



The Greater Trumps

by

Ken Brown, Hugh Eckert, and Dave Singer;

The Greater Trumps was written and produced by Ken Brown, Hugh Eckert, and Dave Singer; from an original idea by Ken Brown.

This game is respectfully dedicated to Charles Williams; Pamela Colman-Smith and A. E. Waite; and the unknown men and women who in the Renaissance first formulated the Major Arcana.

The authors owe the shape of the Hierarchy to Gareth Knight. It comes from his book The Magical World of the Tarot: Fourfold Mirror of the Universe, Aquarian 1991. Copyright 1991 Gareth Knight.

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Inspirational Sources: Aliester Crowley, John Crowley, Eden Gray, T.S. Eliot, Tim Powers, Shriekback, Robin Williamson, ZBS Radio, and a host of others.

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Roles, Not Goals

This game is deliberately heavy on role-playing. There is only one real plot, and player goals are made rather fuzzy in order to allow everyone to get a piece of the action. Concentrate on role-playing your character, and you'll be OK. If you have a problem with this, please let us know; we'd hate to disappoint you.

Characters

Those of you playing "Originals" (the 22 cards of the established Greater Trumps) may notice that our interpretation of the card differs from the authorities. Don't worry about it; just play the character as written. Those of you playing "Outsiders" (the 11 archetypes that we added) may be a bit confused; if the character sheet seems a bit obscure for costume or roleplaying hints, please let us know.

Composite Characters

Two of our characters for this game have dualistic natures. Four of you lucky guinea pi... uh players are playing them; that is, two players will have the same character sheet, and be playing two aspects of the same archetype. No, this isn't a cheap attempt to avoid writing two more character sheets; instead, it is (we hope) an interesting experiment in player dynamics. If you are playing such a character, we will list your cohort's name address, and phone number on a separate slip of paper in the mailing. If you don't find it, feel free to call us up and yell at us, and we'll hang our heads, and mumble an apology, and quiver our lower lips, and our eyes will fill up with tears...

The Larp Library version of The Greater Trumps stands as a memorial to

G. David Singer
LARP writer, LARP video pioneer
and student of the Tarot.

He was a brilliant and generous man without whom this game would
not exist.

Background

Introduction

Forever, there have been the Forms. These archetypal images, faceless and mutable, are embedded into the very structure of the universe, and are the source of the ideas and ideals that underlie consciousness and fire creation. They are, in essence, ungraspable; name one and you lose part of it by fixing it in place. But there is always need for the concrete as an intermediary to the abstract, and so names developed for the Forms, names and other attributes. In an indefinite time in the ahistorical past, there developed Beings that represented the Forms; these Beings had names, and attributes, and powers. They are called Personae, and your character is one of them.

The Personae were, at first, only imperfectly unique- the very nature of the Forms made them changeable, and they had a tendency to merge and separate at intervals. Some of the Personae were stronger-willed than others, and held together better, but it was always a chancy business. This situation held, stable in its unstable fashion- until something happened to change it.

The Magus, the Fool, and the Hierarchy

The Magus, representative of directed energy and transformation through will, was especially good at staying together. And so he* wished to grant this gift to others. He approached a number of the other Personae, those who were the most coherent of those currently in being, and laid out his plan, a plan for a Hierarchy, a configuration which would shine like a gem of many facets and focus the energies of the Forms in a wonderful fashion, and fix those Personae in it so that they would not need to waste energy in the effort to stay unique. Twenty of the Personae agreed. The Magus then approached the Fool with his plan.

The Fool was and is the most mysterious Persona; it made no effort to stay coherent, but always seemed to *be*, and was always recognizable no matter what form it took. Any questions regarding the Fool's origins are met with a merry laugh;

no other Persona can remember a time without the Fool. The Fool always seems to be listening to a delicious joke, but there is no doubt that it is in no way frivolous; it is somehow basic to the Personae, as the Form it represents is basic to the Universe.

The Fool listened to the Magus with a pretense of gravity, while mirth danced in its whirling eyes. It nodded its approval, and rocked back and forth with contained amusement. When the Magus made the mistake of asking what the Fool thought of his plan, and what the future of it was, the Fool got a faraway look in its eyes for a moment, and then bellowed with laughter. The Magus was annoyed, but he knew he could not do without the Fool.

-----* NB: Gender pronouns are the opinions of the authors. Please feel free to differ.

And so they gathered, the chosen Personae, and put forth their will in a ritual that the Magus revealed to them. And the Fool raised its hand and blessed it with laughter, and the great four-fold Hierarchy sprang into being. The twenty-two Personae fell sharply into focus, as if they had been painted into images.

Their personalities became much more defined, and their powers easier to wield, and they rejoiced. Although there were disagreements and difficulties within the Hierarchy, and assaults from without, it held firm.

The Conclave

But now, things are changing. Justice, the great champion of the Right and the Balance, has called a Conclave of all the Hierarchy. This is her power, but she was charged to only use it under grave circumstances, for the Conclave was established as the only place where the Hierarchy can be changed. Even gathering all the Personae of the Hierarchy together in one place makes the fabric of its being tremble. But Justice is not given to whim; she has compelling reasons for all that she does.

The World has created a place of assembly; Strength has been charged with making sure that disputes do not become too violent; and Temperance's function is to attempt to keep the

discussions flowing smoothly and make sure that all the Personae present get a voice- whether or not they are in the Hierarchy.

Yes, there are others present. They are called *Outsiders*. Some were excluded from the Hierarchy's creation, some came into being since then. Some of the Hierarchy do not wish them there, but they have been invited by Justice, and so have a right to presence and speech.

Now, you are all gathered together, in this Hall that the world has created. Soon, Justice will speak the words of Opening, and the Conclave will begin. There is a strange tension in the air. What are *the Greater Trumps*?

Distribution of Lesser Arcana

The lesser arcana provided in the packets represent the formative power of the elements, and act as "building blocks" for a successful Hierarchy. It is not simply necessary for each Persona in a Hierarchy to have some of the lesser arcana. There must be some balance provided, in number, in suits and (to a lesser degree) in value.

In the original arrangement, the lesser arcana were distributed to reflect the concentric nature of the Hierarchy. The Magus had 8, the four "arm leaders" 4, and each of the outer ones 2. There was also a distribution of suit, based on the attributes of the "arm leaders": Justice and Justice's arm had Swords, Strength and Strength's arm had Wands, Temperance and Temperance's arm had Cups, and The World and the World's arm had Pentacles. The Magus had the Aces and Tens of each suit and the four "arm leaders" had the court cards of their suit, but the outer Personae had random value cards.

It is by no means sure that such a thoroughly defined distribution is necessary, although the Magus certainly champions this view. There *must* be, however, some kind of logical pairing of card distribution with Hierarchy design. The design of the new Hierarchy will determine whether it can weather the change storm. The distribution of lesser arcana will resolve how it will stand the test of time.

Creating a New Hierarchy

This is the manner of creating a Hierarchy; the one that is passing was created this way by the Magus, but any Persona with imagination enough can initiate the Hierarchy that is to come.

Firstly, there must be an Idea for the Hierarchy, one which has balance and coherence. The Hierarchy must include or have the blessing of the Fool; no other Persona is indispensable. There must be at least eight Personae in a Hierarchy for it to cohere; for balance, even more is desirable. There is no strict formula for balance; the most that can be said is that a wide variety of Personae is desirable, with a range of attributes. There are some Personae who by their nature should be able to sense the quality of balance; seek their judgment.

Secondly, the Personae for the Hierarchy must be gathered. They should dispose themselves in the manner indicated in the Idea, each according to their assigned place in the Hierarchy that is to be

Thirdly, they should each have with them some of the elemental tokens (the Lesser Arcana *); the numbers and types of these tokens should have a balance to them that reflects the balance of the Hierarchy

to be created. If the Hierarchy is to be based on equality, all should have equal amounts. If it is to be based on an order of power from greatest to least, the greaterst should have many, and the least, few.

Fourthly, the Persona or Personae who have created the Idea shall speak some words of Opening, to focus the the influence of the Forms.

Fifthly, each Persona participating shall state briefly what they bring to the new Hierarchy.

Sixthly, the Persona or Personae who have created the Idea shall speak some words of Binding, to bring the new Hierarchy together.

Lastly, the Fool shall bless the new Hierarchy with Its laughter, and it will *be*. (The safe place created by the World will no longer be needed, and will be superseded by the new Hierarchy)

Note: This format is deliberately loose in order to allow for maximum creative flexibility.

Just remember: Time is of the essence here, so elaborate rituals are out. Keep it simple or the Conclave might end without a new Hierarchy being created. And you don't want that... do you?

* The Waite Lesser Arcana cards that you received in your packet, not the ones used for combat.

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COMBAT

If you wish to wreck havoc upon another, you approach them and announce your intentions. "I say, old chap, were you planning on taking all of your body parts home with you? Did you want them to be attached?" Anyone within earshot of such a statement may participate in the combat.

Sides are then chosen. The person who announced the combat and anyone with him are the attackers. The person challenged and anyone with him are the defenders. Anyone else is an independent assailant.

One of the defenders is designated to be the dealer. The dealer shuffles the cards, one set of minor arcana per eight combatants or fraction thereof. After shuffling, the dealer hands the deck to one of the attackers who then cuts the deck and returns it to the dealer.

The dealer begins dealing cards face down in a clockwise direction, beginning with an attacker or an independent and finishing with himself. Each combatant receives five cards. Everyone may look at their own cards. At this time the participants may declare a change in side. After which each combatant may discard one or two cards face down which the dealer then replaces from the deck.

Each side chooses the best hand from among those held by its members. The chosen hands are then compared. The highest hand wins. The hand values are as follows:

Straight-flush (cards in order same suit)
4 of a kind
Full house (three of a kind and a pair)
Flush (all cards of the same suit)
Straight (all cards in order)
3 of a kind
2 Pair
Pair
Single

Note: Aces can be high or low but do not wrap around.

If a combat occurs with more than eight participants it is possible to have five of a kind in your hand. Five of a kind will be interpreted as four of a kind plus a card of the same value. If two hands are otherwise identical the hand with the highest cards wins. Example: one person has a straight knight high and the other person has a straight nine high, the person with the knight wins.

Each member of the winning side may inflict a penalty upon a member of the losing side(s). If a penalty is inflicted either the dealer or the cutter must be among those receiving the penalty.

Combat results: When you win a combat you may do one of three things to your opponent.

1. You may force them into their reversed aspect. This effect lasts fifteen minutes.
2. You may cause them to lose focus. This causes a player to go inactive. This effect lasts five minutes.
3. You may take cards from them. These are the cards that you received with your packet (Waite LesserArcana), and not the combat cards. One card for each hand level the combat is won by with a five card maximum. The loser chooses which cards to turn over.

In multiple opponent combats each result may be imposed no more than twice on a given persona. If three people beat a single opponent then each may inflict a penalty upon the loser of the combat. The three of them may inflict each penalty once or may inflict one penalty twice and a second penalty once. This maximizes the number of effective attackers to six. There may be more attackers but only six may inflict penalties.

Some special abilities may effect these rules. They should be self explanatory.

Fair escape: If you are approaching someone with the intention of assaulting them and they move away from you while thumbing their nose at you they have escaped. You may not pursue them for five minutes. This does assume your intended victim removes themselves from the immediate vicinity. Taking two steps just doesn't cut it. If there is no avenue of escape; i.e. they are standing in a corner and you have three

friends approaching them from different directions, they cannot fair escape.

Folding: If you are in a combat and find yourself with a hand so bad it wouldn't make a foot and the odds against you, or if you just don't feel like fighting, you may fold. When you fold you admit defeat and place yourself at the mercy of your attacker. You do not get to see your opponent's hand. Now, what good is it throwing yourself to the dogs if they get to stomp you anyway? The advantage is that the penalty is reduced. Instead of being reversed for fifteen minutes you are reversed for ten, unfocused (inactive) for three instead of five minutes. But you lose two cards if your opponent chooses to take them.

Reversal: If you are reversed for combat or other reasons, read the section labeled "Reversed" on your character sheet. It will contain instructions for modifying your behavior- follow them closely, and ask a GM if you need clarification. The behavior changes involved will seem entirely normal to you; you will not know that anything is wrong.

Loss of Focus: Your Persona has temporarily lost it's uniqueness and differentiation. For most, this is an extremely frightening and painful experience: you hang suspended above a vast abyss, with the Forms moving like dim leviathans below. Perhaps your parent Form will swallow you... React accordingly when you become focused again.

Who's who- A list of Personae

In the Hierarchy (the "Originals"):

The Magus - Originator of the Hierarchy. Represents focus and the power of the directed will.

The High Priestess - Represents wisdom and the cyclic nature of the Universe.

The Empress - Represents maternal energy and fertility.

The Emperor - Represents command and authority.

The High Priest - Represents sacred tradition.

The Lovers - Represents love and choice.

The Chariot - Represents accomplishment and goal-directedness.

Strength - The keeper of order (Sergeant-at-Arms) for the Conclave. Represents gentle force.

The Hermit - Represents hidden wisdom and seclusion.

The Wheel of Fortune - Represents luck, fate, and cycles.

Justice - Called the Conclave. Represents fairness and judgment.

The Hanged Man - Represents sacrifice and reversal.

Death - Represents change and rebirth.

Temperance - Facilitator for the Conclave. Represents moderation and diplomacy.

The Devil - Represents lust and carnality.

The Tower - Represents overthrow and traumatic change.

The Star - Represents hope and inspiration.

The Moon - Represents dreams and imagination.

The Sun - Represents warm energy and happiness.

The Last Judgment - Represents fulfillment and awakening.

The World - Provided the location for the Conclave. Represents completion and synthesis.

The Fool - Represents innocence and potential

Outside the Hierarchy (The "Outsiders")

***Note:** these have no description of function, as they are not necessarily known to the other Personae.*

The Scholar

The Hero

The Ship

The Library

The City

The Chameleon

The Fanatic

The Prisoner

The Tree of Life

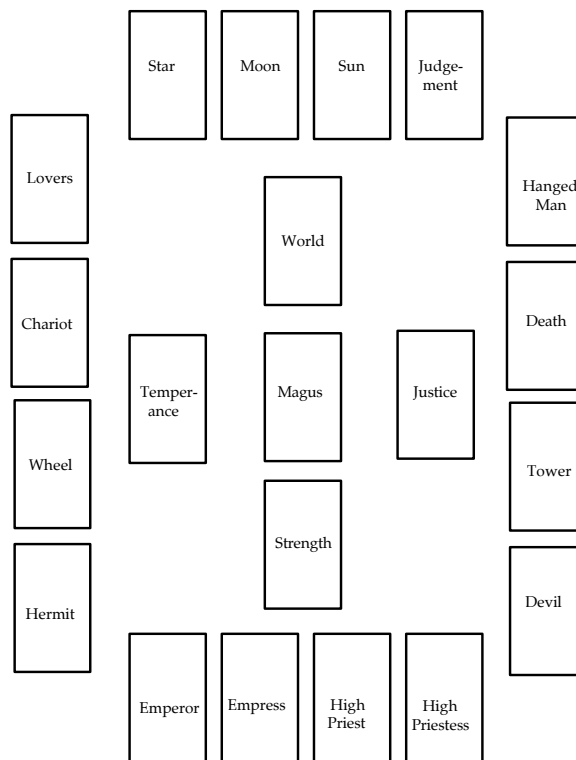
The Rains

The Stranger

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The Hierarchy

This is the shape of the Hierarchy, as it was laid out by the plan of the Magus:



According to some, the Fool is everywhere in this configuration; it is at the center of the Hierarchy and surrounds it. In another viewpoint, it is in constant motion, dancing with all the other Personae at once.

The four of the “inner circle” have special responsibilities regarding the Conclave. Justice has the power to call the Conclave in situations of dire need. The World makes a place to hold it, and provides sustenance for the attending Personae. Temperance conducts the Conclave, making sure that discussion flows smoothly and everyone gets enough time to talk. Strength keeps order, so that cool heads may prevail.

Each of the outer Personae is subordinate to one of the inner four, who are in turn responsible to the Magus. Communication ordinarily only passes through the inner four, who usually wield at least some influence over the outer Personae. Of course, this situation is loosened for the Conclave, so who knows what might happen.

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POST-GAME QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for playing The Greater Trumps

Now you have an opportunity to shape the life of your character. We plan to run Trumps at other times and venues. We would like your ideas and comments about your character. Please take a few minutes to fill out the following questionnaire. Your responses will help us decide what changes are made to the game before it runs next. If you did not open your reversal contingency envelope please do so before filling out the questionnaire. You can give us the completed questionnaires after the game, or mail them to:

Character name

During the game did you: use your special ability? ☐ Yes ☐ No
engage in combat? ☐ Yes ☐ No
become reversed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

On a scale of one to five with one being the most negative and five being the most positive please respond to the following.

I had enough info to characterize my role - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
My character was clearly written
had usable connections to other characters - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
My reversal attitude fit the character - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
My special ability was appropriate
useful - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
powerful - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
The combat system was clearly explained -- ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
was fun - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
worked well with the genre - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +
was easy to resolve - ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 +

First impressions of your character: _____

What could be done to improve your character? _____

Favorite character: _____

The most inappropriate special ability was: _____

Why?

Was there anything which unbalanced the game? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What was it or why was it unbalancing?

Please feel free to comment at length on the back. Thanks once again!