

# Windows into Night

An online larp for two to six people.  
A/synchronous play. Shared world. Mages. Community.

*a role playing game  
by emily care boss  
black & green games  
Golden Cobra Challenge  
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*In loving honor of Ars Magica (tm), which brought me into the magic world of role playing,  
and helped me build many communities central to my heart.*

***You came up together.  
Your Teachers were friends,  
partners, or neighbors.***

You each were chosen, brought into this world outside the world of the daily life you'd known. Farmers, merchants, soldiers – your family let you go, one less mouth to feed. Not asking too many questions about who saw such promise and talent in your young self.

And what a world you joined. A place of mystery. A community of inquiry. Holders of secrets and makers of miracles. You were to become one such.

## **A Mage.**

At one such gathering, you found others who wished to found a new place. A new wizards' tower, a new mages' hold, a new labyrinth of mysteries. Together you stood before the community and spoke your hopes and bound your dreams together.

Now, a year on, you've worked hard to create your place. You've found challenges: it's not so simple to cook food when you've no spirit of the hearth to steady the flame. How can you coax the crops to fullness when you have no one immersed in the founding patterns of plants?

But you've brought your own unique strengths. And found surprising joy in discovery and the overcoming of obstacles that may have seemed overwhelming. You've found unexpected friends and allies. And rubbed edges raw for others.

And now, you turn to your old, dear friends and siblings of magedom. You speak to one another at night, after the day's works are done. In a mirror or a bowl of water, a few words brings forth the beloved face and voice. To share your burdens and new joys.

Your apprenticeship felt long and long. Grinding labor greeted your young days. And freedom, too. Freedom from the burdens of society you'd known. Your teacher's holding home was well grown. Established by mages in years past. Dug deep into rich earth, or landed on a vibrant branch of the sea. The resources were at your fingertips to feed your teacher's investigations, investments and innovations.

You were all shaped by this place and these people that brought you into the wizard's common. Some of you were trained by the same teacher or teachers. You shared joys, memories and sorrows.

As a journeyer, you each went out into the world. Traveling with your teacher to the great gatherings, where homes and holdings and lineages and crafts did meet. Times of celebration, commitment and debate. Quarrels brought before the juris. Vows made for many causes: to wed another or others, join hands before all with heartmates and mindmates and comrades at arms. To begin a venture, to sever a bond.

## **To Forge a New Home in the World.**

# How to Play:

- Please Do's, Please Don'ts
- Creating your Past
- Exploring your Present
- Sharing your Hearts

## Please Do's, and Please Don'ts

Each person playing adds to a list of things they'd like to see in play, and things that they do not want to play with.

*Examples of Please Do's:*

*Romance, Sailing, Weather Magic, Unicorns, Challenging Emotions, Physical Trials*

*Examples of Please Don'ts:*

*Rape, Child Endangerment, Spiders, Giant Spiders, Giant Blood-sucking Spiders, Incest*

If the group cannot comfortably agree on Do's and Don'ts, please choose a different activity.

Especially, if you are playing with people new to you, you may wish to explore communication tools such as the *Script Change RPG Toolbox*, created by Beau Jágr Sheldon. If you do, please consider making a donation to thank them for this great resource.

## Creating your Past

Everyone who plays gets together online. Choose some video conferencing platform that works for everyone, or meet in person if conditions permit. You'll choose your Mage and make your Home Hold.

### Making your Mages –

Choose which type of speaker or shaper you are, then chose your Aspects, and Bonds with up to three others in your group. Choose a name and describe your character's appearance, gender, other characteristics that are important to you.

**Animal speaker** – you studied the languages and wisdoms of other creatures in the world. You can speak the language of three types of animals, and have bonds with two animals who help and protect you in all things. You are working now to gain your Familiar, a magical creature who will boost your explorations of other wisdoms.

**Animal shaper** – you studied the forms and virtues of other creatures in the world. You can take the form of three with the proper rites, and assume the powers of two more in your human form as you will. You are working now on a fourth form, and a third power.

**Stone shaper** – you know the depths of the earth and have learned the secrets of bending it to your will. With a word, you can raise, or break, or bend three types of stone or metal or earth. You are able to take on the virtues of two more elements in your own human body with the proper rites. You are working now on a way to make one element take on a virtue unlike it's own (make steel clear as glass, make stone soft as mud, etc.)

**Spirit speaker** – you've learned to hear the words of those otherworldly beings that live side by side with all but unseen and unfelt. As you will, you may speak or listen to ghosts, elementals, and all those beings that make their home in parts of the world invisibly. With proper rites, you can provide a service to them they request – free them, feed them, comfort them, learn from them. You are working now to earn the trust of a great unseen being who dwells near you.

**Wind shaper** – you've learned the ways of the air, the clouds, the rain and other ways of the sky in your land. As you will, you can call up the breath of wind as to cool or fill sails. With proper rites you can summon two types of weather. You are working now on making a charm that can hold the virtues of two types of weather, but may be broken by any to summon it forth.

**Star speaker** – you've learned the places where the stars, moons, and planets dwell in the night and the day sky and what they reflect about life on your world. With proper rites, you can interpret the lessons from three sets of heavenly bodies. As you will, you can draw the paths of their movements and mark the passage of time. You are working now on creating a chart in the art of your choice, that will mark moments in the year, and offer glimpses of the future.

**Plant shaper** – you've learned the forms and virtues of herbs, trees and other rooted growing things. With a word, you can make a plant or fungus grow fast and fecund. As you will, you can see the characteristics of a growing thing, for food or medicine or scent and so on. You are working now on finding a set of words that will allow you to shape two types of plant grow into a new form of your choice.

**Body speaker** – you've learned the ways of the living body and understand the deep patterns of life. With proper rites, you can heal other beings from a wide variety of common ills. With a word, you can divine what harm or ill a being is experiencing. You are working on finding the proper rites to bring beings back from a certain type of mortal danger or illness.

As you will allows one to do this in the moment, by desire or choice. And it goes away when either: you chose it to end, or you stop holding the state in mind. Choose as you will.

Rites each take a unique set of circumstances to fulfill: a number of people, a type of food, or drink. A scent burned, a chant held, a dance completed. They last until the next set or rise of the sun or moon, or a certain star. Choose as you will.

A word may be a phrase spoken or thought, a song passage, a tune whistled, a gesture made. Choose what feels right.

**Aspects** - a characteristic that defines your personality and experience of the world. Choose two from this list or make your own.

*Speedy, hopeful, awkward, impatient, patient, nosy, overbearing, shy, humble, proud, deft, resourceful, forceful, curious, unconfident, brave, caring, talkative, cautious, bold, careless, insightful, lazy, studious, carefree, downhearted, prankful, loyal, distrustful, imaginative, steady, pessimistic, methodical.*

**Bonds** – a word that describes the dynamic between two Mages. Choose one from list (or make up one free-form) for each other Mage you have a Bond with, up to three total. May be mutual, or different.

*Sibling (from same teacher, or worldly family), rival, crush, inspiration, protector, creative partner, lover.*

### Make your Home Holding –

Together, choose the Place and Type for the community of Mages where your characters grew up together.

**Places** – the countryside where your Home Holding was located. Choose from this list or make up another that suits you.

*The shore, the mountains, the desert, the steppe, the ice, the lakes, the river, the swamps, the plains, the forest, the jungle, the hills, the ravines, the mesa, the islands.*

### Types –

**The Tower** – a great pillar of quiet inquiry, built by ancient hands.

**The Rock** – an edifice carved from living stone, crafted by ancestors of your community.

**The Tree** – a grandmother of time, who sheltered your community beyond memory.

**The Caverns** – a labyrinth of tunnels in the earth, full of glowing lights and glimmering stones.

**The Keep** – a formidable shelter forged in times of war, used by your community in times of peace.

**The Village** – a bounteous gathering of homely dwellings, full of dance and song.

## Exploring your Present

Each player, on their own, creates the Community their Mage is helping to Found. Then, in between (or during!) Sharing the Heart sessions, other players Ask or Answer Questions about the Found Community.

### Creating a Found Community –

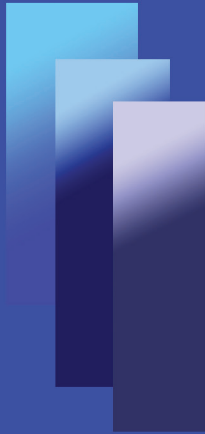
Choose a Place, different from where your Home Holding was. Use the same list as for the Home Holding or make up something different.

Choose two Draws – something that makes it a good place to create a place for Mages to live and learn. Pick from this list or make up something original.

*Strong community, bounteous food, strong magic currents, resource rich (ie wood for carving/building, stones/metals for crafting), steeped in knowledge (cultural center or library etc), home to spirits, remote, defensible, mobile, welcoming, full of wild-life, beautiful, serene, inspiring.*

Choose the Challenge – something that makes it hard to settle there. Pick from this list or make up something original. Do not contradict the Draws.

*Little food, little water, few resources, unfriendly neighbors, battles, raiding, taxation, extreme weather, cursed, little magic, unfriendly spirits, crowded, isolated.*



**Choose the Heart** – the name of the place, and what gives it a connection to those who are making it a Home. Pick from this list or make up something original.

*The Bow, The Lakeside, The Resting Place, The Crossroads, The Sanctuary, The Gloaming, The Bounds, The Bowl, The Landing, The Nest, The Well, The Market, The Library, The Clearing, The Bell, The Workshop, The Aerie, The Farm, The Downs, The Falls, The Bakery, The Charms, The Ends of the Earth.*

Write this information about the Found Community on a shareable document. The Mage whose character lives there may wish to write a bit more – about other Mages, what they do there, where they live or sleep or work, about other people in the Worldly

Each Found Community must have at least one added to it. Players may add Questions to any Found Community.

The player of the Founding Mage who lives there may Cross Out or Change a question asked. If they Cross Out a Question, they or another player can add a new one to take its place. If they Change it, it remains mostly as it is, but is changed in some way by the Founder.

### Answering Questions –

The players create things about the world by Answering Questions about the Found Communities. Answers should be substantial but do not need to be very long. A few sentences is about perfect. Include some details to help give the other players ideas about what it was like or what they might imagine or talk about based on the Answer.

Similar to Unique Questions, these Answers are meant to add events or elements of the world to what we know about the Found Community. This is an opportunity to flesh out the world.

*Typically, do not Answer a Question you've Asked. But if the Founder agrees to it, an exception to this may be made. Sometimes someone is just really excited about something they asked! But in general, it's good to hand it off to someone else.*

Example Question and Answer:

*What is the bargain you struck with the great Magical Creature that lives nearby?*

*The Griffin that lives on the mountain near your Found Community was wary of you at first. But once he learned that you had beautiful, intelligent horses, he became much more tolerant of you humans in his territory. You've learned that he and the horses get very friendly when it is their mating time, and now you have had a first few Hippogriff foals born to your mares. You've found that the Griffin's feathers make quills with magical qualities: anyone writing with them cannot write anything they believe to be untrue, just as when you are with the Griffin you cannot tell a lie. The Griffin doesn't mind if you take some fallen feathers now and then.*

communities about them, or other things important and interesting to you.

### Asking Questions –

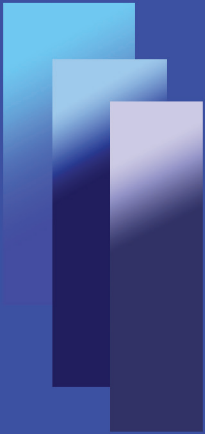
Each Found community starts with five standard Questions to be answered:

- Who lives here?*
- Who lives nearby?*
- What is the area known for?*
- What was the first major setback for the Found Community?*
- What is the closest other Mage Holding?*

And the Founding Mage player chooses one unique question to be answered:

- How do you work with the local spirit that is angry you settled here?*
- Why did everyone get lost in a wild area near your Community on the most recent sacred day?*
- Where is your favorite place to study magic?*
- What happened to that strange-colored wild animal that ran through your Community at noon?*
- Why were the stones the children gathered so important?*
- What did you do when that great storm destroyed so many of your dwellings?*
- How did you realize that your food was being infected by the magic?*
- How did you get food when your crops were destroyed?*
- What is the bargain you struck with the great Magical Creature that lives nearby?*
- How did the festival day your Community hosts come about?*

Once all Questions have been answered, players add new questions in between Sharing the Heart sessions. Use the Standard and Unique Questions as models for what to ask.



*The Mage player whose Founding Community it is picks two questions to answer. They write their answers on the shared document dedicated to that Holding. At any time in between Sharing the Heart sessions, another player can add a Question to your Found Community.*

*After a Sharing the Heart session, Players who were in that session can add a Personal Question to a Founder's sheet. These should be based on what you've talked about together, to get more information about what the Founding Mage experienced and give them an opportunity to make up more about the world.*

*Examples of Personal Questions:*

*What did your Teacher say when you told him you decided to pick another form of Magic to pursue in your new home?*

*Was it frightening to be the first person to touch the Fire Salamander?*

*Do you have a crush on that new Mage who just joined your Community?*

*What is your favorite part of the book on taking the form of birds that you just traded for?*

## ***Sharing your Hearts –***

*Get together with one, two or three other players online. Your characters are in contact through a scrying surface (water, fire, mirror, something else reflective).*

*In character, chat about what's been going on at your Found Community. You can make up shared events from your past, your Home Holding. Use the "Yes, and..." principal of Improv Acting as a general rule. Accept what someone else says, and elaborate on it – give it more detail, or say how it fits into something else you've already created together, or make up something else that builds on it.*

*This is a chance to commiserate with your friends about the new life you are trying to build, and to inspire each other (or tease each other, depending on your relationship dynamic!) about what you are seeking to accomplish.*

## ***Final Notes***

*Have fun with it! And also, experiment with what parts of this are most interesting to you. You may want to write a lot more about your own Found Community, or use the Questions and Answers more. Do what works best for you and your group based on your favorite ways to create, as well as what works best for you based on where and when you live in relation to one another.*

*Thanks so much for reading, and I hope you find beautiful and challenging new places to inhabit.*

*Come good home.*

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black & green games  
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*for Golden Cobra Challenge*