

DUNGEON SOLITAIRE

TOMB OF FOUR KINGS



A FANTASY CARD GAME

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY MATTHEW LOWES

Copyright © 2015 Matthew Lowes

All Rights Reserved

ML

matthewlowes.com

DUNGEON SOLITAIRE

TOMB OF FOUR KINGS

INTRODUCTION

Tomb of Four Kings is a fantasy adventure card game for a single player. With each turn, you defeat monsters, disarm traps, and open doors as you explore a dark dungeon. Along the way you collect treasure, gain skills, even use magic. But death awaits those who linger too long, and if all your torches burn out you will be lost in the dungeon forever. The objective is to find the tomb hoards of four ancient kings, collect as much additional treasure as possible, and make it out alive.

The Cards

2-10 of Spades	Monsters
2-10 of Diamonds	Traps / Treasure
2-10 of Clubs	Sealed Doors
Jack of Spades	Go Berserk
Jack of Diamonds	Disarm Mechanism
Jack of Clubs	Pick Lock
Jack of Hearts	Dodge Blow
Queens	Divine Favors
Kings	Tomb Hoards
Aces	Torches
Joker	Scroll of Light
2-10 of Hearts	Hit Points

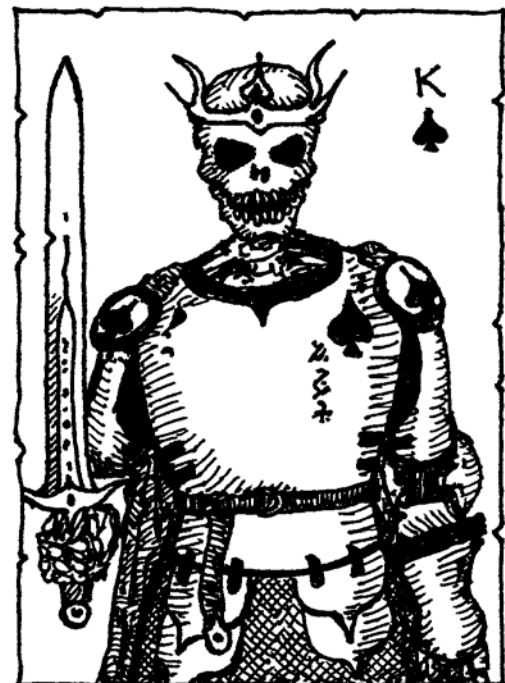
THE SPREAD

The spread is the standard layout for the game. At the top of the spread is an area where you play torches (A), as they appear. In the middle of the spread is the dungeon area itself. Turns descending into the dungeon are played in a row from left to right. This row is called the delve. The turns ascending from the depths of the dun-

geon are played underneath the delve from right to left, with one turn for each turn of the delve except the turn-around point. This is called the retreat. Below the dungeon area, from left to right are a discard area, a hit point counter, and a hand where you collect your treasure, tomb hoards, skill cards, and magic scroll.

SETUP

Use a standard deck of 52 playing cards and one joker. Pull out the 2-10 of hearts and stack them in order, all face up, with the 10 on top. This is your hit point counter. The rest of the deck is shuffled and held face down, ready to play cards off the top.



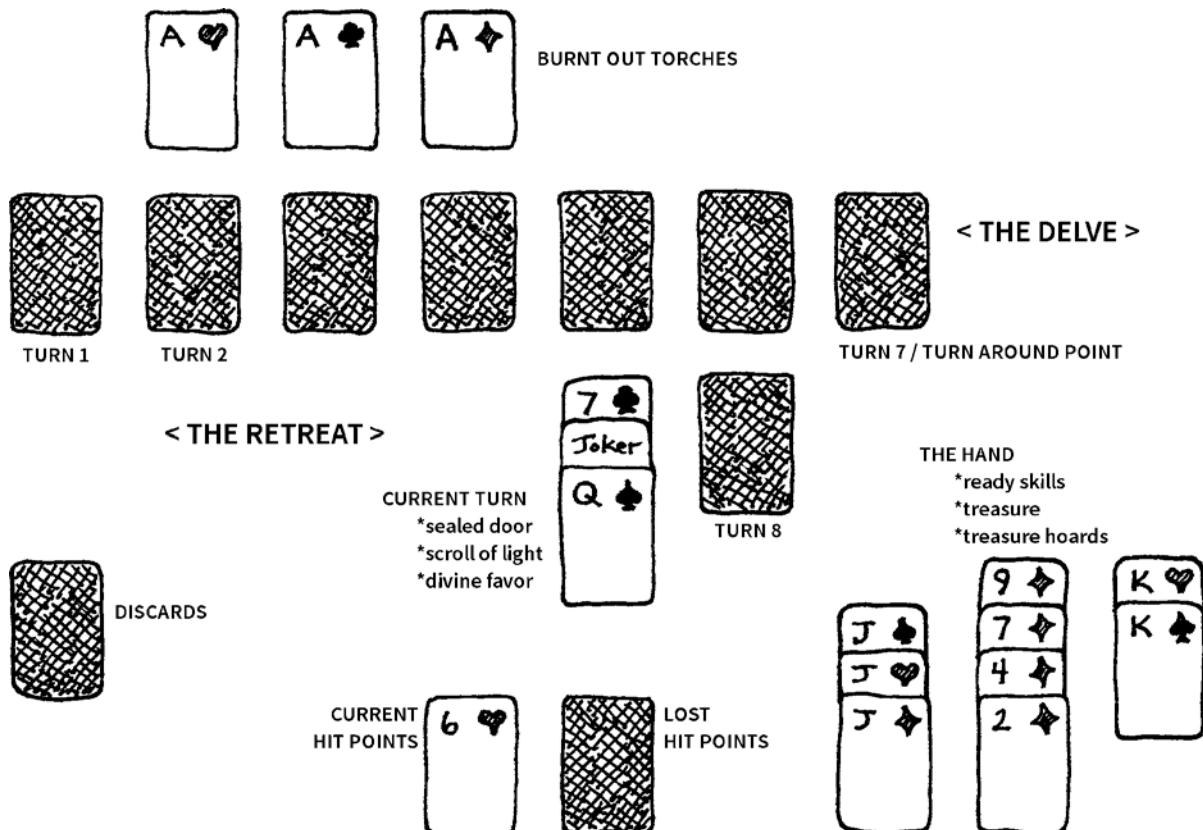
ENCOUNTERS & TREASURE

The game is divided into turns. Each turn, you play a series of cards in the dungeon area. The turn represents an encounter as you explore the vast and sprawling dungeon. Layer the cards in a column while the turn is active. When the turn is over, stack those cards face down before moving on to the next turn. Each turn starts by playing cards from the deck until an encounter card appears.

The 2-10 of spades, diamonds, and clubs represent both encounter cards or action cards depending on when they appear in the turn. The first one to appear in the turn is the encounter card for that turn. Subsequent ones are action cards. To win an encounter, an action card must be equal to or greater than the encounter card. For encounter cards, the suit determines what type of encounter it is: spades are monsters; diamonds are trapped treasures caches; clubs are sealed doors. For action cards, the face value is all that matters when comparing it to the encounter card.

During the turn, you must play cards from the deck or hand until an encounter is resolved. Immediately play any torches (A) that appear above the dungeon area, and collect any skills (J) into your hand. A divine favor (Q) automatically wins any encounter. If one appears before the encounter card, keep playing cards until an encounter appears, then end the turn. Tomb hoards (K) and the Scroll of Light (Jk) are left in the turn as treasure, and another card is played. A skill (J) of the same suit as the encounter card can be played from the hand to win the encounter.

Encounters can be resolved in a variety of ways. Follow the rules for monsters, traps, and sealed doors to play out each encounter. When the turn is over, if the encounter was won, you can collect treasure cards into your hand. Treasure includes any diamonds that appeared as an encounter or action card (2-10d), as well as tomb hoards (K) and the Scroll of Light (Jk). Stack the remaining cards face down to mark the turn. Note that if the turn contains all treasure, one card must be left behind to mark the turn.





THE DELVE

Start your game by playing a card from the deck in the upper left corner of the dungeon area. This is the first turn of the delve. If it is not an encounter card, play additional cards on the turn until an encounter appears. Play until the encounter is resolved, and conclude the turn. The next turn is played immediately to the right of the first turn. The delve represents going deeper and deeper into the dungeon. Continue to play turns from left to right until you decide to turn around and retreat.

HIT POINTS

The 2-10 of hearts are stacked in order and placed face up below the dungeon area with the 10 on top. These are your hit point cards. When you are damaged by monsters or traps, a number of hit point cards are turned over equal to the damage. Damage is always calculated by subtracting a failed action card from the monster or trap card. When the 2 of hearts is turned over, you're dead and the game is lost.

THE HAND

The hand is where you collect your skills (J), treasure (2-10d), treasure hordes (K), and the scroll of light (Jk). The hand is placed face up on your right below the dungeon area. Skills, treasure, and the Scroll of Light can be played from the hand for various effects. If you survive the dungeon, treasure, treasure hordes, and the scroll can be added up for scoring.

TORCHES

The aces in the deck represent your supply of torches. Whenever one appears, a torch has burnt out and the card is played face up above the dungeon area to show how many torches you've used up. If the 4th torch is played, you are lost in the dark dungeon forever.

The Scroll of Light: The joker is a Scroll of Light. If it appears, the scroll can be collected with treasure at the end of the turn. If your 4th torch appears you may play the scroll immediately in the torch area and place the torch on the bottom of the deck. The scroll may only be used once.

SKILLS

The jacks represents a variety skills. Jacks are collected when they appear and may be played immediately or held in the hand to be played later. Go Berserk (Js) beats any monster; Disarm Mechanism (Jd) disables any trap; and Pick Lock (Jc) opens any door. Dodge Blow (Jh) is played on lost hit points to avoid one instance of damage. Each skill can only be played once.

DIVINE FAVORS

The queens are the divine favors of the goddess. They win any encounter on a turn in which they appear. If any appear before the encounter card, the encounter is automatically won when it appears. If two divine favors appear on a single turn, there is no additional benefit aside from being extra blessed in the encounter. Divine favors can only appear once, and are turned face down with the stack when the turn is concluded.

MONSTERS

As encounters, the 2-10 of spades are guardian monsters. Any action card defeats the monster if it is equal or greater than the monster card. If an action card is less than the monster, you take damage equal to the monster minus the action card. To win the encounter, you must continue to play cards, taking damage as indicated, until you defeat the monster with an action card, a divine favor, or Go Berserk (Js). When you defeat a monster, collect its treasure and end the turn.

Treasure Drop: If you don't think you can beat a monster, you have one chance to escape by dropping a treasure card from your hand onto the turn. Monsters love treasure and are easily distracted, giving you a chance to run away. The treasure you drop must be equal or greater than the monster card (kings are 10, the joker is 6). This resolves the encounter, but you lose treasure and cannot collect treasure from the turn.



TRAPS

As encounters, the 2-10 of diamonds are treasure traps. You have only one chance to pass a trap, with a divine favor, Disarm Mechanism (Jd), or a single action card. If the trap is passed, the turn is over and you may collect the treasure. Note, however, that if the turn contains only treasure, you must leave one treasure card behind to mark the turn. If the trap is not passed, you take damage equal to the trap minus your action card. The turn is over, no treasure is collected, and any treasure showing must be turned face down in the stack with the rest of the turn.

DOORS

As encounters, the 2-10 of clubs are sealed doors. You can play only one action card from the deck when trying to open such a door. If the door is opened, the turn is over and you can collect any treasure inside. If the door is not opened, unless you play Pick Lock (Jc), you must discard a number of cards from the deck equal to the door minus your action card.

Discards: The discard pile is made to your left below the dungeon area. Look at each discard and play any torches that appear. Then place the discards face down.

Once discarded, these cards may not be examined again. Discards are lost and out of play. The turn is over. No treasure is collected if the door remains sealed. Any treasure that appeared must be turned face down in the stack with the rest of the turn.

THE RETREAT

Turns are played from left to right as you continue the delve, going deeper into the dungeon, but at some point you have to turn around and retreat if you hope to survive. Once a new delve turn is started it must be completed, but you can decide to turn around after any delve turn is complete. The decision to start the retreat or play another turn on the delve must be made before the first card of the next turn is revealed. The first turn of the retreat is played underneath the penultimate turn of the delve, such that no turn is underneath the turning-point. Retreat turns are played the same way as delve turns, but are played from right to left below the delve turns. If you complete a turn below turn one without dying or getting lost in the dark, you have made it out of the dungeon alive.

SCORING

If you make it out of the dungeon alive, add up all the treasure in your hand. Each king is worth 10. The 2-10 of diamonds are worth face value. The Scroll of Light is worth 6 if it's in your hand. A total of 100 points are possible. Scores are marked with two numbers divided by a slash: kings found / total points. If you found all four kings and survived, you have won the game, regardless of points. Multiply total points by 100 to calculate the value of your treasure in gold pieces.

COMPETITIVE PLAY

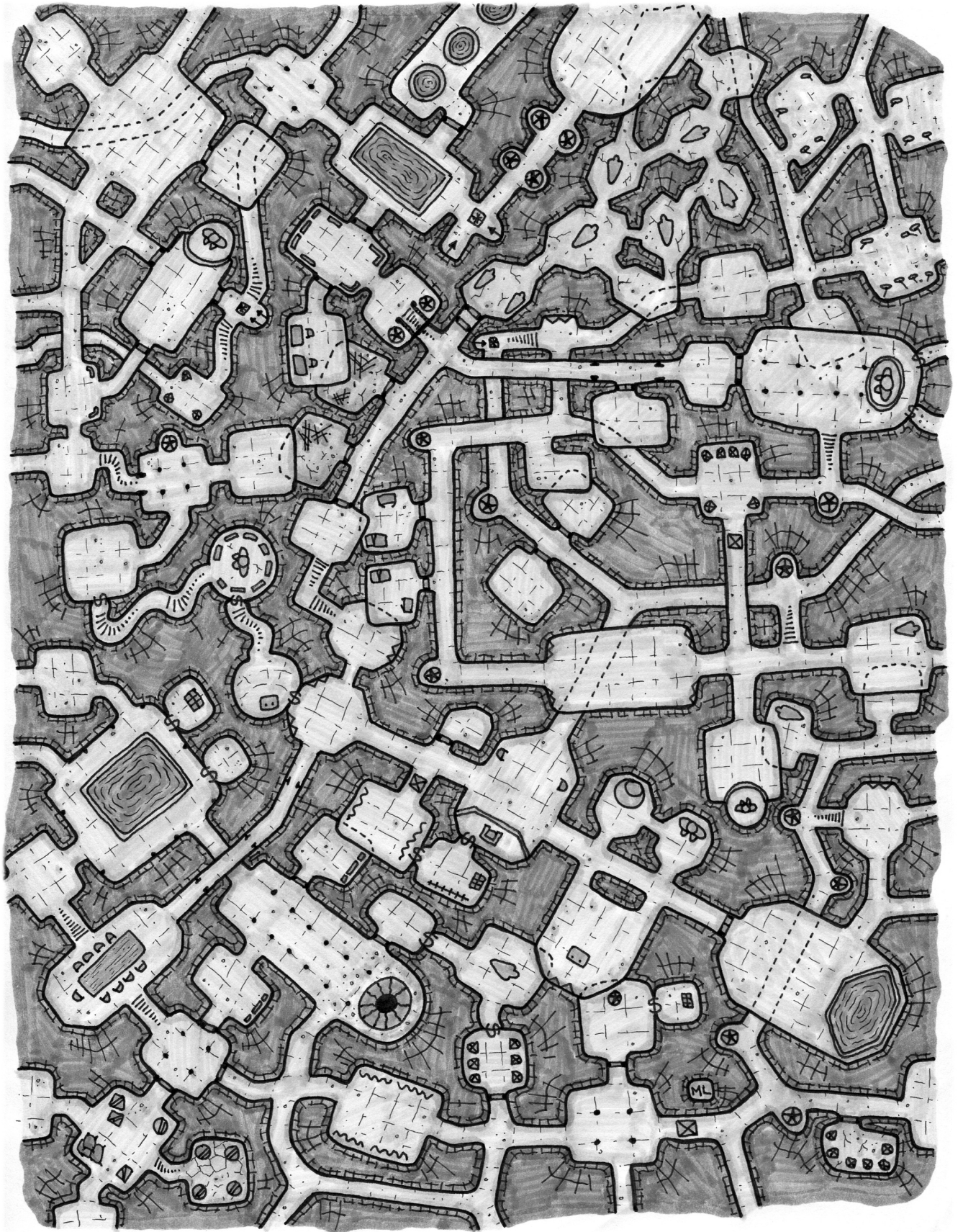
When playing for points, there are multiple challenge available. To start, simply play to survive with as much treasure as possible. Soon you will want to see if you can find all four treasure hoards and win the game. It's not easy. Like most solitaire games, there is some luck involved, and you will only win occasionally, even if you play your cards right. When you want an additional challenge, play for total points over a series of three, five, or ten games. This provides incentive to survive, even if you can't collect all the treasure hoards or get your high score in the current game.

If you're a gambler, you can even play for money per point against another player's game. Highest total points wins. Subtract the loser's points from the winner's points to determine debt. However, if the loser has all four kings, the debt is cancelled. You set the stakes, but keep it friendly.

NARRATIVE PLAY

Dungeon Solitaire can be played as a normal card game, but is perhaps most enjoyable when you imagine the narrative the game creates. Picture yourself standing at the entrance of the legendary Tomb of Four Kings. As you delve its depths, imagine the sprawling dark labyrinth of the dungeon around you, and picture each battle, each poison arrow or dead-fall trap, each gilded or ironwood door. Visualize the events as you play each action. Look in wonder at the treasure hoards of old, and rejoice at the divine favors of the goddess. Feel the satisfaction of gaining skills and putting them to good use. Sense the danger around every corner, the risk of death, and the stark terror should your last torch burn out. Imagine all this and joy will be yours should you just make it out alive, no matter how much treasure you managed to find.





ML

matthewlowes.com

/games

Download rules, variations, and other materials.

Follow future developments, and explore more fiction & games.