GATEKEEPER

Every 100 year, all the female witches from the Northern and Southern continents gather to take part in a grand contest of power. The participants will do anything to take control of the mysterious Astral plane that holds incredible powers to the realm of witches in control. During the contest witches conduct duels across 4 different locations, each connected to a specific element: fire, water, earth and wind.
Winning duels might be the obvious goal for most, but be aware of the "Gatekeeper", as she will move across the locations to remove weakened witches, opening gates to specific elements.
Will your side cast the ultimate victory and survive?

Summary

In Gatekeeper, each turn players will position a witch at one of 4 locations forming the Astral plane.
This can potentially trigger a duel with an opposing witch positioned at the same location. This duel often results in a dazzled witch. Next the Gatekeeper will be activated. Being the merciless arbitrator of the conquest.
The Gatekeeper will attempt to remove a dazzled witch at the location she lands in. Additionally she opens a gate of a specific element at the location. This triggers another confrontation. However, this time on a larger scale, involving all the witches of the element the gate activates. Winning such a confrontation allows the player to inflict damage to their opponent, resulting in the loss of mana. This vital supernatural lifeforce drives a witch coven.
Will you defeat your opponent by lowering his mana level to "0" and control the Astral plane?

Components

44 unique witch cards / 4 location cards / 2 mana track cards / 2 wooden scoring pawns, 1 per player / 1 wooden gatekeeper pawn / 4 transparent yellow glass beads / 2 wooden Astral shield pawns, 1 per player.

Setup

1) Take the 4 location cards and form a horizontal row between the players. This row is called the "Astral plane".
The order in which the cards are placed is not important, but make sure their orientation is the same. Put a glass bead on each of the top element symbols. The Glass bead in each location marks which gate of a specific element is currently open.

2) Shuffle the Witch cards well and form a face down pile to draw cards from next to the location row, so both players have easy access during play. Each player now receives 5 cards in hand, drawn from the top of this deck. Now each player can look at his hand of witches and decice if he wants to discard a number of witches from his hand to the bottom of the draw pile and draw back the same number of witches from this pile to fill back his hand to 5 witches. However, he may only perform this action once.

3) Create a display of cards by **picking the top 4 witches, forming a row next to the Astral plane**.

4) Each player receives a wooden cube which will be placed **on the space marked with "12" on the personal mana track**.

5) Randomly choose the first player. He/She will play the first card in the conquest.

Recruit line
A row of 4 cards drawn from the top of the witch pile forms the recruit line from which players can recruit new witches to form their hand.
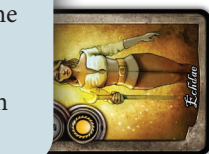
Next to the draw pile of witch cards a **discard pile** is formed while playing.

Astral Plane
is formed by the 4 location cards, presenting the realms of air (white), earth (green), water (blue) and fire (red).
Each location has a "dominant" element matching the background color of the location, that will hold the glass bead at the start.

Mana track
tracks the life force of your realm of witches. Players start with 12 mana but loose mana with each duel lost from the opposing side. Once it reaches "0" that player loses the game.

WITCH CARD

Gatekeeper movement
This Roman value represents the Gatekeeper movement that will be triggered by the witch (see further).

Spellpower
This value determines if the witch will win a duel against another witch as their values will be compared.

Unique Spell
This symbol represents a unique spell the witch can optionally cast once when she is positioned at a location.

This value is the spellpower of your card printed upside down so that it helps the opposing player to get a clear view of the spellpower played by his rival.

Element
Each witch has control of one of the four specific elements: water / fire / earth / wind.

Gwion

At the start of the game the glass bead is positioned on the main element of a location, matching the location (background color). During the game, the bead will move in clockwise direction from one Gate to another, in a circular way, each time activating a gate. Gates are visually represented by the element they will unleash when opening the gate. The central circle is a slot specifically to position the Gatekeeper.

A player's turn

In his turn a player will perform 3 actions. It will not always be posible to resolve all 3, depending on the situation:

1) Play a witch from hand into a location and possibly conduct duel.
2) Resolve Gatekeeper.
3) Recruit a new witch.

During his first turn, the start player will play the first card. When the second player will perform his turn he will, before playing, position the Gatekeeper (pawn) at the location of the first positioned witch.

LOCATION CARD

The Element matching the background of the location card is the "**location**" element.
In this example "water" (blue).
Each location also lists 2 other elements, in this example "earth" and "fire".

1) **Play a witch from hand into a location.**

A player can position **one witch** from his hand in any location on his side of the Astral plane, as long as the element listed on the witch is also listed on the location. Each location allows 3 different elements to be positioned there.
A new card is always added **at the bottom of a column if already witches are present**.

When a player positions a witch in a location, he needs to check if a duel is triggered:
He looks at the opposing column at the location and checks if the competing player has played at least one witch on his side.
If the last played witch (positioned the furthest away from the current active player) is positioned vertically, a duel will take place between both witches. A duel is performed by **comparing the spellpower of both witches participating in the duel. Their element is not important and can be potentially different**.
If both cards have a different value, the card with the lowest spellpower is considered "dazzled".
It will be marked as such by rotating the card 90° clockwise, so that it will be positioned **horizontally.**

In this example the player on the left has played a water element witch with spellpower 6. By playing this witch he goes into a duel with the opposing witch, the last played witch in the column of the rival player: an earth element witch with spellpower 5. As the targeted witch is of a weaker value, the earth element witch will be rotated clockwise into a horizontal position to mark it is dazzled.

However, in 3 cases no duel is conducted when a witch is positioned:
1) The last played witch by the opponent is already dazzled (positioned horizontally).
2) The opposing witch lists a spellpower of equal value.
3) There is no witch positioned at the other side of the location by the opponent.

2) Resolve Gatekeeper.

Once the duel is resolved, the Gatekeeper will activate. **She will move a number of locations equal to the Roman value listed on the witch card played by the active player (who triggered the duel).** The Gatekeeper has a specific cycle-movement.
She always moves **away from the draw pile** when she can, towards the furthest location card in the Astral Plane.
When she lands on that furthest location card, with still one or more movement points remaining, she will jump back to the first location card in the row when the next movement point is spend.

Witches with spellpower "1" have a special icon (wild) instead of a Roman value. **This allows the players to move the Gatekeeper to any location they choose. However, if the current location is chosen again, the Gatekeeper is considered to stay put and will not be activated, so she will not perform her actions.**

In this example, the Gatekeeper is triggered for a movement of "3" (III). Starting her movement on the Earth location (green) she moves two positions to the right. As she still has 1 movement point remaining, she cycles back to the first location card in the Astral Plane on the left, which is in this case the Wind location (white), ending the movement of the Gatekeeper.

The Gatekeeper has two tasks she will execute in order at the location she ends her movement:
Taks 1: Remove one dazzled witch (if possible).
Task 2: Open a new gate.

Task 1: Remove one dazzled witch

At the location the Gatekeeper lands in, the column on both sides will be checked regardless if the active player dazzled an opposing witch or not. If the last played card at the end of a column (from the active and opposing player) is positioned horizontally (so considered "dazzled"), it will be removed and placed on the discard pile.
If on both sides a dazzled witch is present, the witch with the **lowest spellpower** is removed.
So only one witch will be removed during each Gatekeeper action.

In this example, the Bleu marked card is the location. the Gatekeeper will remove the witch marked red

In this example we will resolve the first step of the Gatekeeper, removing a dazzled witch at a location. A player has just positioned a witch with spellpower 6 at the water element location. The Roman numeral shows a "2", so the activated Gatekeeper (blue arrow)will move two locations away from the face down deck (red arrow).

This movement lands the Gatekeeper in the Fire element location. At this location she will check for dazzled witches at the end of a column on both sides.

The active player played well, because in the column of his opposing player a dazzled witch is present (spellpower 4). Now the Gatekeeper will target this witch (green arrow) and remove her from the column.

Task 2: Open a new Gate

After the Gatekeeper has checked for dazzled witches, she will open a new Gate at the location.
This is done by **moving the glass bead to the next gate element in clockwise direction at the location**.

By activating this new gate, a confrontation can be triggered, based on the element of the gate. So basically, when the earth element gate opens, all the earth witches present at the location will take part in the confrontation. It could be that the activated element will trigger no confrontation, as no witches are present at the location of this specific element. **If there however is at least one witch present (on either side of the location) of the activated element, players need to determine the dominating player.**

This is simply done by **counting the undazzled witches of the activated gate element** on each side of this location to see who **holds the majority.**
If there should be a tie**, no damage will be inflicted.**
The player holding the majority will immediately inflict damage to the opposing side.

Opening an element gate

The dominating player, holding more undazzled witches of the triggered element, will inflict damage. This damage is higher if a player has more witches **matching the activated gate element** positioned: The first witch of a specific element inflicts 1 damage, the second also 1 damage, but witch 3 and 4 inflict 2 mana damage each. So having 4 witches of 1 specific element positioned can potentially inflict 6 damage to your opponent!
The victim however can defend himself by having witches positioned on his side of this activated element: **each witch he has positioned on his side blocks 1 mana damage inflicted by his opponent, even in dazzled state.**
Witches of other elements present at the location have **no effect** on both attacker and defender during the confrontation.

Opening the location element gate

The element gate matching the location is resolved like a regular element, but after the main element is resolved, players need to check if a column on either side of the location **holds 4 witches**. If this is the case, **the complete column on both sides will be cleared (all cards are discarded to the discard pile**, creating an empty location again that can be built up with new witches.

Let us now look at 2 gate activation examples to further demonstrate. The witch cards marked with "X" represent dazzled witches. In these examples the cards on both sides are of the same element, triggered for a duel by an open gate.

PLAYER 1   **PLAYER 2**

In this example, player 1 is the clear winner, holding the majority with his 3 witches VS 1 of the opposing player. He will inflict 4 mana damage (1+1+2) with the defender blocking 2 mana of this damage, so 2 damage is actually inflicted.

PLAYER 1   **PLAYER 2**

Here both player have an equal amount of undazzled witches of the triggered elemement and thus no damage is dealt.

3) Recruit a new witch.

A player's turn ends when he fills his hand **back to 5 witches** by taking either one of the 4 recruitable witches on display next to the Astral plane, or the top (face down) witch from the draw pile. The player immediately replaces a missing card in the recruit line with the top card from the draw pile so the display consists again of 4 witches. His turn is now completed and the opposing player now takes his turn. If the draw pile would ever run out of cards, reshuffle the discard pile to form a new draw pile.

As an option, players may recruit at the start of their turn a number of witches equal to the number of witches in their current hand (in most cases 5) **minus 1**, so 4 witches the first time you perform this option. The number of witches drawn will become your new hand limit. Before playing a witch, you discard your hand down to your new hand limit.
This option allows players to refresh their hand when they want to drastically change direction.
But beware: each time you choose this option your hand will get smaller, as you will recruit less witches from then on.

Winning the game

The turns continue until one of the players mana level drops to "0". This renders victory for the opposing player. He is considered the winner of the contest and takes control of the Astral plane.

Gatekeeper comes with a special witch that function slightly different from the other witches in the coven.
Let us take a look:

Shapeshifter witches

Witches with spellpower value "2" have a Sun element listed. This acts as a "wild": **when played, shapeshifters automatically take on the form of the activated element at a location each time a gate is activated at the location,** making these witches both powerful in attacks and building defense. Naturally this makes them a piriority target for your opponent. **However, each column of a player may only contain 1 Shapeshifter witch at any time.**

Unique spells

Let us now take a look at the unique spells that each witch can cast **once** in the turn when she is positioned at a location.
These spells are represented by the 3rd icon on a witch card, except for the Sun witches, who have their unique power build in.
Each of these spells is optional: the player when positioning the witch chooses if he will cast the listed spell or not.
A spell can be cast, **regardless if the witch was dazzled or not** in the duel that was conducted when she was positioned.
Take note that each spell has a specific timing within a player's turn when it may be cast (see the table on the next page).
All of these spells have a one-time-use effect, that is triggered within the turn when the witch casting the spell is played.
Some effects like the "Archer" or "Manipulator" modify a specific phase/action within a turn.

Fury

This spell creates a more furious Gatekeeper: during the Gatekeeper action you can choose to remove 2 dazzled witches in an opponents column of your choice. These witches may be positioned in the same or in different columns. Your own dazzled witches are safe and will not be victim of the Gatekeeper, even if no dazzled witches are present on the side of the opponent.
Timing: The spell takes effect during the "remove a dazzled witch" step of the Gatekeeper action.

Animal Spirit

When the witch is positioned she can call in the help from her spirit animal: as a result the spellpower of her opponnent is, for this turn, considered to be lowered to "0", enabling her to defeat the opponent in the duel. This makes the Animal spirit an ideal way to defeat witches of high spellpower that would otherwise form a considerable obstacle.
Timing: The spell takes effect during the potential duel triggered by placing the witch.

Manipulator

This spell takes effect specifically during the "Open new gate" step of the Gatekeeper phase.
When the active player should opt to activate this spell, the bead would jump two gates forward.
The second gate it lands in will get activated, with the first gate it passes being neglected.
This makes the manipulator both interesting to score one of your elements faster or block the element of an opponent from scoring by deliberately skipping this element, preventing him to strike.
Timing: The spell takes effect during the "Open new gate" step of the Gatekeeper action.

Twin Strike

The player is allowed to position an additional witch directly after having played the Twin Strike witch, following three strict rules:

1) The second witch must be of **lower Spellpower** value: 1/2/3/4.
2) The Twin strike witch itself will **duel but not activate the Gatekeeper**. The second played witch will both duel and activate the Gatekeeper as well as her unique spell.
3) The second witch may **not be positioned in the same location** as the Twin strike witch.

After having positioned the second witch, the player recruits 2 new witches from the display/draw pile to fill his hand back to 5 witches and next fills the recruit line back to 4 witches.
Timing: The spell takes effect after the witch has fought a possible duel with an opposing witch.

Archer

This witch is trained in duels to target a wide range within the Astral plane: when positioned she can target **ANY** witch on the opposing side of the Astral plane, not only the witch at the end of her own column.
This could well be a witch positioned midway a column or in a different column were the Archer was positioned. This renders Archers ideal witches in situations where a player wants to target impossible to reach targets. Basically the Archer can be seen as a modified duel. It also avoids a duel with a potential stronger witch positioned in the opposing column. **Naturally she eliminates witches with weaker spellpower, but by spending 1 mana of your mana pool she can also defeat witches with a higher spellpower.**
Timing: The spell is activated immediately when the witch is positioned and a possible duel is conducted.

Healer

When played this witch can heal **upto 2 dazzled witches on your side of the Astral plane** by **putting the witches back upright**. However, the Healer is not allowed to heal herself.
Timing: The spell is activated immediately when the witch is positioned.

Lieutenant

When played you may immediately move one of his witches in any column to another column on his side of the Astral plane. This doesn't need to be the column were the Lieutenant is positioned. **The player has free choice of were in the column he takes and ultimately re-positions the witch.** With her spell the Lieutenant can thus move witches that have no longer impact in a location to a location were they can truly matter to take control. The transferred witch however **will not trigger a duel** when positioned at the new location, so it is also an interesting option to sneak in a weaker witch that would be otherwise defeated in a duel.
Alternatively the lieutenant is allowed to move himself following the same rules.
Timing: The spell is activated immediately when the witch is positioned.

Temptress

This witch can lure an opponent into a different position.
When played, choose **any witch in the opposing column and move it to a different position inside this column**. During this action only 1 witch may be moved.
This allows the Temptress to choose a witch to conduct a duel against at her location.
*Timing: The spell is activated immediately when the witch is positioned.*

Astral Shield

When positioned, the player takes a wooden shield token and places it on one of the undazzled witches on his side of the Astral plane, including the Astral witch herself. The witch is now considered protected by the shield spell and can not be dazzled until removed from the Astral plane. This makes the Astral shield an ideal spell to protect vulnerable witches you desperately want to keep undazzled to take control of a location. **Only one Astral shield may be active per player at any time. When the Astral shield is already in play, the shield may be moved to a newly selected witch.** *Timing: The spell may be activated at any point in your turn.*

A Player's Turn

**1) Play a witch of an element that is listed at the location:**
If there is a witch present at the end of the opposing column that is undazzled: compare spellpower values. If one is lower than the other the witch with the inferior spellpower is dazzled (positioned horizontally).
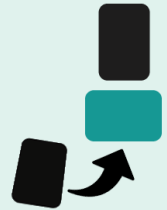
2) Move the Gatekeeper a number of locations equal to the Gatekeeper value on the witch card that was played. At the location she will:

1) Remove a dazzled witch at the end of a column (if possible).
When two witches are dazzled at both ends choose the witch with the lowest spellpower.
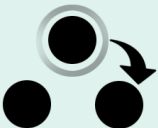
2) Move the glass bead to the next gate to activate a new element gate:
Determine who takes control of the location by comparing the amounts of withes of the activated element. A tie is broken with the side with the least dazzled witches taking control: The player who took control will inflict damage depending on the amount of witches of the activated element he has on his side of the location, minus the amount of undazzled witches of the opposing player.

3) Refill your hand until you have 5 witches again.