

Swords & Dragons®

a fun-filled fantasy card game for 2-10 players

Swords & Dragons® is a fast-paced card game very popular in the fantasy world of Arduin®. Gnomes, Kobbits and Phraints play Swords & Dragons in the taverns of Arduin, wagering gold coins on the turn of the cards. Now you too can enjoy this fantasy card game based on the works of Dave Hargrave.

Like poker with several unusual twists, Swords & Dragons offers card players a wide variety of play options and outcomes - expect the unexpected. Played with a fantasy-inspired deck of 108 cards (eight suits of thirteen cards with four Dragon cards), Swords & Dragons will delight fantasy enthusiasts, card players and older children alike.

Emperors Choice Games & Miniatures Corp. does not endorse nor promote gambling, and so references to betting will always be in terms of "chips" (although characters in Arduin may feel free to wager their coppers, silver shillings or gold sovereigns).

For Ages - 8 & up

Number of Players - 2 to 10

There are different sections to the Rules of the game. This first section that you are reading are the game rules. Other rules include a description of the Sobriquet cards, Cultural Variants for use with other cultures found within the Arduin multiverse, the Oracle which allows the cards to be used as a Tarot deck, the Talon which allows the cards to be used as a variety deck within your favorite role-Play game and Mad Queens Reign. The cards are infinitely expandable and can turn any normal four player card game into up to eight players due to having 8 unique suits.

The Cards - There are eight suits: Swords, Eagles, Skulls, Sceptres, Coins, Chalices, Shields and Talismans. Each suit includes nine "number" cards, three "court" cards (Knight, Queen and King), and one Ace. Cards are ranked in value from highest to lowest as follows; Ace, King, Queen, Knight, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, (Ace). Aces are considered the highest value card, although they may also be treated as a "1" card for purposes of building a Straight.

In addition, there are four Dragon cards, which function as special purpose wild cards. All the cards revealed are her "Hand," while the cards revealed during the Showdown are called her "Book."

Special Cards & Suits - The suit of swords is "Trump," the best suit in the game. A Book containing more Swords will beat a similar Book with fewer Swords. The suit Eagles is special, it's cards are considered "Good," representing the forces of Light (i.e., Love, Peace, Compassion). Eagles and Skulls may never be matched together in the same Book since the suit of Skulls is "Evil," representing the forces Darkness (i.e., Hatred, War, Greed).

Although Eagles and Skulls may never be matched together in the same Book, either may be combined freely with any other suit. All other suits are considered "Neutral" in outlook and may be matched with all other suits.

Certain cards (like the Ace of Swords Blake Blade or Knight of Eagles Eagle Lance) have a special "sobriquet" or nickname in Arduin. This is indicated on the cards themselves. In standard play these

sobriquets have no impact, while some Cultural Variants may attribute great significance to these named cards.

Finally, dragons may be used as wild cards or may be played on a player to force her to discard one or more of her Trove cards (drawn at random).

The Initial Draw - Each player draws one card from anywhere in the deck and reveals it. High card determines the first dealer). Card ranking is Ace (high) and 2 (low).

The Shuffle & Cut - Dealer shuffles the cards and the player on her right cuts them (divides the deck into two or more groups and regroups them).

The Deal - Dealer deals cards, one at a time, beginning with the player on her left and proceeding to the left (clockwise). Each player receives seven cards. The rest of the deck is placed face down on the table. The remaining cards are called the "Draw Pile" or "Talon." The bottom-most is then revealed and placed on the table face up. This is the "Discard Pile" of "Commons." The card on top of the Discard Pile, also known as the "Common Card" is considered to be a part of every player's Hand. Note, the Common Card will change as players discard.

After a Showdown ends play, a new Dealer deals the next Hand. The next Dealer is the player to the left of the current Dealer.

The Hand - All the cards a player holds, plus the Common card, comprise her "Hand." Hands are divided into two sections, a "Trove" and the rest of the Hand. Each player designates four cards as her Trove. These cards are protected and may not be taken by other players. All Trove cards are safe from Questing (although a Dragon Wrack still causes one or more cards to be discarded). Players decide which four cards comprise their Trove after they have finished drawing cards that Round (or after having been dealt their initial Hand). Each player's Trove must be set face down in front of them. When not held, the rest of their Hand is placed crossways on top of the Trove.

Within Hand, certain combinations or cards are called "Books." When a "Showdown" occurs and Hands are revealed, the player with the best Book wins.

The Books - Books are combinations of cards which determine who wins the game. Generally, the player whose Book contains the greatest number of cards wins. This is called "the Longest Book." If several players have the Longest Book, then the highest quality or "Best Book" among them wins.

Notice that a low quality but longer Book will beat a high-quality shorter Book. Between Books of equal length and quality, the Book with the greatest number of Swords wins. If Books are still tied, high card in the player's Hand wins (or next highest if still tied, etc.).

Examples: If player A has a 5-card Flush and player B holds a "Pent" (Five-of-a-Kind), B will win since she has the better of two equally long Books. Notice though, that if player C has a seven card Straight while player D holds a 5-card Royal Flush, C wins since her Book is longer. Suppose that player E and player F both hold 5-card Straights, but E's Book contains more Sword cards than F's. In this case, E would win by having more Sword cards (Trump). If both E's and F's Straights have the same number of Sword cards, high card in the Hand (not just the Book) wins.

NOTE: There are a few exceptions to the "longest wins" rule. Since Pairs and Trips are so easy to get, Three-of-a-kind (3 cards) beats Two-Pair (4 cards) and Three-Pair (six cards). Similarly, Four-of-a-Kind (4 cards) beats Two-Trip (6 cards). On the other hand, "Four Wyrms" or holding all four Dragon cards is unbeatable (even by a 13 card Royal Flush of Swords) in standard play.

The following list shows, in ascending order (#1 is lowest quality), Books which are universally recognized throughout the world of Arduin (additional Books are possible in certain Cultural Variants).

#1 High Card. No combination. The highest Swords card wins; if no one has Swords, the highest card wins, or the second higher if tied, etc. Cards rank: A, K, Q, KN, !0, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 (high to low).

#2 Two-of-a-Kind (Pair). A pair of cards of the same rank (e.g. Two Knights). Between two such Books, the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins. Among "Pairs" having equal numbers of Swords, the higher ranking Pair wins. If tied, high card wins or second higher if still tied, etc.

#3 Two-Pair. Two pairs of cards having the same rank (e.g., two 8's and two 9's). Of two such Books, the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins. Between Books containing equal numbers of Swords, the higher ranking Pair wins, if tied the higher ranking second Pair wins. If still tied, the high card wins or second higher if still tied, etc.

NOTE: This Book is an exception to the rule that longest Book wins, since Three-of-a-Kind (three cards) beats Two-Pair (four cards).

#4 Three-Pair. Three pairs of cards having the same rank (e.g., two 4's, two 7's and two Knights). Between two such Books, the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins. Among Books containing equal numbers of Swords, the higher-ranking Pair wins, if tied the higher ranking second Pair wins, and if still tied the higher ranking third Pair wins. If both Books are still equivalent, high card wins or second higher if still tied and so on.

NOTE: This Book is an exception to the rule that the longest Book wins, since Three-of-a-Kind (three cards) beats Three-Pair (six cards).

#5 Three-of-a-Kind (Trip). Three cards of the same rank (e.g., Queens). Of two such Books, the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins. Between Books having equal numbers of Swords, the higher ranking "Trip" wins. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied, and so on.

#6 Two-Trip. Two groups of three cards having the same rank (e.g., three 2's and three Queens). Between two such Books, the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins. Among Books containing equal numbers of Swords, the higher-ranking Trip wins, if tied the higher ranking second Trip wins. If still tied, high card wins or second higher if still tied, etc.

NOTE: This Book is an exception to the rule that the longest Book wins, since Four-of-a-Kind (four cards) beats Two-Trip (six cards).

#7 Four-of-a-Kind (Quad). Four cards of the same rank (e.g., four 10's) of two such Books, the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins. Between Books containing equal numbers of Swords, the higher ranking "Quad" wins. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied and so on.

#8 Straight. A Book of five cards (or more), all in numerical sequence, but not all of one suit. Aces may count as high (A K Q KN 10) or low (5 4 3 2 A). Of two equal length Straights, the one with the most Swords cards wins.

Between equal length Straights containing equal numbers of Swords the higher-ranking card wins. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied, and so on. (In a Book of equal size, Straights always beat Blazes).

#9 Flush. A Book of five cards (or more), all from the same suit but not in numerical sequence.

Between two equal length Flushes the one with the higher-ranking card wins. However, a Swords Flush will beat other equally long Flushes regardless of card rank. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied, and so on. (In a Book of equal size, Flushes always beat Straights (& Blazes).

#10 Five (or more)-of-a-Kind (Quad). Five or more cards of the same rank (e.g., six A's).

Between two such Books of equal length the one with the greatest number of Swords cards wins.

Among Books having equal numbers of Swords, the higher ranking "Pent" (or "Hext," "Sept," etc.) Wins. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied and so on. In Books of equal size, #-of-Kind always beat Flushes and Straights (& Blazes).

#11 Straight-Flush. A Book of five or more cards, all in numerical order and all in the same suit. Aces may count as high (A K Q KN 10) or low (5 4 3 2 A). Of two equal length Straight-Flushes, the one with the higher-ranking cards wins. However, a Swords Straight-Flush will beat other Straight-Flushes regardless of card rank. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied, etc. In Books of equal size, Straight-Flushes always beat #-of-a-Kind, Flushes, and Straights (& Blazes).

#12 Royal Flush. An Ace high Straight-Flush. Only lower Book (or "Four Wyrms") will beat a Royal-Flush, while an Ace high Swords Straight-Flush is nearly unbeatable. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher if still tied, and so on. In Books of equal size, Royal-Flushes always beat Straight-Flushes, #-of-a-Kind, Flushes and Straights (& Blazes).

#13 Four Wyrms. The is the best Book is standard Swords & dragons: all four Dragon cards. In the standard game nothing beats Four Wyrms.

NOTE: This Book is an exception to the rule that the longest and best Book wins, since Four Wyrms (four cards) beats every other Book.

NOTE: The various denizens of Arduin have their own house rules (or Cultural Variants) for Swords & Dragons, including special combinations of sobriquet cards. The Books are exceptions to the rule that the longest Book wins, since they often beat every other Book. For example, certain human cultures play that "Double Lancers beat all!"

The Bet - Usually, all players ante one chip into the "Pot" before the Deal, that is, each player moves one (or more) chips from her stack to the center of the table, forming the pool for which everyone's playing. Chips once stacked (or bet) cannot be retrieved except by winning the whole Pot (by having the best Book). Individual player's stakes must be kept separate and not combined into a single pile since it is important to know how much each player has bet.

After the Dealer has dealt seven cards to everyone, the player on the Dealer's left has the option to Open (make the first bet) or to Pass. If she Passes, then the player on her left may either Open or pass,

and so on until someone Opens or the Dealer Passes. If no one Opens all hands are discarded, everyone antes again into the same Pot, and a new Dealer deals new Hands. When a player opens her first betting Round she places one or more chips in the Pot as her initial bet or "Raise." Players must at least match this bet or else "Fold" (drop out of play and thus forfeit their stakes). After placing her bet the Opening player draws and discards whatever cards are entitled to her depending on her choice of play (see next section).

After the Opening player finishes her Round, the player on her left now gets the opportunity to either "Call" (place a bet exactly equaling the previous bet), "Raise" (place more chips than needed to cover the previous bet), or "Fold" (drop out of the game, discard Hand to the Commons, and forfeit all stakes). By consensus, players may set a limit to Raising or they may put a cap on the total bet. If the player places a bet (Call or Raise), she draws as many cards as her choice allows (see next section.) Then the player on her left plays a Round and so on. Even players who might have Passed initially instead of Opening get to play a Round, but once a player folds she's out of the game.

If everyone but one player Folds, the last player in the game wins the Pot without revealing her cards. Otherwise, betting continues until a player finds herself forced to Raise her own last bet. Instead of betting, the game ends in a "Showdown." At this point all players still actively in the game reveal their best Book. Generally, the longest Book wins, but there are several exceptions.

NOTE: If the Talon ever runs out, the game immediately ends in a Showdown.

The Play - A player who "Raises" or "Calls" has earned the right to draw one or more cards, depending on the option she chooses. Players in their Round may either "Delve," "Retrieve," "Quest" or "Wrack."

Delve - Player discards one card from her Hand face up on the Commons and then draws the top two cards from the Talon. Player's Round ends, play passes to her left.

Retrieve - Player takes the Common card, then discards one card from her Hand face up on the Commons. Player's Round ends and play passes to her left.

Quest - The Questing player asks another player for a certain card or type of card. If the addressed player has that card or type of card, she must hand it over to the Questing player who then gives the addressed player an unwanted card in return. A successful player may continue Questing as long as she gets what she wants. However, if the addressed player doesn't have the requested card or type of card, the Questing player must draw the top card from the Talon, discard a card, and end her Round.

The Questing player may ask for a specific rank provided she has a card of the same rank in her Hand (she may use the Common card), e.g., "Give me a King." She may ask for a specific suit provided she has a card of the same suit in her Hand (she may use the Common card), e.g., "Do you have any Swords?" She may even ask for a specific card, if she already possesses one of the same rank or suit (she may use the Common card), e.g., "Ace of Eagles, please." She may even ask for a Dragon or sobriquet card, provided she personally holds a card of the same rank. Although no one doubts her honor, the Questing player must reveal to everyone a card from her Hand which allows her to request that particular suit, rank or individual card.

If addressed player has that card or type of card, she must surrender it (one card) in exchange for any card the Questing player does not want. Then the Questing player asks the same or any other active player for another card or type of card. As long as she successfully gets cards, her Round continues.

If the addressed player doesn't have the card or type of card requested, she tell the Questing player to "Quest the Talon!" or simply "Quest!" The Questing player then draws the top card from the Talon. If the card drawn does not match what she was asking for, she discards a card face up onto the Commons, her turn ends and play passes to her left. However, if she does not draw the requested card from the Talon, she reveals this card, and continues her turn as if she'd had a successful Quest.

In some circumstances, when the Questing player has been very successful, she may find herself in the position of not wanting to give any of her cards away in exchange, since her entire Hand is already good. In this case, the Questing player may draw one card from the Talon instead of asking another player for cards, but she must then discard a card to the Commons (probably the card just drawn). This ends her turn and play passes to her left.

NOTE: There are two important exceptions limiting what may be requested:

1. If player A takes a card from player B, then B may not ask for the same card back from A in her immediately following Round. The Round after that she may be requested, if still desired. A player may ask for a suit or a rank however (if they already have a card of that suit or rank, or course).

2. A player's Trove is safe from Questing and may not be acquired. Only a Dragon Wrack can cause the loss of Trove cards.

Wrack - Player discards a Dragon card (placing it at the very bottom of the Commons), then she takes one or more randomly drawn Trove card(s) from a player of her choice, discarding them face up on the Commons. Each Dragon card shows how many Trove cards are lost by Wrack. After discarding the chosen player's Trove card(s), the wracking player's turn ends and play passes to her left.

NOTE: A Dragon Wrack is a very powerful weapon and should not be use lightly. For example, it would not be wise to Wrack someone's Trove when you're relying on that Dragon as a wild card in your own Book.

Players go through their Rounds in clockwise sequence, making bets and taking cards, until one of these three events occur:

1. Everyone Folds except one player. That player wins the Pot without revealing her cards.
2. All players Call the last Raise. A Showdown immediately results.
3. The Talon runs out of cards. The player attempting to draw cards merely ends her turn without drawing. A Showdown immediately takes place.

Terms -

ante - the bet made before anyone Opens, usually one chip.

best Book - the highest quality Book, when comparing Books of equal length.

betting - placing chips in the Pot, which allows a Round of cards to play.

betting player - a player who is currently playing a Round.

Blaze - A Book composed entirely of court cards.

Books - combinations of cards determining who wins the Pot. Generally, the player holding the Book containing the largest number of cards wins, while best combination of cards wins between Books of equal size.

Call - making a bet exactly equaling the previous bet.

Common card - upper most card in the Commons or Discard Pile, left face-up and considered part of everyone's Hand.

Commons - a.k.a. the Discard Pile. Discarded cards are placed face-up on top of the Commons. The uppermost card is the Common card.

court cards - Kings, Queens and Knights

Delve - one of the options available to the betting player, discarding one card and drawing two from the Talon.

discarding - placing a card face-up on the Commons or Discard Pile.

Discard Pile - a.k.a. the Commons. Discarded cards are placed face-up on top of the Discard Pile. The uppermost card is the Common card.

Dix - Ten-of-a-Kind Book

Dragon cards - wild cards which may wrack.

Draw Pile - a.k.a. the Talon. Unused portion of the deck from which players draw cards.

Evil cards - suit of Skulls, may not be matched in the same Book with Eagles.

Flush - Book containing cards all from the same suit.

Fold - making no bet. Player withdraws from the current deal, forfeiting all stakes wagered. She then discards her entire Hand onto the Common.

Four Wyrms - Book composed of all four Dragon cards. This Book is unbeatable in the standard game.

Good cards - suit of Eagles, may not be matched in the same Book with Skulls.

Hand - all the cards a player holds, including her Trove. The Common card is also considered a part of every player's Hand.

Hext - Six-of-a-Kind Book.

High card - player's highest-ranking card in her Hand.

Longest Book - the Book containing the greatest number of cards.

Non - Nine-of-a-Kind Book.

Number cards - not court cards or Aces (i.e., 2-9)

Oct - Eight-of-a-Kind Book.

Open -make the first bet. Player on the Dealer's left has the first opportunity to Open betting.

Pair - Two-of-a-Kind Book.

Pass - decline to Open the betting.

Pent - Five-of-a-Kind Book.

Pot - all the chips at stake in a deal, consisting of wagers from each player.

Quad - Four-of-a-Kind Book.

Quest - One of the options available to the betting player, asking another player for a card.

"Quest the Talon!" - what a player says when asked for a card she does not possess (or which is safe in her Trove). Often just "Quest!"

Raise - place more chips in the Pot than are needed to meet the previous bet. A player can never Raise her own last bet, a Showdown results instead.

Rank - the relative value of a card within a suit, A K Q KN 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 (high to low)

Retrieve - one of the options available to the betting player, taking the Common card and then discarding an unwanted one.

Round - a player's turn to bet and draw cards.

Royal Flush - an Ace high Straight-Flush.

Sept - Seven-of-a-Kind Book

Showdown - all players still in the game reveal their Book to determine who wins the Pot.

Sobriquet cards - cards having nicknames among certain cultures. Sobriquets are noted on cards. These cards can have great effect in some cultural variants.

Straight - a Book of five or more cards in sequence, but not all in the same suit.

Straight-Flush - a Book of five or more cards in sequence, and all in the same suit.

Suit - a series of cards having the same common graphic symbol, e.g., the suit of Chalices.

Talon - a.k.a. Draw Pile. Unused portion of the deck from which players draw cards.

Trip - Three-of-a-Kind Book.

Trove - four cards chosen by each player from their Hand. These cards are safe from Questing, but may be Wracked.

Trump - suit of Swords, the best suit. When comparing Books of equal length and quality, the Book containing the most Swords cards win.

Wild cards - cards which may be used to represent any card of the player's choice. Usually just the four Dragon cards, but Cultural Variants may change this. Ordinarily, wild cards may not be used to represent Dragon cards (no Wrack).

Wrack - one of the options available to the betting player, discarding a Dragon card and forcing another player to discard one or more Trove cards.

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LIST OF SOBRIQUET CARDS:

Often sobriquet cards are simply treated as wild cards (cannot be used as Dragons). However, each has it's own special attributes among certain cultures. Once again, it is suggested that only a few of these special cards should be in effect at a time.

Seven of Eagles - the Magnificent Seven: If a player's Straight or Flush contains this card, she wins the Showdown (except for Four Wyrms which beats it). This effect does not apply when the Magnificent Seven is the Common card.

Knight of Eagles - the Eagle Lancer: In some Human cultures, two Lancer sobriquet cards (Swords, Eagles, Shields) beats every other Book, including Four Wyrms! This card also has an effect on a Royal Marriage, see next card.

Queen of Eagles - the Empress: When matched with the Emperor in a Straight or a Flush it's called a Royal Marriage. A Royal Marriage beats all other Books, including Four Wyrms. However, if someone else's Book contains the Knight of Eagles, the Royal Marriage is nullified, and the winner is determined normally.

King of Eagles - the Emperor: Please see the Empress above.

Ace of Eagles - the Great Eagle: If you reveal this card at the end of your Round you may recover the card you just discarded to the Commons, placing it back in you Hand. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Ten of Skulls - the Ghost Legion: If you reveal this card at the end of your Round you may exchange one of your unwanted cards for a randomly drawn card from another player's Hand. You may not choose cards from a player's Trove. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Knight of Skulls - the Mummy: If you reveal this card at the end of your Round you may randomly draw a card from another player's Hand (Trove is safe). Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Queen of Skulls - the Vampyr: If you reveal this card during your Round you may randomly draw a card from another player's Hand or Trove. Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

King of Skulls - the Lich: If you reveal this card during your Round you may take a randomly drawn card from another player's Hand and one more from her Trove. Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Ace of Skulls - the Skull Warrior: If you reveal this card during your Round you may force another player to discard two randomly drawn cards from her Hand (Trove is safe). Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Ten of Swords - the Curse of Aaos: If you hold this card in a Showdown you automatically lose. If this card is the Common card during Showdown, everyone loses and a new Dealer deals a new Hand from a reshuffled deck. Everyone antes into the same Pot as last time.

Knight of Swords - the Lancer: In some Human cultures, two Lancer sobriquet cards (Swords, Eagles, Shields) beats every other Book, including Four Wyrms!

Ace of Swords - the Black Blade: Eternal champions armed with the Black Blade wield tremendous destructive power. Playing the Black Blade is treated exactly like playing a Dragon Wrack, except all four Trove cards are lost! Just as in a Dragon Wrack, the Black Blade is first discarded to the very bottom of the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Queen of Talismans - *the Sorceress*: If you reveal this card you may draw the Common card. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

King of Talismans - *the Wizard*: If you reveal this card you may draw the top card from the Talon. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Ace of Talismans - *the Sphinx*: If you reveal this card during a Round you may see another player's entire Hand (Trove too). Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Queen of Sceptres - *the High Priestess*: If you reveal this card during your Round you may look through the Commons and take one card of your choosing. Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Ace of Sceptres - *the Wand of Wizardry*: Treat this as a wild card (like a Dragon). Additionally. If you discard this card to the bottom of the Commons, you may change which sobriquet cards are in effect (as if the Dealer).

Queen of Chalice - *the Queen of the Sea*: If you reveal this card during your Round you may take one randomly drawn card from anywhere in the Talon and in addition you also get the Common card. Then you discard an unwanted card onto the Commons. This is in addition to any other play in your Round.

Knight of Shields - *the Shield Lancer*: In some Human cultures, two Lancer sobriquet cards (Swords, Eagles, Shields) beats every other Book, including Four Wyrms!

King of Coins - *the Merchant Prince*: If you win Showdown with this card in your Book, you get an extra three chips from every other player, even those who have Folded.

SWORDS & DRAGONS

(CULTURAL VARIANTS)

Elves play Swords & dragons differently than Goblins. Each region and culture has its own house rules. The major cultural variants of Swords & dragons are described below.

The dealer informs other players which cultural variants are in effect before dealing cards. Dealers should not use too many house rules at once, since this can clutter up the game. Only one or two of these variants should be chosen at a time, but the Dealer may choose more. If all other players agree that they don't want to use some of these house rules, they may overrule the Dealer's choice.

Human Cultures:

Perhaps the most widely played variation involves the inclusion of an additional Book called "Blaze". Most human cultures on **Arduin** know this variant.

#7.5 Blaze - A Book of five cards (or more) composed entirely of court cards. Aces do not count as court cards. Of two equally long Blazes, the one with the most Swords cards wins. Between Blazes of equal length and having equal numbers of Swords, the higher ranking card wins. In case of ties, high card wins or second higher is still tied, etc. A Blaze is considered higher quality than Four-of-a-Kind (#7), but lower quality than a straight (#8).

Almost as well known is the sobriquet card match of the two Lancers, which beats all other Books, even Four Wyrms. The Dealer announces this house rule by saying, "Double Lancers beat all!" Augustans play with a sobriquet match called a Royal Marriage, the King and Queen of Eagles in a Straight or a Flush. A Royal Marriage beats all other Books, unless someone else's Book includes the Knight of Eagles. If the Knight of Eagles is in a Book then the Royal Marriage is nullified and the win is determined normally. In contrast, the Amazons simply play where Queens outrank Kings and every sobriquet Queen is a wild card (cannot act as a Dragon).

Fey Cultures:

In Dwarf rules, the initial Dealer is the player with the longest beard. A popular Dwarven variant involves the addition of a new type of play, Mining:

Mining - Player discards an unwanted card on top of the Commons, then he takes a card sight-unseen from any part of the Commons (except the bottom-most card cannot be take).

Hobbits play where the Pot is split evenly between the best and the worst Books. Also, Hobbits like to play with a new kind of Book, the Red Book. A Red Book is any Book which uses all the cards in a player's Hand (but need not include the Common card). A Red Book beats all other Books and takes all of the Pot. On the rare occasion when two or more players have Red Books in a Showdown, those players evenly split the Pot.

Elves play a variant called, "Nine-who-stand" in their language. In this version, each player is dealt five cards face down one at a time. These five cards form the players Trove. One more card is dealt face up to each player, followed by a second, third and fourth card. Between receiving each card there is a betting interval, but no play. Players may not Delve, Quest, nor Retrieve. However, Dragons may Wrack and any sobriquet cards in effect may be used. All players who haven't Folded after receiving all nine cards reveal their Books in Showdown.

Kobbits play with only five cards to start and a players Trove is only three cards. Gnomes play where all 7's are wild cards (may not be used with Dragons though).

Minion Cultures:

Orcs add a new type of play, Raiding.

Raiding - Player may take one to three cards from another player's Hand, but must give an equal number of cards to the opponent. Troves are safe from Raiding. Then the player discards an unwanted card to the Commons.

Goblins play their Hands as dealt, without drawing further cards. No play is allowed, but sobriquet cards in effect may be used. Players continue betting until a Show down results.

In Kobold house rules, the player with the worst Book wins the Pot. Urukks insist that the Common card must be part of every player's Book, making the Commons very important.

Ogres are not very bright, so they play a simplified game. There are no Books and no play. Each player is dealt one card face down. Then everyone sticks this card to their forehead so that they cannot see their own card, but can see everyone else's. Players continue betting until a Showdown results, where the high card wins.

Uniquely Arduin Cultures:

Phraints are sentient insect beings, something like a seven foot tall mantis standing erect. Highly intelligent, Phraint are completely logical in their thought processes. It is not surprising that Phraint would play a complex variant of **Swords & Dragons**. Phraints play for points. Although they still form Books at Showdown, a Book's length is not important. With Phraint rules the best Book has the highest point value. Number cards are worth their number points, Knights are valued at 11 points, Queens/Kings are worth 12 points and Aces count as 13 points. Swords cards' values are doubled.

Throon are four-armed mercenaries who have no time for trivialities. Throon like their games fast. In Throon play each player gets only one Round. When the last player (the Dealer) ends her Round, there is one last Call. All other players must match the highest bet or they Fold. All players who are still in reveal their Books during Showdown.

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The Mad Queen's Reign

A Swords & Dragons™ Card Game by Monte St John

Swords and Dragons™ is a card game peculiar to the fantasy realm of Arduin ©, played in taverns, gambling halls and among the snobbish circles of the noble elite. Games are for both fun and hard coin, and have been the cause of more than one bar room brawl or duel among the nobility. Presented herein is the commoner version of the game, rules held by all the classes and races of Arduin with little or no dispute. It is played the same whether on the hard wood of wagons along dusty trails or in the carousing vulgar drinking halls of the towns. Popularized shortly after the events of the Black Queen's regime, it is a game that has seized the hearts of Arduinian's and foreigners alike.

The Mad Queen's Reign is played with the Swords & Dragons fantasy-inspired deck of 108 cards (eight suits of thirteen cards with four Dragon cards). The game is typically "tabled" with 2-10 players, with each player assuming the guise of a Noble House during the time of turmoil under the Black Queen, circa Arduin 549, 743 to 549, 752. The object is to be the player with the most points at the end of her reign. The victor in points overthrows the Black Queen (also called the Mad Queen) and assumes the Throne as King (or Queen) of Arduin. It is a popular game and often used as a teaching tool to educate people about the events during that dark time in Arduin history and not to mention just played for fun. The Nobility especially enjoy this game, though are more likely to be found playing the poker-styled version. Regardless of the gaming style they choose, Nobles in Arduin play with deadly intensity, involving the myriad tangles of their intrigues and politics in the weave of the cards. It is a tool among them, since most of the houses are still galvanized along lines for those for the Queen, those against and those who stand neutral. Some very fantastic games have been played in battles fought with keen wit and agile use of the cards to humiliate or defeat rivals. Not all of them for political gain either. After all, who doesn't remember the game Audreil Ethriblad played in the under warrens of Talismonde to save the soul of her son?*

The Cards – The eight suits (Swords, Eagles, Skulls, Sceptres, Coins, Chalices, Shields and Talismans) consist of thirteen cards, ranked in value from highest to lowest as follows: an Ace, three "court" cards (King, Queen, and Knight) and nine "number" cards, 10 on down to 2. Also, there are four Dragon cards that function as wild cards and take precedence over the values in the other suits. In order of strength, they are the Wrathful Dragon, Guardian Dragon, Sea Dragon, and Sleeping Dragon. The suit of Swords is the "Trump", the best suit in the game and follows the Dragons in power. As unique cards, the Dragon cards often gain monikers to describe them in different locales. For instance, the miners of the Salt Mud Flats call the Sea Dragon card Ifinbraxus after the dragon of the same name that dwells there in the salt dunes. The Elves of Mistwood call the Wrathful Dragon card Arlin-Mainthiu after a local legend of a yellowed dragon that twined itself around the armored foot of a godling. The full legend is carved in picturesque graphic along the length and breadth of ancient tree in the village of Treehaven.

Special Cards – Certain cards within the deck, such as the Ace of Swords or “The Black Blade” if you will and the Knight of Eagles or “The Eagle Lancer” as it is known, have a special “sobriquet” or nickname in Arduin. Each is indicated on the cards if it holds a particular familiar. These are monikers that have latched on to the particular cards and are used by all. In game play some of these sobriquets have special significance attached to those named cards. In certain hands, some sobriquets hold boons, others bane.

The Noble Houses – All the Noble Houses of Arduin are generally used in play but the Houses of Margalen, Black Hydra, Borthos, Lazirur, Noscillion, Storm Crow, Silver Mountain, and Golden Lion feature quite often. Those of the elite always play their house even if it did not exist during the time period. It is considered very gauche and offensive to assume another’s house, even in jest.

Initial Draw – The owner of the game is always the first dealer or may choose to pass it over to the player who wins by highest draw. This is done by each player drawing one card from anywhere in the deck and revealing it, high card determining the first dealer. After this initial round, the deal moves clockwise to the next player and continues so until the end of play.

Shuffle & Cut – Dealer shuffles the cards and the player on the right cuts them, dividing the deck into two or more groups and regrouping them.

The Deal – The dealer deals cards, one at a time working clockwise. Each player receives 10 cards and the remainder is set aside until the end of the round. After each hand of play, the deck is reshuffled and deal commences as outlined.

The Rules – Play covers a 10-year period broken into hands, each divided into 2-year lengths and built of 10 rounds (3 months Arduin time). A round is where the dealer places one card on the table and other players (moving clockwise) must follow suit. If you do not have the same suit the round is started with then you can play any card from your hand. You may only lead with a dragon card if you have no suited card to play. Those challenged by a leading Dragon card do not have to play a Dragon card in turn but may play from any suit. The player with the highest card wins the round and collects the cards at the end of the round. The only thing that beats the highest card in a suit is a Trump card and the any of the Dragon cards, listed in order of power above. Each round takes one card from a player and the round’s base value is 1 point, modified only by the special rules governing each hand of play. There are 5 hands played to a game, each covering 2 years of the turbulent time of the Black Queen’s dominion. After the initial hand, the succeeding hands have special rules as the Black Queen takes steps to consolidate her power against the murmuring distress of the people and the nobles. Each hands rules are mutually exclusive and do not carry on to succeeding hands. The winner of the game is the Noble House with the most points at the end of the fifth hand.

Second Hand – In the history of this turbulent period, the Mad Queen exercises her power to bring the Nobles and the people in line by outlawing magic. It was a harsh period where she labored to rend the tools of learning and power, even managing to close

the doors to the famous Colleges across Arduin before relenting in face of the tide of angry criticism it brought. The winner of any round with a Talisman card in play loses 1 point instead of gaining 1 point for the round. Gaining more than 1 Talisman card in a round does not change the penalty, it is -1 point regardless of the number of cards garnered. Also, any player unlucky enough to take the Ace of Sceptres (The Wand of Wizardry) in play loses 2 points. Worse, if the Wand of Wizardry is in with a Talisman card, the total value of the scored points is lost for that round is 2 for the Wand, plus 1 for the Talisman card in play for a total of -3 points lost.

Third Hand – After the failed attempt to abort magic from among her subject, the Mad Queen is forced to stay her hand and gather resources to combat her ever-growing unruly subjects. It was a chaotic time in the land and she was not alone in consolidating power as the Noble houses joined her in gathering unto themselves what financial and magical strength, military stability and political clout that was possible. In this hand, any player who wins a round with a Coin card in play gets 2 points for the round instead of 1 point. Additionally, if a player is lucky enough to win a round with the King of Coins (Merchant Prince) in play, he gains 3 points. Also, the same applies to the Ace of Swords (The Black Blade), Ace of Talismans (The Sphynx), Ace of Sceptres (The Wand of Wizardry), and the 7 of Eagles (The Magnificent Seven), which net a player 2 points for each. These latter four bonus cards are on top of any bonus gained from having a coin card in play that round. Thus, a winning round with a Coin card and the Ace of Talismans would net a total of 4 points. It is worth noting that you only need to win the round with one of these special cards in play to gain the points as outlined above. Thus, you could trump the Ace of Talismans and King of Coins in a round of play with a Dragon card and gain all points (5 points total).

Fourth Hand – This was a horrible time for Arduin as open rebellion and conflicts flared and the wrath of the Black Queen grew at the reluctance of the Noble Houses and the people to bow to her will. With her army and the powers at her command, the Black Queen works dire harm to those who would stand against her in opposition. By her order, Noble Houses are besieged with troops, people of villages scattered and those of noble blood publicly tried for insurrection. If any player wins a round with a Skull card in play during this time, he loses 1 point instead of winning 1 point as their house is considered to have gone against the Queen. If the Ace of Skulls (The Skull Warrior), the Ten of Swords (Curse of Aaos) or the Ace of Shields is in play during a round, a winner of that round loses 5 points for each taken card. Any of these taken in a round of play means the Mad Queen has taken steps to destroy the Noble House and publicly tried them for treason.

Fifth Hand – At long last it is enough and the Noble Houses along with the people of Arduin meet her in open rebellion to end the taint of her rule. A coup is staged against the Queen and armies of the rebels and the Mad Queen lock in battle to determine who will hold future. The player who wins a round with a Queen of any suit in play gets 3 extra points per Queen. If you are lucky enough to win the Queen of Eagles (The Empress), your house was the one to actually capture the Black Queen and you get 6 extra points!

Example round of play – Bored on the long bumpy carriage ride, Simeon the scholar gazes grumpily at the lined walls of the interior. Something catches at the corner of his eye and his mood takes a sudden turnaround as another passenger, an exotic trader from somewhere far to the north slowly waves a deck of cards his direction. It does not take long before they are using the padding of the seat as an impromptu table for their game. Out of boredom and infectious enthusiasm, the two other passengers join in the game. The trader takes the House of the Black Hydra, Simeon the guise of Lazirur and the later arrivals the houses of Noscaklion and Storm Crow. House Black Hydra shuffles the deck and lets Lazirur (Simeon, who sits clockwise from him, followed by Noscaklion then Storm Crow) cut it. After this is done he deals out 10 cards to each player and sets aside the remainder. As is his right by being the dealer he begins play, quickly formulating a strategy around his cards. Since he has numerous trumps, a court card or two and a Dragon card, he passes the lead off initially by playing a Sceptre Knight card and allowing House Storm Crow to take the lead. That house returns with a low Coin card, which he snaps up with the Ace of Coins. In the lead again in round three but only possessing strong cards, Black Hydra leads with the King of Eagles but is cut by a low trump card from House Noscaklion. In round four, House Noscaklion opts to lead with a Sword card, by which Black Hydra is secretly delighted. He manages to offload two low Sword cards in this round and the next. A Talisman Queen card begins round six but Black Hydra is delighted to cut it with a trump and quickly pulls in the cards from rounds seven, eight and nine also by exercising the lode of Swords he was blessed with this deal. The last is his only surprise as he delightedly exposes his Sleeping Dragon card but is confounded by the Wrathful Dragon in House Lazirur's possession. In the end, House Black Hydra wins five hands, gaining five points and is in the lead. At least, for the moment.

**** Surely you remember the scandal that rocked Talismonde in 550, 130 when the Laughingstar baby was kidnapped from the very palace of the King and held for ransom? The cities underbelly and shadows were given its worst purging in history as the King turned out his own guard to pinch shadows and find the child. The kidnappers were unmasked as seven nobles and lords of the land and put to death but the staggering ransom paid to buy the child back was never found.**

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The Oracle

*For use with the Swords & Dragons™ fantasy card deck from
Emperors Choice Games & Miniatures Corp.*

Swords & Dragons doubles as a game for use with the world of Arduin, but it's also instantly adaptable to any role-playing system. Players may role-play their characters wagering silver and gold coins in games which may turn into sword fights! More importantly, the Swords & Dragons deck is an excellent device for incorporating divination (fortune-telling) into a role-playing session.

Emperor's Choice™ does not endorse nor promote fortune-telling. The divinatory aspect of Swords & Dragons is meant for role-playing environments, hence references to GMs and characters. The following is intended for entertainment purposes only.

Divinatory Meanings -

First characters must decide on a question. This can be general or specific, covering any span of time. The Question can range from personal to tactical, involving one or more people. A character asks the Question and deals out seven cards, laying them down in a certain order. The first card is surrounded by the six other cards so that two are above, two are below and one on either side of the central card. Each position indicates the aspect of the Question which the card addresses. Cards are either upright or reversed depending on card facing. Card meanings should be loosely interpreted, choosing the descriptions that best fit. These interpretations might inspire new ways to look at old problems.



1. The Character - Representing the character herself, a card in this position might reveal many things: the character's role in answering the Question, her greatest strength or weakness with regards to the Question, how she's tried to answer this Question before, or possibly even a hint of how she would address the Question.

2. The World - This position indicated the influences of the outside world, including family, friends, acquaintances, and other recent events which have led to asking the Question.

3. The Past - This position is the historical foundation of the Question, the basis of the matter at hand. A card here may not seem pertinent because it concerns background events the character does not yet know, but needs to be aware of.

4. The Opposition - Represents the forces opposing the character. She may not know of this opposition, but must be made aware of it.

5. The Path Ahead - Indicates a possible encounter, meeting, person, affair, or other influences in the near future.

6. The Future - A card in this position might reveal many things. This card might describe the character's hopes for the future. It could be a warning or detail of the character's fate or reveal the final outcome of asking the Question. Major upcoming events might even be revealed.

7. The Answer - Answers the Question. This card reveals the solution to the problem facing the character. Interpreting this card may well allow her to take appropriate actions to deal with the current situation.

Card Meanings-

TWO OF SWORDS

Upright: stalemate, indecision, precarious balance of forces, tension in relationships, military alliances of convenience.

Reversed: stalemate broken, disloyalty, imposters, rapid turn of events, new situation may be dangerous, possible journey

THREE OF SWORDS

Upright: quarreling, separation, emotional loss, romance ends, sorrow, political upheaval, possible civil war.

Reversed: as upright meaning, but not so severe or overwhelming

FOUR OF SWORDS

Upright: repose, solitude, rest after battle, release from suffering, exile, temporary truce, convalescence, situation is improving.

Reversed: ceasing to rest, returning to an active life, partial success, social unrest, be watchful and take precautions.

FIVE OF SWORDS

Upright: failure, defeat, humiliation, cowardice, unluckiness, trickery, adversaries may arise.

Reversed: empty victory, weakness, unfairness, small loss or minor defeat, misfortune for a friend, possible funeral attendance.

SIX OF SWORDS

Upright: success after difficulties, journey by water to a safe refuge, developing a higher state of consciousness, a messenger

Reversed: postponed journey, unable to break free, no solution to present difficulties, unfavorable legal judgement

SEVEN OF SWORDS

Upright: unwisely taking what belongs to someone else, plans that may fail, unreliability, spying, betrayal, dishonorable action, partial success through stealth

Reversed: stolen goods returned, good advice, unexpected good news, wishes may be fulfilled

EIGHT OF SWORDS

Upright: fear, bondage, paralyzed by indecision, sickness, betrayal

Reversed: freedom from fear, new beginnings are possible, impulsiveness

NINE OF SWORDS

Upright: misery, loss, doubt, suspicion, oppression, desolation, serious illness or injury, may mean death of someone close, things are getting worse

Reversed: end of suffering, patience, unselfishness, someone close is doing very well, time heals all

TEN OF SWORDS *the Curse of Aaos*

Upright: ruin, great loss, sorrow beyond measure, terrible military defeat, disrupted home life, plans fall apart

Reversed: overcoming evil, courage, recovery, some success, turning to higher spiritual powers for help

KNIGHT OF SWORDS *the Lancer*

Upright: a brave warrior, martial prowess, heroism, the opposition falters, trouble is coming or going

Reversed: a destructive person, always ready to fight, tyranny over the weak, poor judgement, impulsive mistakes, boasting

QUEEN OF SWORDS

Upright: a strong, quick-witted woman, keen observation, kind but firm, separation, mourning, may represent a widow

Reversed: a narrow-minded, cruel woman, gossip, deceit, malice

KING OF SWORDS

Upright: a brilliant insightful strong willed man, a leader with many plans, wise council, power, authority, military intelligence, justice, possible legal troubles

Reversed: untrustworthy, suspicious, sly, stubborn, cruel and malicious, intrigues are revealed

ACE OF SWORDS *the Black Blade*

Upright: conquest, a hero, great triumph of arms, total victory, possible birth of a legendary figure

Reversed: win the battle, lose the war, obstacles, destruction, tyranny, rule by force, great loss, infertility

TWO OF SCEPTRES

Upright: intelligent, kindly, generous, bold, proud, unforgiving, creative, fulfilling, good things are coming

Reversed: hollow success, good start goes sour, restlessness, stubbornness, suffering, fear, domination

THREE OF SCEPTRES

Upright: successful business, establishment of power, realization of dreams, possible partnership

Reversed: failed business, lost wealth, treachery, disappointment

FOUR OF SCEPTRES

Upright: romance, harmony, peace, rest after hard work, prosperity, future marriage

Reversed: as above but to a lesser degree, dissatisfaction with situation

FIVE OF SCEPTRES

Upright: conflict, violent struggle, competition, obstacles, rashness, internal dissent, unsatisfied desires, possible legal problems

Reversed: success after overcoming obstacles, new business opportunities, trickery

SIX OF SCEPTRES

Upright: good and important news, victory after battle, public accolade after triumph, success through labor, helpful friends

Reversed: delayed rewards, arrogant conquerors, fear, disloyalty, acclaim without merit

SEVEN OF SCEPTRES

Upright: victory through bravery, success against opposition, advantageous position, problems are solved, competition in business

Reversed: hesitancy causes loss, anxiety through ignorance, worries about an outcome, the character is threatened

EIGHT OF SCEPTRES

Upright: great haste, advancing too rapidly, hasty communications, too much too fast, rash decisions, new approach to a goal, possible journey by air

Reversed: jealousy, dispute, delay, oppressive conditions in business or at home, a bad conscience

NINE OF SCEPTRES

Upright: lull before the storm, pause in struggles, temporary cease-fire, strength in reserve, eventual victory through attrition, new challenges, hidden foes

Reversed: adversity, weakness, obstacles, calamity, illness or injury

TEN OF SCEPTRES

Upright: too much success brings oppression, power used unwisely, unregulated force, carrying too much a burden, martyr complex

Reversed: intrigues, exile, selfishness, blaming others, potential legal expenses

KNIGHT OF SCEPTRES

Upright: handsome, young, energetic warrior, rashness, a journey , possible change of residence

Reversed: discord, misunderstanding, separation, quarreling, jealousy, work interrupted

QUEEN OF SCEPTRES *the High Priestess*

Upright: a lady of great power and energy, very attractive, loving and practical, sound business judgement, domestic bliss, kindness

Reversed: a jealous, vengeful, deceitful woman, passion overrules the intellect, unfaithfulness

KING OF SCEPTRES

Upright: a handsome, noble and strong gentleman, honesty, friendliness, loyalty, possibly a good marriage

Reversed: a prejudiced, intolerant, harsh man, severe and ruthless

ACE OF SCEPTRES *the Wand of Wizardry*

Upright: beginning, invention, life, growth, inheritance, adventure

Reversed: false start, unattained goal, stagnation

TWO OF CHALICES

Upright: harmony, satisfying love, friendship, partnership, cooperation, balance of opposing forces yields great bliss

Reversed: losing balance, false love, violent passion, love becomes hate, disunity, misunderstanding

THREE OF CHALICES

Upright: great luck, wildly successful, abundance, harmony, complete lasting victory, healing, pleasure, a big celebration

Reversed: overindulgence, overwhelmed by sensuality, plenty becomes scarcity, pleasure becomes pain, success turns to ashes, talents are unappreciated

FOUR OF CHALICES

Upright: world-weariness, dissatisfaction with material success, solitude spent in contemplation, a temporary pause in one's life

Reversed: new relationships, goals, ambitions and possibilities

FIVE OF CHALICES

Upright: disillusionment, sorrow, disappointment, bitterness, relationship ends, futile regrets, loss, but something's still left, hope for the best

Reversed: renewal, new alliances, return of an old friend or loved one, cautious optimism, determination to overcome obstacles

SIX OF CHALICES

Upright: nostalgia, pleasant memories, innocence, idealism, possible meeting with childhood friend, new opportunities or friendships, a gift from an admirer

Reversed: living in the past, clinging to old ways, renewal, plans that will soon ripen, possible inheritance or gift from the past

SEVEN OF CHALICES

Upright: dreams, overactive imagination, scattered forces, illusionary success, self-indulgence, self-deception, possible mystical experience

Reversed: determination, strong will, the resolve to act, initial success must be followed through

EIGHT OF CHALICES

Upright: rejection of material things and turning to the spiritual, success abandoned, disappointment in love, search for new paths

Reversed: the spiritual is abandoned for the material, joy, feasting, new love, hedonism

NINE OF CHALICES

Upright: material success, satisfaction, abundance, well-being, the good things in life, security, fondest desires being fulfilled

Reversed: overindulgence, illness, self-indulgence, unfulfilled dreams

TEN OF CHALICES

Upright: home, joy, contentment, peace, love, lasting success, great friendship, respect for others

Reversed: loss of a friendship, betrayal, great disappointment, indignation, flagrant waste, sadness

KNIGHT OF CHALICES

Upright: a poetic and indolent young dreamer, a messenger, an opportunity, inspiration arrives

Reversed: idleness, dishonesty, trickery, fraud, competition for opportunity/love

QUEEN OF CHALICES *the Queen of the Sea*

Upright: a visionary woman, kind, honest, loyal, nurturing, protective, loving

Reversed: a perverse woman, intelligent but immoral, an overprotective mother, overimaginative, too passive

KING OF CHALICES

Upright: a kind father-figure skilled in law, trade or the arts, subtle power, generosity, creativity

Reversed: a powerful man cunning and violent, a wolf in sheep's clothing, two-faced, robbery, a double-cross

ACE OF CHALICES

Upright: joy, great love, abundance, contentment, perfection, fertility, beauty, pleasure, faithfulness, great spiritual and material wealth

Reversed: false love, false hope, instability, clouded joy, unfaithfulness, change in plans

TWO OF COINS

Upright: handling several situations at once, harmony in the midst of chaos, lightheartedness, balance and self-control, a written message, new projects are difficult to start

Reversed: too much to handle, instability, events out of control, forced happiness

THREE OF COINS

Upright: craftsmanship, skilled artist, material success, commercial power

Reversed: poor workmanship, lack of skill, ignorance, selfishness, preoccupation with profits, mediocrity

FOUR OF COINS

Upright: greed, assured material gain, power without wisdom, gifts legacy, mistrust, shortsightedness, desperation

Reversed: reversal of fortunes, prejudice, suspicion, wastrel, possible loss of material possessions

FIVE OF COINS

Upright: destitution, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, loneliness, ill health, lovers unable to meet, lacking spirituality

Reversed: hard-earned money, temporary employment, charity, new interest in spirituality

SIX OF COINS

Upright: gifts, inheritance, financial help, repayment of debt, you get what you deserve

Reversed: jealousy, shaky finances may frustrate plans, prosperity threatened, bad debts, bribes

SEVEN OF COINS

Upright: surprisingly good news, cleverness, continued growth through hard work, help will prove valuable

Reversed: pause during an enterprise, slow growth through hard work, unprofitable speculations, disappointment, financial worries.

EIGHT OF COINS

Upright: apprenticeship, learning, new knowledge or skills, new beginning

Reversed: vanity, intrigue, lack of emotion, skills used perversely, do not borrow money

NINE OF COINS

Upright: accomplishment, inheritance, security, material comfort, solitary enjoyment, love of garden and home

Reversed: lost security, danger, threat from thieves, canceled projects, be cautious

TEN OF COINS

Upright: riches inheritance, interest in one's ancestors, home, family, change for the best

Reversed: family misfortune, lost inheritance, material loss, an emotional loss, possibly death, gambling, taking a bad risk

KNIGHT OF COINS

Upright: a mature, respectable, reliable warrior, possibly a person who will help the character, trustworthy, honorable, travel possible

Reversed: inertia, laziness, idleness, carelessness, stagnation, deceit, beware of travel

QUEEN OF COINS

Upright: a rich noble woman, generous and charitable, the Earth Mother, compassion, security, opulence, thoughtfulness

Reversed: mistrust, suspicion, neglected duties, extreme dependence on others, fear of failure provokes panicky responses, false prosperity

KING OF COINS *the Merchant Prince*

Upright: a rich man both materially and spiritually, great prosperity, financial success, reliability, helpfulness, steady temperament, slow to anger

Reversed: a dangerous man if crossed, stupidity, stubbornness, perverse use of talents, too materialistic, vice, bribery, addicted to comfort

ACE OF COINS

Upright: prosperity, contentment, attainment, bright prospects, pleasure, beauty

Reversed: greed, corruption, misuse of power, unhappiness with wealth, false start

TWO OF SHIELDS

Upright: obstacles overcome by love, difficult road to success, influence over superiors, innovative methods, a secret romance

Reversed: sickness due to overwork, social disappointment, responsibilities lead to mental strain, possible marital trouble

THREE OF SHIELDS

Upright: organized actions master adversity, idealism, aggressive action, propaganda, a business relationship thrives

Reversed: underhanded business dealings, end of a relationship, acting upon illusions, oversensitive

FOUR OF SHIELDS

Upright: determination overcomes obstacles, love gained through perseverance, patience is rewarded, political or business initiatives succeed, endurance

Reversed: financial losses, an artistic endeavor ends, remorse, guard against negativity, a vengeful plot exposed

FIVE OF SHIELDS

Upright: faith overcomes adversity, inspiration, beliefs reinforced by fact, rewarding mystic experience

Reversed: religious persecution, overindulgence, impulsive actions, escape from danger

SIX OF SHIELDS

Upright: concentration of forces defeats enemies, focusing energies on the problem, efficient use of resources

Reversed: scattered resources, dissipation, antagonism, ambition, repression, bankruptcy

SEVEN OF SHIELDS

Upright: victory comes from compassion, benevolent influences, positive thinking yields achievement, intuition, profitable journey, protection from harm

Reversed: discord resolved, illusions and delusions dispelled, misunderstanding corrected, danger in traveling

EIGHT OF SHIELDS

Upright: lessons learned through failure lead to success, struggle to maintain balance, frustrations bring strength

Reversed: failure, fear of failure, loss of honor, financial troubles, painful emotions, misleading impression

NINE OF SHIELDS

Upright: alliances with others overcomes obstacles, help from a neighbor, gift from a friend, change of mind

Reversed: quarreling, discord, jealousy, loss of friendship, facts used to obscure the truth

TEN OF SHIELDS

Upright: unconventional inventive methods overcomes adversity, out with the old, in with the new, adaptation to the environment, unexpected travel, inspiration

Reversed: trying to break bad habits, agitation upsets the balance, nervous afflictions, hypersensitivity, possible sudden loss of employment

KNIGHT OF SHIELDS *the Shield Lancer*

Upright: a younger person offers help, diplomacy, vigilant guard, keen perception, insight, service rendered in secret, spying, possibly a secret message

Reversed: imposter, unforeseen developments, vulnerability, childish cruelty, chance of illness

QUEEN OF SHIELDS

Upright: a spiritual teacher of beliefs, traditions, conformity, servitude, religious ceremonies, ritualism, mercy, compassion, attached to outdated ideas

Reversed: unconventional, open to new ideas, eccentric, inventive, foolishly generous, intrigue, superstitious

KING OF SHIELDS

Upright: a strong leader skilled at solving problems, conquest, heroism, courage overcomes all obstacles, spiritual power triumphs over material forces, love overwhelms hate

Reversed: tyranny, abuse of power, loss of faith, lack of moral direction, discord, weakness, sickness, fear of loneliness

ACE OF SHIELDS

Upright: folly, thoughtlessness, innocence, enthusiasm, frivolity, levity, spontaneity, ignoring important details, complete freedom, but lacking discipline, beginning of an adventure

Reversed: folly, carelessness, indiscretion, vanity, indecision, poor judgement, lack of control, trouble is coming

TWO OF TALISMANS

Upright: dynamic and creative power, unpredictability, communicating with spirits, a dead loved one makes contact, subtle influences

Reversed: excitement, alarm, disturbance, stirring things up, secrets revealed, poltergeist, the force to move heavy things

THREE OF TALISMANS

Upright: destiny, entry, ascending to lofty heights, marrying into power, crossing the threshold, mystical development of the soul, good magic

Reversed: karma, exit, descent into the depths, someone close leaves, danger, illusion, fraud, evil magic

FOUR OF TALISMANS

Upright: society, the people speak, democracy, an assembly of notable citizens, abundance, harvest, all kinds of news from all over

Reversed: the individual, resistance to conformity, possible legal troubles, magic used to coerce

FIVE OF TALISMANS

Upright: mental and emotional instability, unpredictable power, unnecessary conflicts, possible insanity

Reversed: venomous insects, intestinal worms, parasites, rotting, perverting, entrancing, magic used to seduce

SIX OF TALISMANS

Upright: successful journey, on the right path, news from far away, freedom to live life in full measure, wandering, adventure

Reversed: delay, confinement, bondage, public punishment, despair, egotism, magic used to possess

SEVEN OF TALISMANS

Upright: change for the better, personal growth, spiritual advancement

Reversed: change for the worse, concentrating on material issues, loss, magic used to transform

EIGHT OF TALISMANS

Upright: unexpected wealth, hidden knowledge revealed, gift, find familiar or magic item

Reversed: hoarded wealth, hidden knowledge, magic used to gain information

NINE OF TALISMANS

Upright: beauty, truth, illumination, visions, wisdom, clear thinking, spiritual development

Reversed: attention!, a warning, the character should stop what he/she is doing, adventure, danger and possibly even death lay ahead

TEN OF TALISMANS

Upright: extremely good luck, great victory, complete success, enemies defeated, glory, health, happiness, fertility, return in triumph, loyalty, one's wishes fulfilled

Reversed: good luck, protection from harm, success, with help from others one's wishes come true for good or ill

KNIGHT OF TALISMANS

Upright: a young scholar, innovative, powers of the mind bring success, reflection meditation, wise beyond one's years, good news

Reversed: bad news, wastefulness, excess, dissipation, loss of power

QUEEN OF TALISMANS *the Sorceress*

Upright: a woman of interest to the character, secret forces at work, mystery, mystical insight, serenity, knowledge, true wisdom, hidden emotions, the future is in question

Reversed: arrogance, ignorance, bad judgement, sensual pleasures, superficial understanding, shallowness

KING OF TALISMANS *the Wizard*

Upright: strong will, mastery of magical power, confidence, ingenuity, opportunities, skillfulness, creativity, desires fulfilled, administrative talents, self-reliance, flexibility

Reversed: weak will, indecision, ineptitude, lack of imagination, power used to destroy, poor judgement cause loss, charlatan

ACE OF TALISMANS *the Sphinx*

Upright: intuition, insightful perception, meditation, search for truth, wise counsel, discretion, a journey may be necessary

Reversed: deaf to wise counsel, hastiness, immaturity, foolish vices, retreating from problems, overly cautious

TWO OF SKULLS

Upright: misplaced loyalty, standing up for the wrong side, foolish bravery, unsavory friends

Reversed: treachery, lie, false friends, possible spies or assassins

THREE OF SKULLS

Upright: fighting, hatred, removal, dismissal, loss of inheritance, emotional isolation

Reversed: confusion, disorder, costly errors, misrule, bad judgement

FOUR OF SKULLS

Upright: banishment, exile, retreat, abandonment, homelessness, circumstances are getting worse

Reversed: solitary confinement, paralysis due to fear, timidity, self-defeating thoughts or actions

FIVE OF SKULLS

Upright: mourning for the dead, sorrow, creeping affliction, weakness, possible death of someone close

Reversed: mounting losses, out of the frying pan and into the fire, more troubles

SIX OF SKULLS

Upright: disturbing news, losing one's way, travel postponed, ill-fated voyage

Reversed: sinister revelation, unpleasant surprise, unwanted marriage proposal, unrequited love

SEVEN OF SKULLS

Upright: hopes crushed, futile attempt, desires unfulfilled, depression

Reversed: bad advice, stupidity, rashness, overconfidence, resisting the inevitable

EIGHT OF SKULLS

Upright: criticism, blame, argument, preventable accident, the end of an era, possible mental turmoil, death of a political figure

Reversed: past treacheries revealed, calamity caused by negligence, unusual event

NINE OF SKULLS

Upright: loss of faith, lacking integrity, immorality, cheating, momentary advantage, fleeting success

Reversed: suspicion, fear, doubt, possible traitor or spy

TEN OF SKULLS *the Ghost Legion*

Upright: a surprise attack, unexpected bad news, bad luck, misstep, a painful experience, regret, possible robbery, political upheaval

Reversed: wanton destruction, loss of property, possibly loss of life, despair, disaster, havoc, revolution, anarchy

KNIGHT OF SKULLS *the Mummy*

Upright: a nemesis returns, recurring problem, cunning, watch out for traps, loss of security, possibility of serious illness, a weird occurrence

Reversed: serious injury or illness, terrible news, false accusation or imprisonment, nightmares, supernatural attack possible

QUEEN OF SKULLS *the Vampyr*

Upright: a domineering woman capable of great passion and cruelty, lust, joy mixed with grief, abundance threatened, losing power, attachment to an ideal

Reversed: a demanding, bigoted woman, possessive, grasping, dissolution, lethargy, hypnotic presence

KING OF SKULLS *the Lich*

Upright: a wicked man, evil influence, ancient terrors and hidden powers, evil magic, anxiety, despair, possible outlander incursion

Reversed: possibly a monster, power turned to evil, destructive forces, the character's fate hangs in the balance

ACE OF SKULLS *the Skull Warrior*

Upright: defeat, death, destitution, destruction, morbidity, violent change for the worse, the good old days are gone forever, infertility

Reversed: disastrous defeat, surrender, evil forces at work, tyranny, oppression, bondage

TWO OF EAGLES

Upright: love, romance, deep emotions, beauty, respect, communication, union, trust, honor, perfection, temptation, choice, wise plans succeed

Reversed: frustration in love, infidelity, silence, unreliability, interference, instability, confusion, unwise plans fail, possible separation

THREE OF EAGLES

Upright: pregnancy, birth of a child, fertility, growth, nurturing, safe

Reversed: barrenness, harsh environment, stagnation, inertia, possible infertility

FOUR OF EAGLES

Upright: home, peace, abundance, good health, well-being, pleasure, contentment, good family life, public esteem

Reversed: petty arguing, anger, mistakes, loss of friendship, differences, imperfections, obscurity

FIVE OF EAGLES

Upright: a search for truth, interruptions, suspense, transition, changing one's point of view, introspection, improvement, self-sacrifice, wise in spiritual and magical affairs

Reversed: a futile search, a wasted effort or pointless gesture, sacrificed in vain, selfishness, egotism, laziness, turning from the spiritual to the material, false prophecy

SIX OF EAGLES

Upright: a valuable find, recover something lost, self-realization

Reversed: lose something of value, possible theft, forgetfulness

SEVEN OF EAGLES *the Magnificent Seven*

Upright: triumph, unexpected quirk of luck, an end to troubles, incredibly good fortune, destiny, new circumstances, moving on, a special gift

Reversed: reversal of fortune, temporary setback, unexpected interference, minor failure, new conditions require courage

EIGHT OF EAGLES

Upright: travel, troubles fall behind, escape, successful work, triumph, overcoming adversity, harnessing conflicting forces, healthiness

Reversed: an unethical victory, restlessness, failure, sudden collapse of plans, possibility of ill health or other troubles

NINE OF EAGLES

Upright: fairness, balance, justice, harmony, good intentions, virtue, negotiations, favorable legal affairs

Reversed: bias, prejudice, intolerance, false accusations, injustice, cruel punishment

TEN OF EAGLES

Upright: stunning success, liberation, freedom, contentment, joy, great achievements, happy reunion, a good marriage

Reversed: lesser happiness, delayed success, canceled plans, an uncertain future, separation from loved ones, possible troubled marriage or broken engagement

KNIGHT OF EAGLES *the Eagle Lancer*

Upright: a white knight, courage, prowess, beauty, zest, desire for power, a messenger, possible the birth of a gifted child

Reversed: braggart, bluffing, instability, aggression, unpleasant news

QUEEN OF EAGLES *the Empress*

Upright: a highly skilled lady building a secure future for her family, great material wealth, marriage, fertility, pregnancy, hidden actions, good advice, safety, luxury

Reversed: uncertainty, wasting resources, inaction, infertility, poverty disrupts the home, possibility of war or famine

KING OF EAGLES *the Emperor*

Upright: a paternalistic figure, secure in his convictions, wealth, stability, leadership, authority, control, domination, mental prowess, military power

Reversed: confusion, indecision, losing control, ineffectiveness, childishness, weak character, possibility of serious injury in battle, megalomania

ACE OF EAGLES *the Great Eagle*

Upright: hope, insight, inspiration, deliverance, help gladly given, spiritual love, future prospects look bright, mastering magical powers, awareness of other worlds

Reversed: doubt, lack of perception, pessimism, disappointment, unrealized hopes, indifference, pride, a warning to avoid these things by never losing hope

the SLEEPING DRAGON

Meanings: dreams, intuition, magical powers develop, deep instincts, imagination, silence, darkness, deceptions, hidden foes, irrational fears, unexpected gain at no cost, friends in peril, many divergent influences come together

the SEA DRAGON

Meanings: harmony, positive influences, adapting to the environment, moderation, self-control, patience, security, good combinations, desires fulfilled through good coordination of resources, possible shipwreck

the GUARDIAN DRAGON

Meanings: completion, just rewards, ultimate success, fulfillment, synthesis, growth, new beginnings, admired by others, the future looks great, changing residence, immortality, the path of liberation, enlightenment, a very auspicious card

the WRATHFUL DRAGON

Meanings: abrupt change, conflict, cherished ideas are questioned, transformation, improvement, chaos and disruption bring enlightenment, fear of death, renewal, a task well done, reward, judgements in one's favor, atonement

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The Talon

By Monte St John & George De Rosa

The Talon is a magikal artifact for use with the Swords & Dragons™ 108-card fantasy deck from Emperors Choice Games and Miniatures Corp.

VALUE: Priceless

SIZE/WEIGHT: 2 lbs. 4 oz. (Full Deck), 1/3 of an oz. per card, 2 1/4" X 3 1/2" X 1/16" Thickness.

COMPOSITION: Black Orichalcum with Red, White, Grey, and numerous other colored Orichalcum fills.

DESCRIPTION/LOOKS: Bridge sized cards engraved with colorized glyphs, characters and sigils. The cards look identical to the cards used in the country of Arduin © to play Swords and Dragons™. The cards are usually found in a drawstring pouch or box.

HISTORY: The Talon, which is also known as The Tarot, Deck of Fate or Cards of Creation, is a unique, one of a kind item. The origin of the Talon is with the three major Gods of Arduin, The Red Moon Spider, Shagrath, The Lady of the Silver Moon (Silver Lady), and Skirin, The great Night Hawk. The cards were originally Blueprints/code plates used by Shagrath for creation of the world and numerous races/creatures. During the ongoing war between Shagrath and the Silver Lady, the cards were used by Shagrath, then taken by the Silver Lady, and finally by Skirin for creation and manipulation. All three god's use and manipulation gave the cards a sort of "sentience" and ability to use numerous powers. The cards started to act of the their own accord. The cards, now known as The Talon, vanished from Skirin's Blue Moon. For thousands and thousands of years all three Gods have searched for the cards. They have never been able to retrieve them by any means. The cards just give off a slight impression from time to time (This is similar to a slight power surge in the fabricate of reality, when cards are drawn. That is when the three God's have a chance to detect an impression.) But, before the God's can react to The Talon, the cards vanish again. When, why and for what purpose the Talon appears anywhere is a mystery. A whole new religion (Temple of the True Tarot) is based on the Cards, as well as popular card games. The God's, especially Shagrath, want the deck back. For if a being were able to control the deck, they would have power beyond imagination...

MAGIK POWERS: The cards are completely unaffected by any means of detection/location and destruction of any potency or source (including major Gods). When the cards are revealed (that is a pouch or box holding them is opened), The Talon sends out a telepathic message to all beings in a 13' diameter of the cards. It asks how many cards you wish to draw. Each character within the radius must decide if they will choose 0, 1, 2, or 3 cards. Any character, not in the radius at first, who moves into the radius while the cards are still around will get the same message in his/her head. Once a character makes a decision on what to take, it is final.

Once a character decides to draw, the cards will flip out of deck and teleport into his hands (they appear in drawn order) if he waits longer than 1 minute, or does not want to draw or is prevented from drawing. A character that tries to draw more cards than chosen or to draw cards after choosing 0 cards, will not be able to lift the cards or move them. The Talon will be an unmovable rock to them.

Each time a character draws from the Talon it will be a full deck. Any cards drawn by previous characters are replaced before the next drawing character. The first character to draw from the deck is the first one to make the decision to draw, and then the next one and etc. The cards will effect the character in the order drawn. Thus if the first card kills the character and the next grants a wish, the character is out of luck because he is dead after the first card. The next card would not have any effect (even if the character is brought back). After all characters, that wanted to draw have drawn, the Talon vanishes...

CARD EFFECTS:

1. Two of Swords: Of the battles myriad fought in the dimensions twixt mind and reality, sometimes the decisions are cast in the die stamped out of the character of a stranger. You are cast into a mass embroiled conflict, which rages around and around: one side or the other must be taken, where the road of the conqueror is given to the tread of your shoes. You are taken to a strange land, to decide the battle for one army or the other with your talents. One side will thank you for your help, outfitting you with powerful weapons and armor, but the other will doom you for interference and will try to take your life most despicably (GM picks randomly which side is which, before you choose and find your fate).

2. Three of Swords: Conflict is called to spur tumultuous times and the baring of this card pulls you into a devious plot leading to political angst and upheaval. You are invited to play a role in a plot to discredit or smear a leading figure: it is up to the GM whether it is willing or coerced. Its work will cause sorrow, personal or political, nevertheless.
3. Four of Swords: This card is a cogent barrier and its drawing convenes a powerful period of relaxation and rest that whirls by in the blink of an eye. This convalescence is equal to 2d4 days of complete and total bed rest whose healing is effective against any wound, burn or physical damage.
4. Five of Swords: The bared edges of these blades cut deep, for no less than five times will you fail when tested, reaping humiliation blade by blade. This card is the sign of woe and you will fail the next five rolls at any effort (skill, attack, saving throw, et al).
5. Six of Swords: The agencies of destruction are muted here and show instead badges of integrity and honor as they herald your journey across the wet, willowy tides of mystery by arcane vessel. You are lead to the misty island of repose and in the companionship of heroes of yore you garner wisdom and healing. These swords are agents of weal, and in your instant journey from here to there and back again, you gain +2 wisdom and freedom from any ailment, healing of all wounds and deliverance of curses and odium.
6. Seven of Swords: The seven points of these blades are the pointed fingers of unfounded accusations that lead to the word spread that the character is a murderer of the foulest nature. Evidence points to his or her guilt and if not exposed as false the character will themselves be convinced of the burden of guilt (a process covering 2d4 days after they are accused). Foiling this damning plot reaps the reward of a powerful, trusting patron.
7. Eight of Swords: These long blades strike well, effortlessly dissecting your mind with razor pinions dealt to deliver you into the bondage of fear and indecision. After this fateful draw, any challenge or conflict requires you to defeat your fears or suffer the agony of paralyzing terror (save versus this effect or do nothing).
8. Nine of Swords: These bodkins are the betrayal of friendship, twisting your hand in decisive moments to strike your most trusted companions. This cursed draw will corrupt your mind three times so that when you deliver a critical blow to an enemy the strike turns instead and bites deep into a friend (next critical hit strikes a friend vice foe).
9. Ten of Swords: This card is the curse of darkness (Aaos)—cogent paeon telling of destruction. Alas, it is an instrument of ruin and its keen edges prune from you all your possessions, wealth, family and political power, ending them all in a very final, desultory way over a day-long period.
10. Knight of Swords: The Lancer drawn is a sign of favor and heroism, before which the most decisive enemy falters. Girded with this badge of courage, you enter the next battle with a +2 (+10%) bonus to all attacks, defense, saving throws and initiative.
11. Queen of Swords: The lady of blades is the keen observer, whose quick wit and firm touch is both bane and boon. You are given a goal (GM choice), from which you can never waver: cost it friend or love. In balance, you have the favor of insight, gaining a +3 (+15%) bonus when dealing with any obstacle or detail in achieving this aim.
12. King of Swords: The monarch of steel is a strong man, given to physical power, authority and indomitable will. This brand of council given, bestows +2 to personal strength, +2 to willpower (Ego or Wisdom), +1 intelligence (reasoning ability) and genius level wisdom of leadership, military tactics and strategy.
13. Ace of Swords: The Black Blade is the sign of legend and succession, the birth of something new. Into your hands is delivered an artifact of power, one of deep history and incredible abilities but also an equally strong curse.
14. Two of Sceptres: You are filled with a burst of overpowering creative insight that expands your mind to horizons previously unimagined. Gain + 1 point of intelligence and add + 2 or +10% to the next three rolls determining craftsmanship or creation.

15. Three of Sceptres: Three is an agent of promise and success, and the dubbing of these three batons of power are the realization of dreams. In your next fiduciary arrangement, there will be manifold wealth, nine times the value to be exact of whatever the transaction, business arrangement or exchange.
16. Four of Sceptres: This draw is the spawn of romance, as mutually reciprocal feelings burgeon in your breast and your prospective mate, as this card opens the path to your marriage to another. This conjoining (Gm adjudication on the details) is a peaceful one that brings prosperity over a period of year and increased social standing. You will gain +1 rank in social standing for the marriage after a year's time and double your present financial worth in the same period.
17. Five of Sceptres: This card drawn sets the stage to give you a drubbing not easily forgotten and put in motion forces to challenge you to bitter rivalry in your next business or commerce activity.
18. Six of Sceptres: These golden batons of sovereignty will bless you with victory and advantage after you have undertaken a perilous quest, the news of whose success winged to their ears holds great, golden reward and notable recognition for you. Success of this dangerous geas brings a boon of nobility (lesser / landless) and 25,000 gold.
19. Seven of Sceptres: The glowing dances of magic wrought by these majestic agents of authority create an air of strength and passion, empowering you against your foes: You gain +2 charisma.
20. Eight of Sceptres: This draw of the deck is the card of haste and celerity and blesses with rapidness unchecked. You are permanently and naturally (organic) cast in a state of haste, moving, thinking and acting at twice your normal speed. This state may not be checked, and after operating thus for several months (Gm adjudication on exact length) you must make an insanity check or be driven to madness.
21. Nine of Sceptres: This represents the lull of silence before the storm, a time both revered and terrible in its potency. You are held in the merciless grip of time (time stop) and must move or permanently die by suffocation. This horrible state lasts 2d20 minutes where any less than near maximum movement destroys 20% of your constitution score per minute. Those who survive this effect are forever immune to such changes again, regardless of source, as well as unnatural aging of any type.
22. Ten of Sceptres: These agents of power overwhelm with puissant increase but carry seeds of doom in the harvest. Your level increases 50% instantly but this unbalanced power brings the heavy weight of martyrdom and you will sacrifice yourself to the next worthy cause.
23. Knight of Sceptres: The apprentice is lively and energetic but prone to rash, illogical actions. His touch renders you healthy, free from any malady or disease but changes your thinking and you loose -2 wisdom.
24. Queen of Sceptres: The high priestess is all the apprentice is not and more, full of power and energy, attractive in all ways. Her beneficence bestows practical and wise judgment, adding +2 to wisdom while cleansing your appearance and reputation of blemish and taint. Add +1 to appearance (charisma) and gain the loss of any taint on your reputation: adding +2 ranks to social standing if there are none to wash away.
25. King of Sceptres: This is the card of nobility, and a powerful house of the land welcomes you into their fold as a lost son or a new one by marriage. You gain in all their powers of influence and wealth, plus are given a powerful magic item as a sign of status and trust given into you.
26. Ace of Sceptres: The wand of wizardry is a powerful draw, indicating unleashed talents of magic. Its spell unlocks these abilities, heralding your change to the class and a respectable level of achievement (level 5-8). Those already wizards find their true genius revealed, doubling their potential to cast spells (mana or memorization), crafting new enchantments with ease (construct new spells with 100 % success or normal success rates if done without any tools or preparation) and the ability to assimilate numberless spells with half the time or intellect requirements.

27. Two of Chalices: These two cups are the symbols of friendship and herald the arrival of a boon companion, who will travel and stand steadfast by your side. You gain a companion, roughly equal to three quarter of your ability (GM adjudication).
28. Three of Chalices: This card is often called the gamblers bliss or Kalar's touch, after the famous gambler whose reput with cards and dice was truly cross dimensional. The fluid of these cups bestow luck equal to Kalar's or that of gloves of gambling, i.e. a +3 luck bonus applied to situations.
29. Four of Chalices: The cups of four are draughts of weariness, soul-shriving despair that reflects the mundane loss of goods. You are stripped of all worldly items, cash, lands, and magic et al, and made penniless.
30. Five of Chalices: Disillusionment grows within at the paucity of life and you endure a months long burden of despair (GM on length). This action shrives you of 60% of your wealth (lands, items, magic) but at its end, you find hope in redemption of a friend or divinity and your most treasured item finds its way into your hands once again.
31. Six of Chalices: Six is a number often blessed in the cups and is filled with contemplative remembrances of times past. From the curtains of the past comes a long lost friend who seeks your companionship once again and returns to you a gift of powerful magic (item or spell) you thought lost.
32. Seven of Chalices: The seven goblets hold strong liquor that intoxicates you into a year long binge of excess. At its end, you loose -2 constitution (health) and spend most of your wealth (75%).
33. Eight of Chalices: The eight glasses are a symbol of piety and transcendence. The character will lose 50% of his total wealth (including 50% of items, cash, lands, magic and etc.) but gain spirituality in the form of inner strength that equates to +3 to Wisdom and +2 to all willpower saves.
34. Nine of Chalices: This draw is Axtur's blessing, surnamed after the one who made material success wherever he walked. You gain 1000 gold, 1 random magic item and 1 -4 mundane items (weapons, armor, mount and etc.) and character will increase in Social standing by 2 levels. These things will fall into the characters possession in within the next month.
35. Ten of Chalices: Ten cups is the sign of satisfaction and home, a boon draw from the deck. If the character does not have a home, he gains one over the next three months as well as the guidance and strength of a powerful patron and counselor.
36. Knight of Chalices: This card is the harbinger of opportunity and desire, opening the path for the potential to go on a quest or mission of great importance in the upcoming weeks. If the mission is successful it will have great rewards and increase in status for you and your comrades. Failure will most likely be due to death (the mission is very tough).
37. Queen of Chalices: The queen of the sea is a symbol of deep currents and forethought, the forerunner of unseen events. Under her touch you gain the benefit of uncontrolled precognition and intuition, those times come randomly and uncontrolled but timely in instances to give you guidance to possibly save your life.
38. King of Chalices: The father figure of creativity, whose cup overflows with subtle power. The king passes on the flair for creativity, giving you a +4 bonus with anything you seek to create, be it material, spiritual or arcane. Also passed on is the skill in law, arts and trade, where you act with a +6 bonus.
39. Ace of Chalices: An overflow of blessings multiply in your path of life with this draw. Over the next five months you will redouble your material wealth, gain 1-3 objects of incredible value (magical or mundane, GM discretion) and increase in spiritual wisdom and experience, gaining +3 to wisdom.
40. Two of Coins: These sovereigns are special, a gift that fills your purse. When drawn it deposits two gold sovereigns (coins) in your money purse, unremarkable in any way except the date of minting is the day you receive them. Given away freely outside of any debt or transaction, they return to you in multiples, filling your purse with six times their number the next day (12 coins total). If they are ever spent, stolen or lost then the benefit is lost.

41. Three of Coins: The power of three is reflected in this card, the triple mintage blessing your economic and commercial ventures by bestowing talent for each. You achieve the facility of a trader of equal level to your own when it comes to these pursuits.
42. Four of Coins: These glinting wedges are arrayed as a sign of impending wealth and soon impart this gift via messenger. You receive a missive detailing a great fortune that is yours for the taking, left to you by the passing of a companion or relative. The only catch is it comes at some cost, as you must abandon your current social status and wealth to seek it out and fulfill the four demands the legacy requires first (GM adjudication).
43. Five of Coins: The pentacle of gold is the harvester of wealth, whose wheat is your fortune. You are laid waste and made destitute through a series of innocent seeming transactions and deals, losing all wealth, items and personal possessions over a five day period. This sudden twist of fate is the rancor that embitters your soul—lose –1 wisdom.
44. Six of Coins: The scales turn in your favor as these coins indicate a sudden lessening of financial burden, compliments of an unknown friend. A previously mysterious patron pays off all your debts in a six-day period and gifts you with 1,000 gold coins.
45. Seven of Coins: Affluence is your destiny under the aegis of this sign and wealth your staple. Any monetary venture you undertake during the next two years will double in its potential returns and coins find its way to your hands in any transaction, netting you a 30% discount or bonus on anything you purchase or sell.
46. Eight of Coins: These eight baubles stand for each of the teachers that approach you and open vistas of new knowledge. You take a one-year long hiatus to study under eight teachers of your craft. Under their tutelage, you gain enough experience to advance 4 levels.
47. Nine of Coins: The coins of this card represent the nine incarnations of pledge that death shall pass you by once, for each of the incarnations that take your place in death's book. You may cheat death nine times; each time avoiding a deathblow that otherwise would end your life.
48. Ten of Coins: The ten rounds of this card are the heralds of past glory, exposing to the light that you are the scion of a noble family, whose time has past but whose fortune is retained. You are found to be of noble blood and rich inheritance, with your inheritance garnering you the prestige (+ 3 social ranks), the power (achieve a noble's position, with high and low law authority), the magic (you gain two magic items of power) and the enemies (at least five others plot for your ruin or downfall).
49. Knight of Coins: The chevalier of gold is a respected companion of many battles and experience, who comes to serve with once again. A trusted ally, he brings also potential gain in the means of a map to treasure lost. Your ally is one level less than your own or 9th level, whichever is higher.
50. Queen of Coins: The matron often seen as the earth mother, whose gold is earth's green. Her blessing is the eye of a noble woman, whose gift is earth's bounty and patronage to increase her name and yours. You gain lands, whose agricultural value is 25,000 gold or the equivalent of a lesser land baron. Another stands to steward your lands, however, as the noble woman has at hand numerous tasks (Gm provides at least three adventures) to increase you and her standing in court.
51. King of Coins: The merchant prince is a man of value, both monetarily and spiritually. His coin is rarely spent, but invested and in you it springs forth a bounty of new value. You gain + 2 intelligence and wisdom during a two-year long stint at the side of a powerful man. At its end, he gifts you with 20,000 gold coins as thanks for your service.
52. Ace of Coins: This card is the glittering prospect of opportunity unfolding and advantage revealed. An offer is extended to learn new spells or skills known to only a select few from an unknown source. Following it, the location of three artifacts is revealed by riddle, book or true word of mouth. Lastly, into your hands is a fortune of objects thought to be junk (Gm adjudication, but no less value than 75,000 gold).
53. Two of Shields: The wards of this card are the wings enfolding your secret romance that plays out over a several month period. Alas, it ends, but without bitterness or nagging bite. The experience makes you wiser for it all: add + 1 wisdom.

54. Three of Shields: This card signals a time of turmoil in your life where you undergo extreme physical adversity but rise above it to triumph. This experience is hardening, gaining you a + 2 to constitution.
55. Four of Shields: A symbol blanketing your adventures, this card represents success in endeavor, be it romance, business or obstacles. You will succeed in your next romantic escapade, business venture or gain a + 5 (+ 25%) bonus in the next four battles.
56. Five of Shields: It is the blanket of faith that encompasses and holds you safe but exposes enough for growth. A sign is given unto you from whom powerful revelations grow. Gain + 4 wisdom and enduring piety to your deity or dogma.
57. Six of Shields: The six shields represent the coalition of powers brought to bear against your opponents in commerce or warfare. In your next commercial venture, five allies come to your aid to ensure its success. In battle the support of your allies tells in equipment, as you gain armor equal to your current with a + 5 bonus (magic enchantment) and weaponry whose devising is equal to your own with a + 3 (magic bonus).
58. Seven of Shields: These valkyries are given to watch over you, represented by each of the shields. Four watch over your health, adding + 2 to your armor and + 2 (+10%) to any saving throws. Three watch over your mind and path, adding a + 2 (+ 10%) bonus to skill and battle checks, and a second chance (save) to resist any possession. This is a blessing of divine origins.
59. Eight of Shields: These eight devices are the heraldry of defeat in future conflict. In the next conflict or battle, you will miss in any attack, be it by weapon, spell or mind. If you survive, this defeat will become a powerful source of strength, adding + 2 to your strength and +2 to your constitution.
60. Nine of Shields: The nine represent alliance, with which friends or neighbors will consider uniting under your banner. If you cannot benefit from such an effect, eight friends gift you with valuable items (GM adjudication on magical or not).
61. Ten of Shields: These escutcheons are indicative of change that overwhelms the old and takes a new direction. You cast aside your old occupation and begin a new career with an opposite view (warrior to wizard, priest to techno, etc).
62. Knight of Shields: The shield lancer is a gift of foresight and intuition. With this new perception, you gain + 4 (+20%) saves versus WILL based effects and + 2 wisdom.
63. Queen of Shields: The lady is a rigorous defender of tradition and belief and leads you down the path of divine inspiration. You cast aside your previous beliefs and class, taking up the mantle of the priest. This sacrifice and devotion leads to rapid advancement, allowing you to advance at twice the speed of others until you reach your earlier apex of achievement (advance at double speed until equal previous level). If already a priest, then gain 2 levels.
64. King of Shields: The card of the sovereign is the sign of authority and enduring strength. In battle you are an incredible dynamo: add + 2 to strength, constitution and dexterity (CF) and + 3 to initiative.
65. Ace of Shields: The sole shield is the one before an army, the fool who stands before the overwhelming tide and is destroyed. You are instantly and irrevocably slain though you may be reincarnated. Your possessions are all that remain to tell the tale of who you once were.
66. Two of Talismans: This duo of magik stones lends their influence to retrieve a friend from beyond the grave. The reunion could be less than joyful as the stones raise the friend as a vampyr...
67. Three of Talismans: The trio of power works the strength of three, illuminating a path that can lead to rapture—or damnation. A Hell Spiral opens up before you, leading to the apex of your religious beliefs (heaven, nirvana, etc.). Fail to complete the trek to that heavenly place and you are cast into a random hell (or equivalent, such as hades, and so on).
68. Four of Talismans: The four stones are the voices of the winds, spreading the word of your deeds and life. Gain + 5 ranks of reputation and + 2 charisma (reputation based) but even the lowliest beggar knows of your every deed...and items, magic, love life...

69. Five of Talismans: The spells of these telesma are woven in the mind, instilling mental illness and instability. You develop 1d6 phobias over the next month and are also afflicted with a major insanity: one with a tendency for mayhem and murder.
70. Six of Talismans: This card is the opener of ways: the beginning of a journey. A gate (nexus) forms before you, leading the way to whatever destination or time you choose. It is only visible to you and will persist for 1d100 minutes before fading away. If taken, it will transport you and anything you carry to wherever and whenever you envision.
71. Seven of Talismans: The seven talismans are a weaving of power forged on the anvil of dreams. From this ether stuff of dreams will come the answer to your greatest dilemma. Once touched, it forever haunts you, showing glimpses of future conflict and angst. This will sometimes work to your advantage, adding a + 1 intuitive bonus (treat as a luck bonus). It disrupts your sleep however, making memorization or study more difficult (20% longer for all of these actions).
72. Eight of Talismans: This card is the boon of magic power, revealing vast reservoirs of hidden knowledge. Those of arcane nature will find they can transcribe into their spell books a number of new spells equal to their current quota, seemingly from nowhere. Those who are not discover the knowledge to use a strong wizard spell that they can use twice per daily (3-8 level spell).
73. Nine of Talismans: Also known as the sage, this card opens the path to cogent insight where you will know the answer to a prickling situation if you choose...*once*.
74. Ten of Talismans: The ten gems are representations of the luck stones from legend, indicating the bounty of the firmament. You are given a wish (full wish) to do with what you will...however, choose carefully...for the gods are capricious at times...
75. Knight of Talismans: The scholar, as this card is also called, opens the door for erudite learning and bestows the learning of language and tongues. You intuitively gain the understanding of 6-12 languages (read, write, and speak) and can assimilate new (non-magical) ones in a three-month period of exposure to the language. This includes the languages of beasts, plants and other worlds, as long as it can be heard and communicated.
76. Queen of Talismans: Also called the Sorceress, this arcane lady leads you on paths of new learning and hidden insight. For a full day and night she wraps you in her folds and exposes the mystical workings of life and creation. Exposed to, but not comprehending this journey, you return wiser, + 2 wisdom and can at times, act with unfathomable meaning in your defense. You may take an additional chance to make any saving throw you fail.
77. King of Talismans: This card is called the Wizard, and rightly so. It illuminates the mind with exploding acuity and revelation, mustering what was before useless resources to the forefront and to your command. No spell is beyond your grasp to understand and cast, though the dangers of using power beyond your skill still exist. Learning is accelerated, quartering the length to learn magik and you are considered competent with any spell you cast.
78. Ace of Talismans: The Sphinx card is a robust card, but a subtle one also. It is the power of counsel and insight, where you may call upon the genius of another to answer five questions and receive the correct answers. This may be done once per day and consists of true, but terse answers to clearly defined questions. The source may be divine, infernal or other, as deemed appropriate.
79. Two of Skulls: The skulls here reflect disaster upon the heads of your friends and close companions as they bear the brunt of your luck. Your friends lose all social standing and are plagued by a disfiguring disease (50%) or scarred by fire or knife. Either way they lose -2 Charisma each.
80. Three of Skulls: The eye sockets of the stacked skulls reflect hostility and hatred and worsen your chances in the next battle. In your next battle, all enemies consider you the worse threat and attack you without quarter above all others. Even after this encounter, beasts, monsters and demons consider your flesh the sweetest in comparison to all others...

81. Four of Skulls: Also commonly called the Doom, creeping tendrils of fire weave around you, burning the skin and lashing the mind. In a burst of fulsome smoke you are gone, cast precipitously into a random Hell...
82. Five of Skulls: This card is a dire draw and sometimes referred to as the Rot. It inflicts an incurable, debilitating disease that slowly rots and consumes you from the inside over a yearlong period. There is one lone chance to survive this malady at its onset (4 x constitution score on % roll) though it still runs its course and halves your constitution score if you survive.
83. Six of Skulls: These death's-head's reflect a dire curse that twist your feet to never know home or right path. For six months no step will be straight, but instead turn you in a random direction. Even after its affects are done, you are still vulnerable to any form of confusion, saving at a penalty of -4 against any such agents.
84. Seven of Skulls: Hopes are dashed and the mind is crushed beneath the weight of the wheels of fate. The character is instantly feeble-minded. Only a full wish or miracle will restore the person's intellect, but there is still an irrevocable loss of 1d4 points of intelligence.
85. Eight of Skulls: In a blink you are gone, taken to death's abode to debate in the court of the damned. If you argue you case well enough (Gm adjudication) it will return you and let you live, though the act of meeting death takes its toll by aging you 50% of your lifespan on your return. Failure means you take your place in his house of the damned...
86. Nine of Skulls: This card is the loss of hope, in destiny, casting you in turmoil of the soul. If you are priest, you decry your profession and take another, casting forever aside your once solid beliefs. Those who are not, give up any divine ethos or moral code, taking a change in alignment. This experience debilitates your faith, subtracting -4 from your wisdom (piety).
87. Ten of Skulls: Also called the ghost legion, it is a terrible misstep to encounter this card. Drawn it invokes ten spectral shapes that grasp and grab at the character once each, the touch draining 1d4 intelligence and constitution points. After all have gone, they disappear taking the soul of the character with them if they succeed in draining either score to zero (irrevocable death or reincarnation). If they fail, they sink into the ground wailing and screeching empty handed. Those who survive, recover the points normally except for 1d6 of each, which is permanently lost.
88. Knight of Skulls: Known as the Mummy, it is the card of conflict and danger. With it comes the attention and enmity of a greater demon (demon lord or prince). This consuming anger and jealousy is unrelenting on the side of the demon and will manifest soon (Gm discretion on time and means) and continue until the death of one or the other.
89. Queen of Skulls: This card is also referred to as the Vampyr. Within a month of its drawing, the character will succumb to the charms of a domineering woman who will hold them in whirlwind for a month's time. At its end, she will be gone, bearing with her the fruit of a union between you and her (or another if necessary) and leave you in an addicted, broken state of destitution. You lose all wealth and social standing, your half-demon child and -2 dexterity and constitution.
90. King of Skulls: The Lich is the horror card. Upon drawing it, four slimy, moldering skeletons with eerie red light and oozy black tentacles, appear on a side of the character. With bloody, disgusting precision they flail and rip the skin and flesh off the character in the blink of an eye and depart, leaving nothing but a bloody imprint on the ground. You are dead but resurrectable if reconstituted.
91. Ace of Skulls: The Skull Warrior is a death card. The character dies instantly and irrevocably as the soul or spirit is shredded upon its fouled weapons. There is no escape.
92. Two of Eagles: The twin eagles are the sign of communion and trust. Under its wings you gain the power of empathy and telepathy (project emotions) over the next month. It may be used at will.
93. Three of Eagles: The three eagles demonstrate birth and rebirth. The character may choose between a powerful fertility / virility and the birth of numerous child (Gm on how many) or rebirth of self. In the renewal of self, the character may re-roll all physical characteristics, but must keep the outcome, however it falls.

94. Four of Eagles: The flight of four raptors illustrates the concept of home and security. The character gains a home, either a small cottage, apartment or similar domicile and a steadfast steward and guardian to care for it.
95. Five of Eagles: Overcome by indiscernible emotions, you make a choice to take a change in life and assume a different mantle. Abandon your old class and assume another. After some time it is possible you may return to your old ideal with the new experience (GM discretion on whether it can every turn into a multi-class situation).
96. Six of Eagles: The six of eagles rampant is a sign of wealth. Gain your choice of 2d20 pieces of jewelry (valued at 3,000 gold each) or 4d20 gems (valued at 1,000 gold each).
97. Seven of Eagles: The Magnificent Seven are the card of triumph and great fortune. At any time or place, *once* per 2 points of permanent and irrevocable loss off attributes, you may triumph regardless of the odds or adversity against *anything*.
98. Eight of Eagles: Also known as the Wings card. The character gains the benefit of the eagle's wings, taking flight over obstacles and outrunning trouble. Three times a day, a character may quintuple his speed without suffering ill effects for a number of minutes equal to his Constitution score. While moving thus, a character only touches the ground lightly and is almost, but not quite flying.
99. Nine of Eagles: The nine avian are the harbingers of balance and equality, bringing harmony. Nine times they may be called to adjust the balance of power between you and another, making both of you equal and balanced. For the duration of that conflict, your strength equals each other's on all levels, including attributes, magic, and items, et al.
100. Ten of Eagles: The ten eagles rampant dance the celebration of your freedom and liberation from shackle, shutter or cuff. Once drawn, it forever blesses you with freedom from any restraint, barrier, door or closure. This is a double-edged blade as none of the above can ever be closed, secured or restrained around you.
101. Knight of Eagles: The Eagle Lancer is the boon companion, steadfast shield brother of tales legend told and re-told. He joins you within a week, complete with horse, weapons, armor and an independent means of income. He is of equal level to you own and always watches your back with zest and courage. With him at your side, you always fight with a + 3 bonus to initiative (CF).
102. Queen of Eagles: The Empress has a vast reservoir of wisdom and material means and the keen intellect to control it. It is the sign of a powerful patron taking active interest in your fate. With her patronage comes the pick of any 10 mundane items, and the endowment of three powerful magic items or possibly a single artifact (GM discretion) is put into your care. A year of tutelage at her feet will benefit you a bonus of +1 to wisdom, but she will only make the offer once.
103. King of Eagles: The Emperor is a man of leadership and influence, gathering respect from all he meets. Two years in his care benefit you greatly, as you learn to command and lead. Add + 4 to charisma, and the same to anything revolving around speaking, persuasion and communication. You may lead twice the number of men as your charisma (leadership) dictates.
104. Ace of Eagles: The Great Eagle is the banner of victory and deliverance, surnamed after a heraldic totem from the time of yore. Under its guidance you can never be lost to confusion, charm or bewilderment of any kind, nor lost in any maze, always knowing your way out. It enhances your battle prowess, adding + 2 to attack and damage and allowing you once per game to never miss a blow in battle, regardless of the impossibility of the attack.
105. Sleeping Dragon: In a stunning instant of mind stretching expansion, you realize certain inborn talents and gain Telepathic and ESP powers. This must be used once a day (all) or your control atrophies and it starts to work at random and inconvenient times, either projecting your thoughts to others or reading their thoughts and emotions.
106. Sea Dragon: You have the natural ability to adapt to any adverse but normal environment, from deserts to frigid wastes, with no ill effects. This includes breathing underwater or surviving in the deep earth with no adversity. However, extreme environmental conditions, such as forest fires, volcanic eruptions or hurricanes pose the same threat to you as anybody else.

107. Guardian Dragon: Rewards come to those with the wisdom to find them, or by the luck of the gods. The character gains an estate and an opportunity in one fell boon, to go forth and wring from the land a bounty. This success is equally met with compensation, a purse of 20,000 to accompany the land, 100 men-at-arms and 300 motivated pioneers.
108. Wrathful Dragon: Cherished ideas are questioned and overturned, the character discarding his previous class and abruptly assuming the mantle of a new one, randomly chosen. The transformation is physical, as well as mental and the character may add +3 to any two statistics to reflect this chaotic upheaval.

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