

a transcendent roguelike solitaire  
by Steve Wright

YOU  
CANNOT  
KILL  
ME  
IN A  
WAY  
THAT  
MATTERS



*You have perished, but the fungal spores that  
suffuse your corpse cannot be destroyed so easily.  
After a timeless time, you return to a body, though  
you don't remember if it is yours or not. You are  
reconstituted, but also transformed.*



You Cannot Kill Me In a Way That Matters

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## What's this about?

The game represents a search for meaning in a vast and hostile mycological landscape. Your character and the forest full of threatening mushroom kaiju are represented by cards from the deck. Sometimes you will find what you are looking for in the forest before you die. Sometimes not. Either way, you will make progress on your journey.

## What's the Goal?

Explore the forest, fight the threats, and grow your strength until you can capture the Ten of Diamonds.

## Roguelike solitaire. Or journaling game. Or both.

This game works as either a journaling game about memory and loss or as a solitaire roguelike about epic battles in the forest.

Each time you capture a Diamond, there is a corresponding question to write about.

On the other hand, if you just want to play some cards and level up, feel free to skip the journaling.

# 2

# YOU CANNOT KILL ME



## Inspirations

This game was inspired in equal parts by Peach Garden Games *Carta SRD*, the videogame genre of “idle games”, and a meme about mushrooms.

The *Carta SRD* provided the core idea of the map and sparked the journaling questions in the game.

A key part in “idle” video games is slowly growing in strength until you can power up your character permanently, at the cost of starting over.

Finally, “you cannot kill me in a way that matters” comes from a tumblr post about how decay is an integral part of existence. It is a really metal title for a game and I had to indulge.

## Content Warning

Your character will die a lot in this game. If that makes you uncomfortable, it is not the game for you.

This game is a fantasy. In real life, death does not solve any problems. If you have suicidal thoughts, please reach out to someone before you make any decisions you can’t take back.

## Materials

You don’t need much to play.

- A standard deck of cards, jokers removed
- A character sheet to track your progress
- A way to mark your progress and write your answers to the questions

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## CHARACTER QUICK START

Pull the Ace of Diamonds out of the deck - that's you! You only have one suit right now, and it isn't very strong, but you'll add more soon.

Put the card face up in front of you, a little to the right. You'll have other cards to add soon!



## Your Character

Your character is represented by face up stacks of cards of each suit, with the Ace on the bottom and other cards on top as they are collected.

## Character Cards

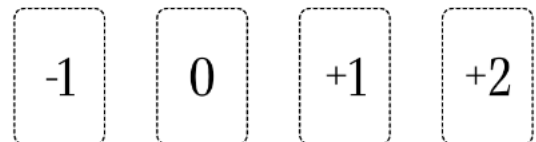
The suits represent different aspects of your character.

- Hearts - your physical body
- Clubs - your resourcefulness
- Spades - your magic
- Diamonds - your clarity and sense of purpose

## Character Track

The position of the character cards in front of you matters. You get a bonus (or penalty) to each combat, depending on which position your character cards are in. The cards on the character track get the following positional bonuses while facing down threats.

You may rearrange which suit is in which stack at the beginning of each round, but once you start exploring the forest, your choice is locked in.



4  
CHARACTER

## Using Your Strength

During play, place the character cards in four ordered stacks, face up, with the Ace on the bottom and the highest number card at the top. The cards that are showing represent your current strength for each trait.



As you are damaged by the forest, you'll flip the top cards out of the way, the lower card values showing your new rating for that trait. If you run out of cards in any stack, your reserves are exhausted. You can have zero cards in a stack, but any further damage to that trait will cause you to perish.



## Goals

Each time you set off into the unknown, choose what stack you want to improve. You're seeking the next higher card in that stack.

### Seeking Cards

Seeking is the first unlocked skill, the ability to gather the power from the forest and take it for yourself. Push a stack forward a little to indicate that you seek to improve that facet of yourself. In the forest, when you defeat the next card higher in that stack, add it to the stack.

You may only capture cards that you were deliberately seeking on any given trip into the forest.

### Supporting Cards

Supporting is the second unlocked skill, the ability to channel your strengths in support of your goals. You may turn over a card from a supporting stack, reducing its power by one card, to give a +1 modifier to another stack. Supporting is flexible - any stack that is not Seeking can provide support. Only as many stacks as your level in Support may participate in any given conflict.

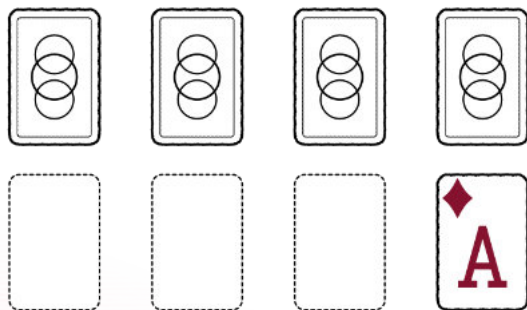


## FOREST QUICK START

Separate out the Threes, the Twos, and the rest of the Aces into a separate stack - that's your starting forest deck. Put the other cards aside for now.

Shuffle the 15 cards in your forest deck and deal out a row of four face down cards, just past where you put your character card. That's the forest.

You should have a play area that looks something like this.



Now you're ready to explore the forest!

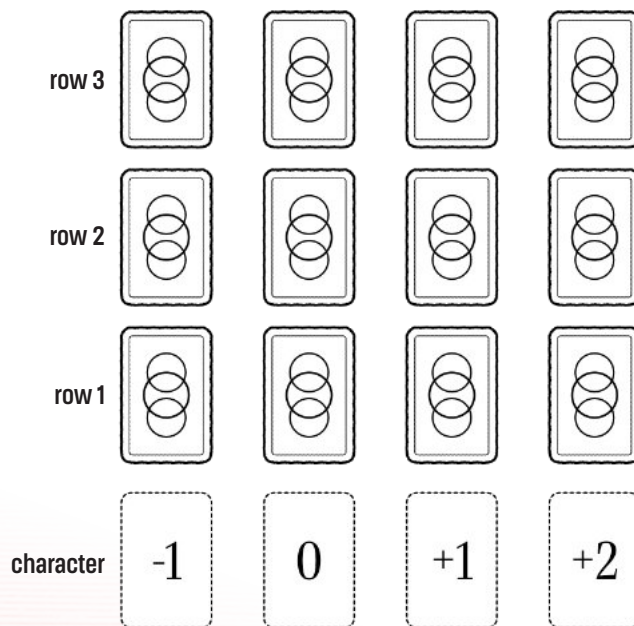
## The Forest

The forest spreads before you, growing deeper and more threatening even as you grow in power.

### Forest Map

The forest is represented by up to three rows of four cards each, dealt face down in front of you. This is the landscape you will explore.

At first, only deal the nearest row - the forest will grow deeper as your character grows.



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# FOREST

## Forest Deck

These are the cards you shuffle and deal from in order to lay out the forest map. It is only part of the deck of cards, not the full deck.

The forest deck should always have at least four more cards than it takes to deal out the forest. When the forest deck drops below the minimum size, add all four cards of the next higher available value. (For example, your starting forest deck is Aces, Twos, and Threes. After you've captured five cards, you'll only have seven left in the forest deck. At that point, add all the Fours to the forest deck.)

When the game starts, the forest is only one row deep, so the minimum deck size is 8. After you capture your first 4, of any suit, the forest grows to two rows. That pushes the minimum size of the forest deck to 12 - you will have to add eight cards from the rest of the deck to fill it up. The same cycle happens again when you first capture an 8.

Milestone	Forest Size	Minimum deck
Start of Game	1 row	8 cards
Capture a Four	2 rows	12 cards
Capture an Eight	3 rows	16 cards

## Face Cards

The Jacks, Queens, and Kings represent kaiju class threats. They are much stronger than the other cards and have special rules of their own.

### Jack

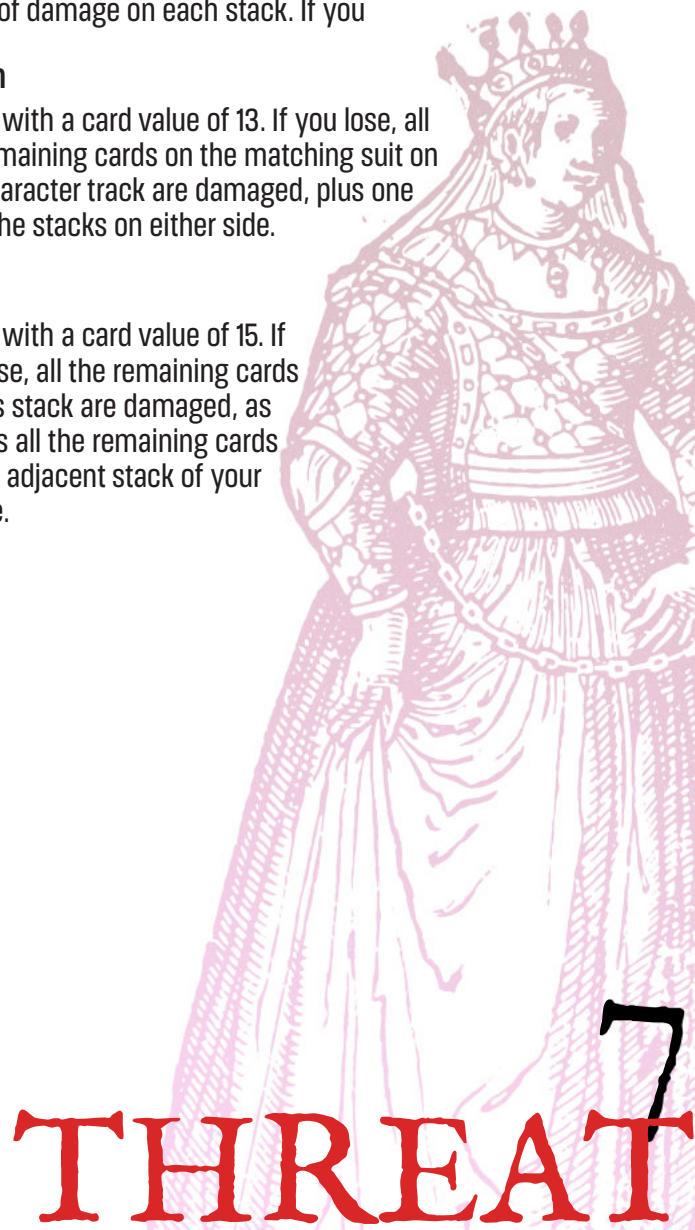
Fights with a card value of 11. If you lose, take three cards of damage on each stack. If you

### Queen

Fights with a card value of 13. If you lose, all the remaining cards on the matching suit on the character track are damaged, plus one from the stacks on either side.

### King

Fights with a card value of 15. If you lose, all the remaining cards on this stack are damaged, as well as all the remaining cards on the adjacent stack of your choice.



## CONFLICT QUICK START

Pick a forest card and flip it over!

If it is an Ace, add it immediately to your character track.

If it is not an Ace, you perish in a cloud of hostile mushroom spores. Mark the turn on the tracker, shuffle and deal a new forest, and try again.

Once you have five squares marked on the tracker, you unlock Seeking. Now you can get strategic about placing your cards and looking for specific goals.

## Exploration

There is no turning back. You will succeed in reaching your goal or you will fail. Either way, you will perish and be consumed by the forest.

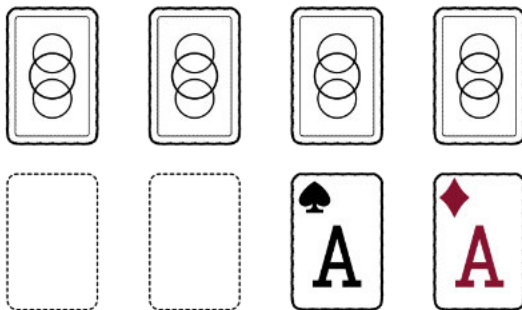
## Search the Forest

Choose one of the four cards on the near edge of the forest, or a card you have a clear path to from the near edge, and turn it face up.

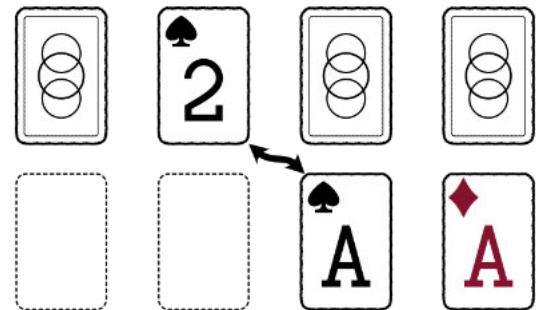
## Conflict

Compare the value of the forest card to the card of the same suit in your character track. Keep in mind the position modifier from the character track.

With bonuses, if the value on the card in your character track is larger than the value on the card from the forest, you win the conflict. If not, you are defeated. (Tie goes to the forest.)



Here's a simple set up with two character cards and one row of forest.



Flipped over the Two of Spades, how does it compare to the Ace (including the +1 bonus)?

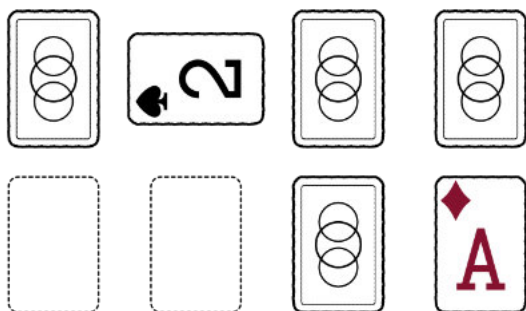


## Winning

If you win, remove that card from the forest.

If you were seeking that card, add it to your character deck on the top of that stack. Mark your victory on the incarnation tracker. If you captured a Diamond, consider the question associated with the card and write your response.

If you beat a card you were not seeking, discard it to the forest deck and choose another part of the forest to explore. As long as there is a path of empty spaces from the near edge to the card you are interested in, you may explore there. (No diagonals though.)



Even with the bonus, we lost that one. Flip the character card to show damage.

## Losing

If you lose, first rotate the forest card sideways to show your path is blocked. Flip over the top card in that suit on the character track to show the damage you have taken. If the card in the forest has twice the value or more than the card, you suffer a larger defeat. Flip two cards from the top of that stack, instead of just one.

If you have no more cards to flip, you have been overwhelmed and this round is over. Mark the loss on the incarnation tracker and reset the field of play.

You may run out of forest before you run out of personal power. You have beaten the forest, but you have not achieved your goal in this life. You eventually perish. Mark this as a loss on the incarnation tracker and start again.



## EACH TIME YOU PLAY

1. Arrange your character cards to adjust how the bonuses apply for each suit.
2. Declare your goal - adjust your character cards to seek the right target.
3. Make sure you have the right number of cards in the forest deck, then shuffle and deal the map.
4. Explore the forest, confronting the threats within, by comparing the cards you uncover in the forest with your character cards. Keep exploring until you reach your goal or perish.
5. Mark the results on the incarnation tracker and start again, applying any unlocked effects.

## Incarnation Tracker

Whatever happened in the forest, mark the results on the incarnation tracker. If you perished, mark one space of progress. If you captured a card, mark a number of spaces equal to the value on the card. (For example, when you capture a Seven of any suit, mark seven spaces off on the tracker. Start in the upper left, filling each row as you go.

## Bonuses

When you reach a circle on the Turn Tracker, you've unlocked a bonus. The first two bonuses, Seeking and Support, are the same every time. After that, you are free to choose. Some bonuses require two circles to unlock completely.

**Seeking.** You may push any one stack of cards in the character track forward at the beginning of the round. This indicates the next higher card in the stack is your goal.

Selecting seeking a second time allows you to have two suits searching for their next cards at a time.

**Support.** In a focused effort to win a battle in the forest, you may flip the top card on another stack over, damaging that stack but granting a +1 bonus for that fight.

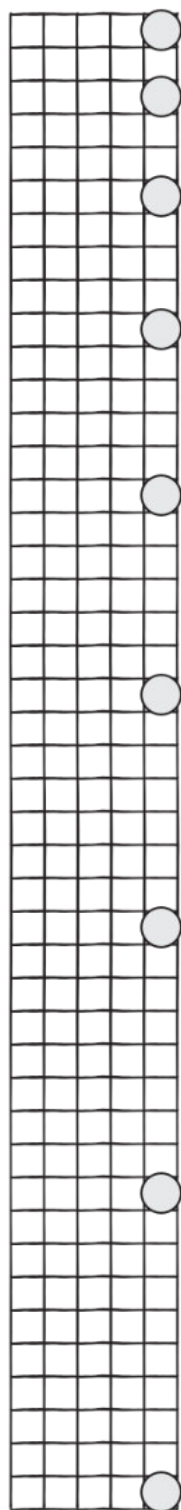
Selecting Support more than once allows you to use a card from two or three suits during a round.

Suits that are seeking may not be used for Support.

**Win on a Tie.** Choose a suit. For the rest of this game, in battles for that suit, ties go to the player instead of the forest. You have to pay for this separately for each suit.



# IO INCARNATION



## Incarnation Bonuses

Each time you reach a circle on the tracker, mark off a corresponding effect here and add that bonus to your game. An inset circle shows you need to get the one above it first.

☐ Seeking (any)

2x ☐ Seeking (any)

☐ Support (any)

2x ☐ Support (any)

3x ☐ Support (any)

☐ ☐ Win on a tie (choose one)

☐ ☐ 2x Win on a tie (choose)

☐ ☐ 3x Win on a tie (choose)

☐ ☐ 4x Win on a tie (choose)

Incarnation bonuses go away when you Transcend.

## Transcension Bonuses

Take your pick!

☐ Start the game with Aces and Twos in your hand.

☐ Clubs +1

☐ Diamonds +1

☐ Hearts +1

☐ Spades +1

☐ Use multiple Support cards from one stack.

## Questions

When you capture a Diamond, reflect a moment.

2♦ What mission do you carry forward to your next form?

3♦ What pain do you leave behind as you move on?

4♦ What power do you carry forward to your next form?

5♦ What regret do you leave behind as you move on?

6♦ What strength do you carry forward to your next form?

7♦ What shame do you leave behind as you move on?

8♦ What memory do you carry forward to your next form?

9♦ What fear do you leave behind as you move on?

10♦ What love do you carry forward to your next form?


## End Game. Or is it...

When you capture the Ten of Diamonds, you have won the game. Feel free to stop.

If you would like to keep going, you may mark one Transcension bonus trait and start the game anew, applying the transcension bonus throughout the game. These bonuses never go away.

# II TRANSCENSION





you cannot remember  
why you cannot die  
but you know the answer  
lies within the forest

transcendent  
take yourself back  
roguelike  
one incarnation at a time  
solitaire

you cannot kill me  
in a way that matters  
a card game  
from Deus Ex Minima.

