introduce Ada, the town, and the case board. In later mysteries, Ada greets the heroes as old friends instead.
- NPCs the heroes have already met remember them and act accordingly. Jess, for example, joins as a sidekick in any mystery once the heroes have befriended her.
- The Lighthouse Mystery's Session 1 opening ("You're just in time") works as written if it's played first. Otherwise, Ada simply hands them the folder.

Growing stronger between cases

After each solved mystery, each hero picks one reward:

- +1 Nerve box (up to 6)
- Start every session with 1 extra Courage
- Raise one stat by 1 (no stat above 4)
- A second use of their special move each session (once per campaign)

By the finale, the heroes will need every bit of it.

Between mysteries: quiet scenes

Before opening the next case folder, run one short quiet scene of 10 to 15 minutes, with no rolls and no danger. These let the players get to know the town they'll be fighting for in the finale. Lay out option cards and let the players pick:

- **Cocoa at Ada's:** Ada shows them her old photo albums and tells a story about the town.
- **Feeding Barnacle:** the seal pops up at the cove, and Lenny shows the heroes how to bait a trap (once the Cove is solved).
- **Firewood for Pearl:** stacking logs by the inn's hearth while Pearl gossips cheerfully.
- **Jess's darkroom:** helping Jess develop photos, and one of them shows something odd in the background.
- **The new rhyme:** kids on the meeting house steps chanting the heroes' new verse about Josiah (once the Bell is solved).
- **A ride with Tibbs:** a slow trip around the harbor, full of tall tales.

In each scene, the NPC can share one small worry ("The fog's been coming in earlier every night") to keep the finale building in the background.

The Secret Behind It All (GM Only)

Every hundred years, a hungry fog called the Gray rises from the deep sea and tries to swallow Gale's Landing. The town survives only because of four old protections, the Four Watches, and this autumn all four are failing at once. The hundredth year comes due on the night of the Hunter's Moon.

The Gray

The Gray is not a cloud. It is something old and empty that lives in the cold dark beyond the continental shelf. It cannot be fought with fists or flashlights. When it comes ashore, it creeps through the streets as a thick silver fog and whispers to people in the voices of those they love. Anyone who listens too long walks into the sea in a kind of sleep.

Its real hunger is for memory. A town the Gray swallows isn't just emptied; it is forgotten. Its name fades from maps, its people from photographs, and no one anywhere remembers it existed.

The Four Watches

In 1726, the first settlers of Gale's Landing barely survived the Gray. A healer named Hannah Gale taught them to set four protections around the harbor, each marked with the same symbol: a four-pointed star inside a circle.

WATCH	WHERE	HOW IT'S KEPT	HOW IT'S FAILING
The Light	The lighthouse on Whisper Island	A light must shine from the tower	The lamp has been dark for 50 years
The Bell	The Old Meeting House	The bell must be able to ring out	Its iron clapper was stolen and sold
The Stone	Under the water in Saltmarsh Cove	The carved stone must stay whole and in place	Poachers cracked it trying to raise it
The Hearth	The Harbor Inn	The hearth fire must never go out	Fake ghost hunters let it die

Each Watch was kept in its century by someone the town barely remembers. In 1826, the bell-ringer Josiah Pell rang all night against the fog. In 1926, the Gray came inside the great October storm, and Eliza Marsh kept her lamp burning through it.

The Tide-Caller: Gideon Shale

Gideon Shale opened Shale's Curiosities, an antique shop on Water Street, last June. He's soft-spoken, polite, and sad-eyed, with a gray wool coat he wears in every weather.

When Gideon was eleven, his little brother Tommy drowned off this coast. Gideon has never forgiven himself. This summer, standing on the shore at night, he heard Tommy's voice in the fog. The Gray has been whispering to him ever since, promising to give Tommy back if Gideon opens the way.

Gideon is not evil. He is grieving, lonely, and being lied to. He has quietly been helping the Watches fail: buying the bell clapper, paying for rubbings of the Stone's markings, encouraging the ghost hunters at the inn. On the Hundredth Night, he plans to stand at Saltmarsh Cove and call the Gray ashore.

In each mystery, Gideon appears briefly as a helpful, slightly odd antique dealer. Play him kindly. The players should feel sorry for him in the finale, and the best ending frees him rather than beats him.

What the heroes do without knowing it

Solving each mystery restores its Watch: the lamp relit, the clapper rehung, the stone set right, the hearth rekindled. The heroes think they're solving four separate cases. In fact they're rebuilding the town's defenses just in time. In the finale, Gideon and the Gray try to break the Watches all at once, and the heroes must hold them.

The Clue Trail

Each mystery hides three campaign clues: one about the Watches, one about the Gray's history, and one about Gideon. Write each on an index card when it's found, so the players can pin it to Ada's case board.

MYSTERY	CLUE CARD	WHAT IT SHOWS
Lighthouse	**The First Watch**	An iron plate under the great lens: “THE FIRST WATCH: THE LIGHT. 1726,” with the star-in-circle symbol
Lighthouse	**Eliza’s Storm Entry**	A logbook line: “The fog came in with the storm, and it spoke. It called me by my mother’s name. I kept the lamp lit, as Mother Gale taught, and it could not come ashore.”
Lighthouse	**The Gray Coat**	One of Jess’s photos shows a man in a long gray coat on the island at dawn, pressing paper to the tower wall (making a rubbing of the symbol)
Midnight Bell	**The Second Watch**	Cast into the bell: “THE SECOND WATCH. RING OUT THE GRAY. 1726”
Midnight Bell	**Josiah’s Warning**	Chalk on the belfry wall, appearing overnight in old-fashioned writing: “100 YEARS. IT COMES AGAIN.”
Midnight Bell	**The Sleepwalkers’ Word**	Every sleepwalker murmurs the same name as they walk toward the cove: “Tommy”
Saltmarsh Cove	**The Third Watch**	The sunken stone’s carving: four symbols (a light, a bell, a stone, a flame) around a curling wave, and “WHEN ALL FOUR SLEEP, THE GRAY WAKES”
Saltmarsh Cove	**The Lost *Constance***	An old fisherman’s tale and a newspaper scrap: in 1826 a silver fog swallowed the schooner *Constance* whole, and no one could remember her crew’s names afterward
Saltmarsh Cove	**The Buyer**	The poachers were paid $500 by “a quiet man in a gray coat” for charcoal rubbings of the stone
Whispering Inn	**The Fourth Watch**	The iron fireback in the hearth: “THE FOURTH WATCH: THE HEARTH. NEVER LET IT DIE”
Whispering Inn	**Grandmother’s Journal**	Pearl’s grandmother, 1926: “Voices in the fog called us by name all night. We kept the fire, and the light, and the bell, and the stone. Next time it will be the Hunter’s Moon.”

MYSTERY	CLUE CARD	WHAT IT SHOWS
Whispering Inn	**The Unstaged Footage**	The fake ghost hunters' camera caught one thing they didn't fake: at 3 a.m., a man in a gray coat on the empty street, staring at the inn as the fog curls around his feet

When the board is full

With all twelve cards pinned up, the players can work out the whole picture: four Watches, a hundred-year cycle (1726, 1826, 1926, 2026), the Hunter's Moon, and a man in a gray coat at every site. Ada recognizes the coat: "That's Mr. Shale, from the new antique shop." If the heroes haven't already learned it, Ada adds one last piece: the town is named after Hannah Gale, the healer who set the first Watches.

Let the players arrange the cards on the board themselves and draw lines between them. Ask yes-or-no questions to help them along ("Do you think these four are connected?") rather than asking them to explain. When they've put it together, or when they're stuck and ready, start the finale.

If a clue is missed

No clue is required. Any missing card can turn up later: Ada finds it in the archive, Jess spots it, or it appears on the board one morning in chalk handwriting that looks very old.

Recurring Cast

A handful of townsfolk appear across the mysteries, so Gale's Landing feels like a real place the heroes get to know. Characters the heroes befriend become allies in the finale.

CHARACTER	WHO THEY ARE	APPEARS IN
Ada Finch	82, bookshop owner, historical society president, keeper of the case board	All
Jess Alvarez	13, works at her family's bait shop, sidekick and photographer	All, once befriended
Captain Roy Tibbs	Ferry captain and teller of tall tales	Lighthouse, Cove, Finale
Gideon Shale	Antique dealer in a gray coat; secretly the Tide-Caller	All (briefly), Finale
Ozzie Brandt	The grumpy, soft-hearted town librarian	Bell, Inn
Mabel Crane	Town clerk; keeps the keys to the Old Meeting House	Lighthouse, Bell
Pearl Okafor	Owner of the Harbor Inn; knows all the gossip	Inn, Bell
Lenny Shaw	Lobsterman who saw the "beast" first	Cove
Dunk Pike	Former handyman, now lighthouse caretaker if befriended	Lighthouse, Finale

New characters for each mystery are described on that case's page.

Gideon in each mystery

Gideon should appear once per mystery, always helpful and a little sad, so that the players like him before they suspect him.

- **Lighthouse:** he browses Finch's Books & Tea and asks Ada, very politely, whether any of Eliza Marsh's papers survive.
- **Midnight Bell:** the heroes find the stolen clapper in his shop. He hands it back at once, apologizing: he bought it in good faith. (He did not.)
- **Saltmarsh Cove:** he's sketching on the beach at sunset and tells the heroes he lost someone to the sea once.
- **Whispering Inn:** he's the inn's only guest who isn't frightened. He sits by the cold hearth each evening, reading.

If a player becomes suspicious of Gideon early, that's great. He has a reasonable answer for everything until the clue board is complete.

Finale Outline: The Hundredth Night

On the night of the Hunter's Moon, the Gray comes ashore, the town falls into a sleepwalking trance, and the heroes must hold all four Watches until dawn while reaching Gideon before he calls the fog in for good. This is a short summary. The full finale, with every scene written out, is on its own page: The Hundredth Night.

Running a scarier game safely

- Before the finale, tell the players privately that it will be much scarier, and ask them to mark anything that's off-limits on a card or list. Respect it without discussion.
- Keep the Pause and Skip cards on the table, and use a lighter version of any scene the moment someone reaches for them.
- The fog's voices use characters from the game (Ada, Jess, Eliza), never the players' real family members.
- Scary here means dread, silence, and things almost seen, not gore. No hero is ever badly hurt. The danger is to the town, and to being forgotten.
- Let quiet be part of the horror. The fog is silent except for whispers, and a player who stays still and watchful is playing it perfectly.

New rules for the finale

- **Watch strength.** Each Watch starts with 3 strength, plus 1 if the heroes restored it in its own mystery. Track it with tokens on four Watch cards. At 0, a Watch goes dark.
- **The Gray Clock.** An 8-segment clock fills as the night goes on. Each scene, and each "Not yet" roll, fills one segment. When it's full, the moon sets and dawn comes. If at least one Watch is still lit at dawn, the town survives.
- **Whispers.** When the fog whispers to a hero, they roll Brave or Kind. On a low roll, they take 1 Fright. A Spooked hero doesn't just freeze up; they begin walking toward the sea. Another hero must reach them with a Help card to snap them out of it. No one walks alone.
- **Allies.** Before the night begins, players place the name cards of the allies they've made on the four Watch cards. Each ally adds 1 strength to their Watch, and gives the heroes a scene where they arrive to help.

Prologue payoffs

Each hero's prologue secret should pay off once in the finale. When it does, read the player's secret card back to them. Some ideas:

- **Ada's Letter:** the brass button came from Hannah Gale's own coat. Near a failing Watch it grows warm, and once during the finale, pressing it against the cracking Stone seals the crack. If the hero noted The Star instead, they recognize the symbol on the four Watches first and can point the others to the weakest one.

- **The Ghost Report:** the pages cut from the library book are upstairs in Shale's Curiosities. They describe the Gray and say it can't recall what it eats, which is the hint behind the counting rhyme. The hero also recognizes Gideon's coat from the library.
- **The Last Room:** the frost symbol on their window was a Watch's mark. On the Hundredth Night, the same symbol frosts onto the inn's windows, and the fog can't pass them. The inn is a safe place to bring sleepwalkers.
- **The Dream:** the brass lantern from the dream is real, waiting in the lantern room. Eliza places it in the hero's hands, and its light can push the fog back from one place once per session.

Victoria's return

If the heroes played the Lighthouse Mystery, Victoria Thorne knocks on Ada's door during Session 1. She brings her great-grandfather's diary, opened to October 1926: Cornelius wrote that the fog called him by his dead father's voice, and that only Eliza's light kept him from walking into the sea. "I don't expect forgiveness," Victoria says. "But I've read this, and I believe it now." She can be placed on a Watch card as an ally like anyone else.

Session 1: The Hunter's Moon rises

1. **The completed board.** The heroes realize the cycle, the date, and Gideon's role. Ada confirms tonight is the Hunter's Moon.
2. **Shale's Curiosities.** The shop is dark and unlocked. Upstairs: a wall of photos of a small boy in a yellow raincoat, the four rubbings arranged in a circle, a map with Saltmarsh Cove circled, and a diary. Its last entry: "Tommy says tonight. Tommy says I only have to open the door." The diary also holds a counting rhyme the brothers made up as boys: "One gull, two gulls, three on the sand. Four for the boat, and home by my hand." (The Gray devours memory, so it doesn't know this rhyme. That will matter.)
3. **Rallying the town.** The heroes decide where each ally goes, by placing name cards on the Watch cards. Short, warm scenes of friends from every mystery agreeing to help.
4. **The fog comes in.** At sundown, the silver fog rolls over the harbor wall without a sound. Streetlights dim to pinpricks. End the session as the first sleepwalker passes by the window.

Session 2: The Gray comes ashore

The heroes race through a foggy, sleepwalking town to wherever a Watch is weakest. Let the players choose the order with option cards. One set piece per Watch:

- **The Hearth:** wind howls down the chimney and the fire gutters. The heroes feed it while shapes press against the windows.
- **The Bell:** the bell rope is coated in frost. Ringing it takes all their strength, and each toll pushes the fog back a street. If the Bell was restored, Josiah Pell's ghost rings alongside them.
- **The Light:** fog presses against the lantern room glass and the lamp dims. If the Light was restored, Eliza Marsh appears and holds the beam steady.

- **The streets:** silent figures of the *Constance*'s lost crew drift through the fog. A sleepwalking townsperson must be gently led home. The fog whispers in Ada's voice, telling the heroes to stop and rest.

End the session when the heroes see a single lantern moving along the beach toward Saltmarsh Cove.

Session 3: Saltmarsh Cove

> READ ALOUD
>
> *Gideon stands waist-deep in black water, holding a lantern high. In front of him, the fog has gathered into something enormous, a shape like a wave that never breaks. From somewhere inside it, a little boy's voice is calling Gideon's name.*

- The Stone is cracking. Holding it together takes Brave and Fix rolls from heroes in the water.
- Gideon won't listen to arguments. The heroes reach him through kindness and the truth: asking the voice to finish the counting rhyme. It can't. Players can do this by holding up the diary page, signaling with light, or speaking.
- When Gideon understands, he drops the lantern. All four Watches flare at once, and their light meets over the cove. The Gray pulls back into the deep.
- In the quiet afterward, a small, warm voice that is truly Tommy's says goodbye to his brother. Then dawn breaks.

Epilogue (optional fourth session or final scene)

The town wakes up remembering nothing but a strange, deep sleep. Ada adds the heroes' names to the old list of Keepers, below Hannah Gale, Josiah Pell, and Eliza Marsh. Gideon stays in Gale's Landing and becomes the new keeper of the Bell. The case board comes down, and something new is pinned in its place: an invitation for the next hundred years.