

Once Upon a Time

by Richard Lambert, Andrew Rilstone and James Wallis

"Once upon a time there lived a wizened old woman. She lived all alone since her one true love, a sage, had gone away years before and she had nobody to keep her company except a frog. One day there came a knock on the door of her cottage. She opened it and discovered it was her brother the wizard who needed her help. He had been sent by the king of a far-off land to find the king's eldest son who had been turned into a huge bird by an evil witch. So the two set off..."

Introduction

"Once Upon A Time" is a game in which players create a story together using cards that show important elements from fairy tales. One player is the Storyteller and creates a story using the ingredients on her cards, trying to guide the plot towards her own ending. The other players try to use cards to interrupt her and become the new Storyteller. The winner is the first player to play out all her cards, ending with the "Happy Ever After" card.

To Start

Shuffle the decks separately, and deal them. Each player needs one "Happy Ever After" card and the following number of "Once Upon A Time" cards:

2-3 players:	10 cards each
4-5 players:	8 cards each
6 players:	7 cards each
7 or more:	6 cards each

Players may look at their own cards, but not at those of other players. Trading cards is not allowed.

Decide who is going to be the first Storyteller. Tradition dictates that this is the person with the longest beard, but if everyone is clean-shaven then the oldest player begins.

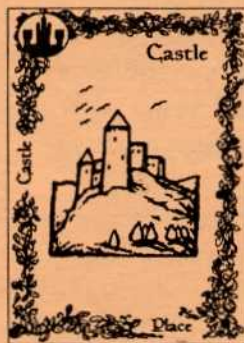
How To Play

The object of the game is to create an entertaining story. The first Storyteller must begin to tell a story suggested by her "Once Upon A Time" cards. Whenever she mentions something on one of her cards, she may put that card face-up on the discard pile next to the "Once Upon A Time" deck. She must tell a story that makes sense, not just try to discard her hand as quickly as possible. The winner is the first player to play all her "Once Upon A Time" cards, and then play her "Happy Ever After" card so that it brings the story to a satisfying finish.

There are two types of cards in the "Once Upon A Time" deck: *Storytelling Cards* and *Interrupt Cards*.

Storytelling Cards

A Storytelling card looks like this:



Storytelling cards are divided into five groups:

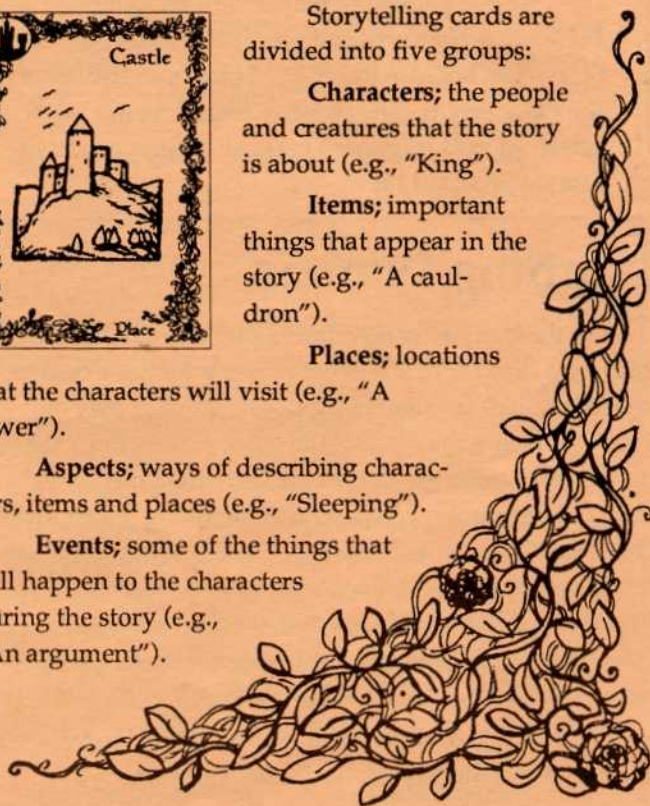
Characters; the people and creatures that the story is about (e.g., "King").

Items; important things that appear in the story (e.g., "A cauldron").

Places; locations that the characters will visit (e.g., "A tower").

Aspects; ways of describing characters, items and places (e.g., "Sleeping").

Events; some of the things that will happen to the characters during the story (e.g., "An argument").



The second type of card is an Interrupt card. While the Storyteller is talking, the other players may attempt to interrupt her. This is the usual way that play passes between the players. There are two ways of interrupting: Interrupt Cards and Naming Names.

Interrupt Cards

Interrupt cards look like this:



Each one names one of the five groups of Storytelling cards; for example, "Any Aspect".

When the Storyteller plays a card, any other player may interrupt by playing an Interrupt card of that group. To work, an Interrupt card must be of the same group as the top card on the discard pile.

Interrupt cards also have plot ingredients printed on them, and a Storyteller can use one just like a Storyteller card. If the card is used to interrupt, ignore the plot ingredient.

Example: Interrupt cards

Storyteller: ...The Witch let out a loud whistle and the door swung open, to reveal a huge cave beyond [plays "Cave" card].

At this point, any player with an "Any Place" Interrupt card can play it and interrupt the Storyteller because the "Cave" card is a member of the Place group. The word "Chapel" on the Interrupt card is ignored because it is not used as a Storytelling card here.

Naming Names

If the Storyteller mentions a plot ingredient without playing a card for it, any other player who has a card for that ingredient (or something closely similar) may interrupt by playing the card. If the other players think that the card is not similar enough to the ingredient mentioned then the interruption fails. The interrupting player must then take the top card from the "Once Upon A Time" deck and the current Storyteller continues. In the event of an argument, it is decided by a vote of all players.

Playing an Interrupt card when someone has interrupted by naming names is not allowed.

If two or more interruptions are made at the same time, the first person to play her card is the interrupter.

Example: A Fair Interruption

Storyteller: ...The king fell in love with the woodcutter's beautiful daughter [plays "Two People Fall In Love" card], they were married and a year and a day later she gave birth to a baby boy...

A player who holds the "Prince" or "Child" card can interrupt here, since although neither has been mentioned, a baby is automatically a child, and because it is the king's son it must be a prince.

Example: An Unfair Interruption

Storyteller: ...So the princess went into the forest and using her maidenly wiles she caught herself a unicorn...

A player with the "Horse" card could not interrupt here. A unicorn is not a horse, and although there is no unicorn card in the game (yet!) they are not similar enough to make the interruption valid.

Example: Another Unfair Interruption

Storyteller: ...The dragon surrendered and showed the knight his horde of treasure —

Player: Treasure! [plays "Treasure" card]

So far this is fine, but a player with an "Any Item" card could not play it at this point because interrupting an interruption is not allowed.

Example: A Third Unfair Interruption

Storyteller: ...The prince left the palace and set off —

Player: Along the road. [plays card]

This is an unfair interruption because the interrupting player has tried to guess what the Storyteller will say next. Players may only interrupt what the Storyteller has already said or implied.

If the interrupt is successful, the person who interrupted is now the Storyteller. She must continue the same story using cards from her own hand. She is not allowed to backtrack, digress or contradict anything that has already been worked into the plot. The former Storyteller must take the top card from the "Once Upon A Time" deck, and wait for a new chance to interrupt and become Storyteller again.

Cards and Sentences

When a player is storytelling, every card that she plays as part of the story must be separated by a full stop — in other words, they must be in different sentences. This rule may be ignored by general agreement of the players.

Passing

The Storyteller can end her turn at any time by saying, "Pass". She must still pick up a new card, but can discard one "Once Upon A Time" card at the same time. The new Storyteller is the player on the passing Storyteller's left.

Pausing

If the Storyteller pauses for more than five seconds, her turn ends and she must take a new card. The player on her left becomes the new Storyteller.

Silly Play

If a Storyteller's story is illogical, contradicts what has already happened or just doesn't make sense, any other player can say that it is becoming "Silly". If the majority of players agree, the Storyteller draws an extra card and play passes to the person on her left.

Happy Ever After

A player can only play her "Happy Ever After" card if she is the Storyteller and has played all the other cards in her hand. The first person to do this wins. The ending must bring the story to a logical and satisfactory conclusion. If it does not, the Storyteller must take a new card from both decks, and the player on her left becomes the new Storyteller.

Example of Play

[There are six players: Amy, Brian, Cliff, Jon, Kay and Spike. Spike is the only player with a beard, and therefore is the first Storyteller.]

Spike: Once upon a time there was an old woman [plays "Old Woman" card] who lived somewhere that's not important right now. She was an unhappy old woman because many years before she had been parted from her one true love who was a sage [plays "Sage," which is on an "Any Character" card]. He had gone off on a sabbatical to do what sages do on sabbaticals, which is to look up things and spend long hours in libraries poring over books. Now the old woman was stuck all alone in the middle of nowhere with only a frog [plays "Frog" card] for company.

Brian: Ribbet!

Spike: One day out of the blue there came a knock on her door and —

[Kay interrupts with the "Door" card, and becomes Storyteller. Spike takes a new card from the "Once Upon a Time" deck.]

Kay: Hoisting herself to her feet, she made her way to the door which she opened. She saw a tall man dressed in purple robes, by which she knew him to be a wizard. [Plays "Wizard" card] "Good morrow, sir," she said, because she knew that one has to treat wizards with respect. "Judith! My darling sister!" cried the man. [Plays "Brother or Sister" card]

[Jon plays an "Any Character" Interrupt card on the "Brother Or Sister" card. Kay takes a new card from the deck.]

Jon: So she made a cup of tea for them both. It turned out that the wizard's reason for visiting his sister Judith was that he was on a commission from a certain king [plays "King" card] of a far-off land. The king's son, Prince Albert, had been turned, transformed magically into a huge bird [plays "Bird" card] and was doomed —

[Amy plays an "Any Character" Interrupt card on Jon's "Bird" card; Jon draws a new card.]

Amy: Any character. The bird was seen to fly around in circles feeding on carrion and living in his enormous nest on a cliff overlooking the sea [plays "Cliff" card]. He was doomed to continue doing this until someone came along to break the curse [plays "Curse" card]. So the wizard and the grandmother set off to discover how to remove this curse from the bird. They left the village where the grandmother lived —

[Kay plays the "Village" card. Amy takes a new card.]

Kay: And so they set off. They travelled for day after day through lands filled with strange things that we shall not detail here, until they came to a huge obsidian tower [plays "Tower" card] reaching three and one-quarter miles into the air, perfectly smooth without surface detail and humming with a low, malevolent sound.

[Everyone hums with a low, malevolent sound.]

Kay: The wizard Jonathan grinned happily and tapped thrice on the base of the tower with his enchanted wand [plays "Wand" card]. A small door appeared. "Welcome in, sister dear, for this is the tower of the sage Cynan." Whereupon they entered the tower, and saw the sleeping [plays "Sleeping" card] Cynan, who was a tall man with a very large —

[Amy plays an "Any Aspect" Interrupt card on Kay's "Sleeping" card. Everyone giggles. Kay takes a new card.]

Amy: Nose. And an equally impressive staff. "Be careful," said the brother, "We must wake him cautiously, for wizards are subtle and quick to anger."

So Jonathan stood at the end of the bed and called the wizard's name. In a moment of fright [plays "Frightened" card] the wizard jumped up and reached for his sword, but relaxed on seeing that it was not a foul foe but his friend Jonathan. So they prepared coffee and other drinks that wizards are very good at making, and discussed the situation. Jonathan explained that they were trying to capture this bird so that they could rescue it. I'm stuck so I'm going to pass here.

[Amy discards one card and takes a new one from the deck. Cliff, on her left, becomes Storyteller.]

Cliff: "I think," said the wizard Cynan, "that we should shed some light on this subject." Making gestures with his staff he caused several windows [plays "Window" card] to appear in the walls, and sunlight spilled in to illuminate the wizardly contents of the room. "Hmmm," said the two wizards who were putting their heads together in a corner. "Hmm. Mandrake. Arrowroot. Caromancy. Pendulums."

Brian: Loseley.

Spike: Artichoke.

Cliff: Basingstoke. "I bet you" said Cynan to Jonathan, "I bet you that this will not be achieved without a mighty struggle —"

Amy: A Mighty Struggle — a fight. [Tries to interrupt with "Fight" card]

Spike: Hmmm. I don't think so. Put it to a vote?

Brian: Um.

Jon: I say no.

Cliff: A fight is a physical fisticuffs thing. [Most people in this group disagree with Amy. She picks up her

"Fight" card and takes another one for her failed interruption. Another mix of players might have agreed with her, in which case the interrupt would have been valid.]

Cliff: As I was saying, "It will be a mighty struggle which the two of us are not likely to be able to achieve. So let us summon minstrels [plays "Minstrel" card] and other people of great noise to go through the kingdom and summon all the wizards and sages to a great convocation, in order to put all our heads together. And better, to serve as an incentive, let us have a contest [plays "Contest" card] so that the one who comes up with the most effective plan for transforming the bird back into Prince Albert shall win the hand of the king's eldest daughter in marriage —

(Ten minutes or so later)

Amy: ...So Jonathan used all his skill to heal the wound that the arrow had done to the huge bird.

Brian: He must have been very wise to do that. [Tries to interrupt with "Very Wise" card]

Amy: No — I said skill, not wisdom.

Cliff: I reckon wisdom and skill are similar enough.

Spike: Me too.

Jon: Yes.

[Amy grudgingly takes a card]

Brian: So calling on his incredible wisdom he healed the wound. Just then the king of that kingdom, who happened to be out rock-climbing, passed by the nest and said...

Amy: No, that's silly.

Cliff: Yes — why would the king be there?

[General agreement. Brian takes a card and play passes to Kay, who is on his left]

Kay: So Jonathan the wizard cast the spell that they had found [plays "Magic Is Used", which is the last "Once Upon A Time" Card in her hand]. The evil witches' spell that had kept Prince Albert as a bird for so long was broken, and [plays her "Happy Ever After" card, reading the words on it] "So it was transformed back into human form."

[Kay wins]

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Once
Upon a
Time



Happy
Ever
After

His

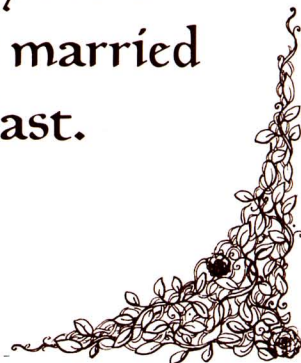
dedication
had broken
the spell.



He saw the
error of his
ways and
repented.



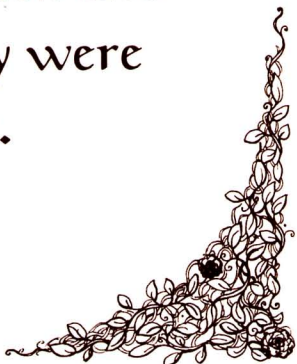
With the
rival dead,
they could
get married
at last.



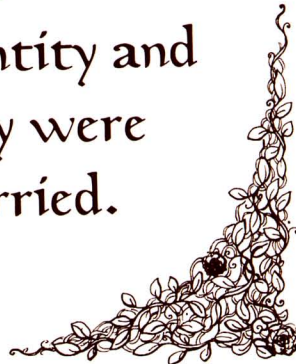
And she
was
reunited
with her
family.



So the
spell was
broken and
they were
free.



So she
revealed her
true
identity and
they were
married.



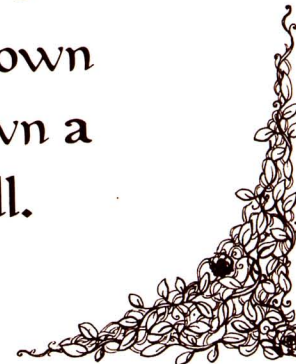
So it was
transformed
back into
human
form.



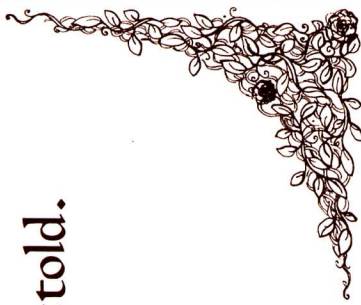
Truelove
had
broken the
enchant-
ment.




So the
evil-doers
were
thrown
down a
well.




The curse
was lifted,
as had been
foretold.




And the
flames rose
and
destroyed the
evil place
forever.




Which
proves that
one should be
more careful of
one's
companions.



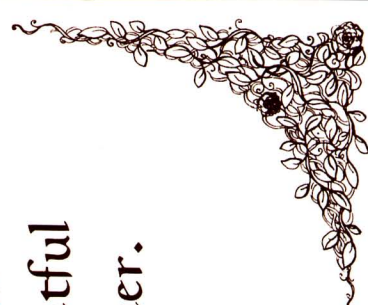
The king
fulfilled his
side of the
bargain, and
everyone
was happy.



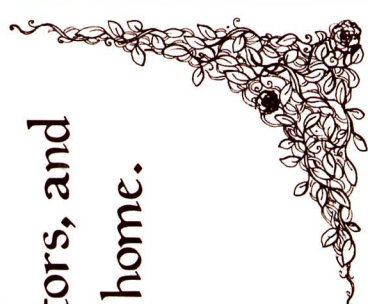
But it
had
vanished as
mysteriously
as it had
appeared.



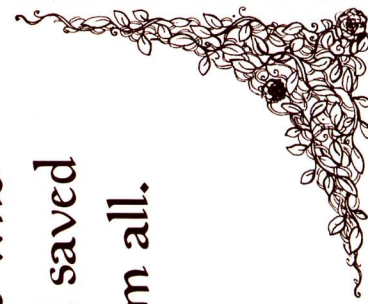
So they
returned it
to its
rightful
owner.




So they
escaped
their
captors, and
fled home.




They
thanked the
hero who
had saved
them all.




Which
proves that
a pure heart
will always
triumph in
the end.




And so
the prophecy
had been
fulfilled.



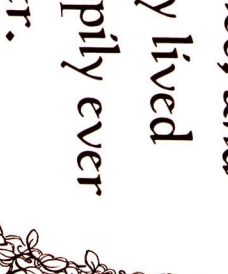
And the king was delighted with such an unusual gift.




So the riddle was finally answered.




So he told her he was the prince, and they lived happily ever after.




So everything was restored to its former glory.




So the rightful ruler was placed once more on the throne.



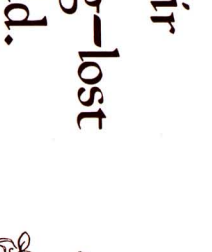
And in the course of time they became king and queen.




And when they died, they passed it to their children.



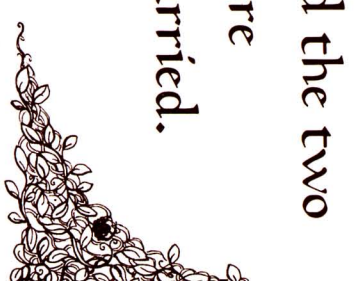
And the parents were reunited with their long-lost child.



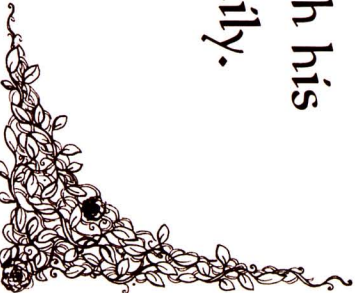
So the king agreed to spare his life.




So the king relented, and the two were married.



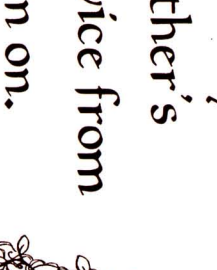
And he
was
reunited
with his
family.




And the
kingdom
rejoiced at
the end of
the tyrant's
reign.




And he
listened more
carefully to his
mother's
advice from
then on.



So he
finally
realized
how loyal
his brother
had been.



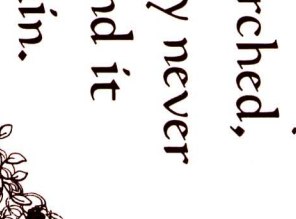
He picked
up his
weapon and
went on his
way.



She
forgave her
and they
were
married.



But no
matter how
hard they
searched,
they never
found it
again.




Kingdom



Place

Kingdom

Ruin



Place

Ruin


INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place

Also: A Labyrinth

Place


Cave



Place

Cave

Cottage



Place

Cottage

Village



Place

Village

Town



Place

Town

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place

Also: A Chapel

Place

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place

Also: A Bridge

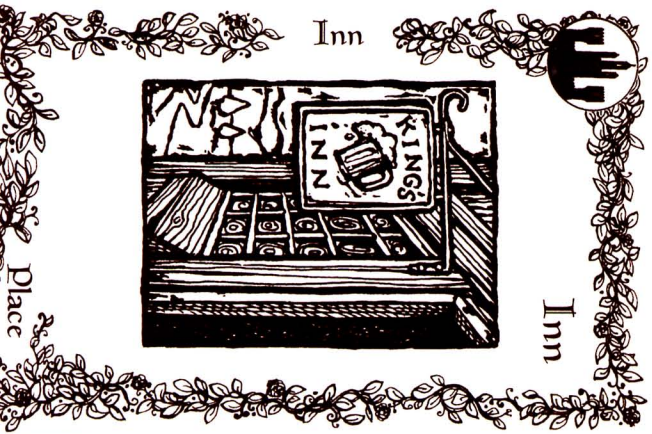
Place

Night



Place

Night



Inn

Inn

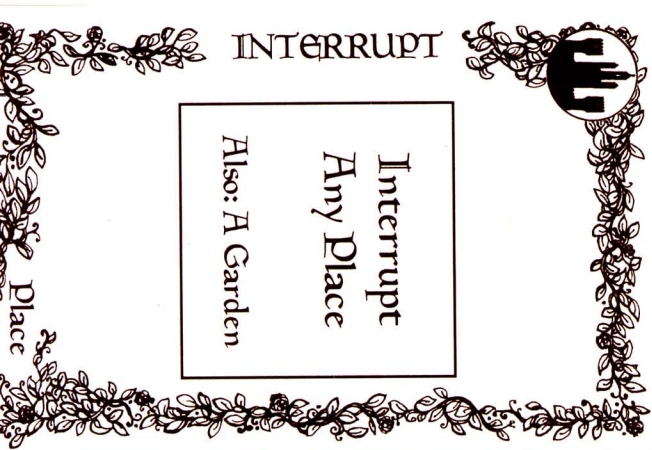
Place



Forest

Forest

Place



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place

Also: A Garden

Place



Mountain

Mountain

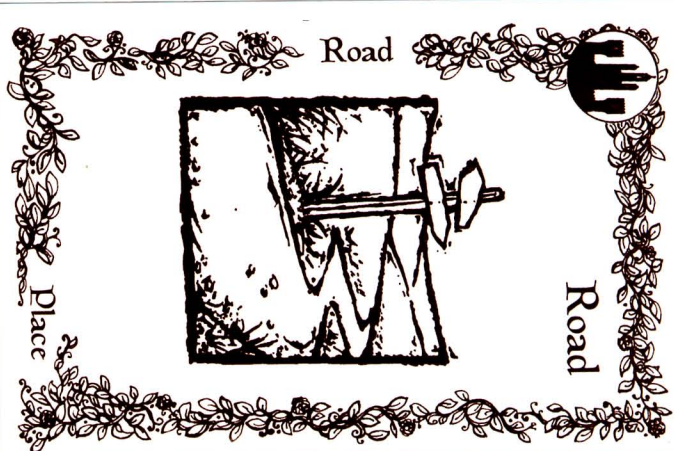
Place



River

River

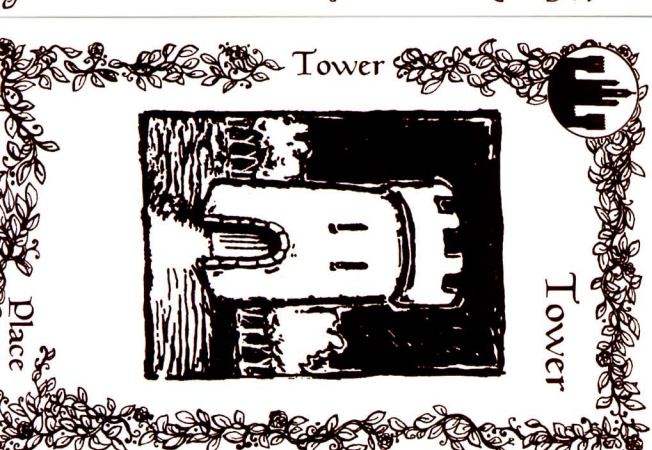
Place



Road

Road

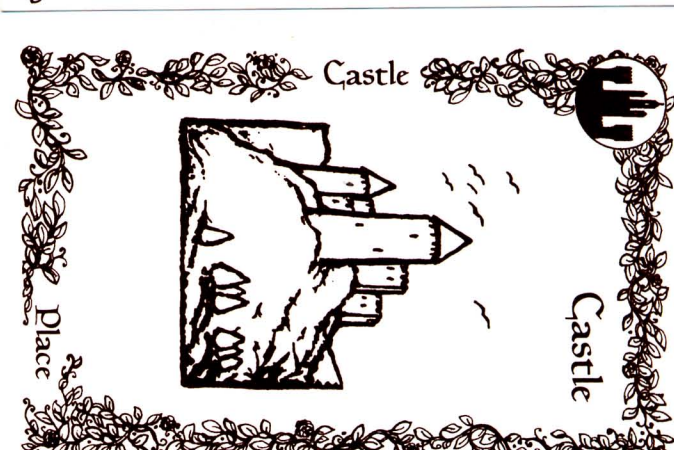
Place



Tower

Tower

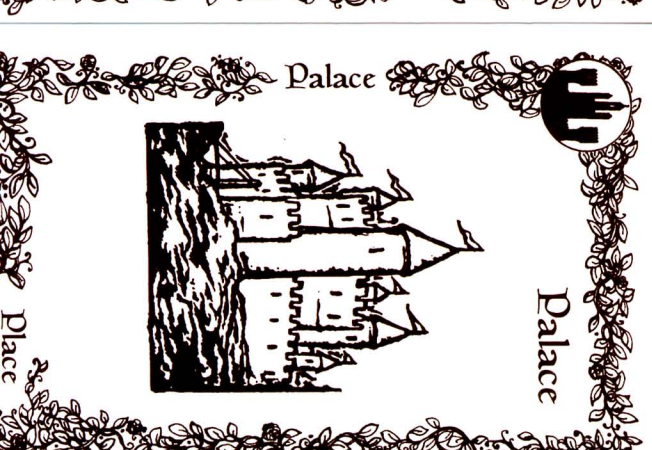
Place



Castle

Castle

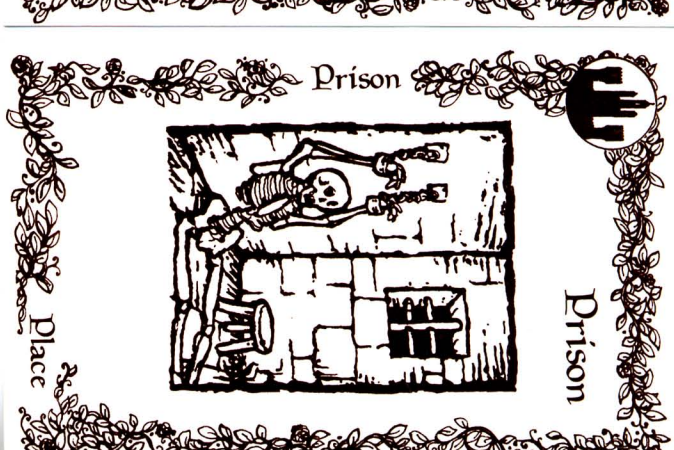
Place



Palace

Palace

Place



Prison

Prison

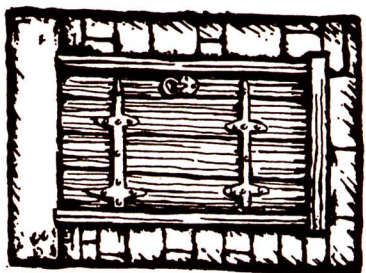
Place

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Item
Also: A Bone

Item

Door



A Door

Item

Axe



An Axe

Item

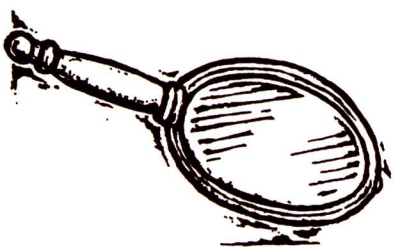
Book



A Book

Item

Mirror



A Mirror

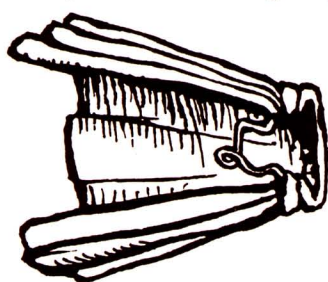
Item

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Item
Also: A Clock

Item

Cloak



A Cloak

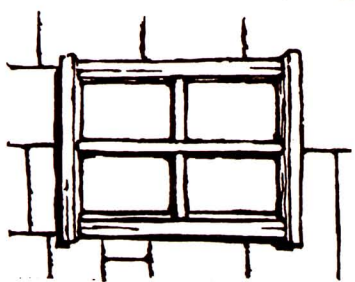
Item

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Item
Also: A Key

Item

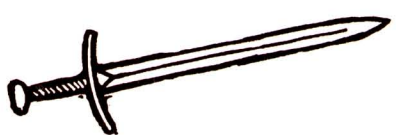
Window



A Window

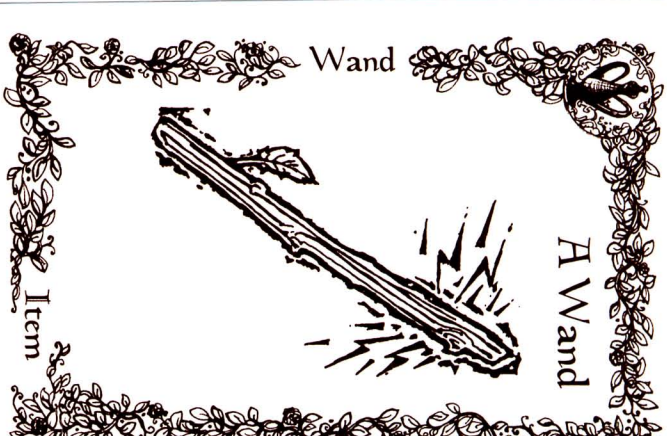
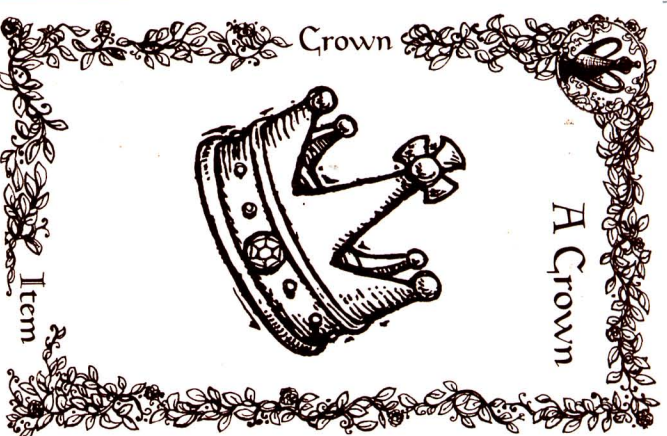
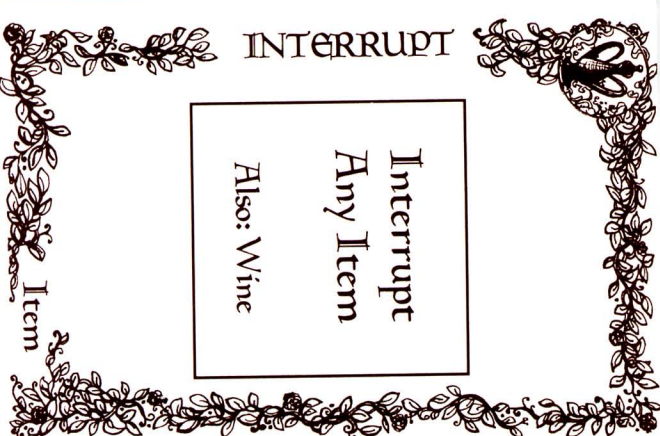
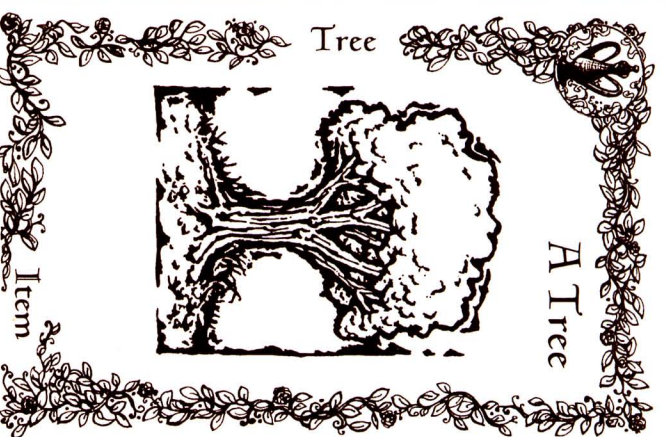
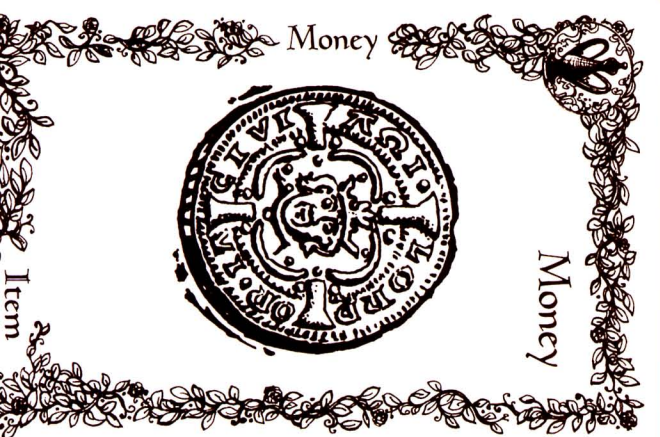
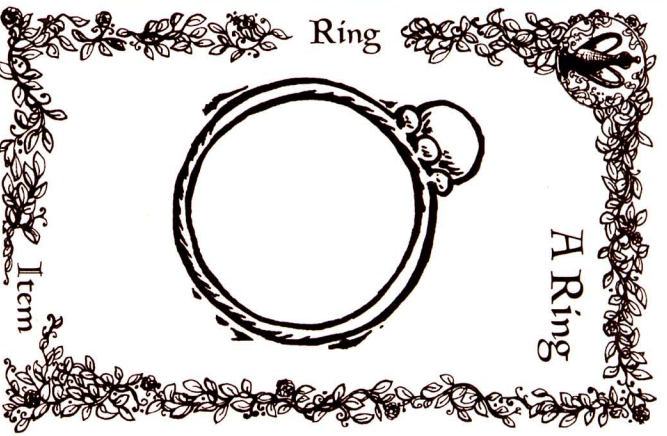
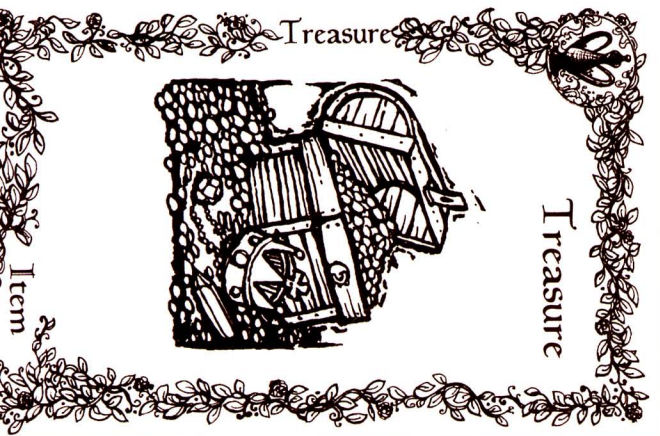
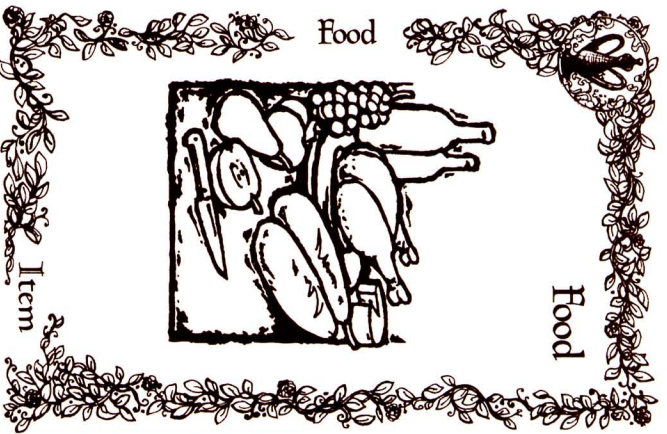
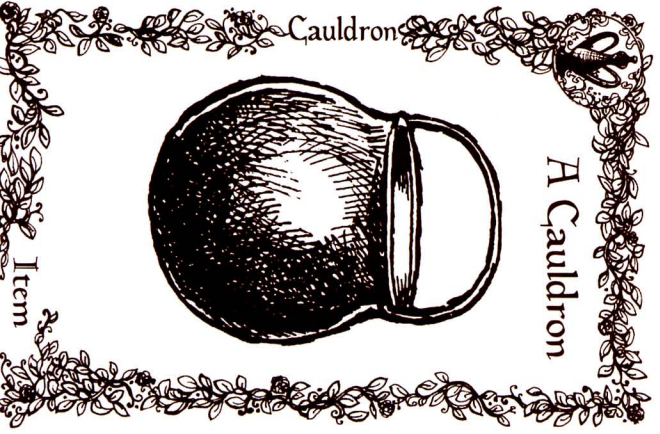
Item

Sword

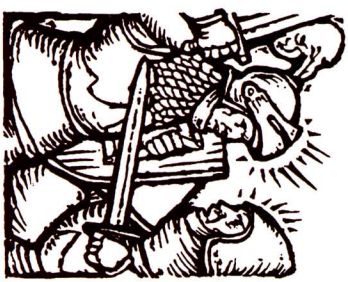


A Sword

Item



Fight



A Fight

Event

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event
Also: A Fire

Event


Something Revealed



Something is Revealed

Event


People Part



People Part
Company

Event


Escape



An Escape

Event

Argument



An Argument

Event

hurt



Someone is hurt

Event

Transformation



A
Transformation


Event

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event
Also: A Contest

Event


People Meet



People Meet

Event

Death



A Death

Event


INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event

Also: A Storm

Event


Pursuit



Pursuit

Event

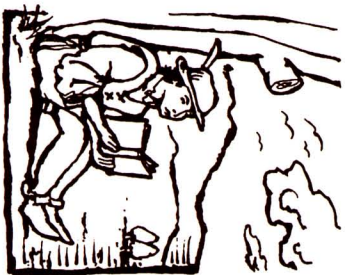
Journey



A Journey

Event


Time Passes



Time Passes

Event


Love



Two People Fall
in Love

Event

Object Breaks



An Object
Breaks

Event


INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event

Also: A Dream

Event

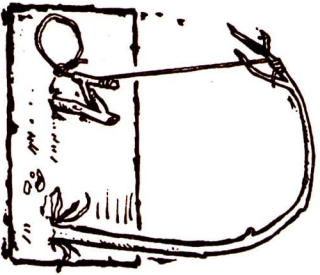
Prophecy



A Prophecy

Event

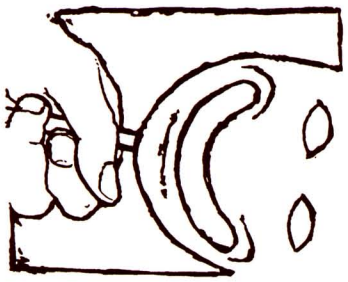
Trap



A Trap

Event

Disguised



Disguised

Animal Can Talk



This Animal
Can Talk

Cursed



Cursed

Evil



Evil

Very Strong



Very Strong

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Aspect
Also: This Item
Can Talk

Very Wise



Very Wise

Hidden



Hidden

Lucky



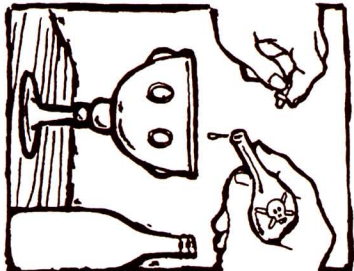
Lucky

Can Fly



This Can Fly

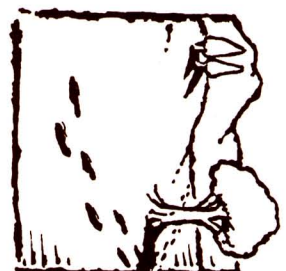
Poisoned



Poisoned

Aspect

Invisible



Invisible

Aspect

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Aspect

Also: Insane

Aspect

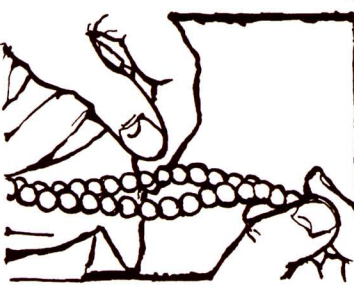
Sleeping



Sleeping

Aspect


Stolen



Stolen

Aspect

Angry



Angry

Aspect


INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Aspect

Also: Stupid

Aspect

Lost



Lost

Aspect

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Aspect

Also: Blind

Aspect

Frightened



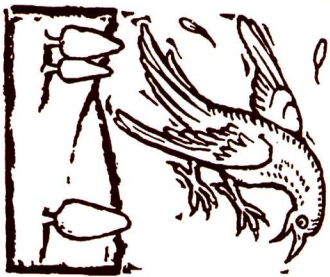
Frightened

Aspect

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character
Also: A Sage

Bird



Bird

Character

Frog



Frog

Character

Knight



Knight

Character

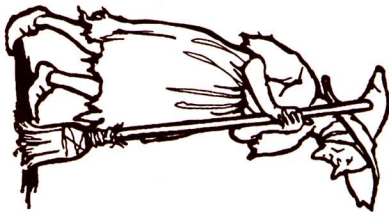
Child



Child

Character

Witch



Witch

Character

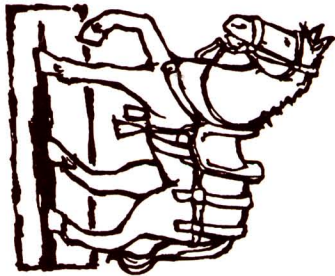
Wizard



Wizard

Character

Horse



Horse

Character

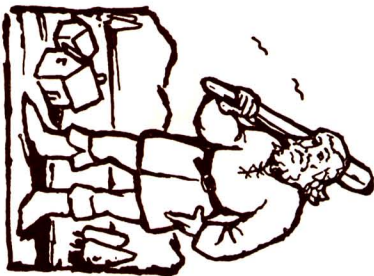
Stepmother



Stepmother

Character

Giant



Giant

Character

Prince

Prince

Character

Fairy

Fairy

Character

Wolf

Wolf

Character

King

King

Character

Old Woman

Old Woman

Character

Princess

Princess

Character

Woodcutter

Woodcutter

Character

Beggar

Beggar

Character

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character

Also: A Fox

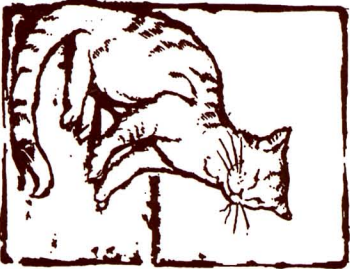
Character

Brother or Sister

Brother or Sister

Character


Cat



Cat

Character

Dragon



Dragon

Character

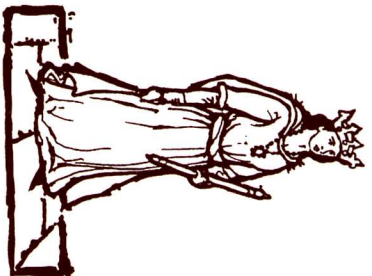
INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character

Also: A
Blacksmith

Character


Queen



Queen

Character

Parent



Parent

Character

Thief



Thief

Character

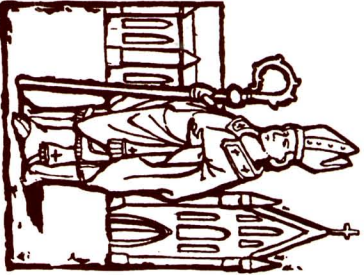
INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character

Also: An Orphan

Character

Priest



Priest

Character