

THE OPEN HAND

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

Every shining city kneels to a goddess. You kneel to none of them, and bow a little to them all. Your martial school flies no city's banner and keeps no single god, but knows every god's name and rite and honors each in its turn. The cities find you useful and uneasy: useful because a hand sworn to no one can hold the scales fairly when they trust no priest; uneasy because you keep to your dojos and your fasts, want little they can offer, and are seldom seen in the street. Let them wonder. You have the open hand, the open road, and a hundred gods who owe you nothing and lend you a little anyway.

YOU MOVE THROUGH THEM

You are quick, open-handed, and everywhere at once. Where the swordsman picks one foe and fells it, you flow through the whole press: a palm here that staggers, a sweep there that drops a man, a strike that lands and is already gone. You do not hit the hardest. You hit the **most**, and with every blow you choose to wound or to unbalance, so the mob that should have swarmed your friends is instead off its feet and reeling while they finish it. You will not out-duel the Velvet Knife nor out-last the Sworn Shield, and you mend no one. Your power runs on **stress**, the school's held breath spent in a moment, so spend it where the line is thickest.

"Strike no one twice. Be where the second blow is not." — the first lesson of the river-temple

MAKE YOUR MONK

Your **Agility** begins at +2. **Might**, **Wits**, and **Presence** begin at +0; the tables below will raise them.

You begin with:

- **Hit Points 13** (you are not built to be hit; you are built not to be).
- **Speed 3** (no one moves through a fight the way you do).
- **Stress 4 + your Presence.**
- **Defense** = Agility + cover. You wear **light armor or none**; the forms need a free body and an empty mind.
- **Flowing Fists** (your unarmed art, below), and a **favored weapon** (a non-heavy arm, below) you may **draw or sheathe for free**, flowing between fist and weapon as you move.
- The lore of **all the gods**, the **Theology** skill, the schooling that makes you a fair witness and an unwelcome one.

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

WHICH SCHOOL RAISED YOU? (1D6)

1. **A mountain eyrie** above the clouds: breath, balance, the long climb. (+1 **Might** · **Climbing**)
2. **A river-temple of the yielding forms**, that turns a blow aside rather than meeting it. (+1 **Agility** · **Acrobatics**)
3. **A walled library-dojō** keeping the rites, feuds, and faces of every god. (+1 **Wits** · **Old Lore**)
4. **A road-school with no walls at all**, sleeping where the night finds you. (+1 **Wits** · **Wayfaring**)
5. **An arbiters' hall** called to judge the disputes no city-priest may. (+1 **Presence** · **Oratory**)
6. **A hard dojo behind a fighting-pit**, where the forms met the street. (+1 **Might** · **Brawling**)

WHOM DO YOU WALK THE ROAD BESIDE?

Choose another player's character, the one whose quarrel you took as your own when you owed no one anything. While you stand within reach of them, both of you may **shake one condition** at the start of your activation for no cost; your calm steadies them, and theirs gives your stillness somewhere to stand.

YOUR FAVORED WEAPON (1D6)

The non-heavy arm your school taught beside the open hand; you draw and sheathe it for free.

1. **A long staff**, all reach and rhythm. (medium · reach; skill: **Footwork**)
2. **A monk's spear**, the temple's guardian arm. (medium · reach; skill: **Soldiery**)
3. **Paired short batons**, quick as the hands that hold them. (light · quick; skill: **Sleight**)
4. **A rope-dart**, that strikes from a surprising room away. (light · reach · thrown; skill: **Stealth**)
5. **A folded-steel fan**, a courtier's secret and a duelist's edge. (light; skill: **Courtesy**)
6. **A sling and a pouch of river stones**, for the foe you cannot reach. (light · ranged; skill: **Hunting**)

FLOWING FISTS

Your unarmed art is the heart of the school, and it works like this:

- Your bare hands are **Quick** (two strikes for one action), as anyone's are, but you flow between blows so the **Multiple Attack Penalty rises only once per action**, once for the whole pair, not once per strike. Where another's fourth punch is at -6, yours is at -2; you can throw a full round of strikes and the last still lands.
- With each unarmed strike, your choice, you either deal its **2 damage** or leave the foe **Staggered** (-2 until its next activation). Strike to wound, or strike to unbalance, blow by blow, foe by foe. Staggering a foe already Staggered **escalates** it to Stunned, so you may pin one enemy or rattle a dozen.

ADVANCED ACTIONS

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

- **Cloud Step**. Once per round, mark **1 stress** to Move up to **half your Speed** across any surface or none: still water, open flame, a sheer wall, the crowns of trees.
- **Running Strike**. One action: **Move up to your Speed** and make one non-heavy Strike at any point along the way. Mark **1 stress** to let that strike be **Quick**.
- **Sweeping Kick**. Your unarmed strike may knock a foe **Prone** in place of damage or Stagger; against a foe already Staggered or Prone, you may **Stun** it instead.
- **Deflect**. A reaction: when a melee blow would land on **you**, mark **1 stress**, once per round, to turn it aside with an open palm, halving it, or sending a thrown weapon back the way it came.
- **Still Mind**. The held breath of the school: you **Endure** fear, pain, and every manipulation at **+2**, and on a short rest you may meditate to clear **2** more stress.
- **Many Gods' Grace**. Once per day, call on whichever god best fits the moment for a small grace: the Lamplighter's sight in the dark, the Walled Mother's footing, the Green Lady's silence. A single roll at **+2**, or a brief ward, as the GM allows. You worship none of them, so each owes you a courtesy.

Five raiders break for the wounded archer. Tariq is already among them: Running Strike carries him through their middle, and on the way his fists fall, a palm to the first (Staggered), a sweep to the second (Prone, an action gone), a real strike to the third (2 damage). His pair-MAP means the fourth blow is still only at -2. He ends the round behind them all, none of them squared away, while the archer looses into the mess.

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, or **Agility** for your open hand and light arms) · **Shoot** (Agility) · **Defend** (Agility) · **Maneuver** (Might/Agility) · **Endure** (the fitting attribute) · **Skill** (use one of your skills). And you may always **mark stress** to push a roll, resist a blow, or feed your art.

AS YOU RISE

You grow over five levels. At **2nd and 4th level** you gain a new skill and a new Advanced Action, a deeper form, a longer step, a stiller mind. At **3rd and 5th level** you raise an attribute (to a cap of +3) and your blows land harder: your **unarmed strike and favored weapon** both gain the level's **+1 damage**.

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

HP _____ / _____

STRESS :

SHAKEN ☐ :

AGILITY

DEFENSE

WITS

SPEED

PRESENCE

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