

THE VELVET KNIFE

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

The shining cities run on more than magic and gold. They run on secrets carried, locks opened, the right throat reached at the right moment, and on people quick and clever enough to do it and walk away smiling. The goddesses get the temples. You get the back streets, the rooftops, and the truth.

YOU ARE QUICK, AND YOU ARE LUCKY

You win by being where the blow is not, by knowing the thing no one meant you to know, and by a knack for slipping out of trouble that looks, to those who do not know better, exactly like luck. You are good at a great many things, and dead in the one moment your mark forgets you are there.

"They never see the knife. They see a smile, and then they see the ceiling." — a saying of the dock wards

MAKE YOUR ROGUE

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

You begin with:

- **Hit Points 14.**
- **Speed 3** (no one is quicker).
- **Stress 4 + your Presence.**
- **Defense** = Agility + cover. You wear **light armor** and favor light blades.
- **Larceny**, your trade and signature skill: locks, traps, and other people's pockets. It is always one of your skills, and your tools and tricks build on it.
- **Backstab**, and you are **Highly Skilled** (below).
- Your **edge** (below).

Highly Skilled: where another adventurer begins with three skills, you begin with **four**, Larceny, the two your tables below grant, and one more of your choosing, and you gain a new skill at *every* level, not only the even ones.

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

WHAT WERE YOU BEFORE THE KNIFE? (1D6)

1. A guttersnipe of the dock wards, raised by no one. (+1 **Agility** · **Streetwise**)
2. A merchant's clever child, taught to count and charm. (+1 **Wits** · **Appraisal**)
3. A fencing-master's failed pupil, too quick for the forms. (+1 **Agility** · **Dueling**)
4. A runner of letters between the great houses. (+1 **Presence** · **Courtesy**)
5. A faerie-touched foundling, light-fingered and luckier than you should be. (+1 **Presence** · **Glamour**)
6. A poacher of the city's edge, at home in the dark. (+1 **Wits** · **Wayfaring**)

HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR WAY? (1D6)

1. **Cutpurse and rooftop-runner.** You read locks and crowds like a page. (skill: **Stealth**)
2. **Spy in borrowed silk.** You wear other people's faces and lives. (skill: **Disguise**)
3. **Duelist of the great houses.** You settle other people's debts at dawn. (skill: **Dueling**)
4. **Smuggler of the dockside.** You always know who to pay, and who to avoid. (skill: **Contacts**)
5. **Charlatan of the fairs.** You can sell a man his own hat. (skill: **Deceit**)
6. **Scout of the wild roads.** You go gladly where the city's law will not. (skill: **Tracking**)

WHO WATCHES YOUR BACK?

Choose another player's character, the one you would not leave behind even when the smart move says run. Once per session, when the two of you act together, one of you may turn a partial success into a clean one, the other was there at just the right moment.

YOUR EDGE (1D6)

1. **A blade that folds to nothing.** It is concealed always, and your first strike in a fight is a Backstab.
2. **A set of city-master's picks.** +1 to open locks and disarm traps.
3. **A domino mask of faewood.** Once per day, those who saw you cannot recall your face.
4. **A weighted deck and a pair of kind dice.** Once per session, decide a coin-flip or a wager your way.
5. **A coil of grappling silk, thin and strong.** You climb as fast as you run.
6. **A debt owed by someone powerful.** Once per session, you may call it in.

ADVANCED ACTIONS

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

- **Backstab** (*granted*). When you Strike a foe who is unaware of you, surprised, or flanked by an ally, deal **+3 damage**.
- **Fortune's Favor.** Your stress cap rises by **2**, more luck to push a roll, shrug a blow, or vanish from a tight spot.
- **Shadow.** +1 to Sneak, and you may hide in a moment's distraction, mid-fight, in plain sight, wherever a heartbeat's inattention gives you cover.
- **Duelist.** When a foe misses you in melee, you may mark **1 stress** to riposte with a Strike (a reaction).
- **Quick Fingers.** +1 to locks, traps, and pockets, and you may do such work in half the time, or under a watching eye.

The guard turns at the sound the skirmisher made on purpose. In that breath Sera is behind him: a Strike against an unaware foe, her Backstab adds +3. The 3d6 come up 13, a clean hit for her dagger's 3 plus 3 more, and the guard folds without a cry. They are through the gate before the next man rounds the corner.

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** with your light blades) · **Shoot** (Agility) · **Defend** (Agility) · **Maneuver** (Might/Agility) · **Endure** (the fitting attribute) · **Skill** (use one of your many skills). And you may always **mark stress** to push a roll, resist a blow, or fuel an Advanced Action.

AS YOU RISE

You grow over five levels, and faster than most in skill: you gain a skill at **every** level. At **2nd and 4th level** you also gain a new Advanced Action (choose from the list above, or invent one with your GM). At **3rd and 5th level** you raise an attribute (to a cap of +3) and your blades bite harder.

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