

One Man: Thrag!

A solitaire game for the piecepack

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You'll need: A piecepack and about 20-30 minutes

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Background

Lars sat with his hands hanging limply down into his lap, an expression of utter incredulity on his face.

“You’re just one man, Thrag. How could you ever do it?”

The Inn of the Rabid Weasel was bustling, as it always was after sundown. Thrag scooped up the bowl of lamb stew in front of him and poured what little was left into his mouth. He wiped his lips and reached for a chicken leg.

“Give me a break, brother. I can take out three lousy wizards.”

Lars grew frustrated, as he usually did in these situations. “No, no! They’re not even here. Have you been listening to anything I said? They’ve each summoned horrific beasts to prowl the night roads. That’s what you’d be up against if you go through with this nonsense, Thrag. What chance do you have?”

Thrag pondered deeply before something caught his eye.

“You gonna eat that?”

“No! For the Gods’ sake, just take it.”

The young warrior shoveled a heap of rice off his brother’s plate. “Lars, you have to get out more. I think you spend far too much time at home with your camels.”

“Horses.”

“Whatever. The point is, someone has to stand up for the people of this town. It’s not safe to stray past the walls after dark. I’m going to end all that. Tonight. And you know what? I’ll bet you I can have it done before breakfast.”

Lars knew there was no point in arguing any further. He called out to the innkeeper. “Nathaniel! What time does the buffet close down tomorrow morning?”

“Ten o’clock, sire.”

Thrag grabbed his axe and leapt to his feet. He slid some bread into his pocket.

“Well, that gives me twelve hours! Save us a good table.”

Object

Slay all of the wizards’ beasts and get Thrag home in time for breakfast.

Setup

- Place the four null tiles face-down in a 2x2 grid. Place the black pawn in the upper-left-most space.
- Make four shuffled face-down stacks of tiles: one each for the remaining red, green, blue and black tiles. Put them in a row, with the black stack furthest on the right.
- Sort the coins by color into four pools. Keep the black ones face-up, the others face down.
- Put the red, green and blue pawns near their respective coin pools.
- Take three black coins from the black pool – the null, 2, and 4 – and put them directly in front of you to represent Thrag’s starting hit points. The other three coins form the starting Healing Pool.

Overview – What the Pieces Do

The red, green and blue tiles are the beasts summoned by the three evil wizards. Thrag must defeat all fifteen of these nasties in twelve hours (turns) or the game is lost. Higher numbers on a tile reflect a more challenging foe.

Track turns by moving the black pawn clockwise around the outer spaces of the 2x2 grid. Twelve turns have elapsed when the pawn returns to the upper-left space.

The red, green and blue coins can help Thrag battle against the beasts of a particular wizard. When Thrag fights a blue foe, he can only flip a blue coin, and so on. The pawns of these colors represent three special weapons at Thrag’s disposal.

The dice are used to randomize strengths on both sides of the battle. Aces count as 1s, Nulls count as 0s.

The black coins track Thrag’s hit points. At game start, three of the coins are in use while the other three are in a face-up Healing Pool. The black tiles represent chances for Thrag to draw coins from the pool and increase his current hit-point total.

What to do on Each Turn

- Draw three beasts – one red, one blue, and one green – and roll all four dice. Keep the black die next to you, and put the other three next to their corresponding foes.
- Pick a beast, and fight it. Thrag **must** fight at least once per turn. After the first fight is resolved, you can stop, or keep fighting. If Thrag slays all three beasts, fighting is over.
- Draw a black tile for a chance to heal.
- If any tile stacks are depleted, reshuffle the discard stacks into new draw piles.
- Advance the black pawn.

How to Fight

Though Thrag is confronted by three foes on each turn, he fights them only one at a time. Thrag **must** fight at least once per turn.

The strength of a foe is determined by adding the number on its tile to the number on its die.

Thrag's base strength is the number shown on the black die. If you wish, Thrag can augment his strength flipping over a coin that matches the foe's color, though sometimes this is not even necessary. If you use a coin, put it out of play where you cannot see it.

If Thrag comes up equal or greater in strength, the foe is slain and put out of play. If Thrag comes up short, he takes damage equal to the difference in strengths, and the beast remains.

If Thrag is still alive, he may fight again against any remaining beast – even the one he just went up against, if it still lives. If he instead decides to end the fighting for the turn, any unslain beasts are put in separate discard stacks. Thrag will meet them again later when the discards are reshuffled back into new draw piles.

Important Note: If Thrag wishes to fight a beast, and he has spent all of the coins of that color, he may flip the coin of any other remaining color instead.

The Special Weapons

The red, green and blue pawns are special weapons that Thrag can use once each. By spending a pawn, Thrag can force the corresponding foe to reroll its die.

If Thrag manages to slay all of the beasts in a color without using that color's pawn, the pawn is then considered to be a "black" pawn. Thrag can spend that pawn to reroll his own die.

Important Note: The decision to spend a pawn must be made **before** Thrag flips a coin for that fight. Once a coin is flipped, the battle is resolved immediately.

Taking Damage

Thrag must pay for damage from the coins in his current hit points. Spent coins go back into the black coin pool, and Thrag may not "make change." That is, if he takes 4 points of damage and only has a 3 and a 5 coin, he must spend the 5 coin. He does not take a 1 coin back from the pool.

The black null coin essentially represents Thrag's last breath. If he cannot absorb all the necessary damage with his numbered coins, he dies.

Healing

Once the fighting is over, draw a black tile. If its value **exactly** matches one of the coins in the black Healing Pool, Thrag adds that coin to his current hit points. If it does not match (i.e., Thrag already has that coin in his hit points), nothing happens.

An Example of the Most Complex Turn Imaginable

Late in the game, Thrag draws three foe tiles and rolls all the dice.

Red	Tile=5	Die=3	Strength=8
Green	Tile=2	Die=5	Strength=7
Blue	Tile=3	Die=0	Strength=3

Thrag's own die, the black one, has given him a base strength of **2**. He must fight at least once. He decides to take on the blue beast, and draws a blue coin of value 4. Thrag wins, 6-3, and the blue tile is put out of play. As it happens, this was the last blue tile in the deck.

He could stop now, but he decides to fight the green beast. He has used up all of his green coins, and decides to use a red one in its stead. It comes up 3; Thrag's strength (2+3) is not enough. He has lost this battle 7-5, and therefore takes 2 hit points of damage.

His hit point coins are null, 1, 4, and 5. He puts the 4 into the healing pool and sighs mightily.

Thrag goes after the same beast again. He spends the green pawn to force the green beast to reroll its die. It pays off -- the new roll is a null, dropping the green beast's total strength to 2! Thrag now dispatches it without even needing a coin, as his base strength is enough to be victorious, 2-2. The green tile is put out of play.

Thrag has no hope of defeating the red beast, and has already spent his red pawn in a prior turn. But he notices that he has slain all the blue beasts, and still has the blue pawn. He decides to spend this pawn to reroll his own black die. Sadly, the black die comes up null on reroll. Thrag decides to call it quits. He puts the red beast into the red discard pile, to be fought again in a later turn.

Thrag flips over a black tile, which comes up 4. Excellent luck; he is able to draw the black 4 coin back out of the healing pool and into his hit points.

The red foe stack and the black healing stack have depleted; Thrag reshuffles these stacks to form new draw piles.

He advances the black pawn. It now lies in the lower-left corner of the grid; he has only three more turns to slay all of the remaining red and green beasts....

Ending the Game

There are four ways the game can end.

- Thrag dies. This is a **loss**.
- Thrag uses up all his attack coins while there are still beasts to fight. This means he has exhausted himself prematurely and gone home to nap. This is a **loss**.
- The black pawn reaches the upper-left space (12 turns) while beasts still live. This means Thrag is still fighting after the breakfast buffet closes. This is a **loss**.
- Thrag slays all 15 beasts within 12 turns. This is a gallant **win!**

Scoring

If you win, you can score how well you did by the location of the black pawn when the game ends. You can give yourself bonuses if you did not need to use all of the special weapons.

Variants and Notes

There is strategy to this game, but luck of the draw (and die) plays a healthy role as well. If your first play proves too easy or too hard, you may find a very different result on subsequent plays.

If you still think you need a harder challenge, leave out some or all of the special weapons.

If you'd like to find yourself victorious more often, you can consider the null coins to be worth a certain number, such as 2. Or, you can keep track of the used coins so that you have a good idea of what coins still remain in each color.