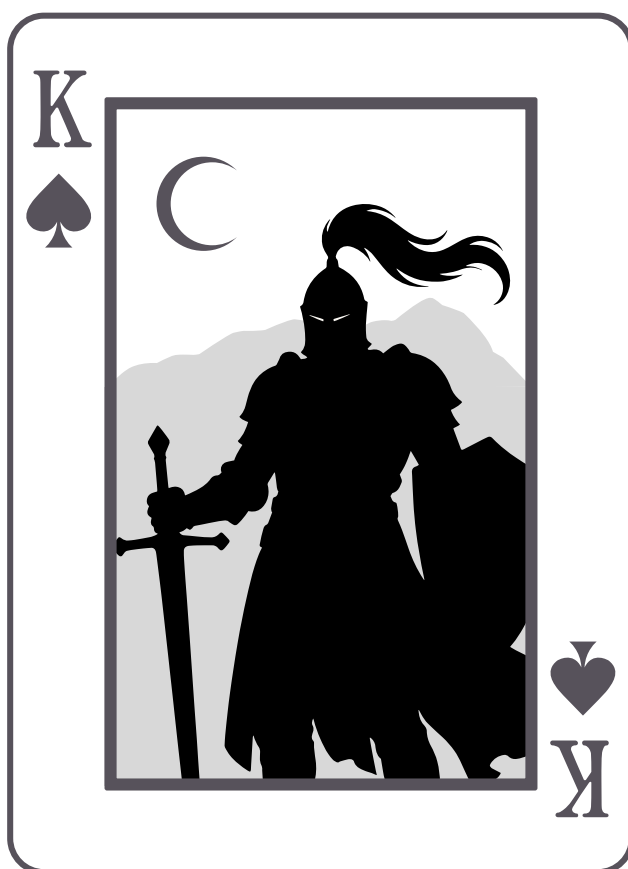




THE LONG ROAD

*A solo card RPG for one chevalier and
one deck of cards*



A Fantasy Card Game

Written and designed by Ashley Hagood

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THE LONG ROAD

INTRODUCTION

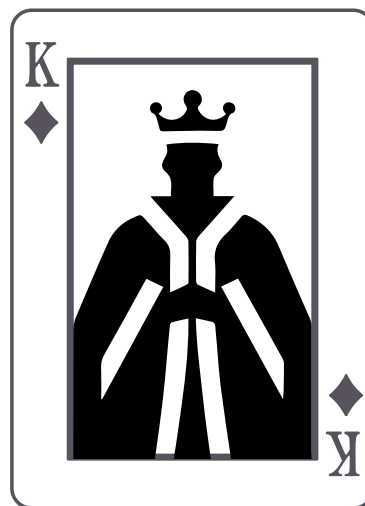
In an ancient land of long summers and green vineyards, of warm harvests and celebrations, there once was a dark king named **Grispère** whose greed threatened the realm. Brave spies stopped him, and he was betrayed by his own court, cursed by his beloved, and died in his throne room before he understood what had been done to him.

But he did not stay dead.

Now the realm survives under his curse: the **gloom**, a long dusk that never quite becomes night. Crops fail, fog lingers, fires flicker and die. Many chevaliers have set out to the end the curse. None have returned whole.

You are no hero of song, just a **chevalier** of little renown, determined to find Grispère and end his curse. Perhaps, with enough bravery, you will lure him from his hiding place.

More likely you will perish like the rest.



Your goal: earn 10 Renown, then defeat Grispère, the Gloam Father.

Each encounter, reveal a foe and draw 5 cards to form your Fighting Form. Stronger forms deal more damage. Survive the road. Build renown. Reach the king.

Play time: ~30 minutes

You need: 1 standard deck, paper, pencil

Track: Vitality (starts at 20) and Renown (starts at 0)



HOW IT WORKS

Each round follows the same simple loop:

I

Flip a card — flip the top card of the Road Deck and place it face-up beside the deck. This card is your foe. It remains in play while the encounter lasts.

II

Draw 5 cards — draw 5 cards from the remaining deck to form your hand. You may discard and redraw up to 2 cards if you would like. Assemble the best Fighting Form (poker hand) you can from your 5 cards.

III

Deal damage — your hand's poker rank determines how much damage you deal (see Fighting Forms). Hearts restore Vitality. Spades add bonus damage. Clubs absorb incoming damage.

IV

Take damage — if the foe survives, it strikes back. Number foes deal 4 damage. Face card foes deal 6. Repeat until one of you reaches zero.

V

Earn Renown — defeating a foe earns +1 or +2 Renown depending on its rank. Reach 10 and Grispère, the Gloam Father, stirs.



SETUP: BEFORE THE ROAD

I

Find the **King of Spades** — this is Grispère, the Gloam Father, the cursed king hiding in the gloam. Set him aside face-down.

II

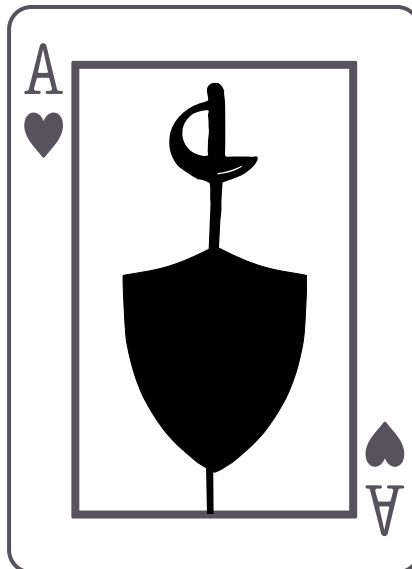
Find both **Jokers** and set them face-up beside the deck. They do not go into the Road Deck. They are Wandering Merchants, available to visit throughout the journey.

III

Shuffle the remaining 51 cards into the **Road Deck**, face-down. Grispère waits off to the side, waiting for someone strong enough to face him.

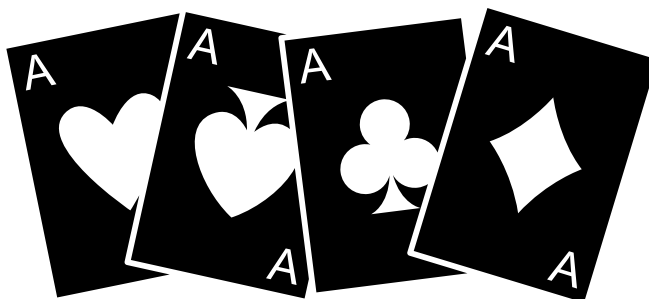
IV

Write **Vitality: 20** and **Renown: 0**. You will track these throughout the game. Shoulder your pack. The road is long.





CARD BONUSES: THE FOUR GIFTS



HEARTS — GRACE

Grace. Each Heart restores 1 Vitality when you play your form — but only after the foe strikes back.



SPADES — FURY

Fury. Each Spade deals +1 bonus damage. A form made entirely of Spades deals an additional +5 on top.



CLUBS — RESOLVE

Resolve. Each Club absorbs 1 incoming retaliation damage.



DIAMONDS — FATE

Fate. Diamonds once carried destiny, but Grispère's curse has stolen fate from the realm.



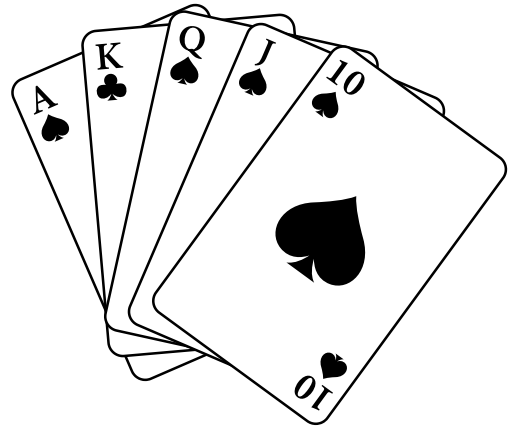


HOW TO PLAY AN ENCOUNTER

Each round is one encounter with a foe in the gloam. Flip over a card to find out what enemy you face: a **gloomspawn** (number card) conjured by Grispère, or a **Fallen** (face card or Ace) who came before you and died.

PHASE I—SOMETHING BARS THE WAY

Flip the top card of the Road Deck. This is your foe. The card's rank sets its Vitality (card value + 3).



PHASE II—FIND YOUR FORM

Draw 5 cards from the Road Deck. You may then discard up to 2 and draw replacements once — your only redraw opportunity for this hand. Then commit to your best 5-card Fighting Form (see Fighting Forms table).

PHASE III—THE PRESS OF BATTLE

A

You strike: Deal your form's damage. Apply suit gifts — each Spade adds +1 damage to this strike, and each Heart gives you +1 Vitality. If the foe reaches 0 Vitality, it falls. Move to Phase IV. Otherwise...

B

The foe strikes back: 4 damage for number foes (2–10), 6 damage for face foes (J/Q/K/A). Each Club in your played form is a shield that absorbs 1 of that damage. Detract the remainder from your Vitality.

C

The fight continues: If the foe still stands, discard all cards. Draw a fresh 5 and redraw up to 2 as normal. Repeat from step A.



PHASE IV — THE ROAD CONTINUES

Once the foe falls: earn +1 Renown for a 2–10 foe, or +2 Renown for a face card (J/Q/K/A). Discard everything. Begin a new round.

If the Road Deck runs out before you reach 10 Renown, reshuffle all discarded cards and keep going. The road is obscured in the gloam, but there has always been much more to it than the eye can see.

FIGHTING FORMS

Assemble the best 5-card form from your drawn cards. Standard poker hand patterns apply.

form	name	what it is	damage
HIGH CARD	Beggar's Cut	No pattern - just your highest card	2
ONE PAIR	La Paire	2 cards of the same value	4
TWO PAIR	Crossed Guard	Two different pairs	6
THREE OF A KIND	La Tierce	3 cards of the same value	9
STRAIGHT	Flowing Advance	5 in sequence, any suits	11
FLUSH	Plein Élan	5 same suit, any values	13
FULL HOUSE	Crown & Grave	Three of a kind + any pair	17
FOUR OF A KIND	Le Rempart	4 cards of the same value	22
STRAIGHT FLUSH	L'Ancienne Forme	5 in sequence AND same suit	30
ROYAL FLUSH	Grâce Parfaite	10, J, Q, K, A same suit — no wilds	40



FOES ON THE ROAD

Two kinds of enemy bar the road. **Gloamspawn** are twisted creatures conjured from the gloam itself: ugly, relentless, and born from the curse. **Fallen** are worse. They are chevaliers who walked this road before you and did not survive it whole. The road broke them, and the gloam hollowed them out. Stripped of Fate, they know only Fury.

FOE VITALITY AND DAMAGE

Every card you flip is a foe. A foe's **Vitality** is always their card value + 3. Jacks are 11 + 3 (14), Queens are 12 + 3 (15), Kings are 13 + 3 (16), and Aces are 14 + 3 (17). This is how much damage you must deal to defeat them.

Combat is turn-based. After you strike your foe and deal damage, if they survive, they will strike back. Below, note the **damage per strike** each foe will deal you when they hit.

foe type	card	what it is	vitality	damage per strike
GLOAMSPAWN	2-10	<i>cursed creatures conjured by Grispère</i>	card value + 3	4
FALLEN	Face cards (J/Q/K/A)	<i>fateless, slayed chevaliers</i>	Jack - 14 Queen - 15 King - 16 Ace - 17	6

Note that card suit does not matter for foe type.



JOKERS: WANDERING MERCHANTS

Both Jokers are Wandering Merchants: **Destin**, who grunts more than he speaks and has more age lines than anyone can count, and **Félicité**, who smiles as she recounts dark tales from the Road.

Each may be visited **once on the Road**. When you visit either merchant, purchase one of the following by paying **2 Renown**:



item	effect	description
 EXTRA DRAW	+2 cards	<i>If you are close to a winning hand but need one more chance, the merchant produces two cards from somewhere in their pack. They go directly into your hand without discarding – you now hold seven cards. See what five-card form you can make.</i>
 HEALING TONIC	+8 Vitality	<i>This tonic of uncertain provenance is bottled in something that does not bear close examination, but it works. Restore 8 points of Vitality immediately.</i>
 SULLIED SHIELD	block one strike	<i>Though this shield is old and dented with a fading crest, it will hold for one more strike. When you wield it, the next enemy strike deals 0 damage, regardless of how strong the foe is. The blow destroys the shield. It cannot be used again.</i>



THE LAST CAMP

When you reach **10 Renown**, the air shifts and the road narrows. You know what is ahead. Make camp and rest while you still can. This may be your last sleep.

I

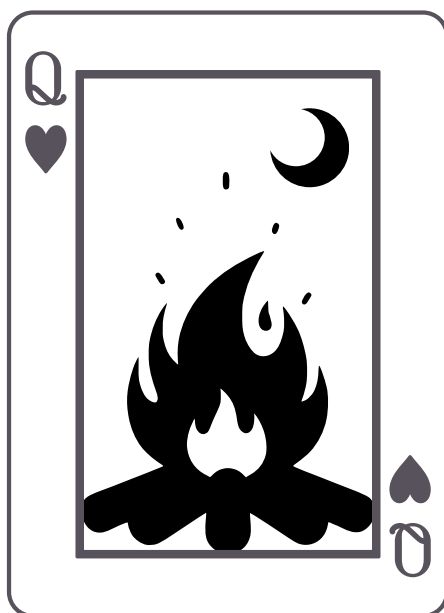
Full Rest: Vitality restored to 20.

II

Strangers return: Flip both Jokers face-up again. *Destin* and *Félicité* have found you and commit to join you during your battle with Grispère, free of charge. You share the same goal: to rid the world of this cursed king and his eternal blight on the realm.

III

Retrieve the **King of Spades** from where he was set aside at setup. Grispère, the Gloam Father, stirs at last.





BOSS ENCOUNTER: GRISPÈRE, GLOAM FATHER

The ancient king, betrayed and slain long ago, has heard of you. Many have sought him out before. You are the first to find him.

Or rather, he has found you.

Grispère, the Gloam Father, is the final and greatest foe you will face. He boasts 40 Vitality and deals 8 damage per strike at the start of the battle; when his Vitality falls to 20, he becomes enraged and hits even harder.

PHASE I (40–21)

Strikes for 8 damage after every form you bring.

PHASE II (20–0)

Strikes for 12 damage. But his fury creates openings: draw 6 cards instead of 5 this phase, with the usual free redraw of up to 2.

Spades still deal +1 bonus damage each. Clubs still absorb 1 damage each. Hearts still heal +1 each.



Destin and Félicité are now available to share their wares with you at any time in the battle. You may visit each one time for one item – the same as before, now free of charge.

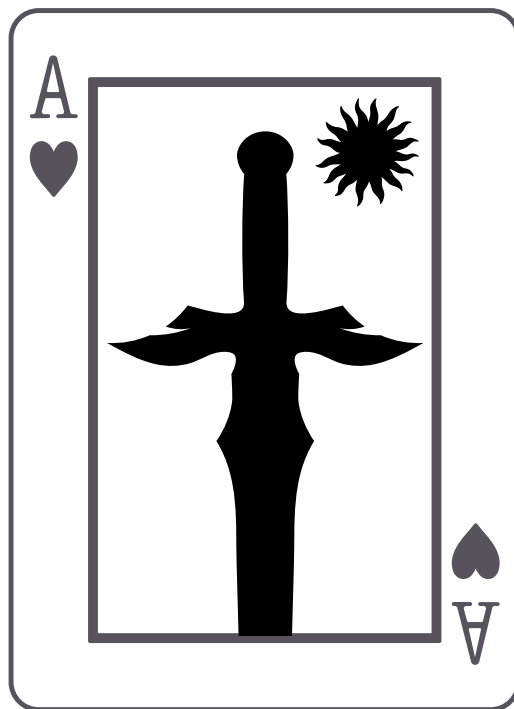


WIN CONDITIONS

When you bring Grispère to 0 Vitality, you destroy him forever
and win the game.

The gloam lifts. The skies seem to sigh their relief. It may take time for
the realm to shed the last of its grief, but in time, the days will brighten,
and Fate will return with good fortune to this world.

ALL BECAUSE OF ONE CHEVALIER OF LITTLE RENOWN
WHO DARED TO TREAD THE LONG ROAD.



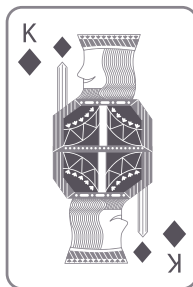


EXAMPLE ENCOUNTER

You are preparing for another foe. You have 11 Vitality and 5 Renown.

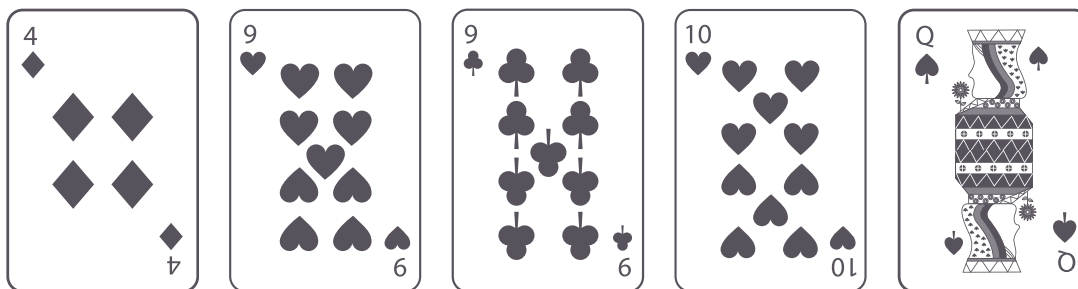
PHASE I — SOMETHING BARS THE WAY

You flip the top card of the Road Deck to find the King of Diamonds. This is your foe. His Vitality is face value + 3 — that's 16 Vitality here.



PHASE II — FIND YOUR FORM

Draw 5 cards from the Road Deck.



Right away, you have a pair of nines (La Paire) which, if played, will deal 4 points of damage to your foe. But because you are allowed to discard up to two cards and redraw, you decide to go for something more.

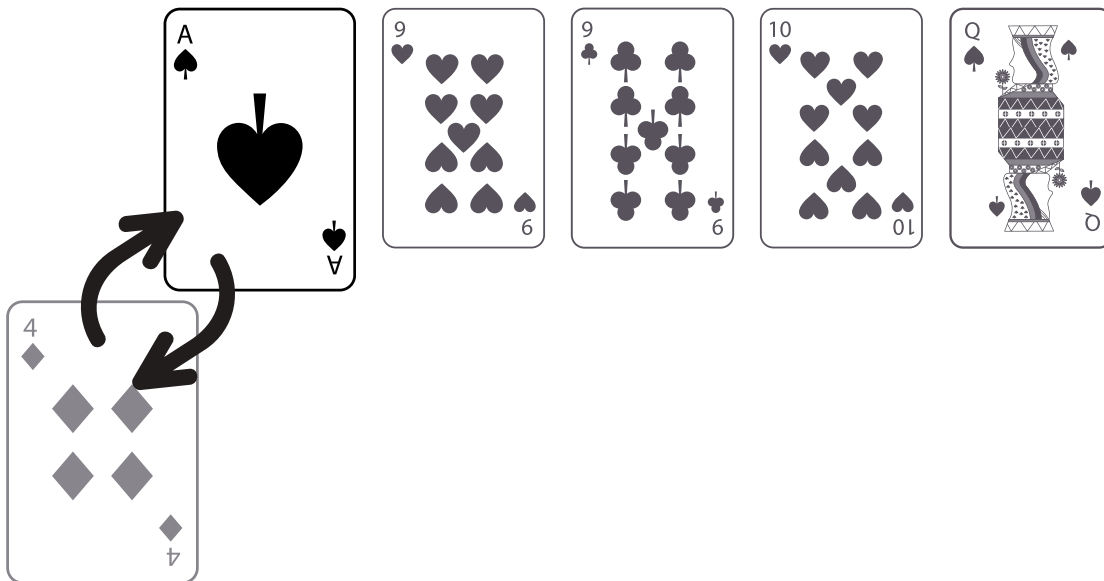
Let's look more carefully at your cards first.



You decide to keep **10 of Hearts**, because you need the healing (every Heart is +1 Vitality).

You also decide to keep the **Queen of Spades** to deal extra damage (every Spade is +1 damage).

But Diamonds don't have any special effects, so you discard the **4 of Diamonds** and redraw one card to replace it.



You drew an Ace of Spades. This is good for two reasons. First, Aces are wild, so you can combine it with your pair of nines to create Three of a Kind (La Tierce) — this fighting form will deal nine points of damage! In addition, each Spade deals +1 damage.

You're ready to play your hand.

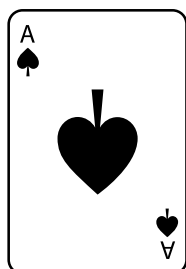


PHASE III — THE PRESS OF BATTLE

A

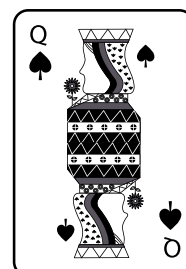
You strike: Deal your form's damage. We've already established that's 9 points here! But that's not all. Apply suit gifts — each Spade adds +1 damage to this strike. In this case, that ups your strike to deal 11 points of damage.

SPADE
+1 DAMAGE
(TO FOE)

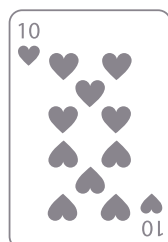
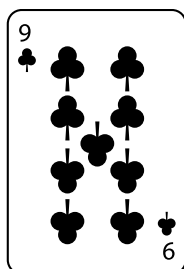
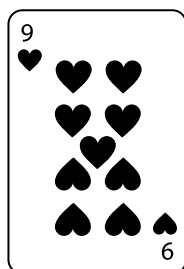


WILD CARD

SPADE
+1 DAMAGE
(TO FOE)



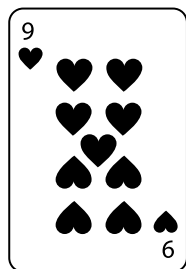
3 OF A KIND (LA TIERCE)
+9 DAMAGE
(TO FOE)



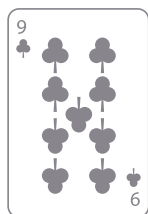
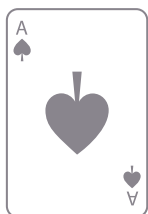
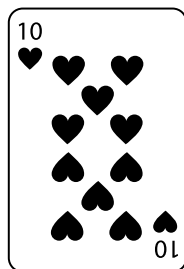
Your foe's Vitality drops from 16 to 5. Since he is not yet defeated, he will strike back.

But first, you may use your Hearts to heal yourself: 2 Hearts gives you +2 Vitality. Your Vitality increases from 11 to 13.

HEART
+1 VITALITY
(TO YOU)



HEART
+1 VITALITY
(TO YOU)

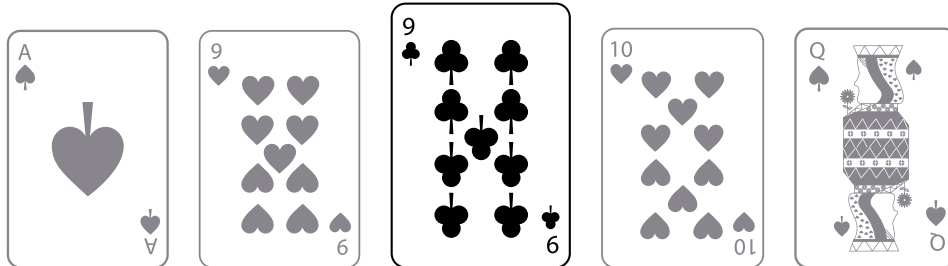




B

The for strikes back. Like all face cards, the King of Diamonds deals 6 points of damage. You have one club to block 1 incoming damage. This mean that instead of striking you for 6 points, he will strike you for 5 points of damage.

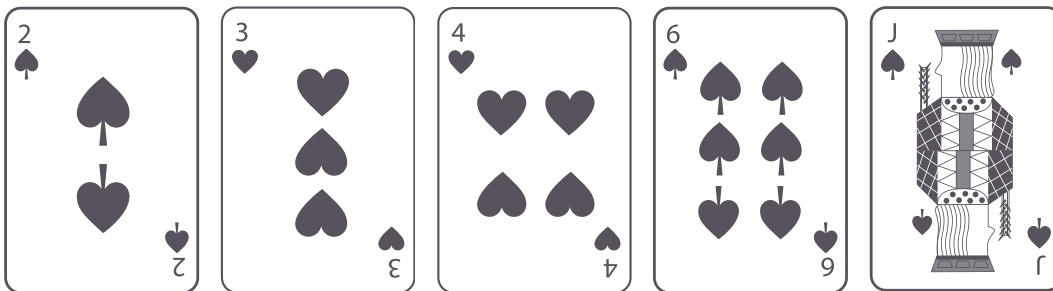
CLUB
GUARDS AGAINST
1 INCOMING DAMAGE



Your Vitality goes from 13 down to 8.

C

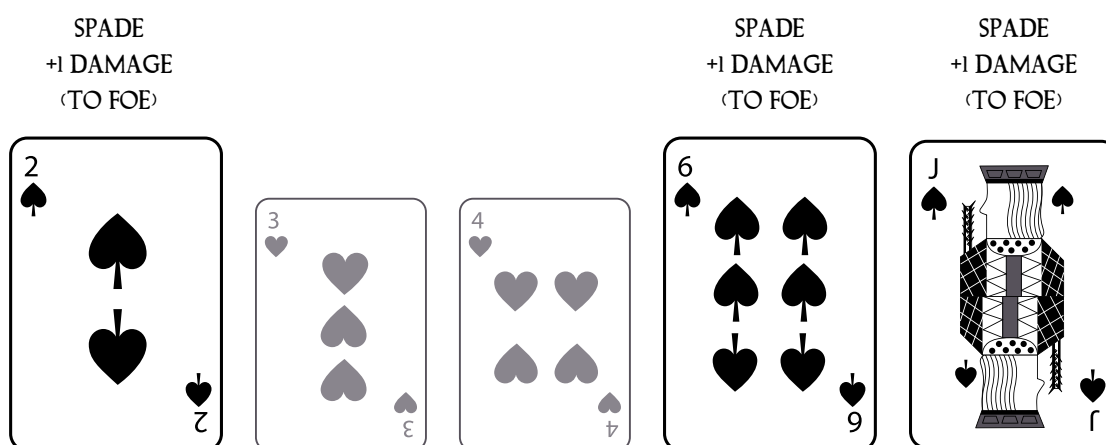
The battle continues. Discard your hand and draw a new one: five cards.



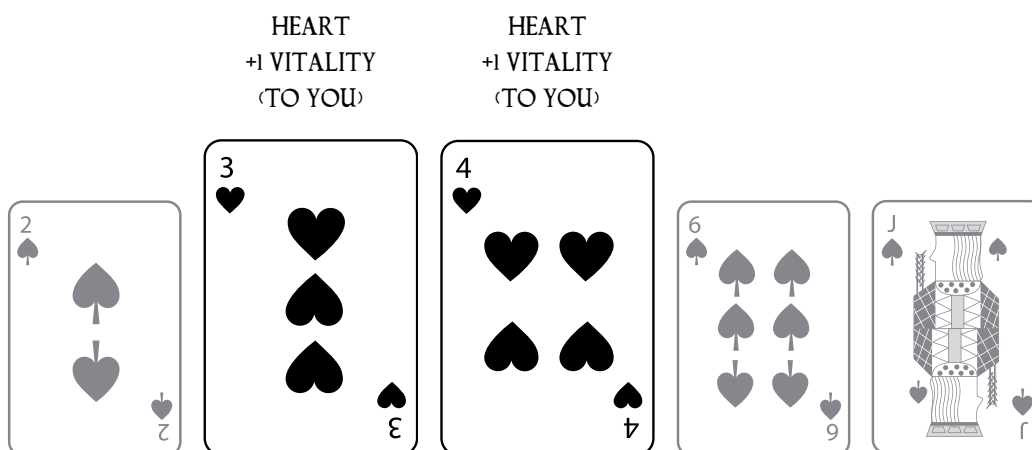


You don't have any matching cards, but you are close to a run. You could discard the Jack in hopes of getting a 5 to complete the Flowing Advance fighting form.

However, you only need to strike for 5 points to defeat your foe. Playing a single card deals 2 damage. You also have 3 Spades, which will deal +3 damage. This brings your strike up to 5 damage — enough to defeat the King of Diamonds.



You decide to keep your two Hearts to heal yourself too. (Hearts heal as soon as you play your hand.)





You play your hand. The King of Diamonds' Vitality plummets from 5 to 0.
You have defeated your foe.

For your victory, you take +2 Renown. (Face cards give 2 Renown; number cards give 1 Renown.)

Your Vitality is now 10. Your Renown is 7.

Given your health, you may decide to visit a Wandering Merchant (Joker) to purchase a Healing Tonic for +8 Health. But people will talk — it will cost you -2 Renown.

Discard the King of Diamonds and your hand. The road is long. It's time to meet your next foe.

Thank you for playing The Long Road. I hope you ~~survived~~
enjoyed your adventure.

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