

THE ADVENTURER



A solo rpg about
writing journal entries.

Introduction

A lone figure sits by a fire built in a pile of rocks beside a long disused and overgrown path. Hunched over in their blankets, making the best of the warmth afforded by the small fire, they write carefully in a small leather bound journal. Pausing for a moment, they produce a small pouch of fragrant leaves from their pocket and drop it into a pan of boiling water. As the smell of the leaves fills the air, the sound of a twig breaking under foot in the dark punctuates the silence. The figure turns and places a hand on the hilt of their sword.

This is a game of narrative adventure journal writing where you will be telling the story of someone travelling through a world of your creation. During the game you will draw cards and interpret their outcome; writing the outcome in your journal. You will be creating the world, its inhabitants and the adventurer themselves as you play.

Play materials

- * A standard pack of playing cards (jokers removed)
- * A pen and paper (or take the notes on your laptop instead)



Playing the game

The cards

Take the cards and separate them into four piles by suit; one pile each for hearts, clubs, spades and diamonds. Shuffle each pile and place them face down on the desk in front of you. During the game you will be drawing cards from these piles and looking up their meaning on the card table, you then interpret these cards as you wish and write a journal entry.

Each suit of cards has a different meaning in this game:

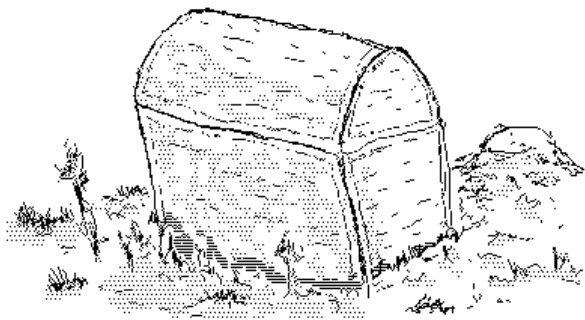
Spades - Locations that you will go to.

Hearts - Events that happen while travelling.

Diamonds - Things that you can find.

Clubs - Beings that you will encounter.

At the start of the game draw a location card, this will be your starting location. Make a journal entry about this place. Why are you here? How long have you been here? **Now repeat the following steps until the adventure ends.**



1. Draw a location card

This will be the next location that you will travel to: What has made you choose to move on to discover this location? Is it the promise of riches, power or has someone forced your hand and driven you from where you are? Make a journal entry about why and how you are preparing to journey to this new place.

2. Draw event cards

These are the things that happen to you en route to your next location. You can draw as many of these as you like; the more you draw the further the journey. Make a journal entry documenting each encounter and when you are ready to arrive move onto the next step. Make a journal entry now about arriving at this new location.

3. Draw being and thing card

Draw both a being and a thing card; these are waiting for you at the location. You can interpret these cards any way you choose using either one card or both. Make one or more journal entry about these cards. Repeat this step until you feel that you have nothing else to discover at this location or something is drawing you to a new location. Go back to step 1.

Other actions

If at any point you draw a card that doesn't fit with your story, or seems problematic for you in any way, then instead of resolving that card you can discard it and instead make a journal entry using one of the following actions:

- You have taken a moment to reflect, make a journal entry about an event from your past.
- The world is bigger than just you, make a journal entry about current or past events in the world at large.
- Write a journal entry about something you have recently learned about survival in your world.

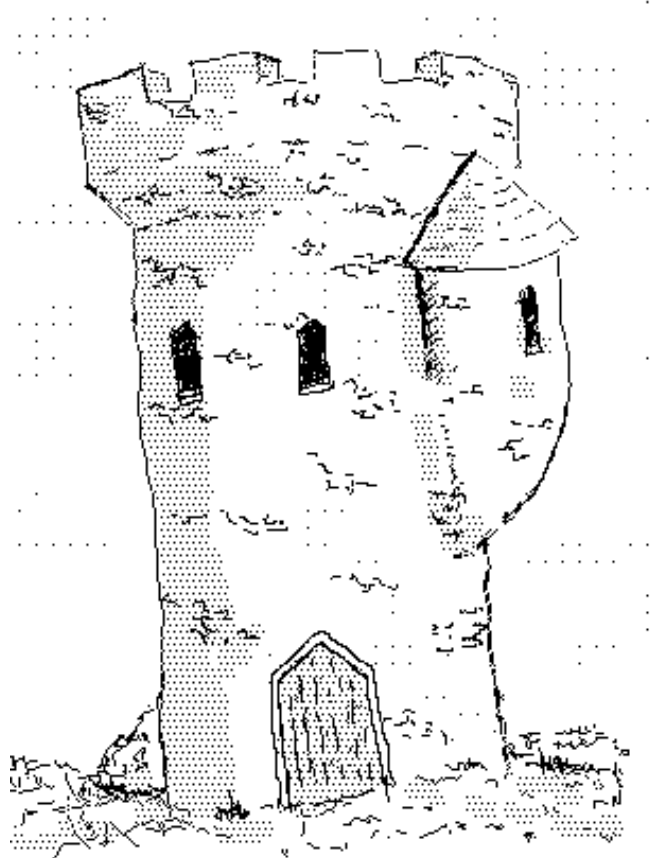
About writing journal entries

Journal entries can be as long or short as you like. You will be creating the adventurer themselves and the world that they inhabit as the game progresses and these entries are your chance to explore both and learn more about them.

Start each journal entry with a date, this date can be from a real world calendar or you can invent a calendar of your own. These dates give a feeling of the length of time between events. When making journal entries, pay heed of the length of time that has passed and what the seasons may be, if there are seasons in your world, and how your adventurers supplies may be diminishing.

Ending the game

If a journal entry seems to make sense that it would be a tidy and fitting conclusion to the story then let that be the end of the adventure. Exhausting any pile of cards can also be the end of the adventure. There is no hard and fast rule about ending the game though; this is a narrative focused game and the game should end when it feels right for the story to end it. While exhausting a deck of cards is often the end of an adventure, as the character appears to have seen everything in the game, it does not have to be.



Card table

Spades (Locations)

2	Ancient ruin
3	Town or village
4	A woods/forest
5	Castle
6	Safe house
7	Place of worship
8	Battlefield
9	Barren landscape
10	Gardens
J	Coastline
Q	City
K	Palace
A	An island

Clubs (Beings)

2	A new / old foe
3	A wandering spirit
4	A lone traveller
5	A tyrant king
6	A scholar
7	An ancient evil
8	An unknown presence
9	A beast
10	The plants
J	A playful creature
Q	A new / old love
K	A bandit leader
A	A new species

Hearts (Events)

2	Natural disaster
3	Lost on way
4	Met an interesting stranger
5	Extreme weather
6	Cross dangerous terrain
7	Attacked at camp
8	Taken in by strangers
9	Saw Death
10	Wild animal
J	A vision
Q	An illness
K	Path blocked
A	A sign

Diamonds (Things)

2	An ancient artefact
3	An unknown object
4	A book
5	A curse or spell
6	A lost treasure
7	A trinket
8	A mechanical contraption
9	A map
10	A small box
J	A weapon
Q	A toy
K	A new food
A	The remains of a past visitor

Optional rules and suggestions

Setting the scene

While starting the game with a completely blank slate and creating the world as the game unfolds is fun, sometimes it is also nice to have an outline for a setting or character backstory before play starts. Before beginning the game you can use the **Oracle** and **Aura** to help create an outline for the adventure.

Creating the Oracle and Aura decks

First, remove all of the face cards (Queens, Jacks and Kings) from the deck, shuffle them together and place them face down on the desk in front of you; this is the **Aura**. Next, shuffle all of the remaining cards and place them face down in front of you in a separate pile; this is the **Oracle**.

Consulting the Oracle

The Oracle deck can be used to answer yes/no questions about the setting you are creating such as, "Is there a King or ruler?" Or, "Is there magic in this world?" To do this, first ask a question about your setting and then draw a card. If the card is red (heart or diamond) then the Oracle has answered yes, if the card is black (club or spade) then the oracle has answered no.

Reading the Aura

The Aura is used to discover the tone or nature of an aspect of the world. This is used for inspiration for a wider aspect for your setting that cannot be answered with a binary answer from the Oracle such as, "How does the King treat their subjects?" Or, "What is the nature of the gods?" To take a reading from the Aura, first decide on what aspect of the world you want the Aura to reveal to you and then draw the top card of the Aura deck. Consult the Aura table and then interpret the card to flesh out your setting. After interpreting the result, shuffle the card back into the Aura ready for the next reading.

A note on asking questions

It is tempting to ask a lot of questions of the Oracle and aura decks to get as much information about the world as you can, but it is often better to ask fewer questions and explore the results in game play. Use the Oracle and Aura sparingly to set tone and flavour to the world.

If I have decided that there is a Queen that rules the world I then ask the Aura about their personality. The Aura gives me the Queen of Diamonds, I now know that the Queen leaves the people with very little. I then ask the Oracle if I have ever met the Queen and it says I have. I now ask no more questions about this relationship, choosing to let my relationship with the Queen reveal itself in journal entries instead.

Aura table

Clubs

King

The King took great joy in wanton destruction. They would burn cities and lay waste to whole continents just for their own amusement.

Themes: Death, Destruction and Ruin.

Queen

Everybody that thought themselves to be a friend of the Queen soon found themselves at the sharp end of a blade. There was nobody that the Queen knew who she would not throw to the dogs for their own self interest.

Themes: Betrayal, Deceit and Treason.

Jack

As the official requisitions officer, the Jack had licence to take anything that was owed to the crown and a little extra for themselves if they saw fit; and take they did, by any means possible.

Themes: Theft, Corruption and Piracy.

Spades

King

Their rule endured challenge from neighbouring kingdoms and usurpers. The King stood strong and immovable in the face of time, that is why they called him the Mountain King.

Themes: Strength, Stability and Endurance.

Queen

While the King stood strong against external influence, the Queen maintained the natural order of things in the land; creating a safe space where people could live in harmony with mother nature.

Themes: Nature, Creation and Sustainability.

Jack

A strong King and Queen need eyes and ears everywhere and those were the Jack. The Jack could adapt to any situation without being noticed and nothing escaped the Jack's knowledge.

Themes: Flexibility, Knowledge and Adaptation

Diamonds

King

The King saw the happiness of the people around them and they wanted it for themselves. The more they tried to emulate the happiness of others though, the less happy they appeared to become.

Themes: Want, Envy and Discontent.

Queen

The King would give the Queen anything she wanted to make her happy, and she took everything she could. She watched the people around her getting poorer and, even though she had excess, she let them starve.

Themes: Greed, Avarice and Plenty.

Jack

The Jack was a bitter old soul who had a dislike of all other people and would go out of their way to make others as uncomfortable. The only thing that bought a smile to their face was when they were causing misery for others.

Themes: Spite, Hatred and Antagonism.

Hearts

King

The people of the kingdom trusted the King of Hearts with their lives. The King was always in the people's corner when they needed it and they never misled the kingdom about hard times that were on the way.

Themes: Reliability, Truth and Trust.

Queen

The Queen cared deeply for all people and could see the good in everyone. They cared for the people of their kingdom as if they were their own family and cared for people in need from other kingdoms as if they were from their own.

Themes: Openness, Love and Kindness.

Jack

The Jack saw the suffering of others and felt compelled to help. They had very little in this world but the little they did have they gave away to those more needy. They ended up eventually giving their life so that another could be saved.

Themes: Generosity, Altruism and Sacrifice.

An in game Oracle

Sometimes you might want to ask clarifying yes or no questions about elements of the world and for this you can ask the in game Oracle. For example, you might draw the Queen of Spades as a location card and are travelling to a city. You may now have questions like, "Have I visited this city before?"

To ask the Oracle, draw the top card of any of the piles, check its value against the following table and then shuffle the card back into the pile it came from.

- **Ace:** Yes, and something else good happens too.
- **Jack:** No, and something else bad happens too.
- **Queen:** Yes, but there is an unexpected development.
- **King:** No, but there is an unexpected development.
- **Odd number:** No.
- **Even number:** Yes.

While it is tempting to ask a lot of questions, you should try and avoid asking too many questions and leaving no room for you to create your story. The answer the Oracle gives you is not set in stone and if the answer does not feel right then choose to ignore it.

Using The Adventurer with another rpg system.

Maybe you have a particular rpg system that you want to take for a spin to familiarise

yourself with the rules before running a campaign. Perhaps you have a particular system that is a favourite and fancy running a solo campaign. Whatever the system you have in mind, it is possible to run it along with The Adventurer.

Most rpg systems are designed to arbitrate the rules of characters' actions. They provide rules for testing if a character is strong enough to lift a crashed carriage off from its driver's leg, or if a character is able to convince another into doing their bidding. These systems tend to concentrate on the mechanical aspects of how the world works. In contrast to this, The Adventurer was designed solely as a narrative game experience providing the locations that a character will visit and the events that happen along the way; with very little care for the rules that make the world keep turning. It is these two different approaches to gaming that means these two systems can compliment each other well. While The Adventurer provides the story prompts that create situations for your character, it is the other system that will provide you with rules to arbitrate the outcome of your character's actions.

To do this you should create your character using the method in your systems rule book, this is now the character whose journal entries you will be writing. Continue playing The Adventurer as normal by drawing cards and making journal entries and when you encounter something non trivial to achieve, such as picking a lock, use the rules from your chosen system to determine success.

More card tables

The City

Spades (Locations)

2 Library
3 Palace
4 School
5 Slums
6 Hospital
7 Bazaar
8 Place of worship
9 Museum
10 Park
J River
Q A new home
K A local treasure
A Monument

Clubs (Beings)

2 Political leader
3 Worker
4 Celebrity
5 Artist
6 Wildlife
7 Religious leader
8 Homeless
9 Lost soul
10 Friend
J Immigrant
Q Trader
K Fortune teller
A Citizens

Hearts (Events)

2 Festival
3 Crime
4 Party
5 Performance
6 Eat with strangers
7 Ceremony
8 Fire
9 Protest
10 Patrol
J Local tradition
Q Injustice
K Royal encounter
A A game

Diamonds (Things)

2 Secret
3 Instrument
4 Book
5 Local delicacy
6 Story
7 Hidden door
8 Piece of history
9 Ornament
10 Art
J Traditional clothing
Q Gift
K Reminder of home
A Occult symbol

Blank card table

Spades (Locations)

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
J
Q
K
A

Clubs (Beings)

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
J
Q
K
A

Hearts (Events)

2
3
4
5
6
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8
9
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J
Q
K
A

Diamonds (Things)

2
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