

CHAPTER FIVE



MAGIC

Magic permeates all living beings in the land of Thedas. It courses through every animal, plant, and sentient creature. Some even believe that magic is the power that gives life. Despite the prevalence of magic in all living beings, only a rare few possess the ability to manipulate it. Mages and other spellcasters are able to draw mana from living matter around them and shape it into fire to blast their foes, channel it into arcane glyphs, or use it to dominate the minds of those around them. This chapter provides some background on the use of magic in Thedas and then explains how it works in the *Dragon Age RPG*.

THE FADE

Mages have a special connection to the otherworldly realm known as the Fade. According to the Chantry, the Fade is the source of the primeval matter from which the Maker formed Thedas and all living beings. When the living die, their souls pass through what is called the Veil and into this realm. Those who lived good lives and worshipped the Maker then journey into the sky to join him as an eternal reward. Those who lived evil lives or did not worship the Maker, however, return to the ether from which they were formed when they enter the Fade. Mages claim that what happens to the souls of the dead is a Chantry tenet that has no substantia-

tion. No dead soul has ever been witnessed to enter the Fade, according to the mages, so it also cannot be proven that anything described by the Chantry happens upon death. It is an eternal debate between the Chantry and the Circle of Magi, made all the more difficult because the Chantry requires that its position be accepted as a matter of faith.

THE DANGER OF MAGIC

The Fade is not an empty realm. Indeed, it is full of spirits of various sorts, as well as those of beings asleep on Thedas. For reasons still unknown, mages attract the attention of the Fade's native spirits. Some sages speculate that the mages' natural ability to use magic makes them appear differently in the Fade. Unlike other living beings, when a mage enters the Fade (voluntarily or no) he is able to act normally, and spirits may be able to sense this difference in them. However it occurs, malevolent spirits (such as demons) that wish to enter the world of the living are drawn to mages like beacons. Should a mage encounter such a demon in the Fade, it will attempt to possess him. Some demons try to use force, but others cajole or trick their prey, offering power or nearly anything to get their way.

The result is inevitably the same: an abomination is created. This is the name given to possessed mages, though it is not a physical possession. The demon is still in the Fade, but so is the mage's own spirit; the demon twists and controls the mage's body through that captive spirit. The demon sees through the body's eyes, channels his power through it, and is able to use the mage's magic in ways the captive would never have imagined. Once the demon is in control, an abomination becomes a mad creature that goes on a rampage until stopped. The more powerful the demon, the worse the abomination, and historical records tell of abominations that have ravaged entire settlements and continued to terrorize the countryside for years.

So it is that the fears of the common people are not unjustified. All mages are susceptible to demonic possession, and even the strongest must stay on their guard. This is why the Chantry created the Circle of Magi in the first place. If mages must exist so their power can be wielded against the darkspawn, so be it. The Chantry insists, however, that they must be watched carefully and that those who endanger Thedas be dealt with before possession can take place.

LEARNING SPELLS

Only a mage can learn spells, so be sure to pick this class if you want to use magic. A level 1 mage begins the game knowing three spells. If you are the only mage in your group, you should seriously consider taking the heal spell as one of them. It will keep your allies alive in dire circumstances.

A mage can gain more spells in two ways: class powers and talents. A mage learns a new spell every other level as a class power, starting at level 2. This means that over 20 levels a mage will learn 10 additional spells just by being a mage. The other way to learn new spells is through talents. See Creation Magic, Entropy Magic, Primal Magic, and Spirit Magic in CHAPTER 3: FOCUSES AND TALENTS for examples of such talents.

A starting mage can choose any three spells from this chapter. If you're not sure what to pick, try one of these suggested combinations:

BALANCED MAGE

ARCANE BOLT, HEAL, ROCK ARMOR

This is a good choice if you are playing a mage for the first time. It has one attack spell, one defense spell, and Heal to help your companions.

CREATION MAGE

GLYPH OF PARALYSIS, HEAL, HEROIC OFFENSE

This is the support choice, as most of your spells are for aiding your allies. Your only offense is the glyph and proper use of it takes some forethought.

ENTROPY MAGE

DAZE, DRAIN LIFE, WEAKNESS.

This choice lets you really mess with enemies, but has no spells that help your allies.

PRIMAL MAGE

FLAME BLAST, ROCK ARMOR, WINTER'S GRASP

If you like to fight, this choice is for you.

SPIRIT MAGE

MIND BLAST, SPELL SHIELD, WALKING BOMB

This is also a good choice for combat, but offers no protection from mundane threats.

MANA POINTS

It takes the magical energy of living beings, known as mana, to power spells. The amount of magical power a mage has available at any given time is measured in mana points (abbreviated MP). The more you have, the more spells you can cast. If you run out of mana points, you can't cast spells until you get some back.

A level 1 mage starts the game with mana points equal to 10 + Magic + 1d6 and adds Magic + 1d6 more every time he gains a level. Powerful mages can cast spells for a long time without running out of mana points. That said, mana points are a finite resource and a smart mage knows when to spend them and when to hoard them.

Each spell has a cost in mana points. This must be paid when the cast action is taken, regardless of whether the spell works or not. Magic always has its price.

SPELLS AND ARMOR

Although not trained in its use, mages can wear armor. However, doing so makes it more difficult for them to cast spells. When a mage in armor casts a spell, he must pay an additional amount of mana points equal to the strain of the armor type (see accompanying table). This extra mana must be paid for each spell, which makes wearing heavy armor a losing position for mages in the long run.

CASTING IN ARMOR

ARMOR WORN	STRAIN
Light Leather	1
Heavy Leather	2
Light Mail	3
Heavy Mail	4
Light Plate	5
Heavy Plate	6