



• Introduction •

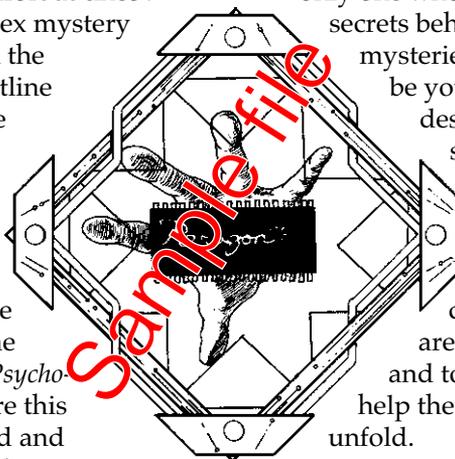
Psychosis is a unique game in which the players' perception and understanding of reality shifts constantly and can never be trusted. Unlike most games, it is not a competition between the players, but is more like a cooperative effort at uncovering a complex mystery buried within the enigmatic plotline of a story. The course of the storyline, and even the object of the game, are not clear at the beginning. The challenge of *Psychosis* is to explore this fictional world and discover the objective.

Psychosis requires a group of three to seven players. One of your number will be the **Guide**, and the rest will be the **Players**: Players in the game, Players of cards and Players of roles. If you are going to be a Player, read only this introductory section, otherwise you will spoil your enjoyment of the

adventure. If you are going to be the Guide for a group of Players, you should read through the game rules over the next few pages and at least the beginnings of the adventure that follows. You will be the only one who knows the secrets behind the game's mysteries, and it will be your job to describe the settings and events of the adventure, to take the roles of all the characters who are not Players, and to generally help the story's plot unfold.

Players' Introduction

As a Player, you will be faced with an ever-changing vision of the game world, a vision which will be confusing at times, but which will gradually take shape as you move through the story. Prepare yourself for a unique and imaginative experience that is unlike any other roleplaying





game you have ever played. The next few pages will introduce you to the game rules, then get ready to leave your world behind as you enter the realm of *Psychosis*.

Playing the Game

Psychosis is played by three to seven people using a deck of cards. One

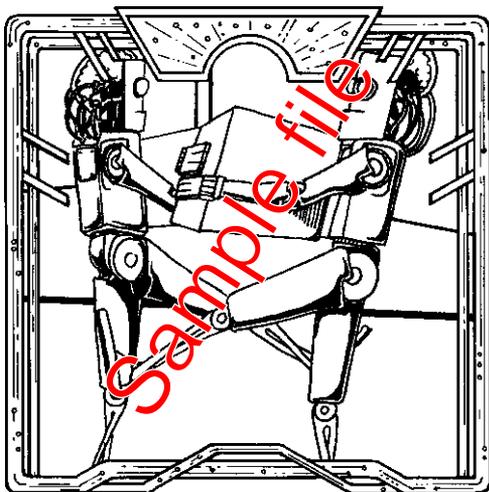
of the participants takes the role of Guide, and acts as referee and narrator.

The Guide describes the setting for the Players, charting their paths through the adventure. Whenever the Players try to do something which is challenging, cards are played to find the outcome. By winning challenges and collecting clues, the Players will gradually solve the mysteries and complete the adventure.

The Deck

To play *Psychosis* you'll need a standard Tarot card deck. The Tarot deck consists of seventy-eight cards—fourteen in each of the four **minor** suits (numbered one to ten, plus four **royalty** cards), and twenty-two unique major **Arcana**. The numbering and exact names of the Arcana,

and the names of the minor suits, can vary from deck to deck, but regardless of terminology any standard 78-card tarot deck is perfectly suitable for use in *Psychosis*.



The complete deck is separated into two piles during play. Minor cards are used for challenge resolution, and are placed in the **Challenge Deck**. The Arcana make up the **Arcana Deck**, and have special effects, each unique to that particular card, and to each adventure campaign. Each





minor suit in the Challenge Deck represents a **sphere** of action or capability: **Staves** represent strength or brute force; **Swords** agility or dexterity, **Coins** intellect and knowledge, and **Cups** intuition, empathy and psyche. Again, in some Tarot decks the suits are slightly different (coins are sometimes called disks or pentacles, for example), but as long as you know what each suit represents, you won't have any problems.

The four minor suits relate to one another in a relational pattern as shown in the illustration on page 168: Swords and Coins are diametrically **opposed**, as are Cups and Staves. Those to either side of a given suit are **related**.

Every minor card has a value, equal to its number. Royalty cards are valued at 12 for **Pages**, 14 for **Knights**, 16 for **Queens**, and 20 for **Kings**. In general, high values are desirable, for they beat lower values when the cards are played.

Aces are set aside when they appear, but usually indicate a draw from the Arcana deck.

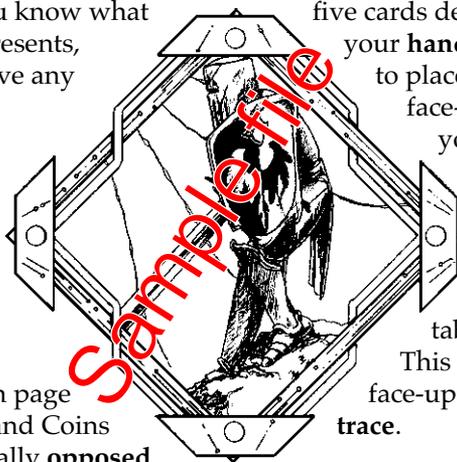
Your Cards

At the very beginning of the game, your Guide will deal you five cards from the Challenge Deck. If you get an ace at this time discard it and the Guide will give you a new card. The five cards dealt to you are your **hand**. You may opt

to place some cards face-up in front of you—up to one card from each suit. Lay these cards neatly out on the table before you.

This collection of face-up cards is your **trace**.

It's a good idea to only put cards with high values in your trace. If you don't have high cards, you may want to wait until later on when you are dealt something better. You can move cards from your hand to your trace at any time, but never from your trace back into your hand. The cards in your trace still count towards the size of your hand (in other words,





you can only have a total of five cards between your trace and your hand), but trace cards are not discarded when used. They stay in play until your Guide instructs you to remove them.

Cards from both your hand and your trace are used during the game in a manner to be described in just a moment. At

times your hand will become depleted as you use and discard cards. At

6 other times your Guide may instruct you to discard some or all of the cards in your

trace. Between game sessions, your cards will be set aside as a record of your character's capabilities.

Challenges

Cards are played to determine whether or not your character succeeds at the many tasks and difficulties faced over the

course of your story—such as driving a car in a high-speed chase, fending off the attacks of a terrible monster, or jumping from one rooftop to another while being pursued by enemy agents. Such tasks are called **Challenges**.

The Guide will describe your character's situation, and it's

your job to determine how your character deals with it. Based on the course of action you choose, the Guide will determine which sphere (strength or brute force;

agility or dexterity; intellect or knowledge; or intuition, empathy and psyche) is most suitable, and hence, which suit is **trump**. You will then make a brief card play to determine how successful your character is in overcoming the challenge.

Let's look at an example. Your character has been confronted

