

## A Tarot Game: Queens of Fate

A Fun Solitaire Tarot Game that Uses All the Cards and Doesn't Require Knowledge of Tarot

*Originally conceived and published by Anthony Juarez at (<http://voices.yahoo.com/a-tarot-game-queens-fate-4787196.html>)*

*Modifications added by Todd Reiser following main rules.*

These are the complete instructions on how to play a solitaire game called Queens of Fate, using only a deck of tarot cards and a large playing surface. I made up this game as a tool to help me learn to use and interpret the multi-faceted meaning of the tarot cards in different ways, and soon found both the game and its story to be quite addictive.

A typical game lasts for 10 to 20 minutes and requires only 1 player. A tarot deck (of any variety) is required for play, and you may want to have a large playing surface to lay out all the cards. I've found that any common household desk should have enough room.

### Introduction

You are a modern day shaman and supernatural champion. Waging your secret war against dark forces intent on reshaping the universe, you also face off against destiny in the wake of an uncertain prophecy that foretells destruction but gives the promise of hope. Across the world, the infant Queens of Fate are being reincarnated into the world. Can you find them before the dark powers get to them?

Fortunately, you are not alone in your task. The Earth contains human beings that are remarkable in their capabilities and unpredictable in their ability to defy the odds and survive the whims of fate. Even those who know nothing of the supernatural world possess resources and capabilities that will help you on your quest.

### Knowledge of Tarot

Knowledge of the tarot is not required to play the game. However, the domains share the same names and qualities as the tarot deck suites, so the more you know about tarot, the more you can interpret how the story is unfolding as you play. For those with some rudimentary knowledge of tarot, this can add an immersive flavor to the game and is probably why I enjoy it so much.

While knowledge of tarot is not required for player, knowledge of how to read the roman numerals on the Major Arcana cards is required to determine the strength of the Opposition cards.

### Objective

The shuffled deck of face-down cards represents your supply of "Destiny", the time and potential window of opportunity you have to shape the future. If you run out of cards at anytime during the game, this event is called "The End of the World" and you lose.

To win the game, you must find, train, and unite the four Queens. If at any time you have all four Queen cards in play at once, this event is called "the Ascension" and you win the game!

### Setting Up

The tabletop play area is divided into several imaginary sections where you will play your cards. In one area you will have your the deck of cards (your "Destiny"), and next it you will have two areas for discard piles. After you use cards, they will be removed and placed face-down into one of these two areas. Try not to get the piles of cards mixed up. At the start of the game, the two discard piles will be empty (because you haven't discarded any cards yet) and the Destiny deck will be full (because you haven't drawn any cards yet).

The deck with all the cards at the start of the game is called your Destiny. The cards in the two discard areas are called the Signs & Portents.

One of the discard areas is for "Trumps", the cards of the Major Arcana, usually indicated with roman numerals. Once a Trump card goes into this pile, it is effectively removed from the game and will not be used anymore. The cards in this pile are referred to as the Signs. (You may keep the Signs face-up if you wish -- it really doesn't matter.) As you gain experience in the game, you'll learn to read the Signs as a way of indicating which challenges still remain in your Destiny deck.

Everything else goes into the other discard area when they are discarded. This includes everything with a name or common number that makes up the Minor Arcana, such as the "three of cups," "ace of wands," "king of swords," etc. These cards must be discarded face down. You are not allowed to look through these cards except when "Recovering the Fallen" (which you'll read about later when we discuss Sources). The cards in this pile are referred to as Portents.

Next to the Destiny deck, you will have an empty area referred to as your "Fate". Your Fate can hold only one card in it at any given time. It starts the game empty.

Near the Fate area, you have the Challenge area. The Challenge area also holds exactly one card, and the card in this area is always referred to as "the Challenge" for as long as it is in this area. The Challenge area also starts the game empty (because all the cards start in your Destiny deck).

The main playing area is divided into four columns, called "domains". Each domain represents one suite from the tarot deck -- "cups", "wands", "swords" and "discs", but the names of these domains vary depending on which tarot deck you use. When you play cards into the play area, you place them into the domain matching the card's suite.

There are no cards numbered with a "1" in the Minor Arcana -- rather, these are referred to in tarot as the "Aces". There are four Aces in the deck, one for each Suite. In this game, they are referred to as "Sources" and represent a powerful resource of raw magical potency. Sources can be used for a variety of purposes. They are not placed in a domain, but instead have their own space off to the side referred to as the Source Area.

#### Capacity of the Domains

There are some restrictions to how many cards you can place in a domain at once. Each domain has a capacity to hold a certain number of cards of each type.

In the court area of the domain, you can place any and all court cards from the domain's suite (there are four court cards for each suite in the Destiny deck, so each domain can hold all four -- for a total of 16 altogether).

In addition, each domain can hold one "Arcana card", which in this game are the Minor Arcana cards numbered 2 through 9. This means you can have a total of four Arcana cards in play -- one for each domain. Some of the court cards expand this limit when moved into a domain, which you'll read about in a bit.

A domain never holds Sources or Opposition cards. One exception to this rule involves placing a Source card on top of one of your Arcana cards in play when forging Artifacts. Although the Source card is technically in the domain as part of the Artifact, it can no longer be used as a Source.

#### Introduction to the Cards

**Court cards:** Court cards are the Kings, Pages, Knights, and most importantly Queens, which are bound to one of the four Domains (by suite). They represent people who will assist you and be vital in your mission. If you have each of the Queens in their respective domains, you win the game. The other court cards do not directly contribute to your victory like Queens do, but they each grant some special boon to help you in your quest.

**"Full Court":** To fill a domain with court cards, you must have a Queen, Knight, Prince, and Princess of the same suite in the same respective domain. If you fill a domain with all four court cards, this is referred to as a "full court" event. If a domain has a "full court", then all Arcana cards in that domain are considered to be one point higher than their face value. So a "Six of Wands", for example, will count as a 7 when used, if there is a full court within the Wands domain.

**Knights & Pages:** These stalwart companions help to expand the influence of their domains.

Possessing a Knight or Page within a domain each allow you to hold one additional Arcana card there. So if a domain has both the knight and page, it can hold a total of up to three Arcana cards. (one for the knight, one for the page, and the one it is normally allowed to hold).

**King:** A king allows you to avoid conflicts with cards of its domain. If a Challenge card opposes a card in Fate, having a king of the same suite as the Challenge will allow you to treat the cards as if they were not opposed. This should help in gathering your forces for upcoming battles.

**Queen:** Playing a queen card represents your successful attempts to identify and recover a newborn queen, recently reincarnated by the Illuminated Powers. Playing a Queen into a domain has no appreciable effect toward your quest, except that they are needed to win the game and they help contribute to getting a Full Court.

**Opposition:** The Opposition cards represent powerful adversaries, unfortunate events, or primal forces that bar your way to victory. They are represented with the Major Arcana cards, referred to as "Trumps" or "Opposition" in these rules. The higher the roman numeral value is on these cards, the higher their strength, and the more difficult they are to overcome or endure. If an Opposition can not be immediately overcome in battle, it will kill off a Court card. If there are no Court cards, it will bleed off an amount of cards from the Destiny deck equal to its strength. Once an Opposition has been fought, it will be discarded into the Signs area.

**Arcana:** The numbered Minor Arcana cards of the tarot deck are referred to simply as "Arcana", and represent the cunning plans, useful resources, and mystical empowerment needed to defeat Opposition when it arises. They are used when conducting a battle against Opposition, by discarding Arcana cards from your domains. Each domain can hold only one Arcana card, plus one additional Arcana card for each Page or Knight in the domain.

**Source:** The Aces are called "Sources." They are very powerful cards. Each Source represent the primal mystical forces that empower each domain. A Source can be discarded to recover troves of useful cards that have been discarded, to resurrect dead court cards, and to vanquish powerful Opposition. Use them wisely.

### Game Play

At the start of the game, you have no resources available, no idea how to find the Queens, and are relatively free from danger. You will likely never face Opposition and can live your life in a more or less mortal existence, fighting minor supernatural threats as they appear.

But you're not going to do that, because you have to find and rescue the Queens before the dark powers find them. And that means you're going to take risks, gather resources, make allies, and face opposition. You're going to do what it takes to find and unite the Queens of Fate and thwart a vile prophecy. And that quest begins now, with the drawing of the first card. As you draw each card, you resolve its effects one by one. This process of drawing and resolving is called "passing the years".

This game involves a gradual passing of the years, one at a time, resolving each card as it is revealed. Other games may refer to these as "turns" or "rounds". You start playing the game by passing your first year.

To pass a year, you take the top card of your Destiny deck, and flip it over, placing the card into your Challenge area. This card is now called a Challenge. The Challenge will be either an Opposition card, a Court card, a Source, or an Arcana card.

If it is an Arcana card: you must "resolve Fate". (see below)

If it is an Opposition card: you must "battle the Opposition". (see below)

If it is a Source card: you may immediately "secure it" by placing it in the Source area.

If it is a Court card: you may immediately "secure it" by placing it in its respective domain area (swords, wands, cups, or disks, as determined by the card's suite).

Once you "secure" a Source or Court card, you are ready to pass the next year. Likewise, once you finish "battling the Opposition" or "resolving Fate", you are ready to pass the next year. To pass a year, simply draw your next card from the Destiny pile. In this way, the years pass as you draw each card one by one and resolve them.

### Securing Cards

Court cards and Sources are "secured" once they are revealed from the Destiny deck or resurrected from the Portents area. Once a card is secured, place it in its appropriate place in the play area. (Either to a domain matching its suite or to the Source area.) These cards remain in play and can be immediately used.

Using a Source card for any purpose will also remove it from the Source area. Once you "Invoke the Source," the Source card must be immediately moved face-down to the Portents discard area.

### Resolving Fate

When you pass a year, you take the top card of the Destiny deck and place it face up as a Challenge. If the Challenge is an Arcana card, that card must be resolved with the card in the Fate area.

If the Fate Area is currently empty, you may resolve Fate by moving the Challenge card into your Fate Area. You are now ready to pass the next year.

If the Challenge is an Arcana card, and you already have an Arcana card in your Fate, these two cards will have a relationship. They will either be "in harmony" or "in conflict".

**Harmony and Conflict:** A Challenge is considered "in conflict" with Fate if the two cards have opposing suites. Cups oppose wands, and discs oppose swords. All other combinations are considered "in harmony". However, if you have a King in play with the same suite as the Challenge card, that card is automatically considered "in harmony" with all other cards, even those with opposing suites. A Challenge card that has a King in play matching its suite is never considered "in conflict" with another card in Fate.

**Fate in conflict:** If the cards are "in conflict", then the lower value card is automatically discarded, and the remaining card is moved to the Fate area (or remains there). If the two cards have an equal numeric value, then both cards are automatically discarded. You are then ready to pass the next year.

**Fate in harmony:** If the cards are "in harmony" with each other, you must immediately move the Challenge card to the Fate area. The harmonious card that is already in Fate may either be discarded (moved face-down to the Portents area) or "secured" (moved face-up to a domain matching its suite). Each domain can only hold one Arcana card, plus one additional Arcana card for each Page or Knight within that domain. If a domain has too many Arcana cards, you must discard Arcana cards until you are within the maximum limit. Once this done, you are ready to pass the next year.

### Battling the Opposition

When an Opposition card comes up, you must "battle" it. You may choose to either to "overcome" the Opposition, or to "endure" it.

**Overcoming the Opposition:** When choosing to overcome the Opposition, you must discard any amount of Arcana cards from any domain(s) whose total numerical values equal or exceed the Strength of the Opposition. The strength of the Opposition is determined by the roman numeral printed on the Opposition card. (For example, the "Priestess" Opposition card has a roman numeral of II, giving it a strength of 2.) If you cannot discard enough Arcana cards to overcome the opposition, you must "endure" it.

**Enduring the Opposition:** When choosing (or forced) to endure an Opposition, you must discard one of the Court cards from any one of your domains, if you have any. This court card is considered to have abandoned the cause, and often represents death, capture, impairment, or loss of loyalty from a valuable companion. When discarded, the court card is moved face-down to the Portents area.

If you have no Court cards in play to sacrifice, then you must discard an Artifact, if you have one. The Source card corresponding to this artifact is discarded (moved face-down to the Portents area). If you have no Artifacts, you must discard a Source card from the Source Area.

If you have no Sources in your Source Area, and no Court cards or Artifacts in your Domains, then the only way to "endure" an Opposition card is to make a "Sacrifice". To make a Sacrifice, you must discard destiny cards from the top of the Destiny Deck equal to the full Strength of the Opposition.

This is a common occurrence early in the game, but rarely happens later unless the war is going very badly. You may look at the cards as you discard them, and move any Opposition cards to the Signs area.

Once an Opposition card has been overcome or endured, it is discarded to the Signs area and you are ready to pass the next year. Learning when to "endure" and when to "overcome" is a vital strategic skill toward mastering this game.

### Invoking the Source

If you have a Source card in the Source area, you may use the Source at any time (including during a Battle). When a Source is used, it is discarded face-down to the Portents area. A Source card can be used in one of three ways:

**Recover the Fallen:** Take all the cards in the Portents area and hold them in your hand. Turn over the entire stack of cards so that it is face-up, and look at the top card (the one that was on the bottom). If it is a Court card, immediately "secure it" by placing it in its appropriate domain. If it is not a Court card, place the card face down in the Portents area and check the next card. Continue this process until a Court card is revealed and secured. Then place the remaining cards back on top of the discard pile, face down, so that their order has not been changed.

**Awaken the Arcana:** You may take the bottom four cards of from the Portents area, and reveal them. You may choose to secure any revealed applicable cards (Arcana, Sources, and Court cards) by moving them to their appropriate domains or areas, and discard the rest (placing them face-down, on top of the Portents area).

**Forge an Artifact:** You may take your Source and, rather than discarding it, attach it to one of the Arcana cards in the domain matching the Source's suite. (Obviously you can only do this if you have a matching Arcana card available). The Artifact is treated effectively as a single card while in play, counts as a single Arcana card for determining how many Arcana cards can be played in the domain, and if you ever discard it (as a result of battle, or by your choice when resolving Fate), you must discard both cards face-down to the Portents area. (See "Using an Artifact" below for more information.)

Source cards are very powerful and very helpful. How and when you choose to use them will be a major strategic decision that will govern whether you win or lose the game.

### Using an Artifact

Artifacts are some of the most complicated, powerful, and challenging aspects of the game. I recommend playing without them for your first few games.

A Source can be combined with an Arcana card at anytime to Forge an Artifact. Although an Artifact is represented by both a Source and Arcana card together, and takes up space in a domain like an Arcana card, it can not be used like Arcana or Source cards once forged together.

An Artifact can be used in any and all battles you engage in when attempting to overcome Opposition, although only one Artifact can be used at a time. When engaging in Opposition, you may use the Artifact to reduce the strength of an Opposition card you are attempting to overcome.

An artifact is considered to have a value based on the Arcana card that composes it, rounded down. So an Artifact that was composed of an Ace of Wands and a Six of Wands, for example, would have a value of 6. This serves two functions: to determine how effective the artifact is at reducing Opposition strength, and to determine the dangerous price of its use.

When an Artifact is used in battle, the strength of the Opposition is reduced by half the value of the Artifact, rounded down. So an artifact with a value of 6 would reduce the strength of an Opposition card by -3 when used.

It's important to remember that an Artifact is not an Arcana card, and can't overcome Opposition by itself --

you will still need to use Arcana, even if the strength of the Opposition is reduced to 0 or less. The Artifact simply makes powerful Opposition easier to overcome.

Each Artifact has a perilous price to their use, however. This price is determined based on the type of Arcana cards you are overcoming the Challenge with. For each Arcana card you use with an equal or lower value than the Artifact, you must "make a Sacrifice" of half the value of the artifact, rounded down.

For example, if you used an artifact with a value of 6 to reduce an Opposition's strength by -3, and then used a "Four of Cups" to overcome the Opposition, you must reveal the top 3 cards of the Destiny deck and discard them (to the Signs or Portents area, depending on the type of card).

### Harvesting the Power

There are many minor skirmishes involved in the secret war, and there are many triumphs and losses on both sides. "Harvests" represent personal victories in the battle, important objectives achieved, and the acquisition or protection of magical secrets. These Harvests can also represent a variety of special favors, boons, events, and cosmic patterns that work in your favor, and will happen periodically throughout the game.

A variety of conditions can cause you to "Harvest". This usually happens when securing a card, before passing onto the next year. When you "Harvest the Power", you may take the bottom three cards of your Portents and place them (without looking at them) at the bottom of your Destiny deck. A single Harvest may not seem like much of a breakthrough, but achieving many of them will give you a decisive edge toward victory.

You may Harvest immediately upon securing a card that allows one of these five conditions to be met:

- 1) You have a King, Knight, and Page all within the same domain.
- 2) You have three Arcana cards in the same domain.
- 3) You have all four of the same Court card (other than the Queen) in play at the same time. (Remember, if you get all four Queens at the same time, you win the game.)
- 4) You have four Arcana cards with the same numerical value in play at the same time. (One in each domain)
- 5) You have all four Sources in the Source Area at the same time.

You only Harvest the Power once when the final card you need is secured; you do not continue to Harvest each subsequent turn that the conditions are still met. However, if circumstances change so that the conditions are no longer met, but you secure a card that allows the conditions to be met again, you may Harvest the Power again. You cannot postpone Harvests until later, but must resolve it immediately if the conditions for scoring it are met.

### A Final Note: Losing the Queen!

It may happen that you are lucky enough to find ("secure") a Queen early in your quest, however during the first few turns of the game you are not in much of a position to defend her. Given that Opposition cards always attack your Court cards first, you may find yourself having to discard the Queen early in your quest.

Queen            This can be a major obstacle toward winning the game. You'll have to find some way to get the  
back, either by using Source cards or by Harvesting the Power enough times to recycle her card  
back

into the Destiny deck. Losing the Queen makes the game much harder to win, but doesn't mean you have lost. You don't lose the game until you're out of Destiny cards and the world finally ends. Until then, you are the world's only hope.

## Conclusion

And that's the game. Resolve the years, one by one. Battle the Opposition and secure the cards into your domains or the Source area. Find the Queens before the Opposition dwindles away your cards and recover them using Sources or Harvests if they are discarded. Maximize your Harvests to recover valuable Sources and high-value Arcana cards. Get the Queens to the Ascension before the End of the World!!

Good luck, and I hope you enjoy this game as much as I do.

## Modifications to Queens of Fate by Todd Reiser

These modifications are meant to make the game more challenging and give it a faster pace. The original rules also tend to result in a win nearly every play through.

- Remove the Knights from the deck
- Aces have only two purposes; either to defeat a Major Arcana or they can be discarded to harvest 4 cards from the bottom of the discard pile and placed in play is applicable. Aces found when harvesting are never returned to play.
- When combinations are completed, ie; Four 3's, four 6's, four King's, etc. 3 cards can be harvested from the bottom of the discard pile and placed on the bottom of the Draw pile.
- Play Area: On the blue Mat: Queens on the top, Court in the middle, Minors on the bottom, Aces can be placed to the right of Mat. To the left of the Mat starting at the top: Minors/Courts discard pile (face down), Left and beneath discard pile Major Arcana discards (face up), to the right is the Resolve area, beneath Resolve is the Challenge/Opposition area, to it's left the Draw pile.

