

Fortune's Child



Fortune's Childe

FORTUNE'S CHILDE is a fantasy roleplaying game designed for one player and one gamemaster. The player assumes the role of the Fool, a light-hearted wanderer adrift through life, whose personal quest is the same as all our quests: to attain wisdom and good fortune while avoiding ill events and staving off death. At the beginning of each game session, the player decides whether his character is Upright or Reversed, with his or her abilities depending on that choice.

FORTUNE'S CHILDE is a free-form and stylized game that uses a "theater of the mind" format rather than battle maps and exacting rules. It celebrates abstractions and is designed for experienced RPG players and GMs.



The Mechanic

FORTUNE'S CHILDE uses 22 cards from a Tarot deck to make attribute, skill, and combat checks, as well as to cast spells. These cards, known as the Major Arcana, are numbered 0 through 21. When a card is turned over, not only is its number revealed, but also whether or not that card is Upright or Reversed; this orientation affects the outcome of any particular skill or ability check. In lieu of actual Tarot cards, the GM may simply use index cards, numbering them 0 through 21, and indicating one end of each card as the top and one end as the bottom. This game mechanic is known as the Major Arcana system.



The Setting

The world of FORTUNE'S CHILDE is *any* world. The GM may use a published fantasy setting or a homebrewed campaign when creating scenarios for the Fool to explore. These lands might teem with sorcery and beasts of myth, or they might be grounded in gritty historic fact. FORTUNE'S CHILDE offers GMs and players the chance to explore their familiar campaign universe through unfamiliar eyes—the eyes of the Fool. From fey forests to snow-swept hilltops and the heathered moors in between, the Fool is equally at home . . . as long as the rules of that world don't preclude the occasional use of magic. The Fool possesses inherent magical ability, even if he isn't always able to control it.



The Premise

The Fool is a man without a country. Like the heroes of legend, the Fool is a half-child of the gods, dispatched to the material world in order to learn the lessons of mortals and hopefully gain insight into his own soul. He's been sent to explore, to seek out adventure, and to hon his talents. The Fool has no memory of his semi-divine origins; he was raised by human parents as a stepchild but departed home at an early age to find his fortune. In most respects he is ordinary; his physical form is unimpressive. But the Fool has one distinct advantage over the pedestrian populace: magic.

In each game session, the GM prepares a traditional adventure scenario. He might even use a published module for a different game system and replace the stat blocks and dice rolls with the mechanics of the Major Arcana system. Or he may elect to design his own missions. Either way, the Fool soon finds himself embroiled in derring-do: tromping through old ruins, burgling treasures, and combating wandering monsters in the classic style.



The Character

The Fool begins play with four **attributes**: Charisma, Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom. The Fool possesses no scores in such things as strength and constitution. He is slender, fine-boned, perhaps even fragile. If met with a challenge of pure brute muscle, he fails every time. The Fool's innocence and naïveté are symbolized in his physical frame; his hand is more suited to a wine glass than a wooden tankard; his feet are more comfortable in slippers than iron-shod boots.

The starting scores of three of these attributes range from 1 to 21. To determine the Fool's attribute ratings in Charisma, Dexterity, and Intelligence, remove the Fool card from a shuffled Major Arcana and draw three cards. For purposes of attribute generation, the orientation of the cards doesn't matter; simply refer to the number of the card and then apply those three values to your attributes in any order.

***Example:** Matt is creating his Fool character, basing him off the legends of the trickster heroes of mythic Ireland. The GM shuffles the Major Arcana and offers the deck to Matt, who draws three cards: the Emperor (number 4), the Star (number 17), and Temperance (number 14). Matt then assigns these three numbers as he chooses, resulting in attribute ratings of Charisma 14, Dexterity 17, and Intelligence 4.*

The attribute of Wisdom is special. Because the Fool is new to the world and ignorant of its ways, his Wisdom score always begins at zero (0). As his worldliness expands and his legend grows, his Wisdom improves—and so too does his ability to wield magic. When his Wisdom reaches an apex of 21, he has become enlightened. Refer to **Wisdom and Enlightenment** for further details.

Upright or Reversed?

The Fool inhabits a world of caprice. Fortunes change without warning, for better or for worse. Perhaps the player is frustrated because he generated lower-than-average ability scores for his character. Luckily, those scores can dramatically transform throughout the course of an adventure—only to change back again in a fickle instance of fate. Before each gaming session, the player decides whether his Fool character will play as Upright or Reversed. The attribute scores of an Upright character are exactly as they were generated, with no changes. A Reversed character, on the other hand, has three of his attribute scores turned upside down; subtract each score in Charisma, Dexterity, and Intelligence

from 21 to find the Reversed score. The Fool then uses these Reversed stats until destiny dictates otherwise.

Beware: Throughout the course of the session, events can cause the Fool's orientation to invert; a Fool who begins play Upright might find himself suddenly Reversed, and vice versa!

***Example:** Matt elects to play an Upright Fool with attribute scores of Charisma 14, Dexterity 17, and Intelligence 4. But shortly after the adventure begins, a game effect causes his Fool to become Reversed, so now his scores are Charisma 7, Dexterity 4, and Intelligence 17.*

Making that initial decision of Upright or Reversed is a strategic one, based on what the player knows about the upcoming trials the Fool will face. If he assumes that the quest involves puzzles and lore-gathering, he will want a high Intelligence. If he anticipates lots of combat, a potent Dexterity might be a better choice. However, no matter what his decision might be, the Fool could be made Upright or Reversed at any time, completely altering the player's plan. Thus is the unpredictable world that the itinerant Fool calls home. But regardless of how many times the Fool is switched from Upright to Reversed and back again, his Wisdom score remains the same.

For further details on character creation, refer to **Skills**.



Fhama

Fhama is a conglomerate of luck, guile, destiny, reputation, and karma. How any particular citizen of the campaign setting defines fhama depends entirely upon his upbringing, his worldview, and certainly upon the beliefs of the people who populate his region. Folks in the snowy mountaintop villages think differently of fhama than do those in a crowded seaside city. Woodsmen see fhama as a spiritual force, like a wind from the gods that moves mortals into the predetermined places of their destiny. In this instance, fhama is synonymous with fate. At the same time, the shrewd denizens of a busy urban center view fhama as little more than a person's "street cred." To them, an admired ship captain has high fhama—or fame—while a leper's fhama is nonexistent. But despite the fact that fhama has no true nature, no one argues the influence it exudes in a person's life.

At the end of each successful session, the GM awards **fhama** to the Fool for meeting certain mission objectives and overcoming challenges. The more fhama the Fool accrues, the wiser and more skilled he becomes. Here are a few typical fhama awards:

- defeat a goblin - 15 fhama
- solve a tomb riddle - 50 fhama
- rescue a maiden from a cult - 100 fhama
- bring an infamous bandit to justice - 500 fhama
- survive a difficult quest - 1000 fhama
- slay a giant - 2000 fhama

The GM places a fhama value on all adversaries and obstacles the Fool faces during a game session, using sourcebooks for other campaign worlds as a benchmark or setting his own fhama values as he sees fit.

More information on fhama can be found in **Wisdom and Enlightenment**.

Dark Fhama

Just as every coin has two sides, fhama has two faces. Every time a player draws a card from the Major Arcana, it is referred to as a **deck check** (refer to **Deck Checks** for details). If a drawn card is Reversed, the player records 2 dark fhama points on his character's sheet. Every time a Reversed card is revealed, another 2 points of dark fhama are added. This ever-changing dark fhama tally represents the sometimes vindictive nature of the universe. Dark fhama is discharged by applying negative modifiers to deck checks. The player keeps a running total of dark fhama; this total goes up and down throughout the course of a game session, but the player always hopes to keep it at zero. Details on the penalties imposed by discharging dark fhama can be found throughout these rules.



Deck Checks

Any time the player must randomly determine the outcome of an attribute test, an attack, or a spell, it is referred to as a **deck check**. To make a deck check, draw a card from a shuffled Major Arcana; be careful to keep the card oriented in the way it was drawn from the deck, and then place

it in front of you. Each card bears a numeric value from 0 to 21 that determines the outcome of your deck check. Also, each card will be oriented so as to be either Upright or Reversed. When shuffling the cards, be sure to shuffle the cards' up-down orientations as well as their order, so as to produce unpredictable results when you reveal whether the card is Upright or Reversed.

If you don't have an actual Major Arcana on hand, you can substitute with an online dice roller or random number generator, and then determine Upright or Reversed by flipping a coin or by similar means. You may also design your own Major Arcana with index cards or standard playing cards.

There are several types of deck checks: attack checks, attribute checks, defense checks, skill checks, and spell checks.

Attack Checks

Swinging a sword or firing a bow requires an attack check, as described under **Combat**.

Attribute Checks

Sometimes the player is required by the GM to "make a Dexterity check," or to "make a deck check against the Fool's Intelligence." Though the exact wording is left to the individual GM, the procedure is the same: make a deck check and compare the result to your attribute score. If the number on the card is less than or equal to your attribute score, you succeed. If the number on the card is greater than your attribute score, you fail. Because the Fool card has a numeric value of 0, this gives the player a slim chance to succeed on an attribute check even if their score is as low as 1. If the card is Reversed, nothing changes: success or failure depends only on the number on the card. However, a Reversed card in an attribute check generates 2 points of dark fhama. The player or GM keep careful track of the Fool's accumulated dark fhama, as it penalizes every subsequent deck check until the dark fhama total reaches 0. For further details on how this works, see **Dark Fhama Penalty** under **Skills**.

Defense Checks

The GM might require the player to "make a Dexterity defense check" to avoid falling into a pit of spikes, or "make an Intelligence defense check"

to resist the effects of a cup of poisoned tea. The three attributes of Charisma, Dexterity, and Intelligence may all be used to avoid some kind of adverse event, as dictated by the GM. A defense check is simply an attribute check; draw a card from a shuffled Major Arcana and compare the card's number to the Fool's score in that particular attribute. If the card's number is equal to or lower than the attribute, the Fool succeeds in his defense check. Ignore Reversed cards; because the player wasn't choosing to make this check, but it was being imposed upon him, a Reversed card doesn't penalize him by saddling him with dark fhamas.

Skill checks are explained under **Skills**. For spell checks, refer to **Magic**.



Skills

As a Fool advances in accumulated fhamas, he not only gains insight into himself and the world around him, but he also learns new things—how to fight with an oaken staff, how to weave a basket, how to field-dress a deer. These acquired talents are purchased with **skill points**. Refer to the Advancement Table on page 11 for details on how many weapon skill points and nonweapon skill points are earned as the Fool accumulates fhamas.

In FORTUNE'S CHILDE, the Fool may attempt virtually anything, whether he possesses a pertinent skill or not. Though he may have never piloted a boat before, there's always a chance he gets lucky and is able to guide himself safely along the river without capsizing. And he may not have been instructed in fine wines, but he might have picked up a bit of random trivia along the way that allows him to fake connoisseurship, however briefly.

Purchasing Skills and Determining Scores

As the Fool earns fhamas, he gains insight in the form of an improved Wisdomscore, and he also learns new weapon and nonweapon skills, as detailed on the Advancement Table. For each point he has earned in the Weapon Skills column, he may become proficient in a new weapon. For each point in the Nonweapon Skills column, he may purchase a new skill. Refer to Combat for information on putting those weapon skills to use. For nonweapon skills, determine the skill score in the same manner as

applying attribute scores: remove the Fool card from a shuffled Major Arcana and assign the numeric value of the drawn card to the selected skill; the card's orientation doesn't matter.

***Example:** Upon reaching the title of Jackanapes, the Fool chooses a new skill—Hunting, so that he no longer has to depend upon alms and the kindness of strangers to put food in his belly. The player draws Justice (11), so the Fool now has Hunting (11).*

Skill Checks

To determine success in any particular endeavor, add the Fool's score in that particular skill to its related attribute, as detailed on the skill list. If the Fool doesn't possess the correct skill but is determined to attempt the feat anyway, add 0 to the related attribute. This results in a number between 1 and 42. (Note that a 1 is possible only if the Fool does not possess the correct skill and also has a score of 1 in the related attribute.) Next, make a deck check, and be careful to keep the card oriented in the same direction in which it was drawn. If the number on the card drawn is equal to or lower than the Fool's combined skill and attribute scores, he succeeds. If the number on the card is greater than the Fool's combined scores, he fails.

If the drawn card is Reversed, add 2 points to the Fool's dark fhamas total.

Dark Fhamas Penalty

Obviously if the Fool's combined score is 21 or more, he will always succeed on a skill check, as the highest number in the Major Arcana is 21; a card higher than 21 can't be drawn! However, the gods are not so easily appeased, and success is rarely automatic. Any dark fhamas currently counting against the Fool becomes a negative modifier to his combined scores. Remember, the only way to remove dark fhamas is by discharging or "spending" it on negative modifiers. The player has no choice as to when to discharge dark fhamas; if the Fool has accumulated dark fhamas, those points are applied automatically as penalties until the dark fhamas total reaches zero.

***Example:** Matt's Fool character has Charisma 14 and Acting 12. The total of the two scores is 26, so the Fool confidently approaches the tower guards, certain that he'll succeed in his attempt to bluff his way past*

them. Because his combined score exceeds 21, no deck check is necessary—unless he’s carrying around a load of dark fhama. If his dark fhama total is 8, that means his modified score is now 18 (14+12-8). The odds of success are still in his favor, but now if the deck check results in a 19, 20, or 21, he fails to convince the guards and must pay the price for that failure.

Dark Fhama at a Glance

The Fool gains dark fhama by drawing Reversed cards in any deck check. The Fool gets rid of dark fhama by applying penalties to future deck checks or by using the White Rose.

Dark fhama doesn’t affect only skill checks. It applies to every deck check (attribute, defense, skill, or spell) until the reservoir of dark fhama is exhausted. If it sounds as if the steady accumulation of dark fhama will prevent nearly all deck checks from succeeding, take heart, as the Fool has many tricks up his sleeve, including a certain flower . . .

The White Rose

As depicted on his card, the Fool carries in his hand a delicate flower that symbolizes his freedom from base desires and unproductive envy. As a progeny of the gods, the Fool is equipped with one skill he need not purchase: Botany (8). Botany is the only skill related to Wisdom. By succeeding in a Botany skill check (8 + Wisdom score), the Fool is able to transfer his dark fhama to nearby vegetation, where it is diluted by the vitality of nature and eventually rendered inert. The Fool may discharge all of his dark fhama by using this ability, but he can attempt it no more than once each day.

The Fool may employ the White Rose ability only in the wilderness; the skill doesn’t function in a dungeon catacomb or cobbled city streets. The Fool can’t carry a potted flower with him in hopes of discharging his dark fhama there. The recipient plant must be outdoors, grounded in real soil, atop real bedrock, under an open sky. Fungi and other vegetable matter that thrives in the shadows will not suffice.

If the Fool’s dark fhama total is reduced to 0 by calling upon the White Rose, it will accumulate again through the usual means.

Skill List

The GM will certainly add his or her own skills to the roster below, depending on the needs and nature of the campaign setting. Games that take place in arctic settings, for example, will feature skills necessary to thrive in such extreme environs. A campaign that is primarily based in an urban setting will include talents appropriate for that lifestyle. But regardless of the area geography, the Fool never has access to strength-based skills such as blacksmithing, masonry, and mining.

Each skill may be purchased with 1 skill point. Determine the skill's score as detailed above, then record that number on the Fool's character sheet. The list also includes the attribute that is linked to that particular skill. Remember to add the two values together (skill + attribute) when making a skill check.

Skill	Attribute
Acting	Cha
Animal Husbandry	Int
Artistic Ability	Dex
Bartering	Cha
Begging	Cha
Bowyer/Fletcher	Dex
Climbing	Dex
Dancing	Dex
Engineering	Int
Etiquette	Cha
Farming	Int
Fishing	Int
Gambling	Cha
Herbalism	Int
History	Int
Horsemanship	Dex

Hunting/Trapping	Int
Jewelry/Appraising	Int
Leadership	Cha
Leatherworking	Dex
Musical Instrument	Cha
Navigation	Int
Oratory	Cha
Ropes and Knots	Dex
Sailing	Int
Scribe/Calligraphy	Int
Singing	Cha
Swimming	Dex
Tailoring/Weaving	Dex
Tracking	Int
Wilderness Survival	Int
Wines and Spirits	Int
Woodworking	Dex



Wisdom and Enlightenment

The Fool is an aspiring sage, ever on the lookout for experiencing what can lead him to a better understanding of his mortality. As he completes

quests and survives trying ordeals, he accrues fhamas, as shown on the Advancement Table on the next page.

Advancement Table				
Fhama	Wisdom	Weapon Skill Points	Nonweapon Skill Points	Title
0	0	1	1*	Beggar
1250	1		2	
2500	2		3	
5000	3	2	4	Jackanapes
10,000	4		5	
20,000	5		6	
40,000	6	3	7	Mendicant
70,000	7		8	
110,000	8		9	
160,000	9	4	10	Vagabond
220,000	10		11	
440,000	11		12	
660,000	12	5	13	Wanderer
880,000	13		14	
1,100,000	14		15	
1,320,000	15	6	16	Tinker
1,540,000	16		17	
1,760,000	17		18	
1,980,000	18	7	19	Jester
2,200,000	19		20	
2,500,000	20		21	
3,000,000	21	8	22	Hermetic

* The Fool also begins with Botany as a bonus skill, as detailed in **The White Rose** under **Skills**.

Fhama is the total amount of fhamas required to earn the Wisdom and skill rewards. A GM bestows fhamas according to the Guidelines found under **Fhama**.

Wisdom directly affects spellcasting; the higher the Fool's Wisdom score, the more adept he is at bending magic to do his bidding, as detailed under **Magic**.

Weapon Skill Points are acquired slowly. The Fool is inquisitive by nature but not naturally inclined to the cruder arts of combat. He begins play with proficiency in one weapon. Weapon use is detailed under **Combat**.

Nonweapon Skill Points come more naturally. Ever thirsty for knowledge, the Fool picks up new talents frequently. Having entered this world, he is nearly a blank slate, starting with a single skill but rapidly learning others as he devours knowledge about the workings of the world and learns much-needed survival expertise. For more information, refer to **Skills**.

Title is what the Fool is called, based on his experience. In the spirit of classic roleplaying games, the Fool attains new titles as he progresses toward enlightenment. The effect of these titles is left to the purview of the GM. Possible uses for a Fool's title include gaining membership in adventuring companies, earning the right to bear the king's crest, or being granted permission by a knight's council to create and display his own heraldry, all of which could be honors exclusive to Fools of a certain title.

Enlightenment

When the Fool attains the rank of Hermetic, he achieves **enlightenment**. He has completed his survey of the mortal world and amassed all of the knowledge one can hope to attain in life. Having survived uncounted perils and held court with sages and saints, the Fool is a fool no more; he sees through the eyes of the gods.

A Hermetic may choose to reenter the world again as a Fool, to complete the cycle again. He might opt to ascend to the immortal realms and take his rightful place at the divine table. If the GM allows it, the Hermetic might even transfer his essence to different game systems altogether, in order to explore alternate character professions. One thing is certain: the Hermetic has not only been changed by his experience, he has changed the world in return.



Combat

FORTUNE'S CHILDE makes three assumptions about combat:

- Any weapon, if used correctly, can be lethal with a single strike.
- Hitting a target depends not on the target's armor, but rather on the attacker's skill.
- Armor helps the wearer resist damage.

Due to the Fool's inclination to switch from Upright to Reversed and back again at a moment's notice, combat can be wildly unpredictable. He might be a talented swordsman one second and then find himself a bumbling clod the next.

Weapons

The Fool does not use heavy weapons. Axes, claymores, and halberds run contrary to the Fool's nature; he is a pilgrim seeking wisdom, a curious mind in search of lost knowledge. Because the Fool possesses no strength attribute, his weapons of choice reflect his physical nature. The following weapons are a sample of suitable arms, though the GM will amend this list as needed: dagger, dirk, quarterstaff, rapier, sabre, short sword, stiletto, and whip.

Ranged Weapons

Appropriate ranged weapons include the blowgun, bolas, boomerang, bow (short), dagger, dart, javelin, sling, and spear. To determine the range of such projectiles, the GM can either consult rule books specific to his campaign setting or use the following suggestions, which include modifiers to the attack check.

Ranged Weapon Categories In Yards and Modifiers				
	Short (+2)	Medium (0)	Long (-2)	Extreme (-4)
dagger, dart	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
blowgun, bolas, boomerang	0-5	6-15	16-30	31-35
javelin, spear	0-10	11-30	31-50	51-60
sling	0-15	16-40	41-70	71-90

short bow	0-20	21-80	81-120	121-150
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Proficiency

As shown on the character Advancement Table on page 11, the Fool begins play with one weapon proficiency and gains another weapon every three levels of advancement. The player may select any weapon that the GM deems suitable, given the parameters of the campaign. The Fool may always attempt to use any weapon he finds, though without the proper training, his odds of wielding that weapon successfully are greatly diminished. Remember, the Fool is a neophyte in all respects, knowing little of the world, its people, and its conflicts. Martial skills are ones he will need to acquire slowly.

Initiative

The combatant with the longest weapon always strikes first every combat round. The GM must reasonably decide who holds the weapon with the greatest reach. If it seems to be a tie, then compare the Intelligence scores of the combatants; the smartest man finds a weakness in his enemy and strikes first.

Rounds

Combat takes place in rounds. Each combatant has the opportunity to attack once in each round.

Attacking

Make a deck check. If the Fool is proficient in his weapon, he compares the result of the drawn card to his Dexterity, the attribute used in all attack checks. If the number on the card is equal to or less than his Dexterity score, he hits his target. If the Fool is *not* proficient in the weapon, his Dexterity score is considered half of its actual value (rounded up) for purposes of the attack check.

At any given moment, his Dexterity might be reversed, so the Fool can never be quite certain how he'll perform in combat until he strikes.

Example: *Armed with a stiletto stolen from his lover's bodyguard, the Fool ambushes the village bully, intending to teach him a lesson. When it's his turn to attack, the player makes a deck check, which results in a 12. The Fool's Dexterity score is 17, so the stiletto sinks deeply into the*

bully's shoulder. The next round, though, the gods decide to play a trick on the Fool, and he is suddenly Reversed. His Dexterity is now 4. In order to stab his target a second time, he'll need to draw a 4 or lower. If he was not proficient in the stiletto, he'd need to draw a 2 or lower.

For details on how and when a Fool finds himself switched from Upright to Reversed or vice versa, refer to **Random Inversion**.

Dark Fhama in Combat

Remember that any card drawn Reversed during a combat deck check adds 2 points of dark fhama to the Fool's total. Any existing dark fhama on the Fool's character sheet is applied as a negative modifier to his weapon skill check, regardless of whether he's checking against his Dexterity or his nonproficient score of Dexterity/2.

Damage

After a successful strike, make a deck check to determine damage. *The card's orientation doesn't matter; Reversed cards do not add dark fhama on a damage check.* Consult the damage table.

Light wounds impose a -2 penalty on the victim's deck checks until the injury is healed. So if the Fool delivers a light wound to a bandit, that bandit's relevant weapon score is considered to be 2 points lower when he next attacks the Fool. The penalty wrought by medium wounds is -4, while serious wounds deliver a -6 penalty until remedied with curative measures. These negative modifiers apply to *all* deck checks, whether they are attribute checks, spell checks, or anything else.

Anyone taking two light wounds is considered to have one medium wound. Two medium wounds become a serious wound. Two serious wounds are critical and kill the character or creature instantly. If the player draws the Fool card on his damage check, he deals a light wound to his target, but he is also instantly inverted from Upright to Reversed or Reversed to Upright.

Damage Table		
Card Drawn	Damage Level	Effect on Target
0	Light + Inversion	-2
1-7	Light	-2
8-14	Medium	-4

15-20	Serious	-6
21	Critical	Death

Deflection

A man's armor or a monster's naturally tough hide can absorb incoming damage. This is known as **deflection**. Light armors such as leather or animal hide deflect less damage than a man encased in full plate armor. After a card is drawn for a damage check, reduce the card's value by the armor's deflection rating before determining the wound level.

Armor Type	Deflection Rating
None	0
Light	-2
Medium	-4
Heavy	-6

Light armors include leather, hide, or linen pads, as well as the thick epidermis of certain monsters. Medium armors are represented by chain mail and dragon scales. Heavy armors are suits of steel plate and solid exoskeletons. As always, the GM is the final arbiter regarding the deflection value of any character, animal, or monster. Armor can also deflect spell damage, depending on the nature of the elements involved.

***Example:** The Fool rams his rapier into the flank of the giant serpent and draws the Tower (16) on his damage check. This normally results in a serious wound. However, the GM rules that the centuries-old serpent enjoys the equivalent of medium armor, as its body is hardened by barnacles and battle-scarred scales. The card's numeric value of 16 is thus reduced by 4 and becomes a 12, inflicting a medium wound.*

The Fool's Defense

Because of his evanescent nature, the Fool never wears armor heavier than light. This would seem to set him at a disadvantage in a landscape that teems with brigands who want to waylay him and beasts that want to devour him. But the gods have not set their misbegotten son on his path without providing him with a few boons. One of those favors is certainly the ability to use magic. The other is his natural inclination to sidestep incoming attacks. Unlike any other character or creature, the Fool may attempt to avoid being struck altogether. After any successful

attack check against him, the Fool may attempt a Dexterity check. If he succeeds, he twists or ducks just enough to avoid the strike. If the Dexterity check fails, damage is applied normally. As with all attribute checks, this one can be penalized by any dark fhlama the Fool currently carries.

Healing

Wounds can be healed with bandages, herbs, and poultices, or they may be cured magically. A light wound mends itself in two days naturally or in one day if tended by someone who makes a successful Herbalism skill check. Medium wounds downgrade to light wounds in two days or in one with an Herbalism check. Serious wounds become medium wounds in two days or in one with an Herbalism check.



Random Inversion

At the beginning of each game session, the player decides whether the Fool will be Upright or Reversed. This determines the scores of his Charisma, Dexterity, and Intelligence, as described under **The Character**. Yet at various times throughout the course of the session, events might unfold that cause **inversion**: an Upright character becomes Reversed, and a Reversed character becomes Upright. Sometimes inversion happens multiple times in the same combat encounter, rendering the Fool's life an unpredictable one, indeed. Inversion takes place any time one of these events occurs:

- The player draws the Fool card while making a damage check.
- The Fool's dark fhlama total reaches 10.
- The Fool fails a spell check by 4 or more.



Magic

In the world of FORTUNE'S CHILDE, magic can do almost anything. There is no formal list of spells or a description of each spell's limitations. In the true spirit of magic, the Fool may conjure up anything he can envision; he can splinter ancient oak trees; he can open a locked door; he can rain fire from the sky. Of course, the more elaborate his intentions, the more taxing it is to shape the proper spell. Boundless magic left entirely to the player's imagination would be an impossible task for any GM to adjudicate. Thus, certain limits must be imposed:

- At least one of the four elements must be present.
- Magic isn't capable of any kind of teleportation.
- The more grandiose the spell, the more challenging it is to cast.
- All spell effects are temporary.

The Elements

The Fool can't cast spells without access to one of the four traditional elemental substances: earth, air, fire, and water. The Fool must be within 22 feet of at least one of these elements if his magic is to function at all. Why 22 feet? Because the gods place limits on the powers they allow the Fool to siphon from their mystic realm, and 22 is the number of cards in the Major Arcana. All spells must have an elemental component. Any effect must somehow be connected to at least one element in a logical way. Soil and rock can be moved, shaped, and transformed. Water can be frozen or turned into a powerful spray. Trees can become a palisade wall, or they might suddenly crash down on an approaching foe. As long as a spell has an elemental base, it might be made to do anything the player envisions. The Fool might be tempted to carry the elements with him, and this is certainly possible, but the small amount of soil that can be carried in a belt pouch or the liquid in a waterskin won't be able to produce very powerful effects. The GM decides if there is enough element present to cast the spell described by the player.

***Example:** The Fool sees a torch hanging on the wall in the old sepulcher, about 15 feet away. That's all he needs to cause a jet of fire to leap from the torch and scorch the ghoul that shambles toward him.*

Limitations

The four elements are not instruments of teleportation, translocation, or any kind of magic that causes an object or person to vanish and reappear elsewhere. Those types of effects are beyond the realm of the elements' material properties. The Fool's journey must be one completed on foot or on the back of a trusty mount. There is wisdom to be found in every footstep. Of course, by using a bit of air-related magic, he could attempt to fly . . .

Magic is also limited by time; all spell effects are impermanent. If the Fool transforms a nearby pine tree into a cart to carry his newly discovered gold coins, that cart eventually collapses in a heap of splinters. A spell's duration is determined by the player, but the longer he wants the effects to persist, the more difficult the spell.

Spell Checks

To cast a spell, the player dreams up an effect and explains it to the GM in specific terms. How big is it? What is the radius of its effects? Does it inflict damage? Does it intend to manipulate physical matter—if so, how many pounds? Is there a sufficient amount of the necessary element to create the desired effect? Finally, how long does the player want the spell effects to last? He describes his intentions to the GM, and if they sound reasonable, the GM permits the spell to be attempted.

The player makes a deck check and compares the result to his Wisdom score + 5. The GM assigns a level of difficulty to the proposed spell. The following guidelines provide several examples.

Easy Spell – Difficulty (0)

- opening a locked door, healing a light wound, enchanting a sentry, donning a disguise

Challenging Spell – Difficulty (-2)

- throwing a ball of fire, healing a medium wound, flying through the air, creating a wagon

Difficult Spell – Difficulty (-4)

- boring a tunnel through solid rock, healing a serious wound, conjuring a toxic cloud, summoning an elemental spirit

Mythic Spell – Difficulty (-6)

- diverting a river, causing an earthquake, changing the weather, raising the dead

The Fool's Wisdom score always begins at 0. So when a Fool first commences his career, his total score for spellcasting is only 5 (Wisdom 0 + 5). He can cast a difficult-level spell only if he draws a 0 or 1 from the deck; mythic-level spells are impossible for him—as well they should be. But as his Wisdom improves, so too does his understanding of the arcane arts and his ability to bend the four elements to his will.

Duration and Difficulty

As a general rule, a spell with a more lasting effect will be bumped up to the next difficulty level. The longer the player wants his creation to remain, the greater the complexity of the casting. An effect meant to last only an hour or so might have no effect on the difficulty level, but beyond that, the GM is free to impose additional penalties.

***Example:** The Fool has used a pool of water nearby to create an ice cage to trap a wanted fugitive. This was a challenging spell to cast (-2), and the player decides that he needs the cage to remain in place until the king's guards arrive to take the fugitive away—and that's six hours from now. The GM advances the spell to the difficult level (-4).*

Inflicting Damage with Spells

As with a spell's duration, the more damage the player wants to inflict on his enemies with a spell, the more difficult the casting. No damage check is required for harm-inflicting spells. Instead, the player and GM decide the damage level before the spell is cast. A flying stone meant to cause a light wound is an easy spell (no negative modifier). A challenging spell (-2) can inflict a medium wound, while a difficult spell (-4) can deal a serious wound to its target(s). Only a mythic spell (-6) can kill outright. Depending on the nature of the spell, multiple targets can be damaged at the same time, but as always, the larger the radius of effect, the more demanding the spell check. A portion of the damage might also be deflected by the target's armor, as detailed under **Combat**.

Failure and Inversion

If the Fool fails his spell check, the magic fizzles rather undramatically, the elements sputtering a few times before returning to their original form. The Fool may attempt the same basic spell again in any particular encounter, but each try imposes a -2 cumulative penalty to the spell check. The only way to avoid this penalty is to try a spell with an entirely different element as its primary component or to move to a new location and a new encounter. The GM decides what constitutes a new location.

- If the spell check fails by 4 or more, the Fool is instantly inverted; refer to **Random Inversion**.
- A spell check that results in a Reversed card adds to the Fool's dark fharma total, as usual.

***Example:** The Fool attempts to create a stone bridge to span a dangerous crevasse. He has attained the rank of Vagabond, and his Wisdom score is 9. The GM deems the spell to be challenging (-2). To fashion the temporary bridge from the surrounding rocks, the Fool needs a 12 or lower on his spell check (9+5-2). He draws Judgement (20), Reversed, from the Major Arcana, so three things happen: the spell fails, the Fool acquires 2 points of dark fharma, and he is instantly inverted from Upright to Reversed or vice versa. The inversion occurs because the Judgement card's numeric value (20) is 4 or more greater than the target number of 12. Had the player drawn Death (13), the spell would have failed but the Fool would not have been inverted.*

Casting Frequency

How often can the Fool attempt a spell? How many times each day can he summon the mystic energies and command the elements? Refer to the Fool's Intelligence score. This is the maximum number of successful spells that the fool can cast per 24-hour period without penalty. A failed spell check does not count against this total. If the Fool attempts to exceed this limit, he faces a -2 cumulative penalty per attempt. If the Fool is Reversed at any time, his Intelligence changes, which might suddenly put him over his limit.

***Example:** The Fool has an intelligence of 14. The player keeps careful track of how many successful spell checks he's made that day, and currently that number stands at 9. The Fool can still cast five more spells today—and he's only a Beggar!—so life is good. But then the Fool is inverted, and his Intelligence becomes 7. Suddenly he is over the limit, and his next spell check will be made at -2, and the one after that at -4.*



Equipment and Encumbrance

The Fool has access to whatever gear is available in the fantasy setting you choose for your game of FORTUNE'S CHILDE. What type of currency is used? What type of weapons? These vary from one campaign to the next. It is assumed that GMs have access to other roleplaying manuals that contain exhaustive lists of items and an explanation of the currency required to purchase them. Because the Fool inhabits an existing campaign setting, he uses whatever wealth he discovers in his travels to acquire items appropriate to that game world.

Encumbrance

How much weight can the Fool carry, given that he has no strength or muscle attributes? The Fool is armed for self-defense and for love; he is equally at home with a dueling blade and a bouquet for his beloved. Thus his typical kit might include his padded armor, a rapier, a dagger at his belt, a knife in his boot, provisions and fire-starting gear in his bag, along with a silk rope, tackle for fishing, and a perfumed pillow on which to rest his head. If at any time the GM deems that the Fool is overburdening himself, or that his agility might be impeded by his load, a penalty of -2 can be applied to all Dexterity checks until the Fool sheds some baggage.



The Character Sheet

The Fool's record sheet should contain several pieces of information, as maintained by the player:

- current status of Upright or Reversed
- four attribute scores, with entries for Upright and Reversed
- fhama acquired
- dark fhama current total
- weapon skills purchased

- nonweapon skills purchased, including Botany
- number of successful spells cast that day
- weapons, armor and equipment



The White Dog

At times the gods dispatch an emissary to aid the Fool or to lead him astray, depending on their incalculable whims. As depicted on his card, the Fool is attended by a small canine that is either guiding him or harassing him, depending on one's interpretation. At any time, the GM might decide to have the White Dog appear to the Fool and serve as a familiar. The frequency at which the White Dog arrives depends on the GM, but usually every other game session or so, the hound bounds through the trees or runs from the morning mists to greet the Fool with a friendly nip on the ankle.

The White Dog communicates telepathically with the Fool and bestows upon him a +2 bonus to all deck checks, so long as the White Dog is within the Fool's line of sight. The Dog is highly intelligent and a keen observer of the mortal world. Usually it serves as the Fool's ally, but as an agent of the immortal beings, it isn't to be trusted. Every so often it might lead the Fool astray, perhaps to teach him an important life lesson or simply to appease its volatile creators. The GM may use the White Dog as the Fool's aide-de-camp, or as a plot device, or as a bit of *of deus ex machina* if the Fool finds himself in a particularly deadly predicament.

If the White Dog is ever targeted by an enemy's attack, it runs away, not to be seen again until the gods decree its return.



Magic Items

The nature of magic items introduced into the game world is limited only by the GM's imagination. GMs should devise their own items or borrow and modify items from other sources. Here are a few examples of how such items can aid the Fool in his pursuit of enlightenment:

Adroit Epaulets

Though faded and frayed by time, this pair of blue silk epaulets retains a considerable amount of magical power. Granted, this power has degraded over the years, so that the *adroit epaulets* aren't quite as effective as they once were, a century ago, but they nonetheless provide a terrific boon to any who use them. These shoulder pieces are made of subdued blue silk and adorned with three brass buttons each. When held to the shoulder area of any existing garment, the *adroit epaulets* magically adhere themselves in proper fashion. Once so fixed, they grant the wearer a +4 bonus on all Dexterity attribute checks and all defense checks involving dodging, shifting, or jumping clear of danger. Further, for reasons unknown, the *epaulets* bestow upon the wearer an exceptional ability to perform graceful ballroom dances. Upon donning a garment fitted with the *epaulets*, the wearer instantly knows the skill of Dancing (15) and can execute the full range of courtly dances.

Gloves of Rooting

These gloves are made from tawny leather and appear ideal for gardening or other outdoors work. When touched to the ground, the fingers of the glove sprout roots that delve through the soil to a depth of up to 50 feet. The wearer's tactile sensitivity extends down the intertwining branches of all ten appendages, allowing him to detect cracks and faults in bedrock or the existence of subterranean chambers. Any object the wearer could normally lift, such as a buried chest, can be grasped and pulled to the surface. Given sufficient time (at least one hour), the roots can be worked into any cracks or faults in larger objects, such as castle walls, forcing the fissures to widen and possibly damaging the structure. Performing this act is strenuous, resulting in sore forearms and hands. Further, anyone "putting down roots" cannot be moved by winds of less than gale force. If the roots contact an large underground water source, they immediately absorb the fluid, which spews safely from the wearer's mouth within minutes.

Kettleboots

Legend holds that this pair of battered footwear was consecrated by being beaten with a large iron cooking pot for one full day. The rat shaman, Uloho, wanted to roam the sewers, swamps, and other toxic places without fear of foot rot or disease. The *kettleboots* are watertight and keep the feet dry at all times, through the most extreme conditions, so long as the straps remained buckled. They grant the wearer a +4 bonus to all

defense checks to avoid normal and magical diseases, sicknesses, and plagues. The *kettleboots* are fireproof, windproof, and invulnerable to snakebites, lacerations, and lightning.

Oaken Armor Seeds

By gripping and rubbing one of these four acorns for one full minute, the user causes a magical wooden sheath to form over his body. This *oaken armor* does not impede movement or weight the wearer down, though it serves as medium armor. The *oaken armor* from each seed persists for one full day. The wearer is also more buoyant, able to float without requiring a Swimming skill check. There are four acorns in the collection. Each may be used once.

Spider Bow

Upon command, this magical shortbow causes a silver filament to trail behind any arrow fired from it. When the arrow makes contact, the fine strand transforms into a silk rope with a breaking strain of 250 pounds, and the arrow becomes secured to its anchor point as if gripped by a grappling hook. This silken line persists for one hour, after which time it turns to dust.



Glossary

Deck Check: any time the player draws from the Major Arcana to determine success in an attack check, attribute check, defense check, skill check, or spell check.

Deflection: armor's ability to absorb damage.

Enlightenment: the highest pinnacle of a Fool's career, at which point he often transcends into the celestial realm.

Fhama: a combination of luck, grace, and karma that parallels the Fool's progression along the path toward enlightenment; can also appear as dark fhama, which negatively impacts deck checks.

Inversion: when the Fool is suddenly and randomly altered from Upright to Reversed or vice versa.

Major Arcana: the name of the primary game mechanic used in FOR-TUNE'S CHILDE, comprised of the 22 cards from a traditional Tarot deck.

Reversed: a card that is oriented "bottom-side up" when drawn from the deck and placed in front of the player.

Skill Points: the points given to a Fool as he gains fhama, used to purchase weapons and nonweapon skills.

Upright: a card that is oriented "top-side up" when drawn from the deck and placed in front of the player



Game Design: Lance Hawvermale

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