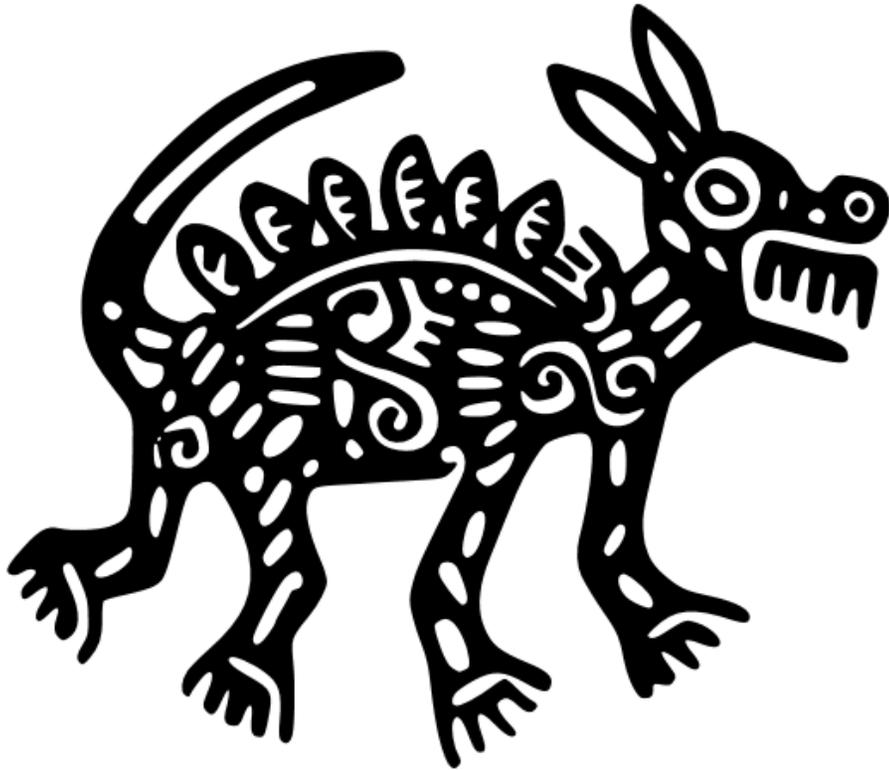


Three Card Coyote

A Game Chef 2012 contest entry by Todd Zircher using the theme of Last Chance and the ingredients; Coyote, Doctor, Lantern, and Mimic.



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In a darkened room, the Trickster God smiled and shuffled the cards. The assembled celestial powers were not amused with Coyote's theatrics, but they also knew that the cycle was coming to an end. This was their chance to grab the power for themselves. But until then, Coyote literally held all the cards; a metaphor for the earthly power that he had.

Standing in front of a round poker table, Coyote cleared his throat, a purely human mannerism.

"We all know why I'm here", he growled. "My reign is coming to an end and one of you shall take up that mantle of power. Power that will allow you to walk among men and influence the world."

Coyote sweeps his hand across the table to reveal a fan of cards, "The power can't be taken. It can only be given away... or earned."

Coyote smiled wickedly, "Let's play a game."

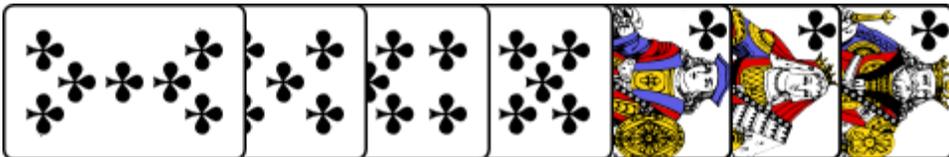
Three Card Coyote is a story telling card game. The players each represent a celestial power that wants to win the game and claim the earthly power that is currently in the hands of the Trickster God. This might be your last chance. The god power only changes hands every few centuries or millennia. In a few more centuries, you might become a forgotten god or goddess and fade from existence.

The dealer plays the role of Coyote. You have the god power and can directly meddle in the affairs of man or beast. You also have control of the deck and to some extent, fate itself. In traditional role playing games, we'd call you the game master.

At the start of the game, each player gets six poker chips (although beads, coins, or other tokens work just as well.) This is their personal power that they can expend during the game. It enables them to raise the stakes, but once a chip is thrown down, it can't be taken back. Once a player runs out of chips, they're stuck with the cards that they have been dealt.

The game starts with the draft. The dealer lays down the cards in a fan with their faces down. Each player pulls one card from the deck. High card gets to select a deity or human first. The draft then continues goes down in order from the next highest to the lowest card. In case of a tie, the suite order is spades, hearts, clubs, with diamonds as the lowest. The lowest card holder gets to select both a deity and a human avatar. The process then goes back up from lowest to highest with each player selecting a complimentary role (if you chose a human, now select a deity or vice versa.) No duplicates allowed.

At the end of the draft, each player should have one deity and one human as their celestial power and human avatar. These two roles combined represent the special powers and skills for each player.



The Celestials and their powers:

Atlas, a titan with a grudge to settle
I can lift anything.
Pose Mastery!

Chuck, mythical martial artist
Reality defying round house kicks
Beard magic!

Cthulhu, elder god, has a penchant for tentacles
Eye of madness
Tentacles from Beyond

Kukulcan, a Mayan feathered serpent with a taste for blood
Stir the winds, herald the storm.
Snake magic!

Loki, the former Trickster God until he lost a bet
Shape shifter with an eye for mischief
Frost giant blood

Helena, daughter of Zeus, paragon of beauty
This is my town, I'm welcome anywhere.
People would go to war for me.

Thor, Norse badass, inventor of heavy metal
When you have a hammer, everything is a nail.
Donner and Blitzen! (Thunder and lightning, the not reindeer.)

Zeus, king of the Greek pantheon, has infidelity issues
Lightning bolt!
Shape shifter supreme!

The powers used by the Celestials are magical in nature and strange things frequently happen around them. Could the school teacher use beard magic if she is the avatar of Chuck? You betcha! Of course, she might garner more than a few strange looks until Chuck banishes the beard back to where it came from.

The Humans and their skills and things:

The Blacksmith, mister fix-it of the West
Hammer and tongs
Tough as iron

The Cowboy, under that dusty hat is a practical mind
You were born in the saddle with a rope in your hands.
A well maintained Henry lever action rifle

The Doctor, no, not that doctor
A compassionate and trusted healer
The Black Bag of holding medical stuff

The Merchant, almost everyone owes you for something
The general store, everything you need and nothing you don't.
Everyone underestimates you.

The Miner, scruffy isn't a look, it's a life style
Underneath that rough exterior is a rough interior
Secret stash of gold dust

The Missionary, salvation or bust
Unshakeable faith leads to misplaced trust.
The good book is more useful than you think.

The School Teacher, it's hard to be humble when you're so smart
Personal library of books includes a few unusual entries.
Your educated ways intimidates the locals.

The Texan Ranger, a persistent tracker of men
The Law is on my side, even out in the territories.
The star on my chest is only matched by my Starr revolvers.

While your typical human does not wield any magic, when processed by a celestial power, they become very competent. A player doctor becomes a great healer or a cowboy becomes a showman when it comes to rope tricks.

Give your character a name and gender. While a proper East coast lady wouldn't be caught dead in a territorial mining town, the rules are a lot more flexible out West.

There is a game inside a game thing going on here. At one level there are humans running around town, but at another level there are mystical beings sitting around a table playing a game. So, when Thor does something at the saloon, Cthulhu in the stables would still know what's going on in a meta-gaming kind of way.

The game starts with everyone sitting in a stage coach. If either the cowboy or ranger is present, they can start on horseback sitting next to the stage coach.

"Last stop!", shouts Coyote the stage coach driver. "Welcome to Last Chance Gulch, the town leaders changed the town's name to Helena last night. Today is October 31, 1864."

The air is crisp this morning, but the first snows have not fallen yet. Coyote continues, "The little town of Helena doesn't have much to offer. Well, except for nigh unlimited power, if you can unlock it."

"The rules of the game are simple, search the town for the Door, the Key, and the Lantern. You need to combine all three to unlock the power. Don't worry. You'll know it when you see them or who is carrying them."

He reaches up and pulls out a shotgun. "Oh yes, it wouldn't be much of a game if you pull out guns and knives and start killing each other. You're forbidden from attacking each other directly until the Showdown. The town folks are not restricted. So, you all be mindful of stepping on too many toes. Or, use that to your advantage."

After the players have picked their characters, the dealer re-shuffles and deals three hidden cards. The first reveals the location of the Door. The second reveals the nature of the Key. And, the third reveals what is the Lantern. Look up the meaning of each card on the following tables, write that down, and hide it. After that, return the cards to the deck and shuffle again.

Card	The Door	Description
A	Tent Town	One of the tents glows with a green light. Sneaky Pete is in a bad mood and wants no visitors.
2	Miner Camp	Unseen rainbow sparks lift from the campfire in the center.
3	Helena Heights	The finest houses in town are built here in the Victorian fashion. A fine violet light glows from the sitting room windows of one of them.
4	Big Sky Saloon	Lines of power drunkenly sway towards the small stage. Employees only.
5	North Main Street	Ley lines cross where the Last Chance Gulch runs through the middle of town.
6	General Store	Curiously, the etched glass main window forms an eldritch archway.
7	Assayer's Office	The cast iron safe in the Assayer's Office emits an inaudible hum.
8	Last Chance Hotel and Doctor's Office	A second floor hotel room overlooks the street. It sings of alien mystery.
9	Sheriff's Office	The last jail on the end whispers of a dark past. Crazy Sam also hears the voices, but no one will let him out.
10	School House	The ghostly runes on the blackboard can open a hidden doorway.
J	Smith and Stable	No one knows that there's an ancient Indian burial ground under the corral.
Q	Church	To your eyes, the alter glows with a white light.
K	Homesteads	This humble home is different from the others. It has a pot belly stove that looks like a grinning imp.

Card	The Key	Description
A	Necronomicon	Only a mad Arab would write a book like this. It can be found in a Victorian house.
2	Eagle Feather	This spirit token has ended up in the hair of a waitress at the Big Sky Saloon.
3	Bear Skin	This rug covers part of the floor in one of the homesteads.
4	Bible	Not the one that the missionaries carry, this is the big one that sits on the lectern.
5	Jail Key	This fancy key never leaves the Sheriff's side. Getting it will be tricky.
6	Gold Dust	No miner will want to easily part with this. Unfortunately, it has to be Last Chance gold and not any that the player starts with.
7	Dead Man's Hand	Easier to get than a live man's hand. Maybe the doctor has some spares handy.
8	Noose	This would be the one that hangs from the old oak tree outside the stable.
9	Chalk	Surely the school house has some on their blackboard.
10	Scale	Not a dragon's scale but the kind used by the town's Assayer to measure gold dust.
J	Mining Pan	Partially buried in the mud of Last Chance Gulch at North Main Street. It has the perfect resonance.
Q	Mirror	Specifically, that really fancy mirror that is hanging in the General Store.
K	Tent Stake	Only one that has tasted blood will do. Like the one that was involved in that accident in Tent City that crushed a man's hand.



Card	The Lantern	Description
A	Jack-o'-Lantern	There are plenty in town this day. Helena almost got called Pumpkinville. You can find this squash in front of the school.
2	Miner's Lamp	It should be no surprise that this can be found in a miner's tent.
3	Camp Lantern	A brass dead flame lantern commonly found around camp sites.
4	Black Candle	No one knows why this is in the sheriff's desk.
5	Lime Light	One of the lights for the saloon stage is different from the others.
6	Torch	Stuck in the mud next to a wooden plank, this torch is found on North Main Street.
7	Hot Coal	There is a hot coal in the blacksmith's forge that never grows cold.
8	Chandelier	Only a Victorian home would have one.
9	Blessed Candle	The Church is the obvious place for one.
10	Hurricane Lamp	Rather fragile, you can find one brought from back East by a homesteader.
J	Oil Lamp	This Arabian style oil lamp is located in the Assayer's Office.
Q	Matches	Easily bought at the General Store.
K	Menorah	It looks rather out of place in the Last Chance Hotel.

Each round, the dealer deals out three cards to each player face down. The players 'spend' these cards to perform actions. Some actions are easy such as walking across a street, others require a high card, and a few require a winning hand. Some actions, such as a big chase or brawl might carry over several actions or rounds. The first round starts with the player to the left of the dealer. The next round starts with the next player to the left and continues around the table.

Each turn of a card is an action that the player performs. It's possible for the players to think outside the box and it is up to the dealer to decide if their action is successful. In general, easy actions can be done on the turn of any card, difficult actions require playing a card with a value of eight or higher, dangerous actions require a winning

card or hand (against another player or the dealer.) During an action, a player can choose to not reveal a card and instead fold or raise.

Folding means that the player voluntarily forfeits their remaining actions that round. In a story telling context, it means they fail gracefully. They cower from a fight, bide their time for an occupant to leave a house, etc. They forfeit their move to avoid a loss or confrontation.

Raising happens that the player throws down a chip and explains how they're using their celestial power or supernatural skill. The player describes what happens and they automatically win that action unless an opposing player also throws down a chip and creates a stalemate for that action. A player can only do this if they're in a position to intervene. This usually means they have to be in the same location on the map. If this is the third action of a round and there is still a stalemate, any hidden cards are revealed and the winning hand determines the outcome of the action.

Ranks of Hands:

Straight Flush, a run of three cards in the same suit.

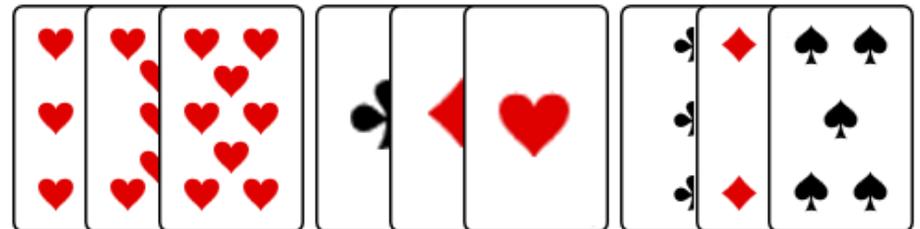
Three of a kind, is three cards of the same value.

Straight, three cards in ascending or descending order, the Ace can be played on the high end (AKQ) or low end (A23).

Flush, three cards of the same suit

Two pair, two cards of the same value with the third card being used as a tie breaker (also known as a kicker.)

High card, if nothing else works, use the highest card.



Action	Description
Pass (any)	Place a card face down and take no action. Useful to bluff someone into not attacking you.
Move (any card)	Move up, down, left, or right on the map. This is an automatic success, unless someone is trying to stop you. If you are in a fight, you need to have a higher card. If lower, you lose the fight. If tied, it's a draw but you don't escape.
Search (8+)	Use your mystic senses to search a location for the Door, the Key, or the Lantern. Failure means that you were interrupted and need to search again. On a success, the dealer will tell you secretly if you have found anything. Even if there is nothing to find, the dealer should either whisper to you or give you a note on a slip of paper to keep the other player's guessing. Just because you know the location of an object does not mean you need to reveal it. If you say, "I pick up the hurricane lamp in the homestead." The other players will have to decide if you got the real thing or are just trying to fool them.
Talk (any/8+)	Talk is easy. Use it to gain info, buy objects, or create facts. But, if you're trying to fool a non-player or get them to help you, you need to play an 8 or higher.
Fight (high card)	Fists, knives, or a frying pan will all do the trick. High card puts a wound on everyone that doesn't tie them. More than one player or non-player character can be in a brawl. If you lose a fight, you take a wound and the winning player can take one object. Guns can harm, but not steal from others. They can't be counter attacked except by other guns and ranged magic.
Unlock (any card)	If a single player has the Key and the Lantern and they're at the Door, they can play any card to unlock it. Describe the ritual you use. However, if someone is fighting you, they can interrupt the process unless you have a higher card. If you lose either the Key or the Lantern, you can't complete the ritual.
Claim (any card)	If the Door has been unlocked, the player with the Key and Lantern can claim the power. If someone is fighting you, they can interrupt unless you have a higher card.

The Showdown:

At the end of the round after all three components have been discovered, the dealer announces that the showdown has begun. Players can now attack each other. Each player can take three wounds. That means they need to lose three separate fights before their human is knocked out of the game. NPCs are taken out by a single wound.

Optional Rules:

Want to play the Monkey King inhabiting the body of an Indian or a Voodoo Loa inside of a Baker? For each celestial creature, create two powers. For each human, they have either two skills or tools that can help them. The dealer has final say if the powers or skills are too unbalanced for game play.

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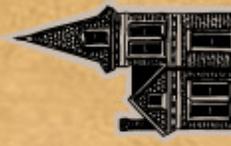
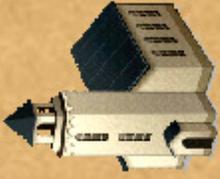
The card faces are a derivative of the public domain Paris card set (made to look more like a Faro deck) created by Todd Zircher.

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Three Card Coyote

 <p>Tent Town</p>	 <p>Miner's Camp</p>	 <p>Upper Last Chance</p>	 <p>Helena Heights</p>
 <p>Big Sky Saloon</p>	 <p>North Main Street</p>	 <p>General Store</p>	 <p>Assayer's Office</p>
 <p>Last Chance Hotel And Doctor</p>	 <p>South Main Street</p>	 <p>Sheriff's Office</p>	 <p>School House</p>
 <p>Lower Last Chance</p>	 <p>Smith & Stable</p>	 <p>Church</p>	 <p>Homesteads</p>

Helena 1864