**NUTSHELL**

Players are courtiers in the King’s court. They vy for the King’s favor by being the most useful and influential advisor, working to gain influence and power over different parts of society. They also compete with each other to expose the plans and political situation of the other courtiers. When courtiers believe another has lost favor or over reached, they accuse each other to the King in hopes of eliminating their competition. The King cannot abide worthless courtiers who have no influence or overly ambitious courtiers who threaten the throne. Any such courtier is summarily executed!

**Players:** 3 - 6

**Equipment:**

* Blue Beads - Clout
* Yellow Beads - Gold
* Cups - (Clout) Cups
* Privacy screen for each player
* Event & Secret Cards
* D6s for rolling and to use as counters

**SETUP**

1. Each player fills each Cup with **10 Clout** and hides their Cups behind a privacy screen.
2. Each player starts with **2 Gold**.
3. Shuffle the Event Cards and put the deck in the middle of the table.
4. Shuffle the Secret Cards and put the deck in the middle of the table.
5. All players must be **unanimous** on optional rule variations, if any, before the game begins. If unanimity is not reached, losing players are always executed and removed from the game.
6. Roll a D6 to see which courtier goes first. Turns start **clockwise**.

(Optional)

Each player randomly draws a secret Personality Card.

(Optional)

Draw a random King’s Psyche card and place it face down in the middle of the table. No one players should know the King’s personality.

**PHASES OF PLAY**

1. Event - Draw Event Card
2. Intrigue - Play Secret Card (if desired)
3. Deal - Make deals with other player(s) / Purchase Secret Card (if desired)
4. Accusation - Accuse another player to the King (if desired)

**CARDS AND PIECES**

**Clout and Cups**

Clout sit in a pile in the center of the table.

Clout represent influence players have.

When clout are taken by players they are placed into Cups behind their screen.

Clout are uniform in appearance so when a player takes them from the center, other players do not know which Cup they are going into by looking at the “type” of chip. There is no TYPE of Chip.

Cups represent the influence a player has over the social elites of that ilk. The more Clout a player has in a Cup the more influence they hold.

There are 4 types of Cups

1. Plebs
2. Banks
3. Generals
4. Clergy

**Event Cards**

Event Cards are common cards drawn from the central Event Deck.

The Event Card is read aloud for all players to hear.

Then the drawing player takes the necessary actions to resolve the event, however, they do NOT need to declare how they chose to resolve the event.

Event Cards usually involve taking and/or returning Chips and/or Gold to the center of the table.

Event Card can be declarative and offer no option. For example, “Pay X Gold to the King.” and the player must take Gold from his pile and put it into the middle of the table.

Event Cards can offer an option. For example, “Acquire +2 Generals / -1 Clergy OR +3 Plebs / -1 Generals.”

Once an Event Card has been resolved, it goes into the Event Discard Pile.

If, for any reason, a player is unable to fulfill an Event Card, that player must reveal their Cups to all other players.

**Inventory Cards**

Inventory Cards are a special type of Event Card that persist between turns.

Inventory Cards can be saved and used later for the resolution of an Event Card (during any player’s turn).

Once an Inventory Card has been used, it goes into the Event Discard Pile.

**Persistent Event Cards**

Persistent Event Cards are persist between turns and take effect before the Event Card Draw on the designated turn (ie Before Owner’s Turn, Before Any Non-Owner’s Turn, or During Every Turn).

For example, “Savior Reborn - Before every turn +1 Plebs and -1 Clergy.”

Once an Persistent Event Card has been used, it goes into the Event Discard Pile.

**Secret Cards**

Secret Cards can be purchased with Gold from the Secret Deck for 5 Gold during the Deal Phase.

Secret Cards need only be read/known by the drawing player.

Secret Cards can be played during the Intrigue Phase, unless the card says that it can be played “at any time” or “when accused” or something else.

**Gold**

Gold is currency available to players to achieve their goals.

Similar to Clout/Cups, a player’s Gold stash is hidden from all other players, but Gold flowing in or out of it is not.

Gold can be used to resolve Event Cards, Purchase Secret Cards, make deals with other players (including purchasing Secret Cards from them), etc.

**Contracts (OPTIONAL)**

Players are able to write out public contracts for each others deals. For example, “For the next 3 turns, Sally will resolve any Banks related Event Cards for me in exchange for +5 Gold now and +3 Gold then the 3 turns expire.” These agreements must be negotiated and displayed in full view of all other players, all terms, conditions, and durations.

Contracts cannot take Clout directly out of any players Cups. Instead, they must be based on future Event Cards. Gold, however, can change hands immediately or any time in future based on the terms and conditions.

If for any reason, a player cannot fulfill their part of the agreement, the agreement is VOID. The other courtier may immediately accuse the reneging courtier to the King. If the Prosecutor is wrong, they do not need to reveal their Cups. If the right to accuse is waived, the King will not hear accusations about this broken contract in the future.

**ACCUSATION**

When a player is accused, the King will be influenced to investigate the value of the accused courtier. If any Cup is EMPTY the King sees the courtier as worthless and unworthy of keeping around. If any Cup is MAXED, the King sees the courtier as a threat to the throne and threats need to be removed. In either case, the courtier is executed.

During the Accusation Phase, the current player (Prosecutor) may accuse another (Accused) player to the King. The Accused player must reveal her Cups to the Prosecutor.

The Prosecutor is CORRECT if any of the Accused player’s Cups are EMPTY (0 Clout) or MAXED (>20 Clout). If correctly prosecuted, the Accused player is executed by the King and removed from the game.

If the Prosecutor is WRONG, the Accused player is validated (all Cups are safely between EMPTY and MAXED). As punishment, the Prosecutor must reveal his own Cups to all other players. As recompense, the King allows the Accused to add or remove up to 10 Clout (total) to any of her Cups. As per normal Chip/Cup adjustments, the number of Clout moved is visible to other players, but not the source/destination Cups. (For example, remove 3 Pleb Clout and put them in the center of the table and take 7 Chip from the center and add it to her Generals Cup.)

(OPTIONAL)

When revealing Cups, the Accused must reveal all her Cups to all players instead of only the Prosecutor.

(OPTIONAL - ADVANCED)

When making an accusation, the Accuser must declare the exact Cup that is out of bounds. They are only CORRECT, if the declared Cup (not any other) is EMPTY or MAXED. The Accused may only reveal the declared Cup.

(OPTIONAL - ELITE)

When making an accusation, the Accuser must declare the exact Cup AND whether that Cup is EMPTY or MAXED to be CORRECT. The Accused may only reveal the declared Cup.

(OPTIONAL)

If a player loses, roll a D6. On 5+ the player is not executed by the king, but stays in the game and their Cups are reset to starting levels. They are unable to win, but they are able to keep playing as normal. “I can't win but I don't want Joe to win either so I'll help Sally!” If they lose again, they… are executed with no recourse OR … repeat the D6 roll.

**ACCUSED BY THE KING**

When a courtier is Accused by the King, they must immediately reveal all Cups to all courtiers and suffer the King’s judgement if found guilty.

**GAME OVER**  
The game ends when only one player is left standing, blameless before the King. The King declares the player Prime Regent, executes all of the adversaries, and leaves the Regent to rule happily until death.  
  
**Personalities (OPTIONAL)**  
Before the game begins, each player picks a Personality Card. The Personality Card alters the players options during play.

It may:

* Grant the player a special ability
* Add a special win condition

Personalities are secret and hidden from all other players unless an event happens that reveals it or players agree to exchange information.

(OPTIONAL)

The King also has a Personality Card, selected from the King’s Psyche expansion cards. The King’s personality is not exposed until the first accusation. It is then viewed by the Prosecutor and the Accused only, unless the card instructs it to be revealed to all.