



Character Theme: Fatedancer

By Quinn Murphy

Illustration by Slawomir Maniak

Developing your character into someone who has a rich story can be a fun and rewarding process. You likely already have an idea of what race and what class you want to play, but you might have only a general concept of what his or her life was like before you start playing the character at the gaming table. A theme can help you flesh out your character and provide some interesting options for developing his or her background.

This article details a theme for use with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fortune Cards, called the fatedancer.

CHARACTER THEMES

Your character's theme is a career, calling, or identity that describes who he or she is in the world. Just as race and class create basic definitions about who your character is, theme adds a third character component to help refine your story and identity. For example, you might be a halfling rogue who chooses the fatedancer theme, but "halfling fatedancer" might mean many different things. Perhaps your worship of Avandra has gone deeper than most, granting you a special insight into the workings of fate. Or you might be a gambler who has embraced chance so deeply that it favors you. A theme can encompass several unique stories within the same concept.

Theme Features

For detailed information on using themes as part of character creation and rules for how to gain and use theme powers and features, see "Heroes of Nature and Lore" in *Dragon* 399.

Starting Feature: Each theme includes a feature that you gain when you select the theme during character creation.

Additional Features: Most themes offer additional features at levels 5 and 10. You gain an additional feature automatically when you reach the appropriate level; it doesn't replace any of your class features.

Optional Powers: Most of these themes include a number of powers that you add to the ones from which you can choose when you reach the appropriate level. For example, if you're a 6th-level fighter, you can choose a 6th-level fighter utility power or a 6th-level utility power from your theme. You can choose a theme power in place of a class power at any level where a theme power is available.

PLAYING WITH FORTUNE CARDS

Fortune Cards provide opportunities for your character to slightly alter in-game events. For example, a card might provide some temporary damage resistance, grant a bonus on your next attack roll if you charge, or give you a reroll when a certain condition is triggered. If your group doesn't use Fortune Cards yet, you might offer to share some with other players to introduce them to the possibilities. You don't need a lot of cards to have fun with them; even a few boosters should be enough.

You can also use Fortune Cards to enhance role-playing. For example, a monster uses a push effect against you, and you respond with the Stand Firm card (which negates forced movement). When the DM describes how the push effect works, you can in turn explain how you nullify that push.

Building your collection of Fortune Cards also lets you express new aspects of your character or provide detail not covered by other parts of character creation. Take, for example, the dwarf fighter Gurroden. Valiant and reliable, always willing to help his friends in time of need, he is the rock that the rest of his party leans on. Gurroden's character statistics



have already been created, but he can gain an extra layer of personality during play through specific Fortune Cards that fit typical situations or actions he commonly takes. His use of multiple Stand Firm cards represents his steadfastness in and out of combat. Several copies of the Dependability card grant an automatic “take 10” to a poor skill check or ability check, highlighting the fighter's surprising wisdom—he never misses an opportunity to give advice. A few Fair Fight cards (+2 bonus to at-will attack) reflect Gurroden's disdain for fancy combat maneuvers in favor of basic but reliable attacks.

Another example is the halfling rogue Piffen. A playful rogue, Piffen is hard to predict; he often doesn't know what he's doing himself! This character demands a deck with more diversity. For Attack cards, Reckless Onslaught is a good choice, allowing him to reroll an attack (but then fall prone), as well as Mind over Metal (next attack targets Will) and Crafty Strike (+4 bonus to damage against an enemy granting you combat advantage). For Tactics, Piffen's deck has two copies each of Push through the Crowd (move through enemy spaces) and Look at Me! (enemies adjacent to you grant combat advantage to your allies, and you grant combat advantage to enemies that are adjacent to you). Piffen's Defense cards include two copies each of Gambler's Dodge (increase

or reduce damage) and Gambler's Sidestep (raise or lower defenses).

Both Piffen and Gurroden use their cards for tactical advantage, and their choices also let their players express their characters with more depth.

FATEDANCER

Everyone wants good luck, but few have minds broad enough to embrace the whole of fate, sense what is meant to be, and follow that path. Those who do so learn to accept both the best and the worst that the world can offer. Fatedancers understand that what should not happen, cannot happen; the proper way to live is to embrace what must be. By accepting what fate offers, they gain more than peace of mind—everything they do aligns with the true purpose of the world.

To know fate is to dance, for life compels one to quickly move from here to there, from one thought or place or event to another. Though outsiders believe fatedancers to be mercurial at best, random chance does not exist for those who embrace fate, only opportunities taken or missed. The future and the present are always exactly as they should be for fatedancers; such individuals exist in the moment. They get into a lot of trouble because of this stance, but they are usually lucky enough to get out of it. Theirs is the life of a vagabond, taking both good and bad fortune as it comes.

Any adventurer who believes in luck as a force can be a fatedancer. Martial characters most often choose this theme. They do not depend on any external source for their powers, so they are attracted to a path that depends on their own actions. To their minds, reliance on arcane magic or the power of the gods is an attempt to circumvent what should happen.

Bards and rogues also have worldviews that encourage this way of life. Bards weave songs that tell of heroes' fortunes and misfortunes and thus naturally respect the power of fate. A few follow this tendency further and learn to rely on it, even though they also use arcane magic. Rogues approach their

lives with equal parts daring, skill, and luck, but many take to heart the idea that it is better to be lucky than skilled.

Creating a Fatedancer

A fatedancer's relationship with Fortune Cards is different from that of other characters. By choosing this theme, your character has a greater choice of cards to play, as well as abilities that augment and encourage their use. Other characters' Fortune Card decks vary thematically, but a fatedancer can build a deck with a wide variety of cards. Their effects are thus more situational, but your increased hand size and card-drawing abilities let you be better prepared for any situation.

Fatedancers favor no alignment, since a rigid attitude toward life obstructs their adventures and travels. Rare are good-aligned fatedancers, but rarer still are those who are evil. Such agents of chaos follow fortune along its dark edges, to the peril of all nearby.

Starting Feature

Though fatedancers vary widely in their choices and beliefs, after making the decision to connect with and embrace fate, all come to perceive the branches of fortune's road before them. At any moment, many possible actions exist, each with its own outcome. As a fatedancer, you find the best path to follow.

Benefit: You can have up to two Fortune Cards in your hand. You can still play only one in a round, but you can draw a card at the start of your turn if you have fewer than two cards in your hand.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

After walking fate's path for some time, you learn the language of fate. It speaks of destiny and truth, choosing your own fortune through bold and clever action.

You learn to see and hear what the universe is telling you and are rarely caught off guard, easily outmaneuvering those who are deaf to fate.

Benefit: You gain a +4 power bonus to passive Perception checks to determine if you are surprised.

Level 10 Feature

You have an uncanny ability to be right where you need to be, when you need to be there. Others believe you to be extremely lucky, but you do not trust to luck—only destiny.

Benefit: Once per encounter, you can discard two Fortune Cards at the start of your turn to search your deck for any one card. Put that card into your hand, then shuffle your deck.

Optional Powers

Following fortune's path makes you more agile and responsive to change.

Level 2 Utility Power

You step into a moment of destiny, considering all possibilities and making the most advantageous choice.

Seize Fate Fatedancer Utility 2

You seize one opportunity, then another.

Encounter

Minor Action

Personal

Requirement: You must have fewer than two Fortune Cards in your hand.

Effect: Draw two cards from your Fortune Card deck. Put one of those cards into your hand, and discard the other.

Level 6 Utility Power

You grow more accustomed to taking advantage of fortune. For a brief moment, you can immerse your allies in the stream of opportunity.

Flowing Fortune Fatedancer Utility 6

You read the flow of fate, creating a decisive advantage for your allies.

Daily

Minor Action

Close burst 5

Requirement: You must discard a Fortune Card.

Target: Each ally in the burst

Effect: If the card you discarded was an Attack card, each target gains a +4 power bonus to the next damage roll he or she makes before the end of your next turn. If it was a Tactics card, you slide each target up to 2 squares. If it was a Defense card, each target gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

Level 10 Utility Power

In desperate times, other adventurers pray to gods or seek arcane aid. You trust to fate, assured that it will protect and guide you through difficult times.

Desperate Chance Fatedancer Utility 10

Fortune smiles broadly on you in troubled times.

Daily

Minor Action

Personal

Requirement: You must have expended all your encounter attack powers.

Effect: Draw three cards from your Fortune Card deck. Until the end of the encounter, you can have up to three Fortune Cards in your hand. You can still play only one in a round, but you can draw a card at the start of your turn if your hand contains fewer than three cards.

About the Author

Quinn “gamefiend” Murphy has been writing about 4th Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS since shortly after its release. He has been published in *Kobold Quarterly* and the Wizards Community Blog, as well as his own website, <http://at-will.omnivangelist.net/>. He is also active on Twitter (@gamefiend).