The Steppes of Steeppe

Two best of friends and Jests of a Face of Steeppe are on a task for land wide laud. Both must impress the other 12 Faces of Steeppe, returning home to be promoted to Royal Wizards. This is achieved by matching their Wit value to the Countenance of the Royal Faces.

A 1-2 player game played in under half an hour for ages 12 and up.

Needed to play: 1 deck of standard playing cards, including a red and black joker.

Preparation: Remove the Jokers from the deck; they will serve as the characters of the game, (the Jests). Remove the Face cards from the deck and shuffle them. Shuffle the remainder of the deck and deal half of them to form two 20 card decks, face down. Place the red joker above one of the decks and the black joker above the other. Next, deal 3 Face cards face down to place above each of the Jests, turning the top cards face up. Each Jest is assigned the Face card on its side.
Set the remaining 6 Face cards aside and leave spaces for a Laud, (Score) pile and finally a discard pile.

Game play: Turn over the top card of both decks and place the right decks card to its right and the left decks to its left. These first cards are the Charter Steppe cards. Charter Steppe cards determine how many actions may be taken by each Jest. **Revealing the Charter card counts as one of the allotted actions.**
The actions available are as follows:

- **Add a Steppe (Mandatory):** Draw a new card and place it on the previous card, keeping both suits and values revealed. Cards played will form the player's Wit or add to the Faces countenance. See **Getting Laud.**

Half Wit rule: The Jests must be at least a half wit, meaning they must play at least half of the allotted actions, rounded up, in Steppe cards. For example, if the charter card is a 5, two more cards must be added to form 3.

- **Move a Jest:** Move a Jest 1 card away from the **Charter** card.
- **Boost a Jest's confidence:** Draw a card and give to fellow Jest face down without revealing. They may add it to their deck without revealing or play it to their steppes as a free action. Aces may be interchanged as an action as well. Confidence actions do not count toward the Half Wit rule.

Getting Laud: A player's Wit value must meet or exceed the current Faces countenance value. All Face cards have a value of 12. All other cards are numerical value with the exception of the Ace, (see below).

- Any cards played to the Steppes with the same suit as the Face will add to the Faces Countenance value.
- All other cards of the Steppes on a turn will belong to the Jests as their Wit.
- A Jest may also use their specific **Talent**.

A **Talent** is activated by ending a turn with a Jest on a card of the same color suit (red or black); in which case the value of the card is doubled. A Jest ending a turn on any other card has no result. A Jest may not end their turn on a Countenance card.

If the value of the Jests Wit meets or exceeds the Face Countenance, the Face card is placed in a Laud stack. Otherwise, the cards of the Steppes are discarded without success. Keep trying!

The Ace: Ahh yes, the two faced Ace. It can be set aside as a bonus action card **UNLESS** it is the same suit as the current Face, in which case the Face card is doubled to a value of 24! Place an Ace beside a stubborn Face to mark the doubled trouble. An Ace is never added to the Steppes. Once they are used as an extra action or Countenance, they are discarded.

Important Ace rules: Drawing an Ace does not count as an action, it is set aside or given to a Face. To use and Ace as an extra action, all allotted actions must be used first. If an Ace is saved for a following turn for an extra action but its suit matches the players' new Face card, it is lost to that Face card and doubles it to 24 as usual! It is important to manage them wisely and sometimes better to get rid of them as soon as possible.

In conclusion of each turn when all desired actions are taken, all Steppe cards are discarded and the Jests returned to their starting positions.

It is important to note that the Half Wit Rule are the only cards required to play. It may be beneficial to "fold" if there seems to be no chance of success to prevent further burning through a deck.

The first half of the game continues in this fashion until either all three Face cards are resolved or a Jest deck runs out of cards.

If the first 3 Face cards are resolved by each player, the second half of the game proceeds in the same fashion with the last 6 Face cards set aside at the game start. Shuffle the discards with all cards in the players' area and deal the 20 cards to each Jest once again.

Note: One Jest may impress the 3 Faces before the other; at that point they are too far for aid and must try to finish on their own . . . *sigh*.

If either player's deck runs out before resolving all Faces in the first or second half of the game, the players lose.

If all 12 Faces are resolved, the players are victorious!

Game design by Chadwick Russell, 2016