SOUL TAKER

Half is foul and half is not,
Foul 'gainst fair is life's own lot,
Play you fair or foul you'll play
And maybe lose your soul today.

Vanquish foul or safeguard fair,
'Gainst all vice and virtue dare
To vie with skill and subtlety,
A soul within your grasp to see.

Take the cards and play the game,
Quail not and play, for shame!
If you win, a soul you gain,
If you lose, it goes away.

But only for a day.

LORE

Alas, no one can be certain any more just how and by whose hand the game of Soul Taker first came to the multiverse, all that is known is that it was contrived by one of the Demons granted citizenship by the dreadnought-island of Gith-Zhakor in the wake of the War for the Gore-gate.

If such names and events mean nothing tp you, this is not surprising as the game has slithered its way from one reality to the next, in various guises and by the seeming design of innumerable creators throughout the multiverse.

The motivation of its true creator can only be wondered at as well, sadly. There are those who claim that he or she merely wished to redesign the infernal machinations that the Gore-gate turncoats had forsworn in the wake of the war to a purpose more fitting to their new homeland, specifically that of recreation. There are others who cynically see it as an insidious attempt to make the stealing of souls an acceptable act in polite society.

Whatever the truth may be, this game has endured in the memory of thousands of worlds for tens of thousands of years. It has been the pastime of children and tyrants, newly-weds and inquisitors; it has granted freedom to the guileful condemned and been the downfall of careless monarchs. It has been banned and reviled in as many worlds as it has become celebrated and commonplace in others.

Somehow, the game always finds itself to new worlds, though none can quite say how. Magic powerful enough to breach the borders between realities cannot, by any known means at least, operate as subtly as the game's peculiar motion suggests.

If it has come to your world, and your world possesses any magic whatsoever to allow for the extraction of souls, the game shall adapt to its new environment. You need do no more than play the game. Be aware before you play however that should you lose, your opponent will gain control of your soul for a day, and thus the very nature of your existence becomes theirs to decide, they can bestow torments or sensations limited only by their imagination or have you assume any shape or perform any deed they desire. Therefore it is perhaps best not to play against anyone who wishes you ill.

Of course, if you win, such revelries become yours to enjoy.

HOW TO PLAY

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

The Fair Deck

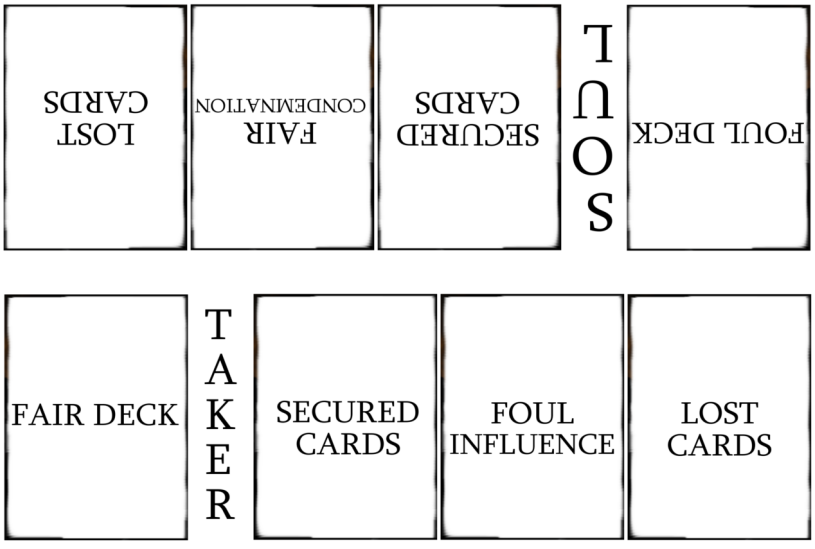
25 cards representing virtues and the positive aspects of life, which must stand fast against the depredations of that which is Foul. Each card is assigned a numerical value between one and five, the importance of which we'll cover soon.

The Foul Deck

25 cards representing those lamentable aspects life and human nature both. Those playing with the Foul deck have a foul arsenal and an ironic one to safeguard their soul with, and one powerful enough to drown out all that is Fiar.

The Board

Not strictly necessary but a convenience for players. Here is where cards are stored once they've been secured, foisted on an opponent or discarded to allow for easier scoring at game's end. More details to follow.



RULES FOR THE STANDARD GAME

A standard game of Soul Taker requires two players, one of whom takes up the Fair deck, the other takes the Foul. A standard game is divided into five rounds, each involving five cards. Each player places their deck face down on the respective Fair and Foul spaces on the board or else on the table, and draw five cards per round. The first two they place face down without seeing what they are, the final three they do see but do not allow their opponent to see. These cards may be played in any order.

On the first round, Fair goes first; they lay a single card, which Foul must counter as best they can. A card can be countered by answering its numerical value with whichever value defeats it. The specifics of which can be seen below:

5 beats 1	5 is the most salient and thus the most blind
3 beats everything	3 is the strength and objectivity of balance
4 beats 2	4 is mighty but lacks perspicacity
2 beats 1 and 5	2 is a tyrant to the weak and the assassin of the great
1 beats 4	1 is the weakest, but sly when the moment comes.

Whoever successfully counters their opponents card moves their own played card to the 'secured cards' space, the total numerical value of the cards collected there will contribute to each player's final score. The card they countered is sent to their opponent's 'lost cards' deck, any cards sent here have no effect on the final score. More on scoring to follow.

There are two other possible actions the player responding to a laid card can take, the first is to play a card of equal value to the first player's in which case both cards are sent to the 'lost cards' spaces.

The other option is to play a card of a different value, but not a countering one. In this instant, the Fair card is sent to the 'Fair Condemnation' space and the Foul to 'Foul Influence'. The combined total of the cards in these spaces at the game's end do influence the final score once all rounds are finished.

On the second turn, Foul lays a card first and Fair must respond to it, then Fair lays first for the third turn, Foul for the fourth and Fair for the fifth. The second round plays identically to the first except that Foul lays the first card for the first turn, Fair for the second, etc. In practice, the players alternate turns in this fashion throughout the game.

When all five rounds are completed, the numerical values of each player's secured cards are added together, the total values of the cards in the 'Foul influence' space for Fair and 'Fair condemnation' for Foul are then subtracted from the score generated by each players secured cards, and this forms the final score.

Assuming the magic of your world allows for it, the winner shall automatically receive the loser's soul once the scores are determined. If your world is too mundane to allow for this, some lesser prize may be decided between the two players, if they wish.

RULES FOR THE MIXED DECK GAME

In a mixed deck game, the Fair and Foul decks are combined and shuffled together, each player is then dealt 25 cards each and the game plays out much like a standard game, with five rounds involving five cards each, the first two being placed face down, the final three visible to the player. A coin can be tossed to determine who goes first, however each player alternates turns in the same way as in a standard game.

The objective of a mixed deck game is not to achieve a high score, but to obtain as close a score to zero as possible. To accomplish this, Fair and Foul cards must be secured, the former adding to a player's total score, the latter detracting from it.

Other differences from a standard game are as follows:

If a card is countered with a card of the same numerical value and both cards are from the Fair deck, both cards add to secured Fair cards of the player who countered the first card. If both cards are from the Foul deck, they add to the secured Foul cards of the player who laid the first card of the turn. If they are from opposite decks, the cards are discarded as normal.

If cards of different, but not countering, numerical values are played, the following may happen:

If two Fair cards are played: Whoever laid the card with the highest number has the option to return any card discarded from the game and add it to their secured cards if they wish.

If two Foul cards are played: Whoever laid the card with the lowest number has the option to transfer any of their own secured cards to their opponent, if they wish.

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Any actual loss of the soul on the part of anyone playing this game is most likely to be coincidental. The game's creator shall accept no responsibility for misplaced or displaced souls under any circumstances. (So nyeh!)

Hope you have fun and thanks for playing.