

# SEVENTH SEAL

A system to collectively tell stories about powerful magic-users in the modern world. You and each other player takes on the role of a Magus, a member of an ancient family of spell-casters, and heir to eons of conspiracy, conflict, and subterfuge.

## YOUR CHARACTER

Each player plays a single Magus. That player controls all of the actions, motivations, and thoughts of the Magus, and how that Magus interacts with the game world.

A Magus is a member of one of many ancient and powerful magic-using families that secretly control the modern world. Generations of mastery of the arcane arts has given each family vast wealth, legions of servants, and incredible supernatural power.

A Magus can do impossible feats by bringing the strength of their magic and their family to bear, expressed by four **Attributes**. Each Attribute is tied to a specific suit and starts with a value of 1.

Each Magus also starts with 5 points of Mana, the stored and stolen life-force which powers their spells.

While the families regularly squabble over petty concerns, the true goal of every Magus is to achieve complete mastery of the supernatural and unlock the last hidden mystery of magic, the Seventh Seal. To do this, your character will come into conflict with powerful supernatural forces and his fellow Magi, with every victory bringing them a step closer to unlocking the Seventh Seal and fulfilling the ancient right held by their family from time immemorial.

## CONFLICT

The game is played by talking. All players sit around a table, with the deck of cards in the middle, and a way of recording their personal Attributes, Mana, and Seals in front of them (for everyone to see).

A conflict is a combination of two things: an episode of a story and a hand of poker.

### AN EPISODE OF THE STORY

A conflict is a scene or series of scenes that allows the characters to come into conflict with each other and come one step closer to unlocking the Seventh Seal.

Every conflict has four **narrative elements** that tell the story of the conflict.

As the conflict develops, each player describes what actions their Magus takes, while the Antagonist describes how those actions play out.

### A HAND OF POKER

Each conflict is like a familiar card game, but with special rules. The character who wins the hand of poker wins the conflict.

## YOU'LL NEED

- A standard deck of 52 playing cards
- A few blank sheets of paper and a pencil for each player
- Poker chips (optional)
- 3 to 5 players with avid minds

## ATTRIBUTES

- Wealth (Diamonds)
- Contacts (Hearts)
- Relics (Spades)
- Secrets (Clubs)

## NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

- An Opportunity (a chance to gain power or influence)
- A Consequence (what happens if none of the characters address the conflict)
- A Complication (something unexpected which makes things harder for one or more characters)
- A Resolution (the conflict's end result)

## ACTIVE LEYLINES (SEE PAGE 2)

- First Leyline: Trump (highest value suit)
- Second Leyline: Resonance (spells of the Resonance suit cast spells at +1 Attribute value).
- Third Leyline: Warding (spells of the Warding suit costs +1 Mana).
- Fourth Leyline: Reward (2-10: +1 to Attribute of Reward suit. Face card: winner unlocks a Seal).

To begin play, each player draws a card. The player who drew the highest card starts as the Antagonist. The Antagonist takes the role of driving the conflict, describing an Opportunity. An Opportunity could be anything: a newly uncovered reliquary, a violent and rebellious Magus, the attempted interference of a worldly agency, or anything that produces conflict in the story.

After the Antagonist describes the **Opportunity**, she shuffles the deck and flips four cards face-up in the middle of the table, discarding one card face-up first. These are the **Active Leylines (see page 1)**, each with a different gameplay effect based on the card shown.

After the Active Leylines are revealed, each Magus decides whether he wishes to ante into the conflict, starting with the Magus to the left of the Antagonist. The ante is Mana equal to the highest number of Leylines of a one suit, paid to the Antagonist. If no characters choose to pay the ante to join the conflict, the conflict does not occur.

The first character to ante into the conflict describes the Consequence, the result if the Magi ignore the conflict. The **Consequence** can be anything, as long as it is not 'nothing happens.'

All characters that are participating in a conflict are dealt three cards facedown as their Resources. Starting to the Antagonist's left, each Magus takes a turn, going counterclockwise around the table.

On a Magus's turn, he may do two things: **cast a spell** and **use his resources**.

When casting a spell or using resources, the player describes what his Magus does, and how it interacts with the conflict. It is up to the player to describe the narrative of his part in the conflict. The Antagonist takes a turn as any other player would to describe how the conflict changes and develops.

At any time during any character's turn, that character may declare that the conflict is coming to a climax. Immediately, a single round of betting begins to determine the **Complication**. Starting to the left of the character to declare the climax, each player may bid Mana to determine the **Complication**. The first time that a player is unwilling to bid more than the previous, the player with the highest bid wins, and describes a sudden change in the conflict. The Mana of the winning bidder is discarded.

Each player but the one that called for the climax takes one more turn. Then all players reveal their hand and try to make the best five-card poker hand they can excluding face cards. They may use the cards in their hand, the cards face-up in front of them on the table, and the Active Leylines.

The character with the highest hand wins the conflict, and decides on the Resolution, or end result, of the conflict. She also gains a benefit as described by the **Reward**. Win or lose, each player gains one Mana for each card of their Resources that he uses to make his final five-card hand.

Once one conflict has been completed, the next player becomes the Antagonist, starts a new conflict by describing an Opportunity, and a new hand begins. Based on the conflicts they participate in and the actions the characters take during these conflicts, the players will collectively tell a story.

The game ends when one character acquires seven Seals, passing to a level of power unknown to any other mortal. How the game concludes, and what happens to the other characters, is decided by the player that first unlocks the Seventh Seal.

## CASTING A SPELL

A Magus may cast one spell per turn by picking one Attribute and spending one Mana. He draws and reveals cards from the deck, placing cards of the Attribute's suit on the table in front of him until he has acquired cards equal to his Attribute value. All other cards are discarded.

If the deck runs out, the discard pile is shuffled and placed face-down to become the deck, and the Magus continues. If it is impossible for the Magus to acquire cards equal to his Attribute value (by going through the entire deck at least once), then the Magus gains no further cards.

If the Magus draws a face card at any point during his spell, he may choose to stop the spell (drawing no more cards) and immediately use that face card as if he had cast it from his hand. He may still play a single card from his hand as normal if he has not used his resources yet on his turn.

## USING RESOURCES

A Magus may use his resources once per turn by playing a card from his hand. Whenever a Magus uses a resource (but not if he uses a resource while casting a spell), he gains one Mana.

- Ranked card (2-10): Counterspell – if the played card can be used with any other face-up cards to form a suited run of at least three, all cards in the run are immediately discarded.
- Jack: Draw two cards face-down, then discard one card.
- Queen: Discard a Leyline and replace it with a card drawn from the deck.
- King: Draw three cards face-down, then discard two cards.
- Ace: switch a Leyline with a card in the Magus's hand.