

Magic in Fate's Edge

The Nature of Magic

Magic in Fate's Edge is not a tool of convenience but a dangerous negotiation with the fabric of reality. It is powerful, flexible, and transformative—yet every attempt to shape it carries risk. The dice never merely ask “does it work?” but always whisper “what is the cost?”

Volatility by Design

Magic is not fully understood, even by its most adept practitioners. Every working pushes against boundaries that resist being bent. This inherent instability means that magic is always a story moment, even when it succeeds.

Risk Embodied

Each spell generates Complication Points (CP). These points do not vanish; they manifest as Backlash—unpredictable consequences that ripple outward. The caster's burden is not just in channeling power, but in bearing the cost of that power.

Thematic Consequence

Backlash is not arbitrary; it aligns with the opposing or uncontrolled element of the Art invoked. Flame flares out of control, shadows linger too long, storms roll beyond command. The metaphysical elements have their own will.

The Eight Elements of Magic

The fundamental metaphysical system that underlies all magical practice in Fate's Edge divides magic into eight distinct elements, each with its own nature and resonance.

Physical Elements

Earth

Nature: Solidity, stability, foundation

Domain: Stone, soil, metal, structure

Manifestation: Shaping, sensing, moving earth and stone

Backlash Theme: Rigidity, collapse, awakening

Fire

Nature: Energy, transformation, destruction

Domain: Flame, heat, light, change

Manifestation: Ignition, heating, burning, purifying

Backlash Theme: Uncontrolled spread, scorching, consuming

Wind

Nature: Movement, speed, freedom

Domain: Air, breath, sound, flight

Manifestation: Moving objects, creating drafts, amplifying sound

Backlash Theme: Whipping, dispersal, loss of control

Water

Nature: Fluidity, healing, adaptability

Domain: Liquids, tides, rain, flow

Manifestation: Calming, directing, purifying water

Backlash Theme: Stagnation, flooding, contamination

Metaphysical Elements

Fate

Nature: Destiny, inevitability, long-term consequences

Domain: Time, prophecy, causality

Manifestation: Seeing future threads, influencing destiny

Backlash Theme: Paradox, temporal loops, unintended consequences

Life

Nature: Vitality, creation, spark of existence

Domain: Health, growth, birth, death

Manifestation: Healing, growth, vitality enhancement

Backlash Theme: Overgrowth, decay, life drain

Fortune/Luck

Nature: Chance, unpredictability, probability

Domain: Randomness, luck, serendipity

Manifestation: Influencing chance, creating opportunities

Backlash Theme: Bad luck streak, probability collapse, ironic reversals

Death/Dreams

Nature: End of things, transition, subconscious

Domain: Sleep, death, spirits, the void

Manifestation: Communication with the dead, dream manipulation

Backlash Theme: Hauntings, nightmares, spiritual attention

Magical Arts and Their Manifestations

The Arts of Magic represent specific methodologies for channeling magical potential. Each Art is associated with one or more elements and has its own thematic expression and backlash patterns.

Common Arts

Alchemancy

Elements: Earth, Water, Fire

Focus: Manipulation of chemical reactions and materials

Methods: Transmutation, potion brewing, material refinement

Backlash Theme: Uncontrolled reactions, toxic fumes, material instability

Herbomancy

Elements: Earth, Life, Water

Focus: Use of plants, medicinal and toxic

Methods: Healing poultices, poison brewing, growth acceleration

Backlash Theme: Allergic reactions, plant overgrowth, seasonal confusion

Geomancy

Elements: Earth, Fate

Focus: Sensing or shaping the lay of the land

Methods: Earth sensing, structural reinforcement, seismic manipulation

Backlash Theme: Earthquakes, structural collapse, stone awakening

Hydromancy

Elements: Water, Life

Focus: Predicting weather, finding water, calming currents

Methods: Weather prediction, water purification, current control

Backlash Theme: Flooding, drought, water contamination

Pyromancy

Elements: Fire, Transformation

Focus: Tending flame, quick-starting fires, heat-hardening steel

Methods: Flame creation, heat manipulation, fire resistance

Backlash Theme: Uncontrolled fires, burns, heat exhaustion

Illusiomancy

Elements: Wind, Death/Dreams

Focus: Veiling or crafting sensory deceptions

Methods: Visual illusions, sound mimicry, sensory confusion

Backlash Theme: Illusion feedback, reality distortion, perceptual confusion

Forbidden Arts

Thanatomancy

Elements: Death/Dreams, Fate

Focus: Full mastery over death and entropy

Methods: Raising the dead, stopping hearts, accelerating decay

Backlash Theme: Death's attention, undead rebellion, life force drain

Voidmancy

Elements: Death/Dreams, Fate

Focus: Drawing on spaces between worlds

Methods: Dimensional rifts, pocket dimensions, banishment

Backlash Theme: Reality holes, interdimensional entities, spatial dislocation

Domimancy

Elements: Fortune/Luck, Fate

Focus: Subjugating minds, enslaving will

Methods: Mind control, compulsion, memory manipulation

Backlash Theme: Mental backlash, willpower drain, psychic parasites

High Elf Magical Philosophy

High Elves approach magic as conscious, responsible catastrophe management. Their philosophy is built on three core principles:

The Law of Narrative Substance (The Echo)

Everything possesses a metaphysical narrative—a story that defines its nature and purpose. Magic works by interacting with these narratives rather than simply manipulating physical properties.

The Law of Artful Manifestation (The Art)

Magic requires not just power, but artistry. The caster must craft their intention with precision, understanding both the desired outcome and the story they are trying to tell.

The Law of Narrative Recoil (The Backlash)

Magic does not solve problems—it changes them. Every spell creates new complications by altering the narrative fabric of reality. Wise casters prepare for these shifts.

Casting Procedure

All spellcasting follows a structured sequence called the Casting Loop, unfolding across two phases of play: gathering strength, then weaving it into form.

Channel

The caster focuses, rolling Wits + Arcana to gather Potential. Each success becomes fuel for shaping the spell. Each 1 adds Complication Points immediately.

Weave

On the following turn, the caster rolls Wits + (Art) to shape Potential into a defined effect. The Description Ladder applies: Basic/Detailed/Intricate descriptions reduce or redirect Complication Points.

Backlash

Complication Points spent by the GM manifest as uncontrolled consequences. These are thematic to the Art and scale with the number of points spent.

Backlash Severity Table

CP Range	Effect
1–2 CP	Minor nuisance or tell; short-lived cost, noise, or reveal.
3–4 CP	Noticeable setback: a real hazard, condition, or new pressure clock.
5+ CP	Major turn: scene shifts, a new foe/clock enters, or severe condition.

Spell Creation Guidance

DV Guidance

- DV 1 = subtle sense or tiny edge
- DV 2 = scene-shaping buff/patch in a small area
- DV 3 = potent, loud, or multi-target edge
- Ace-level miracles should demand a price (Fatigue/Harm, costly component, or Obvious in a hostile place)

Writing Spells

Write the spell in 3 lines:

1. Name & Art: pick an evocative verb+noun
2. Effect: one clear board change
3. Backlash ladder: 1–2 CP = tell/minor cost; 3–4 CP = new pressure; 5+ CP = scene-altering twist

Pre-Made Spells

Cinder-Fist	Art: Pyromancy	DV: 2
Effect: Your hand ignites; for up to 3 beats, unarmed actions gain +1 effect. On a strong hit vs flammables, you may Hazard -1 once. Requires a free hand; Obvious. Backlash: 1 CP flame gutters after one use; 2 CP caster takes Fatigue 1 and scorches sleeve; 3 CP unintended item ignites (start a small Hazard clock); 4+ CP fire wreathes arm (Harm 2) and draws attention.		
Stone-Sense	Art: Geomancy	DV: 1
Effect: Sense through contiguous stone (30 ft); learn flaws/layout. Grant Controlled to a single move/breach using this read. Backlash: 1 CP echo of ancient pain (distraction); 2 CP muddled by a competing presence; 3 CP partial petrification (-1 die physical for the next scene); 4+ CP something attuned in the stone is alerted to you.		
Still the Currents	Art: Hydromancy	DV: 2
Effect: Calm a 10 ft water square for 1 beat. Either start Controlled for one crossing or Hazard -1 in that zone. Sustaining costs 1 Fatigue/beat. Backlash: 1 CP water becomes too mirror-flat (stealth tell); 2 CP chop intensifies outside the zone; 3 CP area stays eerily still until disturbed (curiosity magnet); 4+ CP water turns foul/stagnant, inviting pests.		
Cloak of Shadows	Art: Umbramancy	DV: 2
Effect: In dim or darker light, target starts Controlled vs sight-based detection; bright light ends the effect. Does not help vs sound/scent. Backlash: 1 CP slight self-blindness (-1 die sight checks); 2 CP whispering shadows create a faint tell; 3 CP you borrow light from elsewhere, leaving a conspicuously bright patch; 4+ CP a shadow-being takes interest.		
Storm's Edge	Art: Stormcraft	DV: 3
Effect: For this scene, your ranged attacks gain +1 effect and may push targets back 1 zone. Requires open air; Obvious. Backlash: 1 CP wind snatches small items; 2 CP lightning grounds nearby (Hazard +1); 3 CP gale forces repositioning (lose next action); 4+ CP storm lingers beyond control (start Weather(6) clock).		
Mend Flesh	Art: Vitalism	DV: 3
Effect: Choose one: clear 2 Fatigue or step down 1 Injury level (max to Moderate). Requires stillness (no sprint/fight beat). Backlash: 1 CP patient must rest soon or gain Fatigue 1; 2 CP neglected minor injury festers; 3 CP clumsy overgrowth (-1 die related physical until treated); 4+ CP life drawn from surroundings (plants wither, small life dies).		
Whispering Wind	Art: Aeromancy	DV: 2
Effect: Send a whispered message up to 1 mile per Arcana. Message is clear but cannot carry complex information. Backlash: 1 CP message is overheard by unintended recipient; 2 CP wind carries false messages from area; 3 CP your voice is carried away (cannot speak above whisper for scene); 4+ CP wind elemental takes interest in you.		
Bloom of Life	Art: Herbomancy	DV: 3
Effect: Cause plants in a 20 ft area to bloom or grow rapidly. Can create cover, entangle foes, or provide fresh food. Backlash: 1 CP plants grow in unwanted directions; 2 CP allergic reactions affect allies; 3 CP seasonal confusion (plants behave as wrong season); 4+ CP awakened plant spirit becomes territorial.		

Deck-Based Spell Seed Generator

When improvising, draw 2–3 cards. Use the suit to pick an Art, rank to set DV and a scope tweak. Face cards add a quirk; Aces add a price.

Suit Arts

- ♡ *Vitalism/Hydromancy* : life, vigor, calm, flow, restoration
- ♣ *Geomancy/Discipline* : stone, structure, weight, binding
- ◇ *Pyromancy/Transformation* : heat, light, change, urgency
- ♠ *Umbramancy/Veil* : shadow, silence, misdirection, fear

Rank → DV & Scope

- 2–4: DV 1 (self or tiny area; 1 target; 1 beat sense/edge)
- 5–9: DV 2 (small zone 10 ft; team-sized buff; 1 rail tick)
- 10, J, Q, K: DV 3 (loud, group-facing, or multi-rail influence)
- Ace: DV 3 + price (component, Fatigue 1, Harm 1, or an Obvious flare)

Face-card Quirks

- J Brief mobility or reach boost (leap, glide, slip)
- Q Social resonance (hush, awe, dread)
- K Durability/impact bump (+1 effect on one hard task)

Backlash Prompts by Suit

- ♡ *(Vitalism/Water) overgrowth, exhaustion, stagnation, sympathetic drain*
- ♣ *(Stone/Discipline) rigidity, slow, echoing calls, guardians notice*
- ◇ *(Fire/Change) flare, scorch, noise, uncontrolled spread*
- ♠ *(Shadow/Veil) whispers, self – blindness, cold spots, entities take interest*

Play Examples

Example 1: Combat Casting

Situation: Lyra the Pyromancer faces bandits in a narrow alley.

Channel Phase: Lyra rolls Wits + Arcana (5 dice): 8, 6, 4, 1, 1 = 3 successes, 2 CP

GM spends 1 CP: A nearby barrel starts to smolder (minor environmental hazard)

Weave Phase: Next round, Lyra Weaves Cinder-Fist with Detailed description (re-rolls 1s): Wits + Pyromancy (5 dice): 9, 7, 5, 3, 6 = 4 successes

Effect: Her flaming fist grants +1 effect on melee attacks for 3 beats

GM spends remaining 1 CP: The smoldering barrel bursts into flame, creating a small Fire(4) clock as a hazard

Example 2: Utility Casting

Situation: Theron the Geomancer needs to sense what lies beneath a suspicious floor.

Channel Phase: Theron rolls Wits + Arcana (4 dice): 10, 6, 1, 1 = 2 successes, 2 CP

GM spends 2 CP: The stone whispers of ancient pain, imposing a brief distraction (−1 die on next action)

Weave Phase: Theron Weaves Stone-Sense with Intricate description (re-rolls all 1s and adds flourish): Wits + Geomancy (4 dice): 7, 5, 4, 3 = 3 successes

Effect: He senses a hidden chamber beneath, granting Controlled position for accessing it

Example 3: High-Stakes Ritual

Situation: The party needs to heal a critically wounded ally during a siege.

Channel Phase: Elena rolls Wits + Arcana (6 dice): 9, 8, 6, 4, 1, 1 = 4 successes, 2 CP

GM spends 1 CP: The life force drawn causes nearby plants to wither

Weave Phase: Elena Weaves Mend Flesh with Detailed description: Wits + Vitalism (6 dice): 10, 7, 5, 3, 2, 1 = 4 successes, 1 CP

Effect: She steps down the ally's Severe injury to Moderate

GM spends remaining CP: The life drawn from surroundings creates an unsettling stillness—small creatures flee the area, and an ominous quiet falls over the battlefield

Cultural Magical Traditions

High Elf Magic

High Elves practice magic as conscious catastrophe management, focusing on long-term consequences and narrative resonance. Their spells often have subtle effects but profound implications.

Wood Elf Magic

Wood Elves specialize in low-signature, ecological magic that works in harmony with nature. Their spells include growth nudges, spoor-hiding, and sense-bending fogs.

Dwarven Magic

Dwarves focus on geomancy and stone-working, creating wards and structural enhancements. Their magic is practical and enduring.

Gnome Magic

Gnomes practice low-glamour, high-precision magic including ward-etching and probability slighting. Their spells are precise but often have unexpected side effects.