

THE BORROWED FIRE

A Mage playbook for the shining city-states. Written against Wizards & Lizards v0.10 (BETA, not yet playtested).

Magic is not yours. It is lent. You reach past the lit world into the cold brilliance behind it, take a handful of fire, and spend it before it spends you. In the city-states they raised their shining towers on borrowed fire, and paid for them in ways the songs leave out. You have learned the reaching, and the price.

Your power runs on **stress**, the strain of holding more than a body should. Cast freely and burn bright and brief; cast with care and your fire lasts the night. Overreach, and the Borrowed Fire answers in its own tongue.

"The fire does not hate you. It does not know you are there, until you ask too much." — Decan of the Artificers' College at Aegina

MAKE YOUR MAGE

Your **Wits** begin at +2. Might, Agility, and Presence begin at +0; the tables below will raise them. (Presence sets your stress, your fuel, so a mage who means to cast much should covet it.)

You begin with:

- **Hit Points 12** (you are not built for blows).
- **Speed 2.**
- **Stress 4 + your Presence.**
- **Defense** = Agility + cover. You wear no armor; it fouls the reaching.
- A **light weapon** (a staff, a warded dagger), and your **focus** (below).
- A **pouch of spell components** for anchoring spells that linger; restock in town.
- **Spellcasting** and a bundle of spells from your training (below).
- **Arcana**, the deep grammar of the workings, yours alone among the company to read.

Now walk the tables. Roll or choose; take what each one grants.

WHERE DID YOUR GIFT FIRST SHOW? (1D6)

1. You lit a candle across a room before you could read. (+1 **Wits** · **Old Lore**)
2. You spoke to a thing that was not there, and it answered. (+1 **Presence** · **Spirit-Sense**)
3. You mended a broken clock by wanting it whole. (+1 **Agility** · **Artifice**)
4. Fever-dreams showed you a goddess's face. (+1 **Presence** · **Devotion**)
5. You frightened a bully with a sending and never forgot the thrill. (+1 **Might** · **Intimidation**)
6. Numbers and stars made sense to you that made sense to no one else. (+1 **Wits** · **Reckoning**)

WHO TAUGHT YOU TO REACH? (1D6)

Your teacher fixes the shape of your power. You learn its three spells.

1. **A college of cunning artificers.** Cantrip *Spark* (light, flame, a fuse); Spell *Scatter*, a cracking blast of force; Ritual *Mend Machine*. (skill: **Mechanics**)
2. **A hedge-witch of the faewood.** Cantrip *Beast-Whisper*; Spell *Tanglevine*, roots seize a foe (Grabbed); Ritual *Read the Omens*. (skill: **Nature**)
3. **A goddess who marked you in dream.** Cantrip *Kindle*; Spell *Wardlight*, a shield of standing flame (anchor: a pinch of blessed ash, to make it stand on its own); Ritual *Sanctify*. (skill: **Devotion**)
4. **A stolen grimoire from the age of titans.** Cantrip *Chill*; Spell *Dread*, raw fear (Frightened); Ritual *Speak with the Dead*. (skill: **Old Lore**)
5. **A masque-sorcerer of the great houses.** Cantrip *Glamour*, a small false seeming; Spell *Phantasm*; Ritual *Charm of Welcome*. (skill: **Courtesy**)

6. **The light of a dead star, and no one at all.** Cantrip *Mote*; Spell *Starfall*, a falling bolt of cold fire; Ritual *Scry the Heavens*. (skill: **Reckoning**)

WHOM DO YOU TRUST WITH YOUR SECRET?

Choose another player's character who knows what you can do and has not run. They gain +1 to any one skill. Once per session, when you would falter, they may steady you, and you do not Warp.

YOUR FOCUS (1D6)

1. **A wand of city-glass.** Once per day, cast a spell for one less stress.
2. **A clockwork astrolabe you wear as a pendant.** You always know true north and the hour.
3. **A grimoire bound in a goddess's gray.** You may prepare one extra ritual.
4. **A faerie's gift you should not have taken.** Your cantrips can be worked silently, unseen.
5. **A dueling-glove sewn with sigils.** Your bolt-spell counts as a light weapon in your hand.
6. **A jar of trapped lightning from a college bench.** Once per day, add +2 to one spell's effect.

SPELLCASTING

- A **cantrip** is a small trick, worked at will for free. A **ritual** is worked over long calm minutes for no stress, but never in a fight.
- A **spell** costs **1 stress** (a greater spell, 2). Against an unwilling foe, cast it as a Skill action with **Wits: 13+** works; **9–12** works at reduced effect (half damage, half healing, half duration — the spell says which), or spend **+1 stress** for the full result; **8–** fails and may **Warp**.
- Your magic is **magical harm**: when blades pass through a foe untouched, its Bane is yours to deliver. Most bundles hold a **bolt-spell**, a Wits ranged attack, 1 stress, **4** damage ignoring armor.
- Most spells strike and are done. A spell that **lingers** (a ward, a light, a binding) you must either hold by **concentration** (dropped if you cast again, are **Stunned**, or fall) or **anchor** with a **component** from your pouch, so it lasts on its own and your stress is free. Out of components, hold it or work it as a ritual.
- Spend past your last stress box and you **falter**: the fire surges loose and the GM describes the Warp.

ADVANCED ACTIONS

You have **Spellcasting** already. Choose **one** more now; you will gain others as you rise.

- **Sense Magic.** You feel enchantment, see wards and lingering spells, and can read the make of an arcane thing.
- **Second Teacher.** Learn the cantrip and spell of one other bundle above.
- **Battle-Caster.** You may Move and cast in the same action, and your bolt-spell may strike a second foe within reach of the first.
- **Blood Magic.** You may pay a spell's stress in Hit Points instead (1 HP per stress). The Borrowed Fire likes the taste.

Mirel is down to her last stress box. The soldier's axe passes through the ghou, its Bane is the arcane. She casts Starfall (1 stress, her last): 3d6 + Wits is 14, a clean hit, 4 cold-fire damage that armor and dead flesh cannot turn. One more and the thing will fall, but her next spell will make her Warp. She decides it is worth it.

YOUR ACTIONS

Like every adventurer you have the shared actions, roll 3d6, add the attribute, read the ladder (8- miss, 9-12 partial, 13-17 success, 18+ critical):

Strike (Might) · **Shoot** (Agility) · **Defend** (Agility) · **Maneuver** (Might/Agility) · **Endure** (the fitting attribute) · **Skill** (use one of your skills, and the action by which you cast). And you may always **mark stress** to push a roll, resist a blow, or fuel a spell.

AS YOU RISE

See **Advancement** (overleaf) for what each level grants; your level-up Advanced Actions are new spells, teachers, and deeper arts. Raise **Presence** when you can: it is more fire to spend.

ADVANCEMENT

Your company rises together over five levels. The GM picks how you earn them: a level at each story milestone, or one for every three significant challenges overcome (optionally counting hauls of treasure). Fill a level's three marks as you earn them; when all three are filled, take that level's gains and write in what you chose.

LEVEL 2 ○ ○ ○ *competence*

+4 Hit Points · new skill _____

new Advanced Action _____

LEVEL 3 ○ ○ ○ *power*

+4 Hit Points · raise an attribute _____ to +_____ · +1 damage (see playbook)

LEVEL 4 ○ ○ ○ *competence*

+4 Hit Points · new skill _____

new Advanced Action _____

LEVEL 5 ○ ○ ○ *power*

+4 Hit Points · raise an attribute _____ to +_____ · +1 damage (see playbook)

By level 5: about 30 Hit Points, attributes up to +3, five or six skills, four Advanced Actions. Advanced Actions are chosen freely from your playbook as you gain them (unless one names a prerequisite).

PORTRAIT

Draw or paste your hero here.

CHARACTER SHEET

Wizards & Lizards

NAME _____

LEVEL _____

ARCHETYPE _____

ANCESTRY _____

MIGHT

AGILITY

WITS

PRESENCE

HP _____ / _____

DEFENSE

SPEED

STRESS :

SHAKEN ☐ :

SKILLS

ADVANCED ACTIONS

KIT AND COIN

BASIC ACTIONS

Strike (Might) · Shoot (Agility) · Defend (Agility) · Maneuver (Might/Agility) · Endure (varies) · Skill (varies). Roll 3d6 + attribute: 8- miss, 9-12 partial, 13-17 success, 18+ crit.

NOTES AND CONDITIONS
