Angel, Eagle, Dragon, Fae -- Allies Against the Wraith

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Rules version:
1.1 (9th August 2014)

Your city is under attack by the AI-wraith -- creatures of pure information who have overwritten the spirits of beings and turned them against you. Angels, eagles, dragons and fae are your allies, but they are often outnumbered and every time the wraith get through the allied defences the wraith evolve. In this game, which uses just a standard deck of playing cards and a handful of cubes or counters, you will organise your forces, block wraith attacks, and transform wraiths back into ally beings if you can. How well will you hold out against the wraith?

Components:
One standard deck of playing cards.
A handful of cubes (or counters) of any type.

Playing time:
10-15 minutes.

Structure of the game
A game consists of a maximum eleven rounds, until the deck is exhausted. Each round has four phases:

(1) Bringing an ally and a variable number of wraiths into play
(2) Allied actions
(3) Wraith attacks
(4) Wraith evolutions

When the deck is exhausted a final round of the game may occur, or the game may end at that point, depending on which phase the game is in when the deck is exhausted. The game is then scored. The aim of the game is to finish with as little damage to the city's populace as possible, and the fewest active wraith threats.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SYSTEM

Structure of the beings
In this game, wraiths and allies are made up of two or more playing cards.

<u>Ability (pip) cards.</u>
All beings start with two ability cards (pip cards).

There are four different abilities:

Flying (spades)
Fire (clubs)
Magical power (hearts)
Magical protection (diamonds)

Spirit (court) cards
Allies (but not wraiths) additionally have one or more spirits (represented by court cards), as well as their two ability cards. If a wraith gains a spirit it turns into an ally.

Types of being
Because all beings start with two ability cards, and because no being will ever have ability cards in more than two suits, all beings can be defined by their abilities. There are ten types of beings.

Beings with ability cards in only one suit:

Only spades = Eagle
Only clubs = Dragon
Only hearts = Fae
Only diamonds = Angel

Beings with ability cards in two suits:

Spades/Clubs = Winged Dragon
Spades/Hearts = Winged Fae
Spades/Diamonds = Winged Angel
Clubs/Hearts = Dragon Fae
Clubs/Diamonds = Charmed Dragon
Hearts/Diamonds = Charmed Fae

The golden rule of the game is that although a being's particular abilities may strengthen (through evolution, or the effect of spirit cards) or weaken (through battle damage), a being will never change its basic type.

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DECK SET UP
Take the jokers, and a red jack and a black jack, out of the deck (keep the jacks nearby). Shuffle the remaining 50 cards. You are then ready to play.

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GAME PHASES

(1) Bringing an ally and wraiths into play
To start bringing the beings into play, first deal the top two cards face up from the deck.

Wraiths
If the two cards are both ability (pip) cards then a wraith has been brought into play.

Arrange the two cards so that the card with the higher pip number is on top of the card with the lower pip number (though keep the lower card visible). If the two cards have the same number of pips, follow the order: spades are highest, then clubs, then hearts, and lastly diamonds. So a seven of spades goes on top of a seven of hearts.

A wraith's **strongest ability** is **the ability with the higher total pip count**. (If a wraith only has abilities in one suit, that ability is its strongest.)

Wraith zones
It is useful to arrange the wraith in different zones, so that wraiths with a similar threat are grouped together. Accordingly, place wraiths with flying (spades) strongest in a zone on the left of the playing surface, wraiths with fire (clubs) strongest in the middle zone, and wraiths with magical power (hearts) strongest in a zone to the right. These three zones are **threat zones**.

Wraiths with magical protection (diamonds) strongest are not immediate threats, and can be placed in a zone behind the other wraiths. This zone is called the **charmed zone**. Wraiths in the charmed zone may evolve into a threat later, however, and move into a threat zone.

Then deal another two cards. If the two cards are both pip cards then another wraith has been brought into play: follow the wraith instructions again.

Allies
If the two cards dealt are a combination of pip card and court card (in either order), or two court cards, then an ally has been partially brought into play. Now keep dealing cards singly until a total of two pip cards have been dealt for the ally. Stop dealing when the second pip card has appeared.

When an ally has been fully brought into play (when it has two pip cards), place it into the ally zone, which is the zone closest to the player.

When an ally appears the round then moves to the allied actions phase.

Incomplete beings
It may happen that the deck is exhausted before the final being is dealt both of its pip cards. If this happens, put all cards associated with the incomplete being to one

side, they will not take part in the game. Continue with the rest of the phases as normal, and then the game will end.

(2) Allied actions
The three types of spirit (court) cards -- jacks, queens and kings -- each have their own actions they can perform.

Jacks - healing
If a jack spirit is part of an ally it can heal any ally's pip card that has been damaged in battle, if the damaged pip card is the same colour as the jack. The damaged card is turned vertically. Jacks can heal once per round. [Damage is explained in section (4).]

Kings - doubling strengths
If a king spirit in an ally shares the same suit as an ability card or cards of that ally, then that ability strength is doubled -- i.e. the number of pips is doubled -- while the king remains in that ally.

*Example: If the king of spades is a spirit in a Winged Dragon made up of the 4 of spades and 3 of clubs, then its flying (spades) ability strength is 8 (=4*2), while the fire (clubs) ability strength remains at 3.*

The queens: three actions
Queens can perform actions of three different types. A given queen can only perform one action type per round, therefore to perform all three queen actions in a round a player needs to have at least three queens in play.

Queen actions (i) - summoning spirits
Once per round, as a last resort, a queen may summon into the game one of the two jacks that were put aside during set up, as long as the jack matches the queen's colour. The jack can become part of an ally of your choosing. This summoning represents desperate measures and can only be performed for the first jack if a spirit card has appeared as an evolution card, and for the second jack if a second spirit card has appeared as an evolution card.

Queen actions (ii)- moving spirits between allies
A queen can move any spirit from one ally to another, as long as:
(a) the spirit is the same colour as the queen
(b) at no point is an ally left without a spirit.

A queen can perform this action type as many times per round as required.

Queen actions (iii) - transforming wraiths
A queen can transform a wraith into an ally, by moving a spirit from an ally into a wraith, as long as:
(a) the spirit to be moved is the same colour as the queen

(b) at no point is an existing ally left without a spirit
(c) because an ally has to catch the wraith in order to transform it, the ally providing the spirit must have a higher flying ability strength than the target wraith. This means the ally's total number of pips in spades (including doubling effects from a king of spades, if present) must be higher than the total number of pips in spades in the target wraith. If a target wraith has zero pips in spades, an ally with any spades pips will be able to catch it
(d) the ally catching the wraith must not have a cube or counter on it.

If these conditions are met, then a spirit card can be transferred into the target wraith, transforming it into an ally. Move the wraith from the wraith zone to the ally zone, near you.

Then put a cube or counter on the ally that caught the wraith and donated the spirit. This is to indicate that that ally can't catch another wraith this turn, or block an attack, due to the effort involved in catching the wraith. Also put a cube or counter on the newly transformed ally.

(3) Wraith attacks
In this game, there are three attacking abilities:
flying attacks (spades)
fire attacks (clubs)
magical power attack (hearts)

Magical protection (diamonds) is not an attacking ability.

If a wraith's strongest ability is an attacking ability, it will attack each turn with that ability while it has undamaged cards in that suit.

If an attacking wraith is not blocked by an ally it will successfully attack the city and get one evolution card. To minimise the evolution of the wraiths, and the damage to the city's populace, blocking is an important part of the game.

Each ally may only block one attack per round, and each attacking wraith may only be blocked by one ally.

<u>Using cubes/counters</u>
To help keep track of attacks, blocks, and evolutions later, put a cube or counter on each attacking wraith whose attack is blocked, and on each ally who does the blocking, as blocks are resolved.

<u>Blocking fire attacks (clubs)</u>
A wraith's **fire attack strength** is the sum of the pips in vertical **club** cards the wraith has. This will be compared with the blocking ally's **black defence strength**, which is the sum of all its vertical **black pip cards** strengths, including any doubling effects by a matching king.

Outcome - wraith damaged
If the blocking ally's black strength is higher than the fire strength of the wraith then the wraith's fire ability is damaged. If a single vertical clubs card was used by the wraith, turn it horizontally. If two or more clubs cards were used by the wraith, turn the weakest (lowest pips) vertical card so it is horizontal. Turning a card horizontally indicates it is damaged.

Outcome - ally damaged
If the blocking ally's black strength is lower than, or equal to, the wraith's fire strength, then the ally is damaged. The highest vertical black pip card of the ally is turned horizontally (if spades and clubs are tied highest, spades are damaged).

Blocking magical power attacks (hearts)
A wraith's **magical power attack strength** is the sum of its vertical pip cards in **hearts**. Blocking magical attacks is similar to blocking fire attacks, except now an ally uses its **red defence strength**, which is the sum of its vertical red pip cards, including king doubling effects.

Magical attack outcomes
As with fire attacks, if the wraith's magical attack strength is less than the red strength of the blocking ally, the wraith is damaged and its lowest vertical hearts card is turned horizontally. If the wraith's magical attack strength equals or exceeds the blocking strength, then the ally's strongest vertical red pip card is damaged, and turned horizontally.

Blocking flying attacks (spades)
A wraith's **flying attack strength** is the total of its vertical pip cards in **spades**. Flying attacks are slightly different to the fire and magical power attacks in that an ally can only block with its **flying defence strength**, which is the sum of its vertical pip cards in spades, including doubling effects from the king of spades, if present.

Outcome - wraith damaged
If the ally's flying defence strength exceeds the wraith's flying attack strength, the wraith's vertical spades card (or weakest vertical spades card) is damaged, and turned horizontally.

Outcome - ally transformed into wraith
If the ally only has an equal or lower flying defence strength then the flying attack is successful, and the wraith card catches the ally and is able to overwrite and destroy its spirits (court cards), and transform the ally into a wraith. For this reason, an ally should only block a wraith flying attack if the ally has the higher flying strength.

Magical protection(diamonds)
Wraiths whose strongest ability is magical protection (diamonds) do not attack the city, and so do not need to be blocked.

Checking damage and strongest abilities
When turning a wraith pip card horizontally, and if the wraith has pip cards in two suits, check to see if the horizontal card's suit is still the strongest. If the previously weaker suit is now the wraith's strongest suit -- a strongest suit counts only vertical pip cards -- place the horizontal card (and all cards of that suit) underneath the other suit, and move the wraith to the zone appropriate to its uppermost (strongest) suit.

If a wraith only has horizontal cards remaining, and no vertical cards, it is moved to the charmed zone.

End of wraith attacks phase
The wraith attacks phase ends when all ally blocks have been resolved. Move to the wraith evolution phase.

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(4) Wraith evolutions
Each attacking unblocked wraith will successfully attack the city's populace. (For the purposes of this game, the city is simply the deck.) The wraith, creatures of pure information, will gain extra information from successfully attacking the populace, and this is represented by giving the wraith an additional card.

Deal one card to each wraith that does not have a cube or counter on it. Then resolve each wraith's evolution as follows.

Pip evolution cards - matching suit
If a wraith's evolution card is a pip card, and if it matches a suit of the wraith's existing abilities, then the evolution card is placed vertically behind the existing card (or cards) of that suit, so all numbers are visible. If any of the existing cards in that suit were horizontal (damaged) the act of evolution heals them, and all cards in that suit are now placed vertically.

Note that the suit matched may represent the weaker ability of a wraith. If this happens, check to see if the total strength of the previously weaker suit now exceeds the strength of the previously strongest suit. If it does, swap the cards round so the newly strongest suit cards are on top, and move the wraith to the newly appropriate zone for its threat. Note also a wraith with weaker diamonds may become strongest in diamonds, in which case it is moved to the charmed zone.

Pip evolution cards - no matching suit
If the evolution card is a pip card, but it does not match the suit or suits of the wraith's existing cards, the wraith will look to see if it can pass the card on, if the card is not a diamond.

The wraith therefore looks at the wraiths in the charmed zone. If a wraith there has a suit that matches the suit of the wraith's unneeded evolution card, then it receives the evolution card. If the additional card means that suit is now strongest, that suit is put on top of the diamonds and the wraith is moved to the appropriate threat zone. (If there are several candidate wraiths, the card goes to the wraith that would turn into the biggest threat, i.e. the wraith which would have the highest total pips in that suit, and would move into the threat zone.)

If a wraith cannot pass on its unneeded evolution card, the card is placed off the playing area in **the unused evolution card pool**. It will not be passed on in a later round (but will be used in scoring at the end of the game).

Court evolution cards
If the evolution card is a court card, it is added to the unused evolution card pool. This indicates that a spirit has been overwritten by wraith data, and cannot be revived. Note that this also thins the deck of spirit (court) cards, which is disadvantageous for the player.

End of evolution/clean up
When all evolutions have been resolved, remove all cubes/counters from wraiths and allies.

If the deck is not exhausted, a new round begins with phase 1 (bringing allies and wraiths into play). If the deck is exhausted the game is finished.

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SCORING
The wraith gain:
1 point for every vertical (undamaged) ability card belonging to a wraith in any of the three threat zones. (No cards are scored by wraith in the charmed zone.)

The wraith also gain:
1 point for every card in the unused evolution card pool.

A perfect score in this game is 0. The worst possible score (which requires an extremely unlikely deal, and a bad decision on the part of the player) is a wraith score of 50.