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Spirits of the King

BY

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ABSTRACT

Spirits of the King (SotK) is a 1v1 card game where players use essential resources to conjure spirits from a shared pool to defeat their opponent. Players must make strategic sacrifices to keep themselves from danger or to threaten their opponent, ultimately revealing how much they are willing to risk for victory. The themes, mechanics, and material design of SotK are very heavily inspired by information found in Aleister Crowley's *The Lesser Key of Solomon*.

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CHAPTER 1

Game Description

In *Spirits of the King* (SotK), the objective of the game is to destroy the opponent's Blood, Soul, and Sanity Lifelines, represented by golden coins. Players take turns discarding a combination of Blood, Soul, and Sanity cards from their hands to conjure a Spirit from the center of the table. Each Spirit is represented by a card that indicates a cost as well as one of three effects: Wrath, Greed, or Envy. All three effects will impact the hands of either player in different ways. Ultimately, a player that is low on a particular resource card is at risk of losing a Lifeline. Because the pool of Spirits players can choose from is shared, players will need to measure the relative value of each option, carefully estimating the make-up of their opponent's hand and comparing it against that of their own.

CHAPTER 2

Design Methodology

The design goals for this project were to create a highly replayable dueling card game that could be played in ~20 mins where players have equal chances of winning. Spirits of the King's overall game design borrows elements of occult practice from Aleister Crowley's *The Lesser Key of Solomon* and of traditions it is derived from.

Spirits

The 36 Spirit cards are named after and illustrated based on the descriptions of each as mentioned Crowley's work. Each spirit in the text is ranked according to their hierarchy in Hell. As such, the game places 9 Spirits of each rank in a similar hierarchy, accordingly, reflecting their relative strength. These ranks are Earl, Marqui, Duke, and King, as described in Crowley's grimoire. Spirits in higher ranks are more costly to conjure but are also more powerful, which is parallel to the requirements of occult practice as described in the text. Also in the text, each Spirit is presented with a seal and a short description about their appearance. These short descriptions were used to create illustrations for each Spirit card.

Life Cards

Players will hold Blood, Soul, and Sanity cards in their hands. These cards are what players pay to conjure Spirits; however, holding these cards is also necessary to stay alive. These resources were modeled after the 'costs' of conjuration. Crowley describes an occult summoning as perhaps a product of the mind, and as such, it may have effects on it. Various practices include offerings made to the Spirits, and most practices suggest that Spirits place higher value on more costly sacrifices. As such, the life cards

were designed to represent not only the essential make-up of a human but also the largest sacrifices one could make. The visual designs of the Life Cards were modeled after the Spirits' seals, mimicking the circular nature. Emphasis was placed on symmetry so that the card would be legible by both players sitting opposite of each other.

Lifeline Coins

To represent the player's Blood, Soul, and Sanity, a metal coin with the respective symbol for each resource are placed in front of each player. On the other face, a black pentagon represents the 'dead' side of the coin. These were modeled after the engraved sigils that are required for an occult conjuring as described in Crowley's grimoire. The weight of the metal coins gives them a higher sense of significance compared to the material of the cards. Afterall, defending and destroying the lifelines is the objective of the game.

Box

The box's design is meant to imitate the look of an ancient grimoire. As such, the box is a faux book. King Solomon was the only one who could conjure the spirits, and this box is designed to be a collection of the King's wisdom.

Effects

The three effects in the game are Wrath, Envy, and Greed. These are three of the seven deadly sins which are often what spirits are conjured to inflict. Wrath is an aggressive effect that forces an opponent to discard cards. Envy is one that allows a player to steal cards from their opponent. Greed lets a player draw additional life cards, helping them preserve their lifelines.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a significant theme in conjuration and Spirits of the King. Not only will players sacrifice their

Life cards as a cost to conjure spirits, but once per game, they may sacrifice a Lifeline of their choosing to draw cards. This is a big strategic decision, as it puts a player closer to defeat, but may also change the perceived value of the Spirits on the table.

Bargaining

Players may conjure spirits for a cost different than that indicated on a Spirit card. This system is referred to as 'Bargaining' and is inspired by the conjurer-spirit interaction that takes place during a conjuring, according to occult practitioners. Spirits may or may not accept an offer set forth by the conjurer, so to reflect this experience, players may make an offer in hopes that it could be accepted. The resolution of this is done by a random generation where the odds are opted into by the player, giving them an opportunity to take a calculated risk.

In conclusion, every aspect of the design of Spirits of the King is modeled and inspired by elements of the information from Crowley's grimoire. Players are participating in a downward spiral towards losing their humanity in a struggle to earn victory over their opponent.

CHAPTER 3

Rules and Instructions

Visit spiritsoftheking.com to play.

Game Overview

You and your opponent are conjurers battling for the loyalty of ancient spirits. You will offer your **Blood**, **Soul**, and **Sanity** to summon spirits and destroy your opponent's **Lifelines**. When you destroy all your opponent's **Lifelines**, you are victorious, earning the ascended power of the King!

Components

x36 Spirit Cards

x90 Life Cards

x5 Failure Cards

Game Setup

1. Shuffle each **Spirit Card** into decks separated by rank, and then place the decks face down in a column between the players in increasing rank (Earl, Marquis, Duke, and King).
2. Place **4 cards from each rank** face up to form a 4x4 grid. This grid is called the **Grimoire**.
3. Place **1 of each Lifeline Coin** face up in front of each player.
4. Place the **5 Failure Cards** in a communal face up pile.
5. The last player to lose decides who will go first. Give that player 4 of each type of **Life Card**. Give the other player 5 of each

type of **Life Card**. These cards go in the players' hands.

6. Shuffle the rest of the **Life Cards** into one communal deck and place it face down between the players. This deck is called **The Source**.

Spirit Cards

Each Spirit card has a *rank*, a *cost*, and an *effect*. To influence your opponent's hand (or your own), you will conjure **Spirits** from the **Grimoire** by spending **Life Cards** from your hand. Each *rank* of Spirit has a required *experience value* (as indicated on the back of the card). You may only conjure one Spirit each turn.

Archive

When a Spirit is conjured, they are removed from the Grimoire and placed face up next to the player that conjured it. This area is the player's **Archive**. Your *experience* is equal to the number of Spirits in your Archive.

Life Cards

The three types of Life cards are Blood, Soul, and Sanity. Each turn, including the first, the player will draw a Life card from the Source. To conjure a Spirit, you will discard Life cards from your hand as indicated by the cost of the Spirit.

Lifelines

Each player has a Blood, Soul, and Sanity Lifeline represented by the respective coin.

The objective of the game is to destroy all three of your opponent's Lifelines. To indicate a Lifeline is destroyed, it is flipped face down.

Game Rules

At the beginning of your turn, including the first of the game, draw a card from the Source.

(Once per game) You may choose to sacrifice a Lifeline of your choice before you conjure a Spirit to draw 4 cards from the Source.

Then, select a Spirit to conjure from the Grimoire. If you have the required experience and want to pay the cost as indicated on the card (see Bargaining), you will:

1. Discard the Life cards as indicated on the Spirit card.
2. Remove the Spirit card from the Grimoire and place it in your Archive.
3. Execute the Spirit's effect.
4. Replace the Spirit with the next card from the same rank.

Bargaining

When selecting a Spirit to conjure, you may offer a different combination of Life cards than indicated on the Spirit card, as long as the total number of cards in the offer remains the same. For example, if a Spirit requires 3 Blood cards to conjure, you could offer 2 Blood and 1 Sanity card as a Bargain.

To begin bargaining, reveal the offered Life cards to your opponent. Any offered cards not matching the Spirit's cost are discarded and replaced with Failure cards. After shuffling the offer face down, draw one card. If it's not a Failure card, the conjuring is successful; otherwise, the offer is lost to the discard pile, and the Spirit remains in the Grimoire, ending your turn.

Effects

Each Spirit card has an effect under its name with a Roman numeral indicating a value.

Wrath: Your opponent discards specific Life cards equal to the effect's value. If they cannot, they lose the remaining Life cards of that type and lose the Lifeline of that type. (Note: if a Wrath effect indicates more than one type of Life card, the opponent discards each type equal to the effect's value. For example, Wrath II (Blood) (Soul) must discard 2 Blood and 2 Soul.)

Envy: You name a Life card that you want from your opponent. If they have it, they give it to you. If they do not, they lose the Lifeline of that type. Then, you take cards at random equal to the effect's value minus one or until they have an empty hand.

Greed: You draw Life cards equal to the effect's value from the Source.

Game Over

When you've lost all three of your Lifelines, you lose.

REFERENCES

Aleister Crowley, Aleister Crowley|AUTHOR, and S. L. MacGregor Mathers|AUTHOR. *The Lesser Key of Solomon* Mockingbird Press, 2016.