DUST & INJUSTICE · PLAYER BRIEFING

The Farrow Delivery

One crate, one mule, six days of red clay road, and a ship that will not wait. Day one is nearly done.



Albereth, as any Bowmere carter would sketch it for you. Not to scale.

The Land of Albereth

Albereth runs west to east like a story told in stone. At its back stand the **Stoneback Mountains**, white-capped even now. Below them the **Highgrass Prairies** roll out in endless gold, and on the prairie sits **Bowmere**, a walled city of markets, guildhalls and grain, where you took this job, and which you left at dawn this morning.

East of the city a broad river cuts the grass in two. Past it the land breaks open into the **Redgash Badlands**: a maze of red coulees, dry gullies, wind-carved spires and bones of the old world sticking out of the clay. Beyond the Badlands the dark **Ashfen Forests** run to the sea, and on the **Saltmere coast** lies **Fenmouth**, the trading port where Albereth meets the ships of the wider world.

It is early spring. The snowmelt is running hard, the days are mild, and the nights still bite. The sun is up around a quarter to seven and down a little after eight.

Who Lives Out There

The people of Bowmere

Merchants, farmers, guild folk and the usual mix of hopefuls who come to a city looking for work. Most have never been further east than the river, and like it that way. The Badlands are "out there".

The Coulean

The Badlands are not empty. They are the homeland of the **Coulean**, a people who have lived in the coulees for longer than Bowmere has had walls. They are not one tribe but a confederacy of four **bands**, each with its own country and its own leaders. Bowmere folk know them mostly as traders who come to market with hides, dried meat and river goods. Some know the band names: *Ashcreek* along the river valleys, *Ridgepath* on the high plateau, *Saltgrass* on the eastern edge, and *Thunderback* in the foothills.

What a traveller who has dealt with them can tell you:

- **The spires are not just rocks.** The tall hoodoos of the Badlands are called the *Standing Elders*. To the Coulean they hold the memory of the land. Don't climb them, carve them or chip a souvenir off one.
- **The bones are not curiosities.** The great fossils in the clay are honoured as ancestors, not treasure.
- **They keep their history in song**, not in writing. A traveller who can sing or play is usually welcome at a fire.
- **Each band has a spiritual leader, the *Kemáthra***, who speaks first when a band gathers. It is considered very rude to talk over them.
- Names come in two parts, something from nature and something it does: *Stonecry, Embersong, Rivercall*.

The Gildscale Compact

The new money in Albereth. The Compact is a mining concern backed by distant noble houses. Their badge is a **bronze gear and pick on black**, and over the last year it has turned up everywhere east of the river. They hold a charter to work the Badlands, they pay their labourers in good coin, and they have started running patrols along the Redgash Road.

Opinion in Bowmere is split. Some say the Compact means jobs, roads and prosperity. Others notice that a lot of Coulean faces have stopped coming to market, and that nobody can quite say where they went.

The Job

Oddny Farrow runs a small tea-and-salt business out of Bowmere. She is brisk, fair, and has a ship to catch. She has hired you to carry one sealed crate east to her partner at the **Fenmouth trading post**.

The cargo	One pine crate, 3 × 2 × 2 ft, about 130 lb, with a nailed lid and rope handles. The manifest lists brick tea, a sack of salt, two stoppered jars of willow-bark tincture (fever and pain) and a bolt of bandage linen. Ordinary goods.
The mule	**Nettle**, Farrow's pack mule, carries the crate and some of your gear. She stays with Farrow's partner in Fenmouth. Lose her and 8 gp comes out of the pay.
The pay	**10 gp each** on delivery, against a manifest signed in Bowmere and countersigned in Fenmouth. Anything missing from the crate comes out of your pay unless you can explain where it went.
The deadline	Farrow's partner has cargo space on a ship leaving Fenmouth **8 days from the morning you set out**. Miss it and the tea sits in a warehouse until autumn, and Farrow won't hire you again.
Travel	On foot, leading Nettle. Farrow isn't paying for horses.

> *"It's tea and salt, not crown jewels. Keep it dry, keep the mule fed, and keep to the road."*
> *— Oddny Farrow*

The Road East

In a normal year you would take the **northern route**: flat prairie, inns and wells, about 110 miles and four or five days. Not this spring. The melt has put the **fen causeway under water**, and the word is it won't be passable for three weeks.

That leaves the long way round: the **Redgash Road**, straight east across the Badlands, then a forest track north through the Ashfen to Fenmouth. Most traders would rather wait out the flood, so expect the road to be quiet.

STRETCH	DISTANCE	WHAT TO EXPECT
Bowmere → the river	24 mi · day 1	Prairie road. The **Ford House**, a waystation inn on the west bank, is the usual first night. *You are here.*
The Redgash Badlands	114 mi · days 2–6	Hard red clay road, steep coulee grades, little shade. Water where you can find it. Compact patrols.
The Ashfen forest track		North under the trees to the coast.
Total to Fenmouth	**~138 mi · 6 days**	That leaves you **2 days of slack** before the ship sails. Spend them wisely.

Where We Begin

You set out from Bowmere at dawn, heading **east**. The story opens late in the afternoon of that first day, twenty-odd miles down the prairie road, with Nettle plodding along behind you. The Ford House is a few miles ahead, and you can already hear the river: a low, steady roar under the wind.

Things You've Heard Around Bowmere

- Compact riders have started stopping travellers on the Redgash Road. Mostly they want to know your business.
- Someone has been painting marks on the Standing Elders out east, and the Coulean are not happy about it.
- Fewer Coulean traders come to market than last year. Ask why and you'll get a shrug.

Making Your Character

- **Level 2**, using the 2024 Player's Handbook. Bring back an old character or build a new one.
- You're **sell-swords, carters or travellers with a reason to be in Bowmere** and short enough of coin to take a 10 gp delivery job. Give your character one reason to know Farrow, or to need the money.
- You're walking about 24 miles a day. Pack for dry country and cold nights.
- If your character plays an instrument or sings, bring it.
- Want to play a Coulean character? Ask the DM first.

See you on the road.