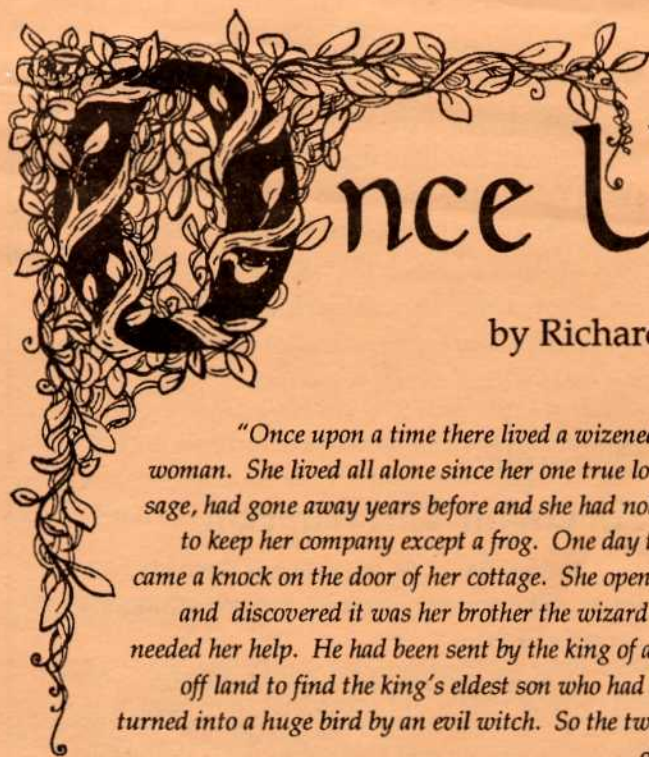




Once Upon a Time

by Richard Lambert, Andrew Rilstone and James Wallis

"Once upon a time there lived a wizened old woman. She lived all alone since her one true love, a sage, had gone away years before and she had nobody to keep her company except a frog. One day there came a knock on the door of her cottage. She opened it and discovered it was her brother the wizard who needed her help. He had been sent by the king of a far-off land to find the king's eldest son who had been turned into a huge bird by an evil witch. So the two set off..."

Introduction

"Once Upon A Time" is a game in which players create a story together using cards that show important elements from fairy tales. One player is the Storyteller and creates a story using the ingredients on her cards, trying to guide the plot towards her own ending. The other players try to use cards to interrupt her and become the new Storyteller. The winner is the first player to play out all her cards, ending with the "Happy Ever After" card.

To Start

Shuffle the decks separately, and deal them. Each player needs one "Happy Ever After" card and the following number of "Once Upon A Time" cards:

2-3 players:	10 cards each
4-5 players:	8 cards each
6 players:	7 cards each
7 or more:	6 cards each

Players may look at their own cards, but not at those of other players. Trading cards is not allowed.

Decide who is going to be the first Storyteller. Tradition dictates that this is the person with the longest beard, but if everyone is clean-shaven then the oldest player begins.

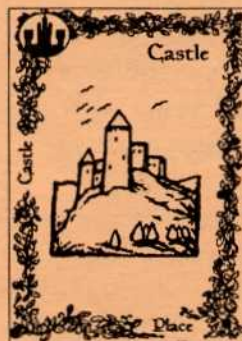
How To Play

The object of the game is to create an entertaining story. The first Storyteller must begin to tell a story suggested by her "Once Upon A Time" cards. Whenever she mentions something on one of her cards, she may put that card face-up on the discard pile next to the "Once Upon A Time" deck. She must tell a story that makes sense, not just try to discard her hand as quickly as possible. The winner is the first player to play all her "Once Upon A Time" cards, and then play her "Happy Ever After" card so that it brings the story to a satisfying finish.

There are two types of cards in the "Once Upon A Time" deck: *Storytelling Cards* and *Interrupt Cards*.

Storytelling Cards

A Storytelling card looks like this:



Storytelling cards are divided into five groups:

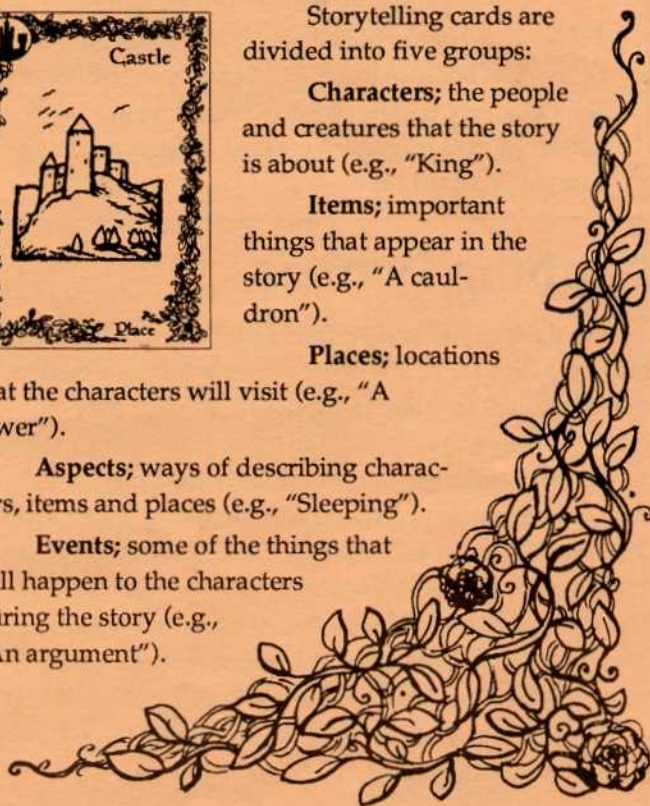
Characters; the people and creatures that the story is about (e.g., "King").

Items; important things that appear in the story (e.g., "A cauldron").

Places; locations that the characters will visit (e.g., "A tower").

Aspects; ways of describing characters, items and places (e.g., "Sleeping").

Events; some of the things that will happen to the characters during the story (e.g., "An argument").



The second type of card is an Interrupt card. While the Storyteller is talking, the other players may attempt to interrupt her. This is the usual way that play passes between the players. There are two ways of interrupting: Interrupt Cards and Naming Names.

Interrupt Cards

Interrupt cards look like this:



Each one names one of the five groups of Storytelling cards; for example, "Any Aspect".

When the Storyteller plays a card, any other player may interrupt by playing an Interrupt card of that group. To work, an Interrupt card must be of the same group as the top card on the discard pile.

Interrupt cards also have plot ingredients printed on them, and a Storyteller can use one just like a Storyteller card. If the card is used to interrupt, ignore the plot ingredient.

Example: Interrupt cards

Storyteller: ...The Witch let out a loud whistle and the door swung open, to reveal a huge cave beyond [plays "Cave" card].

At this point, any player with an "Any Place" Interrupt card can play it and interrupt the Storyteller because the "Cave" card is a member of the Place group. The word "Chapel" on the Interrupt card is ignored because it is not used as a Storytelling card here.

Naming Names

If the Storyteller mentions a plot ingredient without playing a card for it, any other player who has a card for that ingredient (or something closely similar) may interrupt by playing the card. If the other players think that the card is not similar enough to the ingredient mentioned then the interruption fails. The interrupting player must then take the top card from the "Once Upon A Time" deck and the current Storyteller continues. In the event of an argument, it is decided by a vote of all players.

Playing an Interrupt card when someone has interrupted by naming names is not allowed.

If two or more interruptions are made at the same time, the first person to play her card is the interrupter.

Example: A Fair Interruption

Storyteller: ...The king fell in love with the woodcutter's beautiful daughter [plays "Two People Fall In Love" card], they were married and a year and a day later she gave birth to a baby boy...

A player who holds the "Prince" or "Child" card can interrupt here, since although neither has been mentioned, a baby is automatically a child, and because it is the king's son it must be a prince.

Example: An Unfair Interruption

Storyteller: ...So the princess went into the forest and using her maidenly wiles she caught herself a unicorn...

A player with the "Horse" card could not interrupt here. A unicorn is not a horse, and although there is no unicorn card in the game (yet!) they are not similar enough to make the interruption valid.

Example: Another Unfair Interruption

Storyteller: ...The dragon surrendered and showed the knight his horde of treasure —

Player: Treasure! [plays "Treasure" card]

So far this is fine, but a player with an "Any Item" card could not play it at this point because interrupting an interruption is not allowed.

Example: A Third Unfair Interruption

Storyteller: ...The prince left the palace and set off —

Player: Along the road. [plays card]

This is an unfair interruption because the interrupting player has tried to guess what the Storyteller will say next. Players may only interrupt what the Storyteller has already said or implied.

If the interrupt is successful, the person who interrupted is now the Storyteller. She must continue the same story using cards from her own hand. She is not allowed to backtrack, digress or contradict anything that has already been worked into the plot. The former Storyteller must take the top card from the "Once Upon A Time" deck, and wait for a new chance to interrupt and become Storyteller again.

Cards and Sentences

When a player is storytelling, every card that she plays as part of the story must be separated by a full stop — in other words, they must be in different sentences. This rule may be ignored by general agreement of the players.

Passing

The Storyteller can end her turn at any time by saying, "Pass". She must still pick up a new card, but can discard one "Once Upon A Time" card at the same time. The new Storyteller is the player on the passing Storyteller's left.

Pausing

If the Storyteller pauses for more than five seconds, her turn ends and she must take a new card. The player on her left becomes the new Storyteller.

Silly Play

If a Storyteller's story is illogical, contradicts what has already happened or just doesn't make sense, any other player can say that it is becoming "Silly". If the majority of players agree, the Storyteller draws an extra card and play passes to the person on her left.

Happy Ever After

A player can only play her "Happy Ever After" card if she is the Storyteller and has played all the other cards in her hand. The first person to do this wins. The ending must bring the story to a logical and satisfactory conclusion. If it does not, the Storyteller must take a new card from both decks, and the player on her left becomes the new Storyteller.

Example of Play

[There are six players: Amy, Brian, Cliff, Jon, Kay and Spike. Spike is the only player with a beard, and therefore is the first Storyteller.]

Spike: Once upon a time there was an old woman *[plays "Old Woman" card]* who lived somewhere that's not important right now. She was an unhappy old woman because many years before she had been parted from her one true love who was a sage *[plays "Sage," which is on an "Any Character" card]*. He had gone off on a sabbatical to do what sages do on sabbaticals, which is to look up things and spend long hours in libraries poring over books. Now the old woman was stuck all alone in the middle of nowhere with only a frog *[plays "Frog" card]* for company.

Brian: Ribbet!

Spike: One day out of the blue there came a knock on her door and —

[Kay interrupts with the "Door" card, and becomes Storyteller. Spike takes a new card from the "Once Upon a Time" deck.]

Kay: Hoisting herself to her feet, she made her way to the door which she opened. She saw a tall man dressed in purple robes, by which she knew him to be a wizard. *[Plays "Wizard" card]* "Good morrow, sir," she said, because she knew that one has to treat wizards with respect. "Judith! My darling sister!" cried the man. *[Plays "Brother or Sister" card]*

[Jon plays an "Any Character" Interrupt card on the "Brother Or Sister" card. Kay takes a new card from the deck.]

Jon: So she made a cup of tea for them both. It turned out that the wizard's reason for visiting his sister Judith was that he was on a commission from a certain king *[plays "King" card]* of a far-off land. The king's son, Prince Albert, had been turned, transformed magically into a huge bird *[plays "Bird" card]* and was doomed —

[Amy plays an "Any Character" Interrupt card on Jon's "Bird" card; Jon draws a new card.]

Amy: Any character. The bird was seen to fly around in circles feeding on carrion and living in his enormous nest on a cliff overlooking the sea *[plays "Cliff" card]*. He was doomed to continue doing this until someone came along to break the curse *[plays "Curse" card]*. So the wizard and the grandmother set off to discover how to remove this curse from the bird. They left the village where the grandmother lived —

[Kay plays the "Village" card. Amy takes a new card.]

Kay: And so they set off. They travelled for day after day through lands filled with strange things that we shall not detail here, until they came to a huge obsidian tower *[plays "Tower" card]* reaching three and one-quarter miles into the air, perfectly smooth without surface detail and humming with a low, malevolent sound.

[Everyone hums with a low, malevolent sound.]

Kay: The wizard Jonathan grinned happily and tapped thrice on the base of the tower with his enchanted wand [plays "Wand" card]. A small door appeared. "Welcome in, sister dear, for this is the tower of the sage Cynan." Whereupon they entered the tower, and saw the sleeping [plays "Sleeping" card] Cynan, who was a tall man with a very large —

[Amy plays an "Any Aspect" Interrupt card on Kay's "Sleeping" card. Everyone giggles. Kay takes a new card.]

Amy: Nose. And an equally impressive staff. "Be careful," said the brother, "We must wake him cautiously, for wizards are subtle and quick to anger."

So Jonathan stood at the end of the bed and called the wizard's name. In a moment of fright [plays "Frightened" card] the wizard jumped up and reached for his sword, but relaxed on seeing that it was not a foul foe but his friend Jonathan. So they prepared coffee and other drinks that wizards are very good at making, and discussed the situation. Jonathan explained that they were trying to capture this bird so that they could rescue it. I'm stuck so I'm going to pass here.

[Amy discards one card and takes a new one from the deck. Cliff, on her left, becomes Storyteller.]

Cliff: "I think," said the wizard Cynan, "that we should shed some light on this subject." Making gestures with his staff he caused several windows [plays "Window" card] to appear in the walls, and sunlight spilled in to illuminate the wizardly contents of the room. "Hmmm," said the two wizards who were putting their heads together in a corner. "Hmm. Mandrake. Arrowroot. Caromancy. Pendulums."

Brian: Loseley.

Spike: Artichoke.

Cliff: Basingstoke. "I bet you" said Cynan to Jonathan, "I bet you that this will not be achieved without a mighty struggle —"

Amy: A Mighty Struggle — a fight. [Tries to interrupt with "Fight" card]

Spike: Hmmm. I don't think so. Put it to a vote?

Brian: Um.

Jon: I say no.

Cliff: A fight is a physical fisticuffs thing. [Most people in this group disagree with Amy. She picks up her

"Fight" card and takes another one for her failed interruption. Another mix of players might have agreed with her, in which case the interrupt would have been valid.]

Cliff: As I was saying, "It will be a mighty struggle which the two of us are not likely to be able to achieve. So let us summon minstrels [plays "Minstrel" card] and other people of great noise to go through the kingdom and summon all the wizards and sages to a great convocation, in order to put all our heads together. And better, to serve as an incentive, let us have a contest [plays "Contest" card] so that the one who comes up with the most effective plan for transforming the bird back into Prince Albert shall win the hand of the king's eldest daughter in marriage —

(Ten minutes or so later)

Amy: ...So Jonathan used all his skill to heal the wound that the arrow had done to the huge bird.

Brian: He must have been very wise to do that. [Tries to interrupt with "Very Wise" card]

Amy: No — I said skill, not wisdom.

Cliff: I reckon wisdom and skill are similar enough.

Spike: Me too.

Jon: Yes.

[Amy grudgingly takes a card]

Brian: So calling on his incredible wisdom he healed the wound. Just then the king of that kingdom, who happened to be out rock-climbing, passed by the nest and said...

Amy: No, that's silly.

Cliff: Yes — why would the king be there?

[General agreement. Brian takes a card and play passes to Kay, who is on his left]

Kay: So Jonathan the wizard cast the spell that they had found [plays "Magic Is Used", which is the last "Once Upon A Time" Card in her hand]. The evil witches' spell that had kept Prince Albert as a bird for so long was broken, and [plays her "Happy Ever After" card, reading the words on it] "So it was transformed back into human form."

[Kay wins]

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His

dedication
had broken
the spell.



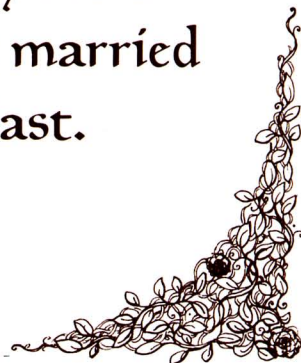
He

saw the
error of his
ways and
repented.



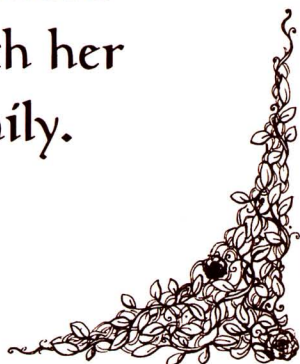
With the

rival dead,
they could
get married
at last.



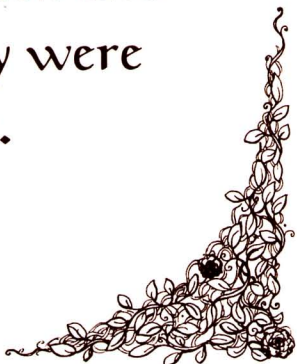
And she

was
reunited
with her
family.



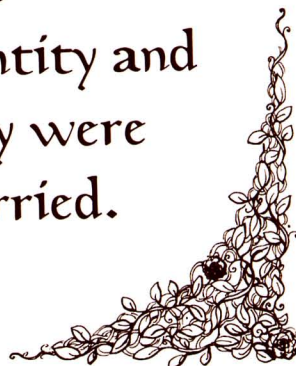
So the

spell was
broken and
they were
free.



So she

revealed her
true
identity and
they were
married.



So it was

transformed
back into
human
form.



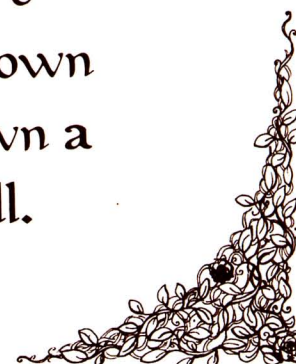
T rue

Love had
broken the
enchant-
ment.

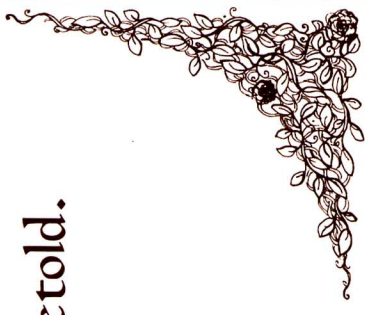


So the

evil-doers
were
thrown
down a
well.



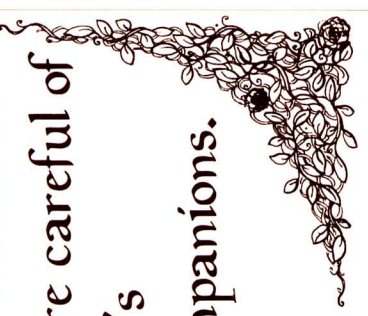
The curse
was lifted,
as had been
foretold.



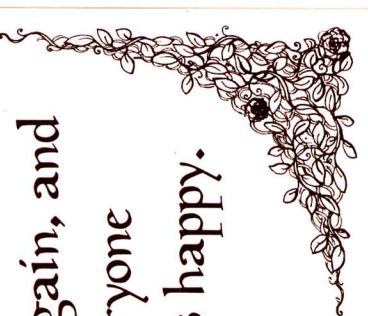
And the
flames rose
and
destroyed the
evil place
forever.



Which
proves that
one should be
more careful of
one's
companions.



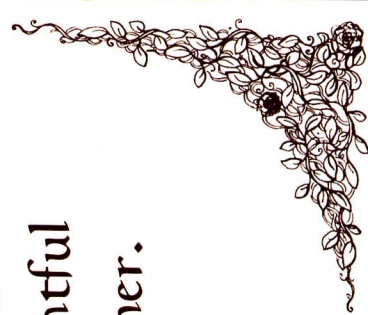
The king
fulfilled his
side of the
bargain, and
everyone
was happy.



But it
had
vanished as
mysteriously
as it had
appeared.



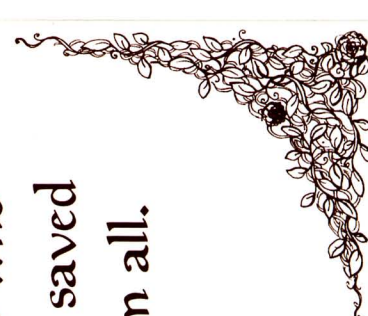
So they
returned it
to its
rightful
owner.



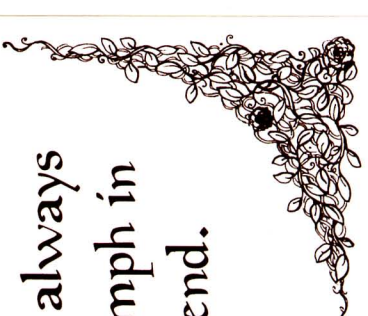
So they
escaped
their
captors, and
fled home.



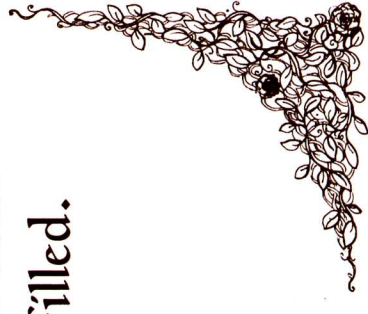
They
thanked the
hero who
had saved
them all.



Which
proves that
a pure heart
will always
triumph in
the end.



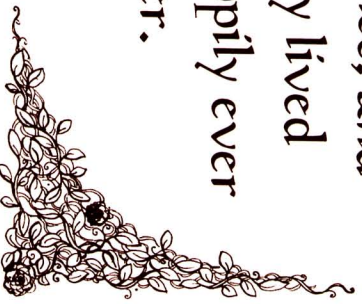
And so
the prophecy
had been
fulfilled.



And the king was delighted with such an unusual gift.



So he told her he was the prince, and they lived happily ever after.



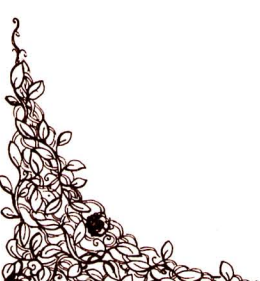
So the rightful ruler was placed once more on the throne.



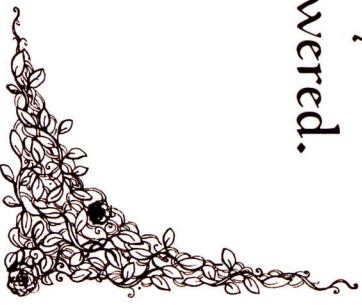
And when they died, they passed it to their children.



So the king agreed to spare his life.



So the riddle was finally answered.



So everything was restored to its former glory.



And in the course of time they became king and queen.



And the parents were reunited with their long-lost child.



So the king relented, and the two were married.



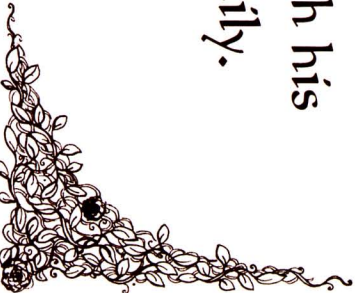
So he forgave her and they were married.



But no matter how hard they searched, they never found it again.



And he was reunited with his family.



And the kingdom rejoiced at the end of the tyrant's reign.



And he listened more carefully to his mother's advice from then on.



So he finally realized how loyal his brother had been.



He picked up his weapon and went on his way.





Ruin



Ruin

Place



Cave



Cave

Place



Village



Village

Place



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place
Also: A Chapel

Place



Night



Night

Place



Kingdom



Kingdom

Place



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place
Also: A Labyrinth

Place



Cottage



Cottage

Place



Town



Town

Place



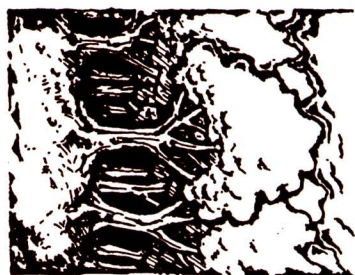
INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place
Also: A Bridge

Place



Forest



Place



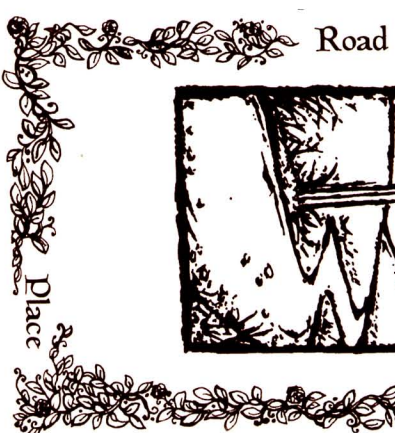
Mountain



Place



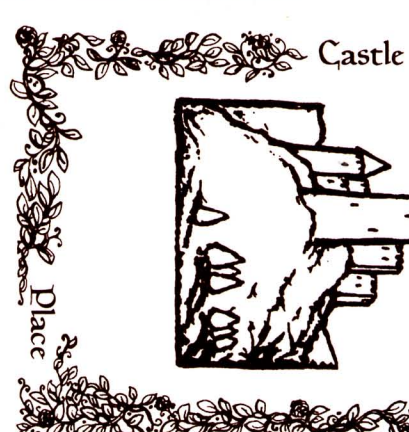
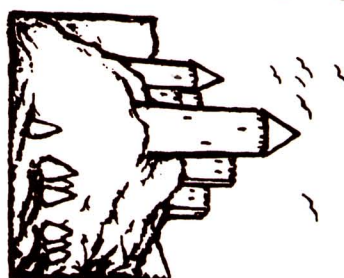
Road



Place



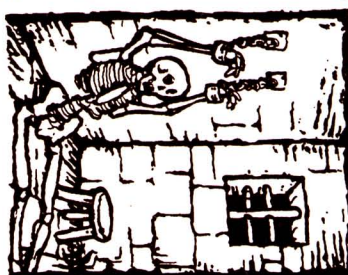
Castle



Place



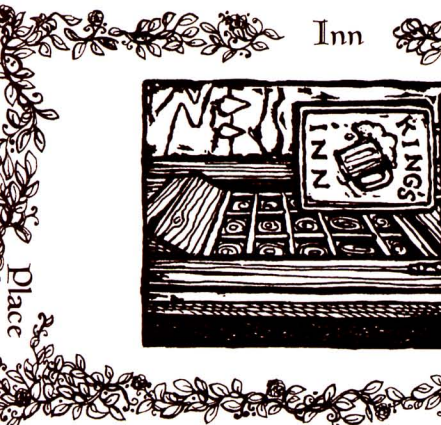
Prison



Place



Inn

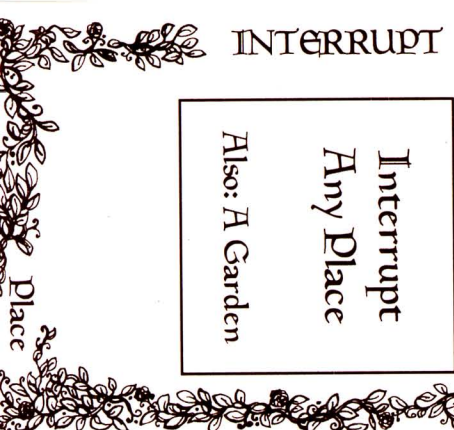


Place



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Place
Also: A Garden



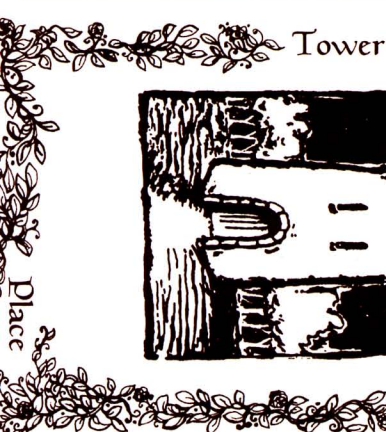
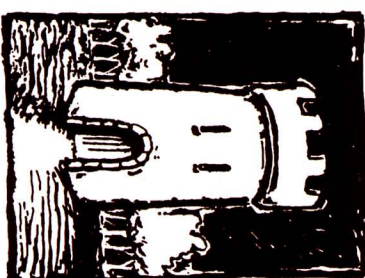
River



Place



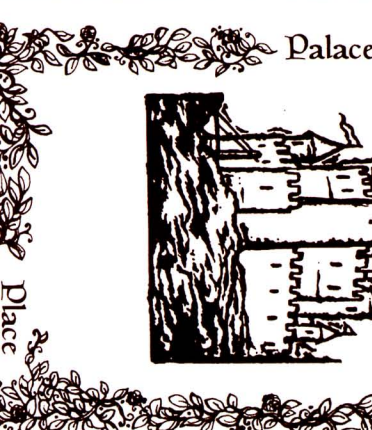
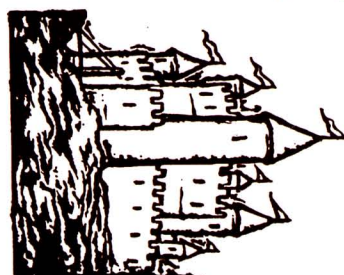
Tower



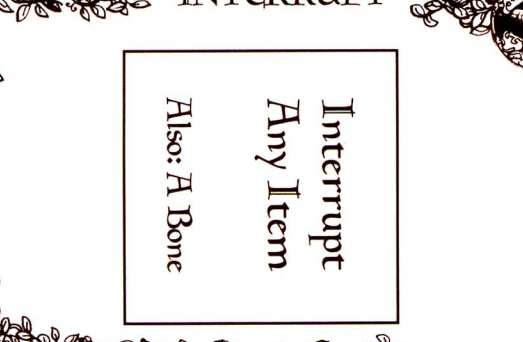
Place



Palace



Place



INTERRUPT

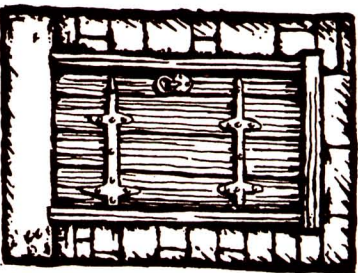
Interrupt
Any Item

Also: A Bone

Item

Also: A Bone

Door



A Door

Item



Item

Book

A Book



Item



Item

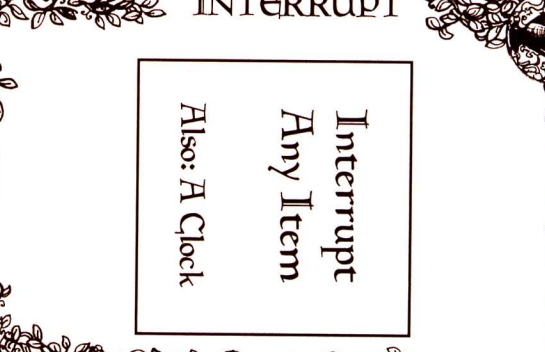
An Axe



Axe



An Axe



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Item

Also: A Clock

Item

Also: A Clock

Also: A Clock

Mirror

A Mirror

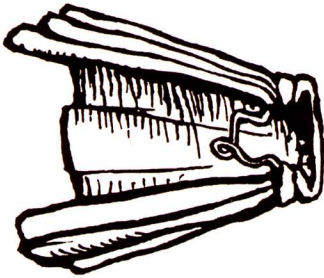


Item



A Mirror

A Cloak

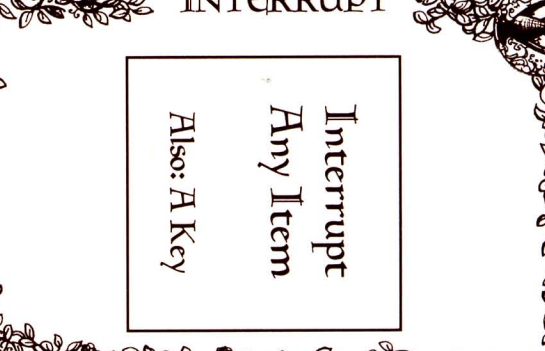


Cloak

Item



A Cloak



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Item

Also: A Key

Item

Also: A Key

Also: A Key

A Window



Window



A Window

A Sword



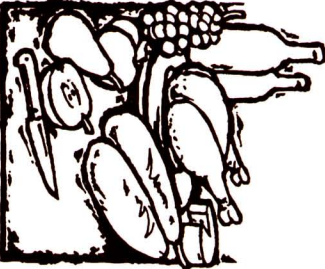
Sword

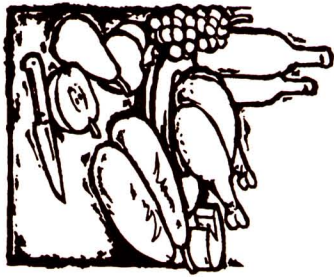
Item



A Sword

Item

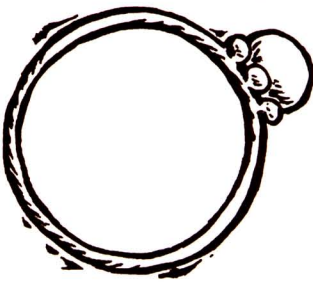
Item	Food
	



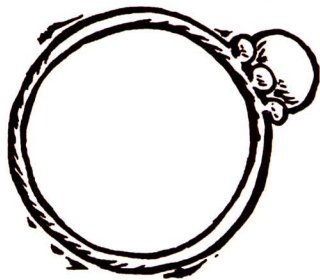
Food

Item

A Ring



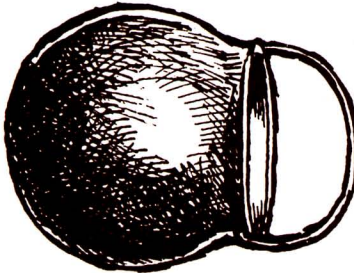
Item



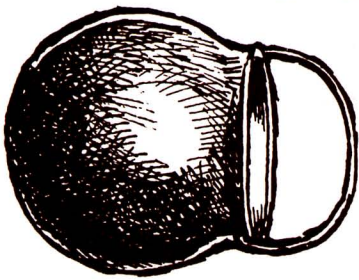
A Ring

Item

A Cauldron

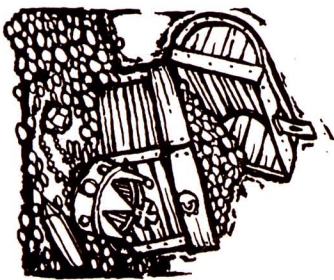


Item



A Cauldron

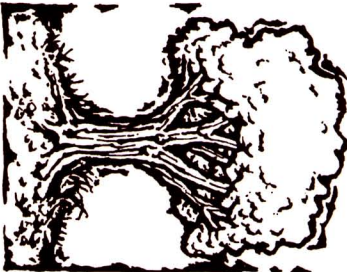
Item



Treasure

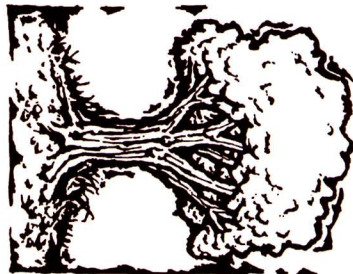
Item

A Tree



Tree

Item



A Tree

Item

Money

Item

Money

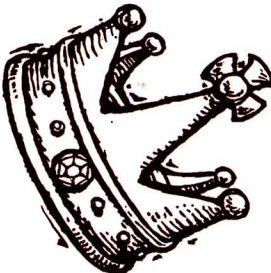


Money

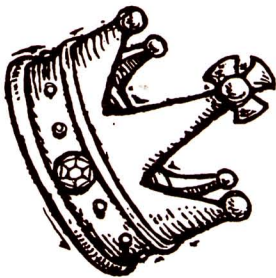
Item

Crown

A Crown

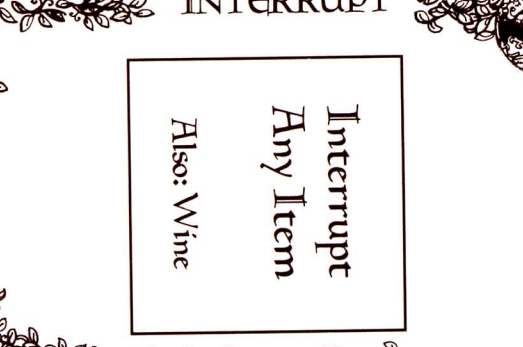


Item



A Crown

Item



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Item

Also: Wine

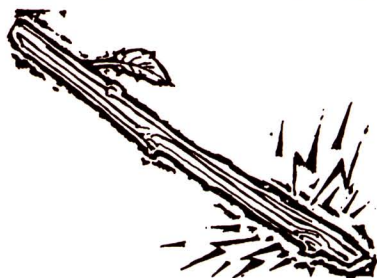
Item

Interrupt
Any Item
Also: Wine

Wand

Item

HWand



H Wand

Item

Item

A Spell

Spell



A Spell

Item

A Fight

Interrupt
Any Event
Also: A Fire

People Part

People Part
Company



Something Revealed

Something is Revealed



Escape

An Escape



Argument

An Argument



hurt

Someone is hurt



Transformation

Transformation



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event
Also: $\mathcal{H}_{\text{Contest}}$

People Meet

People Meet



INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event
Also: A Storm

Event

Death

A Death



Event

Journey

A Journey



Event

Pursuit

Pursuit



Event

Love

Two People Fall
in Love



Event

Time Passes

Time Passes



Event

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Event
Also: A Dream

Event

Object Breaks

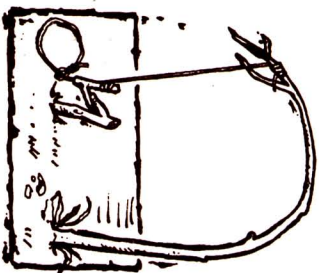
An Object
Breaks



Event

Trap

A Trap



Event

Prophecy

A Prophecy



Event

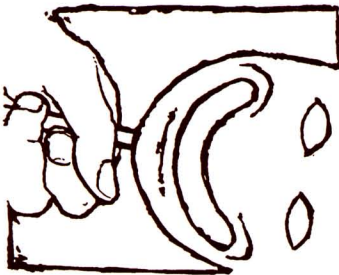
Animal Can Talk



This Animal
Can Talk

Aspect

Disguised



Disguised

Aspect

Evil



Evil

Aspect

Cursed



Cursed

Aspect

Very Strong



Very Strong

Aspect

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any Aspect
Also: This Item
Can Talk

Aspect

Very Wise



Very Wise

Aspect

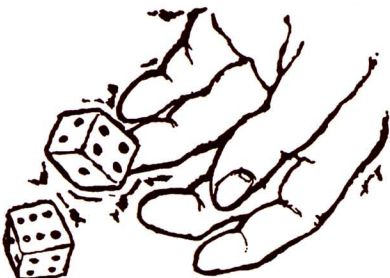
Hidden



Hidden

Aspect

Lucky



Lucky

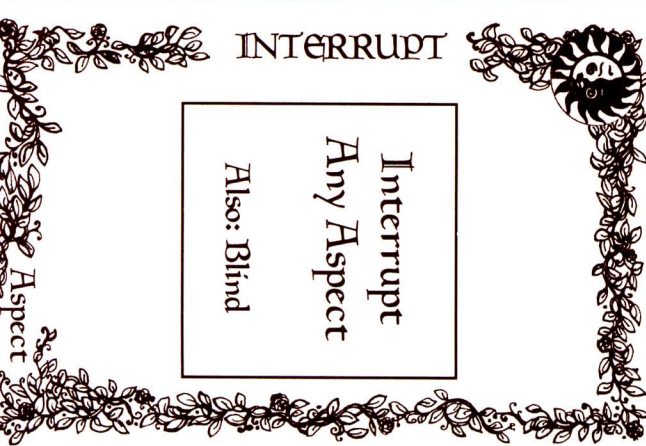
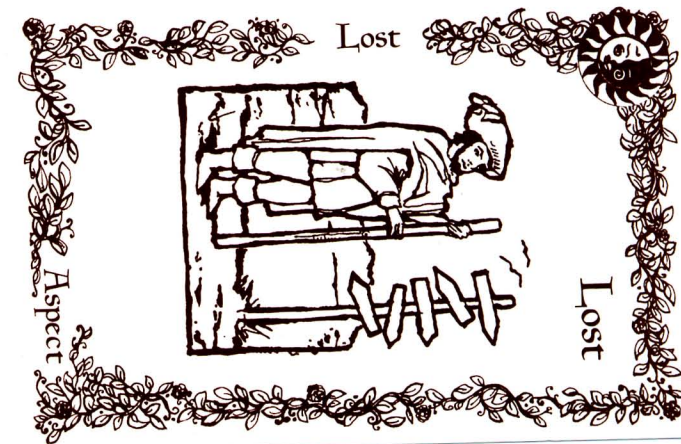
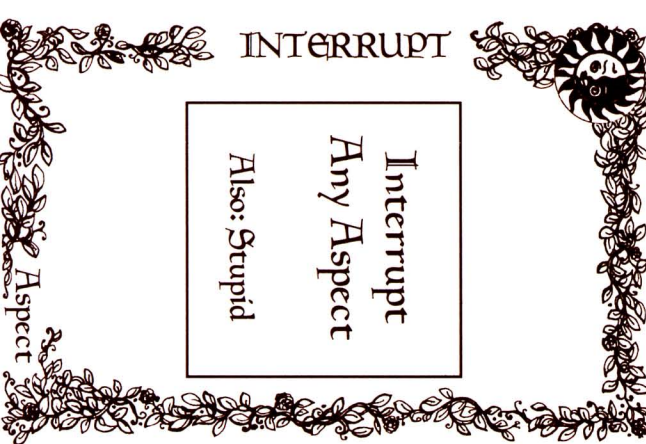
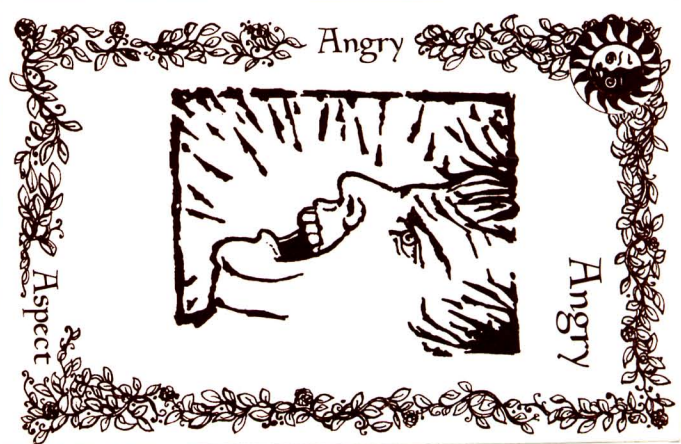
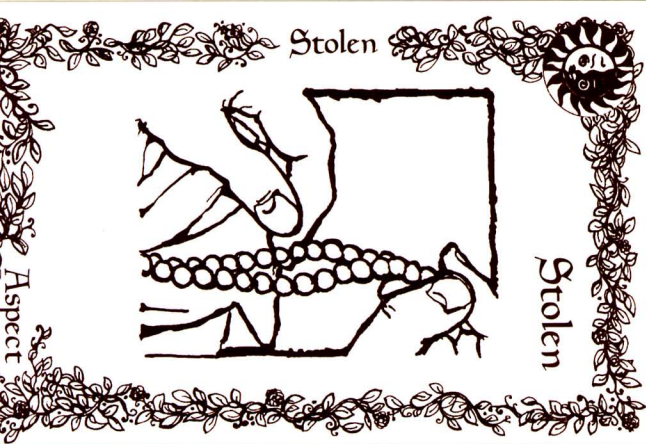
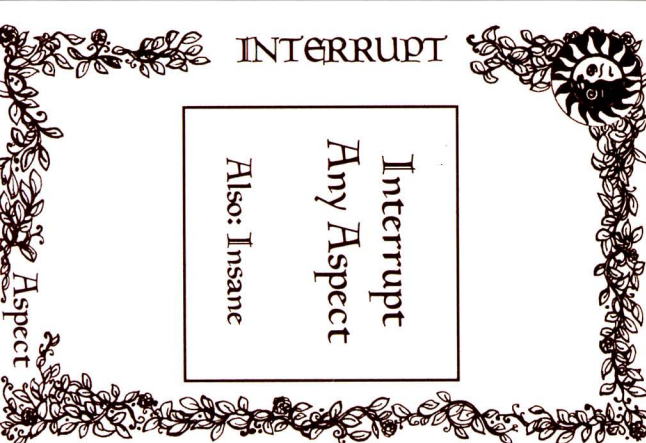
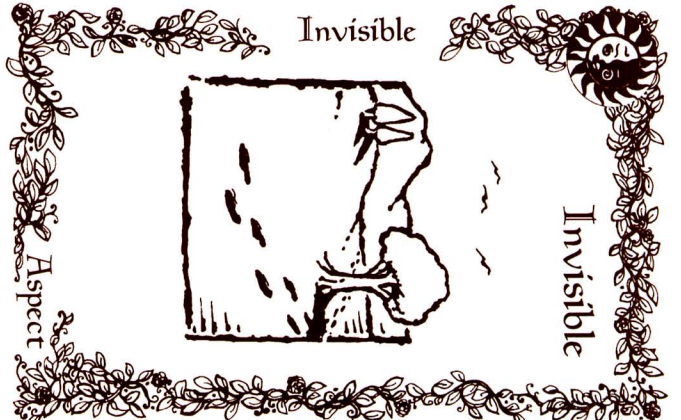
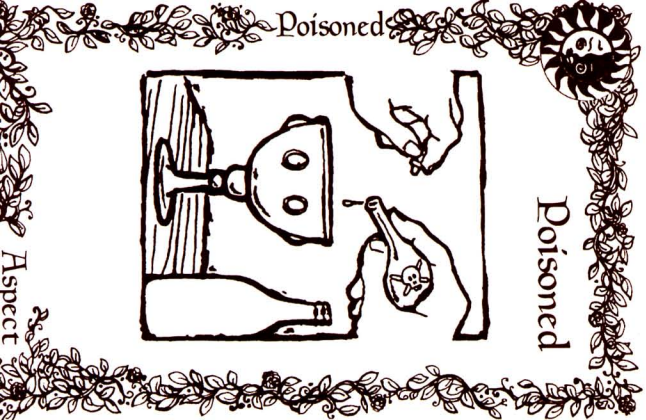
Aspect

Can Fly



This Can Fly

Aspect

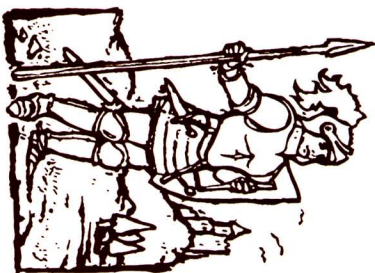


Bird



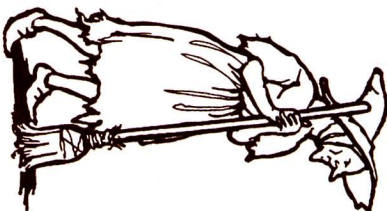
Character

Knight



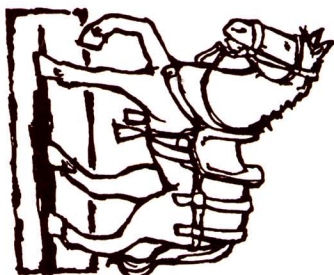
Character

Witch



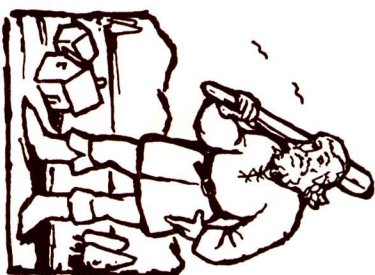
Character

Horse



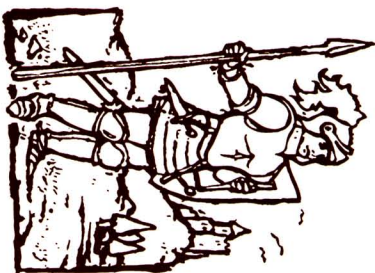
Character

Giant



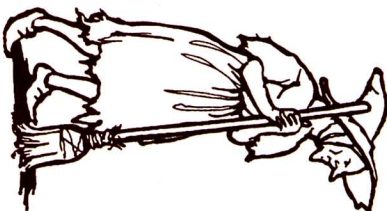
Character

Knight



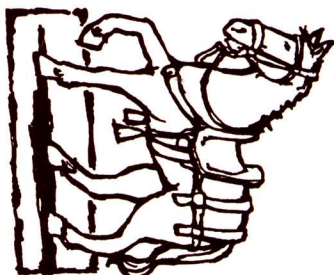
Character

Witch



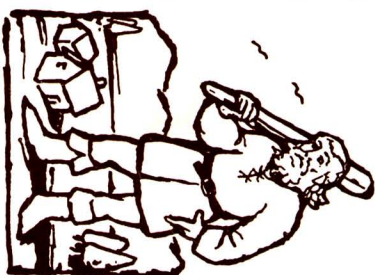
Character

Horse



Character

Giant



Character

Interrupt

Interrupt
Any
Character
Also: A Sage

Frog



Frog

Child



Child

Wizard



Wizard

Stepmother



Stepmother

Character

Prince

Prince

Character

Fairy

Fairy

Character

Wolf

Wolf

Character

King

King

Character

Old Woman

Old Woman

Character

Princess

Princess

Character

Woodcutter

Woodcutter

Character

Beggar

Beggar

Character

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character

Also: A Fox

Character

Brother or Sister

Brother or Sister

Character

Cat

Character

Dragon

Character

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character

Also: A
Blacksmith

Character

Queen

Character

Parent

Character

Thief

Character

INTERRUPT

Interrupt
Any
Character

Also: An Orphan

Character

Priest

Character