

Issue 22 ♥

THE TOWN HERALD

Cards

FEATURING COVER ARTIST

Blu.nation

www.Elftown.com



Contents ♠

Letter from the Editor

It's been a long while since I've been here with you as Editor, but a new issue is here to breathe new life into the Herald once again, and I'm pleased to be able to say that this issue is a lively one! After a long hiatus, we bring you Issue 22 Cards, and a host of new Heralders and Guest Heralders alike.

This issue has been a hard one, with Heralders plumbing the depths of their knowledge on Cards to find new and interesting facets of our theme to bring to you. But the issue has gotten quite fat with all the little tid bits we found for our readers, and has given us all inspiration for the coming months leading up to the Holiday Season. We'll be on the look out for festive fiction, articles, recipes and especially tutorials for our next issue, so we hope to see you all at Herald Hopefuls & Herald Guest Submissions in the coming months.

Enjoy!

Kaimee



Featured Artist

COVER ARTIST BLU.NATION
INTERVIEW BY KAIMEE

Featured Artist

BLU.NATION, INTERVIEW BY KAIMEE

Age: 20

Hobbies:

Writing, painting, sewing costumes and outfits for my ball-joint doll, cooking, watching anime... I have too many hobbies ^_^

Started creating art in:

I started drawing at nine, I started creating "serious" art when I was about 17.

Artist most inspired by:

Everyone. Anyone who is an artist and who's put work into their art to make it wonderful - every time I come across a beautiful piece of artwork, even if I've never heard of the artist, I'm inspired.

Media you work in:

Primarily pencil, sometimes ballpoint pen, paint, or pencil crayon; in digital, Photoshop.

Website: <http://www.septemnox.deviantart.com>

Q: How did you come to be an artist?

A: I drew horses when I was young, because I was obsessed with them. I got easily bored in class so drawing was something fun to do - but when I moved away at thirteen, it became a lot more important to me. My pencil and paper suddenly turned me from "the new kid" to someone interesting. Since then I've held on to it, because it became a form of expression for me and because so many wonderful people have supported me in my artistic endeavors.

Q: How would you describe your work?

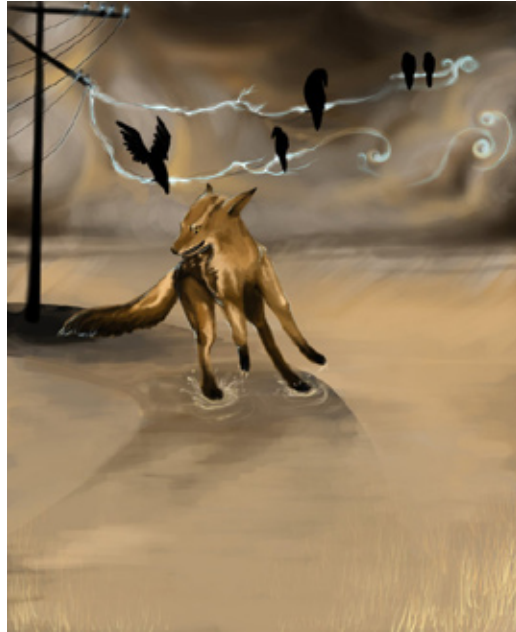
A: "Slow."

My style started out "manga"-ish, but I have tried to move in a different direction lately. I love realism and super-stylistic art equally, so I can't decide.

I would not describe my work as "professional." Definitely not. In fact I hope never to get to that point, because I feel that I will have stopped growing as an artist.





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Q: Where do you find your inspiration?

A: I'm most inspired by art galleries. Contemporary or historical, nothing is quite as thrilling as being face-to-face with a piece of art in all its glory.

Q: What inspired this piece (our cover art)?

A: I'd wanted for a while to do a cute piece of an all-boys Alice in Wonderland (and then Ouran Host Club did it, hahah) so this was meant to be the first. Poor Alice is all alone, though.

I've noticed most people think of him as a girl - since he's wearing a dress and all. Much as I'd love to pretend he's some sweet tomboyish gal with a pixie cut, he's not! ^_^ Not that I mind. People have been confusing my genders for longer than I can remember.

Q: What do you consider your influence?

A: I was strongly influenced by Adele Sessler when I was younger; she's a wonderful artist who's only gotten better, and I tried to borrow some elements of her style. But I can't say I am particularly attached to one movement or style of art, because I have never studied it or been very aware of what's what.

Q: Where do you see yourself going with your art?

A: I hope to continue developing my artistic side; my most ambitious goal is to create a graphic novel (well, my MOST ambitious goal is to create an animated feature film, but let's not talk about that) which would stretch my lamentable skills at expression, backgrounds, and other such nightmares to their very limit; more modestly, I would like to just keep it in my daily life.



Q: Are there any other types of art you'd like to branch into? Why?

A: I would love to try sculpture, film, or a full scale installation in a gallery. Film is such an elusive medium that it would be interesting for me as a hands-on person to try and capture something beautiful with it.

Q: What do you consider your most important pieces of art?

A: The ones I haven't made yet. I'm always looking ahead. There's no way I could look back at a piece now and say, "This is the most important thing I've ever done." When I've done that, I know it'll be time to move on to something new.

Thank you (:

The Art Corner

This issue the Art Corner will be presented slightly differently. As we have such a large number of submissions of great quality work, we'll be giving each artist a feature page. Title and artist details will be at the bottom of each piece, so make sure to check out any artist who takes your fancy!



The Art Corner

QUEEN OF HEARTS, BY [DANCINGSHEEP]



The Art Corner

SIX OF HEARTS, BY [LINDEREL]



The Art Corner

ACE OF HEARTS, ACE OF CLUBS,
ACE OF DIAMONDS & ACE OF SPADES
BY [SILVERFIRE]

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The Art Corner

QUEEN ON DIAMONDS, JACK OF DIAMONDS, ACE OF HEARTS,
ACE OF DIAMONDS, KING OF CLUBS, JACK OF SPADES.
BY [*PHOENIX*]



www.nehirwen.com



www.nehirwen.com



The Art Corner

JOKER OF CLUBS, JOKER OF DIAMONDS,
JOKER OF HEARTS & JOKER OF SPADES
BY [NEHIRWEN]

www.nehirwen.com



www.nehirwen.com

The Poetry Corner

ELFTOWNER'S POETRY FOR THE THEME CARDS

LET'S PLAY A GAME

Before I let you go this round
Let's play a game, shall we?
Pick one card not red nor black
Kiss once the edge then place it back
Say one thing no more, quiet now
Then just like that (I'll show you how)
We'll win the game with a match
Of skills and wit, wait just a bit
Now touch the top deck with care
And I assure you should you turn it over
Your card shall be there.

By [Akane Ice]

PLAYERS ARE PLAYED

You will never control what cards you're dealt,
Shuffle them as you please, deal them again,
You'll never know your hand,
A straight will never beat a flush,
And who knows where a full house will land.

But, any game can be beat,
There's always a trick,
Count the cards, watch the Ace,
And who knows,
You may play the pros face to face.

Cut the deck,
Play the part,
But don't think you're the winner,
You were played from the start.

By [Judith1107]

CARD LIFE HAIKU

Shuffle. Bridge. Shuffle. Bridge. Deal.
That is the life of a card.
Shuffle. Bridge. Shuffle. Deal. Doom.

By [*Phoenix*]

CARDS

Come a little closer folks and I'll happily show you
Everything that I can do with a deck of fifty-two.

I can build a wobbly house up tall,
And with one wrong breath I'll watch it fall.

Or pick a card to play the game,
You put it back; I'll pull the same.

One through ten, Ace, King, Queen, Jack
I'll start a war in red and black.

With these cards I'll entertain and play
A different game on each new day.

By [Nioniel]

HOUSE OF CARDS

Can be found at: my poem page

It stood
I can't believe it stood.
Six stories tall, card stacked atop card

Then you come in
And bash your fist on the table
You should have seen the look on your face

I still can't believe it stood
After shaking the table with the might of a 7.0
again
Six stories tall, card stacked atop card

Then with a sheepish grin
You pluck a card from the bottom
Sending my house of cards plummeting.

By [pegasus1000]

FOR THE POSTCARD TOLD ME SO

The gates were closed,
But she was watching
Watching in her usual pose
There used to be flowers, trinkets, some objects
Piles of garbage with a crown of rose
None of it mattered,
As it still doesn't matter
Her heart was set on his hand-written prose.

His last card was so lovely,
From his far-away throw;
It told her he was coming,
Though progress was slow.
And she laughed and dandied,
The world was so bright -
Whoever would guess that it was in a fight?

But she did not see the darkness coming,
She did not see the bombs
Blood, dirt and sweat were not hers for regretting,
His sweet fiancée, berry-blonde.

Her last card was so lovely,
In his far-away throw;
It said she would be waiting,
Come rain or come snow.
And he cried and fancied,
Maybe it's alright -
And he was drinking her words into the night.

So he did not see the darkness coming,
He did not see the bombs
Blood and dirt met as the red sun was setting
Her brave fiancée was now gone.

Still, she's waiting and watching,
Come rain or come snow;
While the living carry on,
She longs for his prose.
The world grows so dull, as it's rolled on so long,
And she waits for his last card to home.

By [kamisch]

USES OF CARDS

Clubs, Hearts, Dimonds, and Spades
each with its own blade.
With diffrent games to play,
from poker to gin rummy
with food such as nachos
that rumble my tummy.

By [Eyden]

Halfway through 2010

WRITTEN BY FLISK_GIRL

JANUARY

After some ongoing security threats in the country from the terrorist group alQaeda, the U.S. and U.K. have closed their embassies in Yemen.

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake hits 10 miles from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, killing an estimated 200,000 people and destroying several sections of the city.

FEBRUARY

6,000 Afghan, British, and American troops storm the city of Marja, Afghanistan, attempting to destroy the Taliban within the city.

A NATO airstrike, targeted at insurgents, kills 27 Afghani civilians accidentally.

MARCH

Election day in Iraq is interrupted by two bombs that killed 38 people in Baghdad. 62% of Iraqis voted, only 53% of residents of Baghdad voted. Final count of Iraq's general elections are as follows: 91 seats to Iraqi National Movement, 89 seats to State of Law alliance, 70 seats to Shia religious movement, and 43 seats to the two main Kurdish parties.

Both the U.S. and Russia agreed on a treaty to lower the limit on deployed strategic warheads and launchers.

39 people die in Moscow, Russia after two female suicide bombers blow up two subway stations minutes apart from one another.

APRIL

34 people are rescued from a flooded coal mine in China, though 153 remain trapped. 29 are killed in a mine explosion in U.S.

U.S. Consulate in Pakistan is attacked by militants, killing 8 and wounding 20.

MAY

"Nude, Green Leaves and Bust" sells for \$106.5 million at auction. The painting is of Picasso's mistress and was sold by the estate of Frances Lasker Brody.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that he will resign by September as head of his Labour Party. His recommendation of Conservative Party leader David Cameron as successor

creates a coalition government, the first in the U.K. since WWII.

Several nations agree on sanctions to stop Iran's nuclear program from creating enriched uranium after Iran announces deals with Turkey and Brazil to give half of its stockpile of nuclear fuel for a year.

9 are killed after an Israeli navy commando attacks a flotilla of Pro-Palestinian cargo ships and passenger boats on their way to Gaza.

JUNE

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan announces his resignation only 9 months into his term. He is the fourth to leave in 4 years.

2000 are dead in Kyrgyzstan in skirmishes between ethnic Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks. 100,000 people have fled the country, causing Uzbekistan to close its borders.

Australia's former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, is dropped by party, making way for the country's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, who was sworn in on June 24th.

Collectible Card Games

WRITTEN BY WICKED FAE MAGE

Modern Collectible Card Games (CCG), sometimes referred to as Trading Card Games (TCG) were introduced by Magic: the Gathering's designer Richard Garfield. Wizards of the Coast published Magic: the Gathering in 1993.

Collectible cards existed before Magic, for example Baseball cards, though Magic: the Gathering introduced strategy to the game play.

Each CCG has specific rules to the game that describes the objective to the game and governs the game play (though some know that Duel Monsters could get complicated with different trap cards and the triggers for the traps). Each card will explain the card's purpose in the game and any effects it has on game play.

The illustrations differ from game to game, Magic: the Gathering, for instance being focused on the fantasy genre and creatures and spells from the fantasy genre; Pokemon cards feature: Pokemon, trainers, gym leaders, stadiums and energy cards; Duel Monsters features different monsters and classes along with magic cards, trap cards and spell cards.

All of the illustrations reflect the styles of the game and no two illustrations are the same.

The typical CCG phases include drawing a card from your deck, placing cards on the field, buffing or healing preparations, attacking, discarding cards (some games have a remove cards from play option) and ending your turn.

Some games have a more complex playing system and some are simple.

Getting cards is simple. You can find a tournament deck for games in most toy stores and hobby shops. The starter decks usually are usable right out of the pack and include a functioning deck with the minimum number of cards that make a deck legal for tournaments.

To improve your deck there are booster packs that give roughly ten cards, they are usually random and one of them is usually rare and sometimes is the ever-coveted hollow foil.

Starter sets include two decks, or enough cards for two people along with instructions on the game play.

The themed decks are quite popular as well. Themed decks have cards that work together and aren't as random as a booster deck. Duel Monsters had several themed decks of the famous duellists from the show including: Yugi's deck, Pegasus' deck, Joey's deck and Kaiba's deck to name a few.

Each of the decks includes central cards like Yugi's signature Dark Magician and Kaiba's signature BlueEyes White Dragon as well as supporting cards that fit the deck's theme.

Today there are even video games that include the cards from the CCG. In this case, the player gets the electronic copy of the cards for the game use and plays the game in a similar way as the actual

card games. The video games sometimes include a card number to add to register with the game, allowing the use of the cards in game.

Blizzard released World of Warcraft's own CCG which allows rare mounts and other items to be obtained via the code on the card. Some items are only available in the games through the cards' codes.

What is the appeal of the CCG? Collectors everywhere pay good money for seemingly worthless cards with a creature depicted on the card.

With the rare hollow foils, desired effects and personal identification with cards, we have found the tootsie pop of the fantasy lover and collector's worlds. Why are CCG so popular? The world may never know.

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Dream Cards

INTERPRETATION & INSPIRATION

WRITTEN BY CHIMES

'TO DIE, TO SLEEP— / TO SLEEP—PERCHANCE TO DREAM. AY, THERE'S THE RUB! / FOR IN THAT SLEEP OF DEATH WHAT DREAMS MAY COME [...]' (SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET, ACT III, SCENE I, LL. 71-73)

Dream therapy is a sometimes-used way of gaining emotional well-being and balance and an alternative to normal therapy. It makes use of dream recording, interpretation and sometimes the employment of lucid dreams. Some find it very helpful, others don't – some dream a lot and have impressive dream-recall, and others say they don't dream. It depends on what sort of person you are as to whether it could or would actually work for you.



Dream Cards Deck Isa Donelli, Artwork by Luigi Di Giammarino

Now, this is all very interesting (else I wouldn't be writing about it) but what does it have to do with our current theme, cards? Dream therapy relies on the gradual understanding of your dreams – of course, this can be argued against, some might say that you can't understand your dreams and that they are merely projections of your mind as it tries to rest and who is to say that they are wrong? A tool that has been created to help with this is Dream Cards.

Dream Cards can vary, some can be complicated – I am looking at some on Amazon as I write this and I do not understand how they work or how you use them, which could be a downfall and cause difficulties for those who buy them – while others can be glaringly simple. The cards I own, for example, are simple and easy to use. For anyone interested in which cards took my fancy in the early years of my teens, I own *Julia Parker's Dream Cards*.

There are 52 two cards in the pack, 26 of these are positive and 26 are negative. For each positive card of a certain dream-theme – for example, crowds, water, possessions – there is a negative and each card has a list of questions, which, hopefully, only involve a yes or no answer. (The backs of the cards have pleasing artwork so not only are they helpful but they also look good.) There are 25 different dream themes; the other two cards are the 'starter' cards which tell you which of the two relevant theme cards to look at but these aren't always necessary as it is generally easy to tell whether you've had a bad dream or a good dream.

That should still sound simple, despite my somewhat convoluted explanation.

The cards also come with a book, which, once you have answered the questions, offers some explanations of what was going on in your mind when your subconscious decided to thrust whatever colourful, or grey-scale, images upon you as you slept.

I find dreams fascinating; there is no limit to my interest in them, hence my purchase of the Dream Cards. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article these aren't just useful for your average dream enthusiast, they can also help people enrich their emotional well-being or even in some stretch of the imagination help them deal with certain emotional problems or tragedies – dream therapy is often used to help rape victims, for example.

It makes you wonder how much of this is the card and how much of this is your mind – yes, the cards trigger you to think and understand but how much do they really help? I should probably use mine more, so as to give some form of answer to that question but quite often I am too wrapped up in noting them down and getting some idea from them (normally for some story or other) that I forget to analyse. Sure, this analysis could be completely unreliable and a far-cry from the actual meaning, if there is one, but surely it should set my mind forth on some journey or other, right?

As someone who writes, I find that dreams are often very important in my process; they stem all kinds of fantastical ideas that, with some tidying and developing, could become some quite interesting stories. Perhaps with the employment of the cards a dream-inspired story could become a more developed and interwoven plot line simply because I understood why I dreamt what I dreamt. Could these cards be used not only as a tool for therapy but as a tool for writers? I think they can.

Perhaps those seeking dream therapy, writers or even the general public should pick up a pack and start looking deeper into their own subconscious; to quote Christopher Nolan's masterpiece ***Inception***: '*Dreams feel real while we're in them. It's only when we wake up that we realise something was actually strange.*' Give it a try; you never know what you might find.

The Rorschach Inkblot test

BY RICE

The Rorschach test, also known as the Rorschach inkblot test, is a test often used by psychologists and psychiatrists. It involves a series of ten cards, all with different inkblots on them. The subject, for example the person seeking help from the psychiatrist, is told to look at the inkblots and tell the doctor the first thing that comes into their mind.

How they perceive the inkblot is then analysed using psychological interpretation and also scientifically derived algorithms. The test is named after its creator, Herman Rorschach, and is most commonly used to examine a person's personality type or emotional state of mind.

Many people are under the misleading impression that the Rorschach test's outcome is merely created by what the subjects see in the card. However, this actually makes up a very small percentage, the Rorschach test is actually a very clever device with which the psychiatrist observes your behaviour with each card. For instance the first card, that's inkblot is rather trivial, is a way for the psychiatrist to discover how the subject tackles new situations and deals with stressful tasks.

In fact the cards are very cleverly made so that there are only a few answers it could possibly be, thus it is the person's reaction and behaviour that tells us about them. The cards also use colour to reflect emotion, for instance the second card has the colour red which instinctively we see as 'blood' due to the splat formation of the colour.

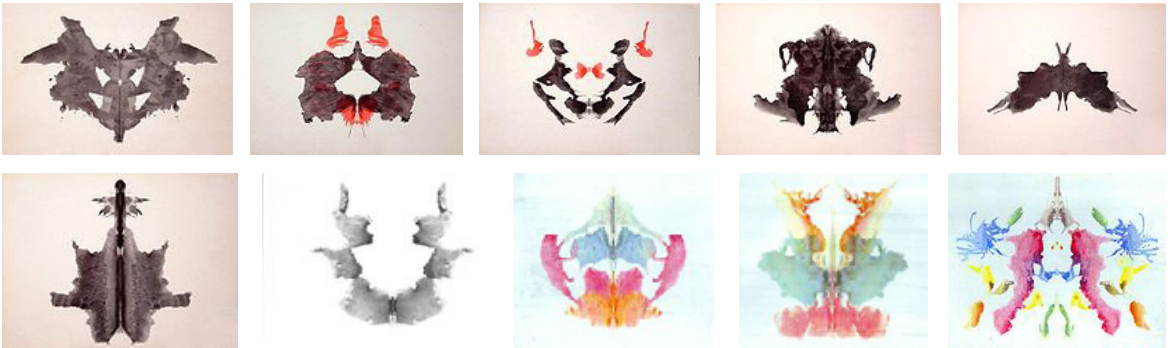
This then usually demands a rather dark answer, like two people fighting, this then provokes feelings within the person of anger or physical harm and the psychiatrist can judge how the person reacts to that kind of situation.

However, while this test seems quite clever there are many downfalls since as with most things there are too many variables to consider. Cultural differences are one since many case studies have shown that people from different parts of the world react differently to the emotions portrayed in the cards, for instance Americans react more solidly to the positive cards whereas people from Europe react more to the negative.

Reliability is also an issue since it has been proven that the results are influenced substantially by the testing procedure, where it takes place, what doctor initiates the test, right down to how the doctor introduces themselves.

If the Doctor is friendly and outgoing when greeting the subject then of course the person will feel more at ease and be more likely to give a positive response, vice versa with a rude greeting. The test is very controversial and shunned due to its lack of quantitative data since most people deem that the results are sheer conjecture as opposed to scientific fact.

On the other hand, considering how much the test has been debunked by scientists it is still used quite extensively by psychologists. A recent survey showed that 20% of psychologists in America still use the Rorschach test, 30% of forensic psychologists, and 23% use it to examine children. And also 80% of all psychology students are taught about the Rorschach test proving that whilst it may be qualitative and up to interpretation, it is still considered a fairly good method to analyse someone and get a deeper understanding of them.

[BACK TO CONTENTS](#)**The cards themselves:****Things you should note:**

1. The inkblot itself is not important, the subjects reaction to new situations is what's being observed. (Most common response, bat, butterfly, moth, any winged insect or small animal)
2. The use of the red splats is an obvious symbols of blood, though one the subject might not realise. The blot itself is done to look like two figures, thus together signifying a fight or conflict. (Most common response, two humans)
3. Also used to signify two people though this time the red markings are less angular and spiky and more smooth edged. This creates a less threatening picture, this one is used to judge how the subject relates to other people. (Most common response, two humans)
4. A very large dull inkblot that is chunky and more than often used to create fear of anxiety in the person. Can sometimes cause a depressed feel due to the murky colour. (Most common response, a body, animal hide, anything dead)
5. It is a very delicate pattern and much smaller than the previous card, it is sued to cause a change of pace within the subject and take them from the menacing 4th card to a much gentler card. (Most common response, butterfly, moth)
6. The general look of the ink in this card is the main focus as apposed to the shape itself. Note the darker inside and feathered edges, due to this it is considered extremely sexually. (Most common response, skin)
7. This card is also called 'the mother card', its dominate characteristic is femininity and can be used to judge the person reaction and possibly link to a major feminine person in their life. It can also be seen as a sexual card as many people perceive to open mark in the middle as a 'vagina'. (Most common responses, face)
8. Card 8 is the main 'change of pace card', which is evident from the switch from black to bright

colours. It can cause relief in the person but also confusion due to the vast amount of colours and possible difficulty in locating a response. (Most common response, some form of animal, usually a type of shellfish)

9. Many subjects have difficulty in processing this card because of its large size, amount of colours and general vagueness about the detail. The response to this card varies vastly and is more than often used to observe how the person copes with an inability to process data, or stressful tasks. (Most common response, human face)

10. Being the last card it makes the subjects response and behaviour very important. While it is just as chaotic as the 9th card the subject will often relax in the notion that the test is almost over and can sometimes zone out and reflect on their emotions during the test. This means that the response will often be directly linked to some inner feelings they picked up on during the test itself. (Most common response, crab, spider, lobster, usually some animal with many legs)

Sources of information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rorschach_test

Psychology for AS-Level http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51713V7V1GL._SL500_AA300_.jpg

General knowledge

Personal opinion.

Pictures: Rorschach, Hermann (1927). Rorschach Test – Psychodiagnostic Plates. Hogrefe. ISBN 3-456-82605-2.

This Trend isn't Going Out Anytime Soon

WRITTEN BY WICKED FAE MAGE

When something's new and fascinating, who doesn't want to be part of it? The fads of pop culture on all levels sweep nations and bring in millions of dollars of revenue. What's better than learning the mechanics of a strategic game and learning how to outsmart an opponent and counter everything they could ever think of? On top of playing, there's the collecting of the cards whether they be your favorites, the rare and coveted of the collections, sometimes both. Trying out your luck with the rare and favorite cards of the card types can be quite a thrill! Everybody knows that!

Who didn't get into Pokemon and open pack after pack of cards, fishing for Charizard, Venusaur and Blastoise? The fun algebraic equations that Pokemon enthusiasts invented never failed. Hold a pack of cards in one hand and another in the opposite hand. If they feel the same weight, switch one of the packs until one feels heavier. The heavier pack has a hollow card. Enjoy. :)

The premiere of Yu-Gi-Oh and the use of the cards in the anime brought out the sensation of Yu-Gi-Oh decks filled with duel monsters, magic and trap cards. The perfect decks constructed of the cruelest cards of each new series with a few new rules and effects added more entertainment to the ever-changing strategy games. There were even a few situations I've come across that weren't specified in the rule books for the game.

Now, Magic: the Gathering is a game I'd only ever played once in real life. I watched a group of people play, me using one of their red decks, the others all using the other different colored decks. I learned the state-of-mind of the decks and their general design. The Xbox 360 arcade version of the game has me quite addicted. Despite there being basic thought processes behind the decks I've learned this: red decks thoughts are direct damage and disposable pawns; black decks thoughts are killing them when they make any move and forcing their hand; green decks are self-sufficient with over-powering your opponents with formidable creatures; blue decks think about move anticipation, counters, and playing on summoning sickness; and white decks are all about back up plans, healing and paralyzing the opponent. The game allows many strategies and many different ways to think and customize your favorite ways of thinking.

For many like me, Collectible Card Games (CCG's) are a great pass time. Lots of people get into the games and buy out hobby shops' and construct strong decks out of tournament decks, booster packs and themed decks. Some CCG's are even released solely for a video game like World of Warcraft. The codes on the cards are used in the video game to get items that are otherwise unattainable.

With so many different games, this trend isn't going out anytime soon. There are cards for Yu-Gi-Oh, fantasy creatures/Dungeons and Dragons, Pokemon, Digimon, Yu Yu Hakusho, Dragon Ball Z, X-Men and so many more. All of the themes are around popular science fiction and fantasy and there are definitely games for everyone, tournaments to reward prize money and fun game play, or pretty cards to put in a binder and show off.

Just a Pack of Cards

WRITTEN BY *PHOENIX*

"Mommy, mommy! Look what I got!"

"Those cards will go nicely in your Alice in Wonderland presentation, dear."

"I know! They're great!"



"More tea, my Queen?" the Three of Spades asked.

"Yes," replied the Queen of Hearts sternly as she held out her cup.

"More," she demanded.

"Yes, my Queen." The Three of Spades slowly and quietly backed out of the room with the tea tray. He let out a sigh. Playing 'Alice in Wonderland' was starting to get on his last nerve. The Queen was stern with what she wanted. If she didn't get her way, then she'd lose her temper, just like Alice's Queen of Hearts. If she lost her temper, she would yell "Off with their head!" After that the cards would drag the offender to a secret room where they weren't allowed to leave. The Queen had to believe they were gone to keep up this charade. He ran off down the hallway. In trade for a Ken doll, Barbie had agreed to let the cards use her Malibu Dream House as their 'castle.' The Three of Spades ran down the spiral stairs and ran into the Ace of Spades.

"Watch it!" yelled the Ace.

"Sorry," Three mumbled and continued on his way. "People are getting very temperamental from this whole ordeal," he thought to himself. "Wait a second!" An idea dawned on him. "Ace! Ace, come back!" he called as he ran back up the stairs and ran after the Ace of Spades. "Ace!" The Ace of Spades slowly turned around and put his hand on his side.

"What?" he retorted rudely.

"What gives the Queen of Hearts the authority to declare herself as supreme ruler?"

"It's Alice in Wonderland, you twit. The story just goes like that. Ask Lewis Carroll. Don't bother me with sill speculation. Besides, you wouldn't want someone hearing you talk like that. You're just asking to be thrown in that nasty room." He brushed the Three off as he turned and continued to walk down the hallway.

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"Wait!" cried the Three of Spades and jumped in front of the Ace.

"Not again," he muttered as he rolled his eyes.

"Just hear me out," pleaded the Three.

"Fine."

"In every game that we've ever been played in, what's the highest ranking card?"

"Me, you nimrod."

"So, why are we listening to a Queen of Hearts? If anything, we should be listening to the aces, and you should be the final word."

The Ace of Spades began to smile. He was liking the Three's thinking. "Go on."

"Why don't we throw the Queen in the Dark Room and redo all the laws? I think all the aces should be in charge, but if something goes wrong of can't be decided then you get the final say."

"I'm liking this. I'll round up the nobles. You get the numbers. Let's meet at the Dark Room."

"All right!"

And so the Three of Spades and the Ace of Spades parted.



They soon met again at the Dark Room outside of the Dream House. All the cards had got there, except one: the Queen of Hearts. Thankfully, she was taking her afternoon nap so she wouldn't miss a few cards. The Ace and Three retold the story and finished with cheers from the other cards. The Queen awoke because of the and appeared at the window.

"What's the ruckus?" she yelled out the window.

"Come down here and find out!" challenged the Ace of Spades. The Ace of Spades cleared out the Dark Room and positioned himself in front of the open doorway. The Queen stomped out of the house, face red with anger.

"What is going on here?" she demanded, tapping her foot.

"Your downfall," replied the Ace proudly.

"What?" said the Queen angrily and slight taken aback. The Ace stepped aside as a roar erupted from the crowd of cards. They pushed her into the Dark Room and barred it shut. Thundering footsteps interrupted their cheering.

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"The child returns!" yelled the Nine of Diamonds. "Everyone, fall!" All the cards fell to the ground, completely silent and completely flat.



"Ally, were you playing with my cards? I told you they were for my project!" The boy gathered up all the cards from the floor. He looked through all of them. "Hey! Where's my Queen of Hearts?"

"I don't know."

"But I need her!"

"They're just a pack of cards. Buy a new pack," Ally said as she took the cards and threw them in a drawer, where the special pack of cards lived in peace.

The End

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The Creation Narrative of a Cat Lover

WRITTEN BY MIRIME

In the beginning there was only the First Cat, and an Earth that was cold and bare. But the First Cat brought forth a hairball, and it rose into the sky, and as it rose it gathered fire, and the Earth was warmed.

And once the Earth was warmed, the First Cat licked the ground with Her rough tongue, and the land changed shape, becoming hills and valleys.

With Her paws, the First Cat scratched holes in the ground, and with Her claws she pierced the sky and rain fell, filling the oceans, and plants began to grow.

Then the First Cat sniffed the ground, and She sneezed. And from the dust that arose emerged the animals of the land, and they fled from Her.

And the First Cat twitched Her tail, and the dust that was flung into the air became a great flock of birds; and they also flew from Her.

And when the First Cat then sharpened her claws upon the rocks, chips of stone fell into the ocean and these became the fish and the creatures of the sea; and they swiftly swam away.

And the First Cat was pleased, and She began to groom herself, and some of Her fur fell onto the ground.

And the First Cat began to purr, and as she purred the fur mixed with the dirt and took form, and the forms took two shapes: cats of all sizes in the likeness of the First Cat, although because they came from different strands of fur their markings varied, and humans, who were mostly bare because there was less of the First Cat's fur in their forms.

And these did not flee from Her, but looked upon Her in awe, and to the humans the First Cat said,

"YOU SHALL BE MY RESPONSIBILITY, AND YOU SHALL LIVE ON THE EARTH THAT I HAVE MADE, FOR YOU HAVE NOT FLED BEFORE ME."

And to the small cats the First Cat said, "You shall stay with these humans, and care for them, for they have less fur than you; and you shall hunt the mice that eat the grain and the birds that disturb their crops; and you shall remind them of your worth by showing them what you have caught." And to the large cats the First Cat said, "You shall hunt the large animals that came from the ground, and fled from me; and they shall ever flee before you; and you shall teach these humans humility and remind them that they have been made with less fur."

And it was so, and the First Cat was pleased.

Horoscopes

WRITTEN BY SILVERFIRE

ARIES (21ST MARCH – 20TH APRIL)

The guy to your left has a pair of Kings. To the right she has a dead man's hand. The lady opposite you's got the jack. Fold now.

TAURUS (21ST APRIL – 20TH MAY)

A new love interest will bloom for you this month. It will start with flirty comments and sly glances across desks, and end with tears and your bloody corpse dumped by the side of the road. Take action now. Buy a tazer.

GEMINI (21ST MAY – 20TH JUNE)

Mars is in your rising sign this month meaning sleepless nights and strange dreams. Relationships with friends will fray, but attempts at patching things up might make it worse. Leave it until you're sleeping properly again and you're temper is more even. The strange, haunting music that echoes in your fractured dreams is a Frenchman on your front lawn with a violin.

CANCER (21ST JUNE – 21ST JULY)

This month you will be a man of unremarkable appearance. Either you've been that way for a while, or something has gone horribly, horribly wrong. Whichever it is, it might be time to do something about it.

LEO (22ND JULY – 22ND AUGUST)

This week you'll get three friend requests, eight wall posts and five-hundred and thirty Farmville requests. Ten acquaintances from your old high school will browse through your photos and remark to themselves in smug tones that you've gotten quite fat since they last saw you.

VIRGO (22ND AUGUST – 21ST SEPTEMBER)

3, 7, 11, 19, 23, 31.

This is either a list of Gaussian Primes, or next week's lottery numbers. There may also be a small chance that, if recited backwards whilst Venus is in Aries, the very fabric of the universe will slowly start to unravel like an old jumper being pulled apart by angry kittens.

LIBRA (20TH SEPTEMBER – 21ST OCTOBER)

Your need to impress others will lead you to spend money you don't have, make promises you can't keep and create a fictional past more interesting than your actual history. At some point in the middle of the month, when you see a child playing with their parent in a way reminiscent of one of your invented memories, you will realise that you are living a lie. Saddened by this realisation you will resolve to live such a life no longer and reveal your true self to all your friends. This would be a mistake. The real you is so boring and lifeless they're practically dead anyway. The only way anyone will ever love you is if you continue to lie, and spend money you don't have. You may die in debt, but at least someone will come to your funeral.

SCORPIO (22ND OCTOBER - 21ST NOVEMBER)

Mercury is shining brightly in all the right zones for you this month - money issues will find ways of magically resolving themselves, your friends will stop bickering for once, your sex-life will pick up and your parents might even start talking to each other again. You may have to buy some earplugs if they decide to move back in together, but other than that, this month will be the best month of your life. Try not to get too depressed when it's over.

SAGITTARIUS (21ST NOVEMBER - 21ST DECEMBER)

You may feel that you are currently having difficulties getting along with other people - you simply can't understand their point of view or see the logic behind their opinion. This is because there is no logic. They are foolish and backwards to disagree with you. Kill them all.

CAPRICORN (21ST DECEMBER - 20TH JANUARY)

lä! lä! Cthulhu Fhtagn!

AQUARIUS (21ST JANUARY - 19TH FEBRUARY)

Things to bear in mind this month:

- Eating nothing but beans will send you mad.
- The spare batteries are in the glove compartment.
- By all means give your rabbit the Yellow Pages to chew, but for God's sake, don't let him eat page 539.
- The photo is the middle drawer, right hand side of the desk
- Use a water-based lube.

PISCES (19TH FEBRUARY - 20TH MARCH)

This week literally everything will literally go wrong, literally. Literally the next week, a few things will literally fix themselves. Other problems will literally refuse to be fixed, no matter what you do. Literally three days after that, you will literally have a metaphorical breakdown.

Old family Recipes –

FROM GRANDPA'S 30 YEARS IN THE US NAVY

WRITTEN BY HANHEPI

As many of you may know, my Dad just recently passed away. Hidden in his basement was a lot of my Grandpa's Navy stuff. My Grandpa started off as a Baker for the Navy, then moved on to become a full fledged cook. In one ancient little military ledger book, tucked away on a basement shelf, was a treasure trove of recipes from when the food in the Navy was yummy, and just home cooking, if your home had more than 100 people in it. Some of his recipes feed 100, some 1000, so, follow recipes at your own risk. Recipes typed just as they appear in the book, no spellings were corrected, and amounts are correct already. I think that the numbers on the left are the steps. In between the * is stuff I added.

Devel Food Cake (good mix)

If pwd eggs is used put three # pwd eggs with pwd milk + water to break up eggs

- pounds. I guess you can convert that to kilos properly and have it still work

oz - ounces. I have no idea what the metric equivalent would be.

pwd - powdered. It was the US military, in the mid 1940s. 90 fresh eggs could have been hard to come by on board a ship in the Pacific Theater, and I don't want to think about what fresh milk would have done about the 3rd month on that ship.

Devel - Devil. Grandpa was writing all this with a 3rd grade education. Guessing the thought process was "Well, it rhymes with 'level', must be d-e-v-e-l."

Coca - Cocoa powder. I'm 99.9% sure that they were not adding 5 lbs of the plant Cocaine comes from to that cake. The sugar/chocolate buzz would have been just about enough to make the Commanding Officer crazy as it is, I can't imagine what 100+ people that high on coke on a tiny little ship would have been like.

And have no doubts about it, even an Aircraft Carrier would have felt like a tiny little ship if that many people were super high on coke:

"YouSeenEnsignBaker?" "YeahSmith,He'sClimbing TheBulkHeadOnTheThirdDeck."

| *Step | Ingredient | Full batch | ½ batch | ¾ batch? * |
|-------|------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | <u>Shortning</u> | 10 # | 5 # | 9 # |
| 1 | Baking soda | 13 oz | 6 oz | 12 oz |
| 1 | Salt | 9 oz | 4 oz | 8 oz |
| 1 | Sugar | 26 # | 12 # | 24 # |
| 2 | Eggs | 90 | 40 | 80 |
| 1 | Coca | 5 # | 3 # | 5 # |
| 3 | Flour | 24 # | 11 # | 20 # |
| 2 | <u>Pwd milk</u> | 5# | 3 # | 5 # |
| 2 | Water | 11 <u>qts</u> | 5 <u>qts</u> | 10 <u>qts</u> |

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Waldorf Salad

WRITTEN BY HANHEPI

INGREDIENTS

3 lb bag Apples
6 stalks Celery
1 ½c. (5 oz. Bag) chopped Walnuts
1 ½c. Raisins
1 Lemon (juiced)

FOR DRESSING:

1 ½c. Mayonnaise
3 Tbsp. Sugar
½tsp Salt
juice of 1 Lemon

METHOD:

Peel and core apples, then chop in to bite sized pieces, covering with the juice of one lemon as you go.

Slice celery thinly, making a vertical cut on the wider parts, but keep separate from apples for now.

In small bowl or big mixing cup, add mayo, juice of other lemon, sugar and salt. Whisk till thoroughly combined. Mixture will be slightly runny yellowish mayo. Pour over apples, combine. Stir in celery, walnuts and raisins. Chill until ready to serve, or eat immediately.

Great for large gatherings, this makes a giant amount.

*Image sourced from **www.eightypercentraw.com** Chef Tina Jo Stephens, who has a great twist on the classic recipe.*



Organising Your Recipes

WRITTEN BY HANHEPI

Maybe you are already super organized. Maybe all your great recipes are in special files on your computer. Congratulations! But maybe you are like me and you have a shit load of recipe books, recipe clippings from magazines, and scraps of paper with recipes scrawled in shorthand all over them shoved in the recipe books. Maybe some of those recipes are important to you... Grandma's fudge recipe, or the one for her biscuits. Maybe we should all be thinking about putting most of them in one handy spot, condense things a bit while we are at it (Why on earth do I need a recipe for squash casserole? I don't even almost like squash! Eww).

I had this urge a few years ago... I go through these spells of needing to organize all the junk I have laying around every so often. This is the story of how I got all my recipes organized.

So I took a little trip down to the store, specifically looking for a recipe box just like Grandma had all of hers in. Nothing fancy... just a nice little box, sturdy enough (hers was metal and had ghastly orange and yellow daisy-like flowers from the 1960's on it) for years of storing and referencing the recipes in it. I wanted something that would look good next to my cookbooks on the shelf in the kitchen. Granted, I went to a dollar store looking for this thing, so I was probably doomed from the beginning. After looking through all the aisles with no luck, I was over in the brick-a-brack section and I found the cutest little wooden box... it looked like a treasure chest. It was lined with a fake, short pile, velvety cloth. It looked like it would hold a 3x5 index card perfectly. Cute, right? I bought it and happily went home, eager to start this project. I get home, and proudly show my husband what I found for the recipes. He agrees that it is a really cool little box. I take my box out of its bag, get all the recipe books off of the shelf, pull all of my scraps of paper, magazine clippings, and those annoying recipes printed on the wrappers of different foods out of the books. I make 2 piles: recipes I know I want, and ones I might someday use. I search my entire house through, and cannot find a single index card. So I shove all of the scraps in the box, and put everything away.

Several months pass, and I finally remember to buy index cards. "Now I can organize my recipes!" I squeal with glee in the store. Yes, I did get weird looks. Again, I head home, gather all the sources and create little piles of recipes. Then I find a pen and start deciphering the chicken scratches scrawled on those scraps of paper. I got maybe six recipes transferred in my neatest handwriting on to the index cards and got bored, so I started putting all of my stuff away. I get the index cards in the box (it wasn't quite as big as I thought, the index cards bow a little, but that's okay!) I go to close the cool little hasp that keeps the lid closed on my nifty little recipe box, and the stupid clasp breaks in my hand. Now this cheap piece of crap won't stay closed...the lid flops open every time I touch it. "This is not going to work," I say to my husband. His response, of course, is to laugh, and loudly. There may also have been pointing, with the hand that was not clutching his ribs.

It had probably been a year since that happened, and I was at Wal-mart buying plastic boxes to organize my makeup and other crap cluttering up my bathroom, and find a little plastic box for holding -get this- index cards! I think angels might have sung for me at that moment. Sure, it wasn't

pretty like Grandma's recipe box, but it was big enough to hold lots of index cards, and spiders can't build webs in it (okay, so I don't use recipes an awful lot) because the lid seals. I was back in business.

Now I had a box and I could finally get organized. I went home and yet again gathered all of my crap into one place (middle of the living room floor). Here's what should have happened: I should have sat there, rewriting all those ancient, messily scrawled recipes in my absolute neatest handwriting until every ugly scrap of paper could have been thrown away. Maybe pasted the magazine clippings to index cards of their own, since they are already neatly written, and most have pictures too. Then I should have neatly placed the recipe books back on their shelf in the kitchen and put the boxful of neatly written recipes on that shelf too.

By now though, you've probably figured out that it didn't quite go that way for me. Here's what really happened: I got distracted. A few hours after starting, I was watching TV more than I was copying, so I decided to put everything away. So into the new box went the recipes I had neatly written on index cards, most of the scrawled recipes yet to be copied, all of the magazine clippings and all of the cut-outs from the wrappers. I did remember to put the unused index cards in the box so I could find them again the next time I decided to try this project.

It's been over a year, and all I do is add more clippings to the box. But hey, at least they aren't just shoved in the books anymore, right? Now, if you'll excuse me, I probably should go ahead and put my makeup and other random crap in the bathroom in those plastic boxes I bought for them over a year ago. Where did I put those boxes....?

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Cider Pork

RECIPE CARD

CARD \$ RECIPE BY
KAIMEE

...



...

Recipe Card

RECIPE NAME

SWEET CIDER PORK

Ingredients

1 KG PORK LOIN, CUT TO 3CM CUBES

4 - 6 APPLES, FINELY SLICED

1 - 2 INCHES LEEK, CHOPPED

1 BOTTLE APPLE CIDER

CINNAMON, 1 - 2 TSPN

SALT & PEPPER, TO TASTE

KOSHER SALT, 1 TBLSPN

WHOLE CREAM

5 - 10 BUTTON MUSHROOMS, SLICED

...

Method

1. Melt butter in pan on high, cook pork until brown, add mushrooms, leek, salt, pepper and cinnamon, stir.

2. Add 1/2 bottle of cider, 1 cup at a time, allow to cook down. Add apple slices and allow to cook. Stir often.

3. Transfer to large pot, reduce heat to medium-low, add cream 1/4 cup at a time and stir through.

4. Add kosher salt, and top up pot with enough water to cover pork mixture. Cook on medium-low for 1-3 hrs. The longer the pork can cook, the more tender it will be.

Serve with creamy mashed potato, and greens.

...

WWW.JKCOLLECTIVE.COM.AU FOR THE TOWN HERALD 2010

Free Downloadable Recipe Cards!

MADE BY KAIMEE @ JKCOLLECTIVE.COM.AU

Made to fit three x cards to one x A4 size page of standard printer paper, although you can print these out onto thicker card, or hi-res paper stock

Instructions:

1. Click on the image, and when the "Download" dialogue box opens, save the files to your computer.

2. Open the files in your image editing or PDF viewing software of choice, and select "print".

Note: If you want to print lots of copies of only one pattern, you will need to use your image editing software to copy that card, and replace the other two unwanted cards.

3. Decide what type of paper you're going to print the cards onto; some printers have special options to select if you are going to use a different type of paper, so be sure to do this if necessary.

4. Using scissors or a craft knife and ruler, cut your three cards apart. You can now use them as individual recipe cards, to stick in a folder, scrapbook, storage box, or simply to keep handy around the kitchen!

5. Simply fill in the Recipe Name, Ingredients, and Method.



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Rifle Paper Co.

RECIPE CARD BOXES

REVIEW BY KAIMEE

"OUR HEIRLOOM RECIPE CARD BOXES ARE MADE BY LOCAL CRAFTSMEN FROM LOCALLY SALVAGED HARDWOOD (TREES THAT WERE DESTINED FOR LANDFILLS). ALL OF THE BOXES ARE UNIQUE AND HAND-CRAFTED DURING A 3-MONTH-LONG PROCESS (A MONTH FOR THE MILL TO SOURCE THE SALVAGED WOOD, A MONTH TO BUILD IN THE WORKMAN'S STUDIO, AND A MONTH FOR THE HAND-RUBBED FINISH TO DRY). THE LIDS ARE THEN SCREEN PRINTED WITH TWO DIFFERENT DESIGN OPTIONS."

Rifle Paper Co. is the new shop opened up by the awesomely talented illustrator Anna Bond, and among her stationary and illustrations the shop just so happens to feature these amazing little recipe card boxes, to go with the illustrated recipe cards she also sells.

The boxes are beautiful; handcrafted with lovely details and hand-finished with a natural oil, but are expensive to go along with it. One of these little boxes will set you back \$120, and the **matching recipe cards** go for \$28 for 40 cards. The boxes themselves aren't that special, aside from their origins, and could easily be replaced with any refurbished wooden box that will fit the 4" x 6" recipe cards. But what you're paying for here isn't just the craftsmanship or quality of work, it's the entire ethos behind salvaging junk wood, and creating something to pass down to future generations. The name "Heirloom Boxes" says it all; you aren't buying these boxes for you, you're salvaging the horrible waste of natural resources for your children. Plus, you're getting a really cute recipe card box to go with it! Whether you buy one of these, or make one yourself, the re-use, recycle attitude is what counts here, and it's so great to see products like this coming out of the US.



Pokemon Ex Deoxys

TRADING CARD BOOSTER SET

REVIEW BY NIONIEL

When I was much younger, I was a huge fan of all things Pokemon. Back then, I collected the action figures, key chains and even the playing cards, some of which are quite collectable these days. When I bought the playing cards, I would sometimes buy them individually from friends or other collectors, but sometimes I would buy them in packs, such as the Pokemon Ex Deoxys Trading Card Booster Set.

For those who do not know what Pokemon are, they are mystical and magical animated creatures (literally, as in Anime) that are found in the wild, at least in the Pokemon-Verse. Pokemon may be captured and tamed as pets, or else they may be trained to fight other Pokemon. When Pokemon fight, or battle, they gain strength and power, which allows them to level up. When Pokemon level up high enough, they evolve. Many Pokemon have three stages of evolution, the first being the most basic, and the third being the most powerful.

In the Pokemon world, the Deoxys is a wild creature that has shape-shifting abilities, as well as a few other magical qualities. While this particular card set is not really one that people play the card game with anymore, the cards and images themselves are still really very collectable, and include such creatures as the Deoxys, the Rayquaza, the Latias, the Latios, the Breloom, the Manectric, and more! However, each Pokemon Ex Deoxys Trading Card Booster Set is unique in that they do not necessarily contain the same cards in every pack, therefore, some buyers will get great sets and others may not be so wonderful. It is always a risk, but often it is a fun one to see which creatures the buyer was able to snag!

While I don't actually play the card game, I do collect the cards, though mostly for the imagery as the artwork is really pretty beautiful. I also consider it fun to go through new Booster Sets to see which Pokemon I got each time. I do not recommend the Pokemon Ex Deoxys Trading Card Booster Set for those who play the card game, as the cards from this set are not technically allowed in the game, but for collectors of the cards, this really is a perfect set!

Fellowship Of The Ring Cards

REVIEW BY W.L.

ENTER THE QUEST TO SAVE MIDDLE EARTH WITH "THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING" TRADING CARD GAME!

So now that I have worked my way through the entire collection of "Star Trek" CCG sets, it seems like the right time to start doing my Epinions (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epinions>) civic duty of fleshing out the database for the "Lord Of The Rings" CCG, which is actually known as the "Lord Of The Rings Trading Card Game." The "Lord Of The Rings" Trading Card Game was produced by Decipher, Inc. and coincided with the release of "Fellowship Of The Ring" and continued to be a flagship product of Decipher until it let the license go in late 2007.

Quite naturally, the "Fellowship Of The Ring" booster boxes that kicked off the "Lord Of The Rings" TCG followed the plot of Peter Jackson's "Fellowship Of The Ring," but one of the nicest things about this first set was that it provided some of the earliest images of scenes that were in the Extended Edition of "Fellowship Of The Ring" (reviewed at: http://www.epinions.com/content_405696777860), like on card 1R314 Stone Trolls.

"The Fellowship Of The Ring" gaming set establishes the "Lord Of The Rings" TCG as a platform that is easy to learn and fun to play in, but from the booster boxes, it is hit or miss as to whether one will be able to play. The Starter Decks come with rule books and they are pretty much essential to getting started, as well as completing one's set.

Basics/Set Composition

"The Fellowship Of The Ring" set was the first set of "Lord Of The Rings" Trading Card Game cards created by Decipher to introduce the new gaming platform to fans of "The Lord Of The Rings." Envisioned as a game played by two to four people, players created decks of cards utilising their own version of the Fellowship and prepared to seed the adventure path with obstacles to thwart other players' Fellowship. For those unfamiliar with the concept, CCGs (or TCGs) are basically a late-teen oriented product designed to capitalise on the youthful desire to play with the acknowledged maturity of the target audience. The initial idea of the customisable card game was to allow young adults and adults to play in a way that was as free and imaginative as playing with action figures, but without the stigma of being a twenty-five year-old zapping a friend's toys with mouth-created sound effects. The result is something that is a midpoint between the freedom and creativity of action-figure free play and the structured rules and rigidity of a board game.

Players might prefer that I describe the game instead as a strategy game that is like a Role-playing game with cards. The break here is that the characters, artefacts, and scenarios are all already conceived by others. The original concept was to find a way to make play socially acceptable for an older audience and it generally worked.

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"The Fellowship Of The Ring" is a 365-card set focusing on characters, location, artefacts, villains and scenarios presented in the first "Lord Of The Rings" film. Released following the premiere of "The Fellowship Of The Ring," this card set utilises material from the film, presenting a well-rounded playing environment from Middle Earth. The set consists of 121 common cards, 121 uncommon cards, 121 rare cards and 2 starter deck exclusive cards, with the most popular characters being presented as rare cards in addition to uncommon and common cards. This provides a sense of balance and allows different character traits to be exploited among the various versions. So, for example, the Uncommon Legolas whose strength is increased by 3 when confronting Nazgul, while the Rare Legolas allows Legolas to be exerted during the Archery phase to wound a minion without being factored into the archery total. This gives that Legolas the equivalent of first strike and with some enemies, that can be quite useful.

The 365 card set features 2 One Ring (cards featuring the necessary artefact of the game), 26 Dwarven, 40 Elven, 20 Gandalf, 33 Gondor, 43 Isengard, 40 Moria, 36 Ringwraith, 45 Sauron, and 35 Shire Affiliation cards, and 45 Site cards. These are generally broken down evenly between Fellowship (your cards you play with) and Minion (cards you set upon your opponent) cards. Within the various affiliations, there are: 2 One Ring (cards depicting The One Ring, which must be kept by the Current Player's Fellowship Bearer), 20 Ally (cards depicting supporting characters, like Farmer Maggot and Elrond), 26 Companion (cards depicting primary characters and those who may join your customised Fellowship, like Legolas and a Dwarf Guard) 72 Condition (cards illustrating long-term changes to Middle Earth that remain in play more than one turn, like Stone Trolls or The Last Alliance Of Elves And Men), 108 Event (cards depicting temporary effects on players, like a dwarf dealing a Cleaving Blow or Gandalf deciding to Risk A Little Light), 52 Minion (cards depicting villains used to obstruct your opponent, like the Witch King or a Troop Of Uruk-hai), 40 Possession (cards depicting objects used to enhance the natural strength or endurance of a character, like the Cave Troll's Hammer or Old Toby), and 45 Site (cards depicting locations in Middle Earth, they form the "board" for the game).

This set establishes a very basic and broad sense of the Middle Earth universe as characterised by "The Fellowship Of The Ring." The booster pack boxes are comprised of thirty-six packs per box with eleven cards per pack. The eleven cards are portioned out with seven common (six in packs that have a foil card), three uncommon, and one rare cards. A foil card replaces a single common in approximately six packs. The foils are simply reprints of the standard cards; there are no cards that are uniquely foils in this set.

Playability

At its most basic level, this is a board game where one constructs the board and pieces out of a selection of cards. The purpose of the game is to survive to the end of the ninth site in the Adventure Path, which (theoretically) indicates the end of the Ring Bearer's quest. The basic idea is to assemble a sixty card deck, lay out the board (Adventure Path) and play against an opponent. The deck is evenly split between Fellowship and Shadow cards, so players ought to have a hand that allows them to play and attempt to thwart their opponent at any given time.

This game uses a "payment" system where cards have a cost. The rule book recommends something like poker chips or glass beads to establish the twilight pool and wound indicators and I've found small poker chips (not included) work very well for this.

Sites form the board for the game, known as the Adventure Path. Sites are seeded in accordance to the rules of bidding (all of this is clearly established in the rule book, which is available in the starter decks). The rule book clearly defines what each deck must possess in terms of numbers of the card types. But

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basically, one starts by laying out a board, determining which player goes first, then setting them off through a Fellowship Phase (wherein the current player adds any characters they can and moves to the next site), Shadow Phase (Shadow players seed Minions to set against the current player's Fellowship), Manoeuvre Phase, Archery Phase (archers fire and it becomes the first chance to try to take out enemies), Assignment Phase (villains target Fellowship Companions), Skirmish (they actually battle) and then Regroup.

This is a fairly complex trading card game, but it represents a level of gaming sophistication designed to appeal to younger adults and actually challenge them, which is a decent idea given the complexity of Middle Earth. The problem, of course, is that most people who would be most stimulated by this game do not have the time or effort/interest to learn to play it. As a result, the mid-teens that basically run the CCG players world seem to have had mixed impressions about this game. Many players seem to enjoy that cards have a "cost" to them, adding a sense of risk to playing many of the better cards.

It takes a great deal of time and energy to learn the game, but once one has played a few hands of it, it is a pretty easy concept for an adult to master and the challenge becomes assembling a strong fellowship and accompanying minion deck and being creative (and lucky) about how the cards from one's hand are used.

Rules/Rule Changes

The rule book for this game is forty pages long; it's not so much the function of a review to rehash all that as it is to evaluate it. The rules are exceptionally clear; in fact, the rule book in "The Fellowship Of The Rings" starter decks is the clearest for any trading card game I have ever tried to play; it is a shame there is no rule book in the booster packs!

The rule book clearly establishes the rules of the game, especially as far as deck size and the creation of the game mechanics. It is also clever enough to attempt to appeal to an adult audience by establishing rule extensions, like suggesting that as players become more advanced, they may increase their deck size (it establishes the essential proportion needed) and how to play with multiple players.

The rules are fairly clearly laid out in the rule book and most adults will not have difficulty understanding and applying them. As well, each card contains text that informs the player what the card is intended to do, so there is not a lot that players need to memorise. The rule book also has a full colour spread in the middle illustrating how to lay out a playing field for the game. This is very handy and makes it exceedingly easy to start the game.

Highlights

Players, collectors and fans of "The Lord Of The Rings" franchise will appreciate the image quality of the characters and scenarios from "The Fellowship Of The Ring." "The Fellowship Of The Ring" set features the entire Fellowship, including Aragorn and Gandalf. The set also features the Black Riders and the Cave Troll Of Moria! This set powerfully establishes most of the biggest characters and scenarios in Middle Earth and it does so with larger images than many other trading card game cards have.

But to pick a highlight, I would have to go with The Pale Blade. Yup, my choice for most valuable card for players is the 1R221, which makes the Witchking 3 on strength with a 1 damage modifier for the low cost of two from the Twilight Pool. More than that, using this blade allows the Witchking (who is discarded by

Fellowship players who survive anyway) to eliminate a Condition card. This is a real steal and tactically one of the most potentially devastating cards a player can use in the game.

Collectibility

Rares are evenly distributed in the booster packs, making only two starter decks necessary for those collecting a master set, as the Aragorn and Gandalf decks each have a single card that cannot be found in the booster packs.

Beyond that, die-hard, obsessive collectors who want to spend a lifetime going from dealer to dealer on a vain search to complete something will thrill over the foil cards. All 365 cards are reprinted as foil cards and the foil sets are near impossible to complete and seem to be disproportionately less valuable than the master sets of non-foil cards. In other words, while the foil sets might take hundreds to thousands of dollars to complete, dealers seem to only be able to get in the low hundreds of dollars for them, probably because many collectors didn't go for this gimmick from Decipher.

Overview

This is the logical starting point for players, and collectors seemed to leap on this set, knowing it was only the beginning of the franchise. The concepts are interesting and well-executed, making for a decent start and a fun game. This is also an easy game to learn and come back to, making it ideal for those who might not have a ton of time in one sitting.

This set culls material from:

"The Fellowship Of The Ring" - http://www.epinions.com/content_50131996292

This was the first set in the War Of The Rings "Fellowship" block and it was followed by "Mines Of Moria" (reviewed at: http://www.epinions.com/content_442382192260).

For other games reviewed by me, please check out:

Lord Of The Rings RISK - http://www.epinions.com/content_129534168708

"Star Trek" CCG - http://www.epinions.com/content_423128108676

"Star Trek" Second Edition CCG Premiere - http://www.epinions.com/content_422389780100

Recommended:

Yes

Amount Paid (US\$): 75.00

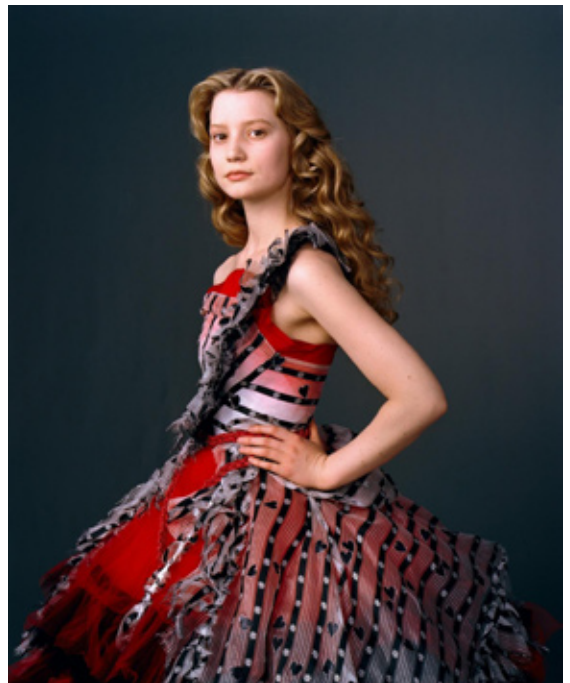
Alice in Wonderland

REVIEW BY W.L.

VISUALLY EXCEPTIONAL, "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" DAZZLES
4 OUT OF 5 STARS

Truth-be-told, I've never read either "Alice In Wonderland" or "Through The Looking Glass," the works by Lewis Carroll which started the franchise. In fact, the closest I've come to knowing anything about Alice from "Alice In Wonderland" is "Lost Girls", which features Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie's interpretation of the character. Fortunately, one may easily be ignorant and enter Tim Burton's "Alice In Wonderland" and get caught up with ridiculous speed. This version of "Alice In Wonderland" is a sequel, of sorts, to the original, features an older Alice and a very dark tone. From what I hear about the book – as opposed to the animated Disney version (this, too, is from Disney) – there is a pretty sinister tone throughout. Regardless, I shall offer no contrast to any prior "Alice In Wonderland" because of my ignorance and the fact that this film is intended as a standalone.

Alice, a nineteen year-old, is attending a gala at the estate of a friend of the family, Hamish Ascot, when she gets wind that he will be proposing to her during the meal. Not overwhelmingly fond of Hamish, Alice does not want to marry him and when she sees a rabbit nearby, she uses that as a means to flee the dinner party. She follows the rabbit back to its warren and in so doing, she falls through a vortex to a mystical realm. Shrunk by a potion she takes at the bottom of the hole, she arrives in Wonderland and soon after meets the insane Mad Hatter, who recognizes her instantly. Alice does not recall the strange setting she finds herself in immediately, but soon elements come back to her. Unfortunately for her, the Red Queen, a maniacal dictator now rules over all of Wonderland.



Amazed by the world around her, Alice encounters fantastic talking beings, like the Cheshire Cat and the White Rabbit, learning about the oppression of the Red Queen. When the Mad Hatter, who has been much abused under the reign of the Red Queen, encounters Alice, he sees his chance to rid Wonderland of the villainess. He aids Alice in getting to the White Queen, who is more quietly dangerous, and Alice steps up to lead the White Queen's forces against those of the Red Queen and fulfill her destiny of slaying the Red Queen's most vicious pet, the Jabberwock!

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"Alice In Wonderland" is a pretty classic hero story set in a fantastic setting. The two elements that impressed me most about Tim Burton's new vision for "Alice In Wonderland" were not (ironically) the special effects and the soundtrack, but rather the level of character development throughout the story and the acting, most notably of Mia Wasikowska (Alice). The special effects are appropriately special and the soundtrack is a very standard and obvious Danny Elfman soundtrack. This is not bad, but it is largely what one would predict from a collaboration between Burton and Elfman. In "Alice In Wonderland," Elfman augments the dark palate of Burton's drained realm with creepy underlying music and appropriately grand and spasmodic themes during the battle scenes. "Alice In Wonderland," to be fair to the collaborators, has a magical feeling that the pair has not (arguably) had for quite some time. Fortunately, when they create a winner together, they truly get it right!

As for the visual effects, considering that is what most people seem to care about these days, Burton and his team manage to do an exceptional job with the effects and I am eager to see how well this translates to the 3-D version when it is theatrically released. Burton employs quite a bit of CG animation in both creating and augmenting both his characters and the landscapes the characters find themselves in. However, the biggest difference between "Alice In Wonderland" and the recent special-effects blockbuster "Avatar" is that Burton and his team more consistently got it right. For sure, there are elements that still look animated - the Cheshire Cat, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and the White Rabbit - but the way they interact with the Wonderland world, as well as the consistently live-action elements, like Alice, the Mad Hatter and the levitating White Queen, makes one feel like they are watching a live-action film, as opposed to an animated one. Where Burton's team gets it really right is with the setting, lighting and the Red Queen. The Red Queen is a computer-altered character, with a bloated Helena Bonham Carter's head on a diminished body. But the character looks absolutely real in every frame of the film and the achievement is on par with the creation of Gollum in "The Lord Of The Rings." The Red Queen's effect was the most consistently wonderful and those looking to feel like they are truly entering a desiccating, but incredible world

will be blown away by the visual effects (as well as the way Elfman's soundtrack melds with them).

More impressive than the visual effects is the fact that Burton and screenwriter Linda Woolverton have a story to tell and it is one more about character than setting. Alice is an unlikely hero and while the "hero with amnesia" thing has been done before, the denial Alice has lived in of her prior encounter with Wonderland plays out feeling surprisingly fresh. As a result, "Alice In Wonderland" is not the story of a little girl overcome by her settings, it is a tale of a young woman taking control of her destiny and standing up for a principle. As Alice makes the transition from ignorant to informed, she becomes empowered and fortunately for those looking at the film for a message, Alice is not used as a simple tool of either the Mad Hatter or the White Queen. Instead, the film is about how those around her help her to make an informed decision and how she takes control of her own powers. And yes, she does manage to discover there is a leader inside her and this ties in quite nicely with her "real world" experience at the beginning of the film.

Alice is an outsider - in both worlds - and she is ably played by Mia Wasikowska. Wasikowska has a great sense of physical acting throughout the film, slouching through some of the movie's early scenes before standing up taller as her character becomes emotionally stronger. She delivers her lines convincingly and she makes for both a likable character and a realistic one. When she is forced to look around in amazement, she doesn't look like she is hamming it up. Nor does she look like she is uncertain when her character is supposed to be confident in her resolve. Hers is an excellent performance from a new, young talent.

The same cannot, unfortunately, be said of Johnny Depp. Depp plays the Mad Hatter and this is not the millionth time he has collaborated with Tim Burton, but it sure feels like it. The crazed nature of The Mad Hatter does not remind one of the manic moments when Depp played Willy Wonka, but rather his character of Jack Sparrow from "Pirates Of The Caribbea." Depp seems too familiar in the role and while he's good, it is nothing we haven't seen from him before. Similarly, Burton now-regular Helena Bonham Carter is fine, but familiar as the Red Queen (Christopher Lee who might seem poised to take slack in the same manner is fine voicing the Jabberwock). Anne Hathaway fans will enjoy how Hathaway stretches her acting chops as the White Queen, though. There is something unsettling (more than just the black eyebrows under the white hair) about Hathaway's performance and it comes from the way she gives her character a faraway look in her eyes constantly. The viewer gets the sense she is looking through other characters and Hathaway delivers that beautifully.

The resulting film is one that is exciting, visually spectacular and surprisingly adult for a film that seems to be erring on the side of kid-safe. In fact, the only real hang-up most kids might have (I can imagine how annoying it might be in theaters now!) would be the language. In keeping with the Lewis Carroll story, Alice and many of the denizens of Wonderland speak with made-up words with a fair amount of frequency. While adults are likely to understand from context, children might, annoyingly, be asking "What does that mean?" every few minutes. I loathe the idea of being part of an audience like that.

Adults, I'd bet early and guess that the 3-D experience is going to be sensational, go to a late-night 3-D showing and leave the kids at home: this is a creepy, fun adventure that has Tim Burton stamped all over it. It feels far more Burton than Disney . . . thankfully.

Twilight Cards

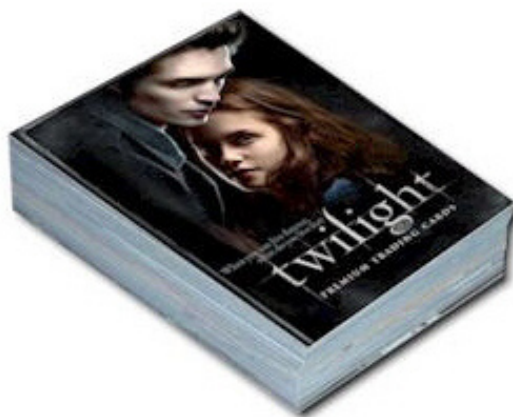
REVIEW BY W.L.

VASTLY OVERPRICED, "TWILIGHT" CARDS MIRACULOUSLY RETAIN THEIR VALUE!

Rather annoyingly for fans of the "Twilight" Saga, even the Inkworks "Twilight" cards are not all they could be. Then the first promotional card for the set was released, it promised autograph cards in addition to the costume cards, but they did not materialize with the product. Instead, the boxes have continued to soar in price (they were originally released at \$55/box) based on a consumer base that has little knowledge of card collecting. They have made a mediocre product exceptionally valuable and for those who are hunting the components of the sets, the boxes are a very pricey way to go about trying to collect it. Even so, boxes of the "Twilight" cards have retained their value for years better than any movie-based card set I have ever seen.

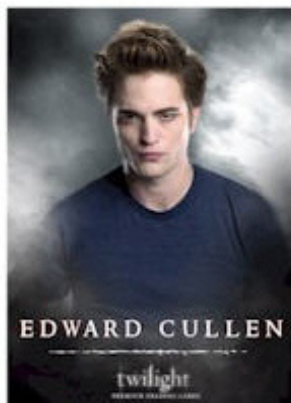
Basics/Set Composition

In the weeks before the release of the 2008 film "Twilight," Inkworks released a trading card set based upon the new film. It was a surprise sellout and most dealers sold out of what boxes they were able to get in with an alarming speed. Indeed, there had not truly been a card set geared toward young women that had been as successful as the "Twilight" cards. However, the lack of "Twilight" merchandise encouraged the otherwise uninterested demographic to buy into the collectibles and boxes almost instantly became impossible to find with common set value skyrocketing and most dealers kicking themselves for not raising their prices to ridiculous levels ahead of time. The "Twilight" card set was produced in standard trading card size as opposed to the elongated "widescreen" movie card size used in the industry for many major film licenses.



The "Twilight" card set is focused primarily on the characters and plot of the movie and the common cards were packed with character images, making it ideal for fans of the film who know how the movie ends. Like almost all of Inkworks' products, the cards come with a UV protective coating to protect the trading cards from fading over time and to give them a nice sheen. This does appear to work as I've not had any cards from Inkworks fade. Rather annoyingly, cards do not follow a universal format, so the character cards that make up the first common cards are oriented in "portrait" format while most of the rest of the cards have a landscape orientation.

The "Twilight" trading card set properly consists of 109 cards. Boxes contain only twenty-four packs



of eight cards each. Inkworks only guaranteed one costume card per box. As a result, most boxes are severely overvalued as the best card that may be found in a box still sells for less than \$300!

Common Cards

The "Twilight" common set is a 72 card set focusing entirely on the "Twilight" movie. The set is comprised of a title card with the Bella and Edward, seventeen significant characters and the rest of the cards being plot cards detailing some of the film's plot. There is a final card (72) which is the checklist for the set.

The character cards are a dream collection for fans looking to get something different autographed at the "Twilight" conventions that have been popping up around the country since the movie was first released.

The seventeen cards feature great promotional images of every major character from "Twilight," from the obvious Bella Swan and Edward Cullen through Charlie Swan, the less obvious James and the villainous Victoria (the original one!). In fact, the only characters neglected in this set are Bella's classmates (ironically, Mr. Molina gets a card, but Bella's token high school friends do not).

The plot cards tell the story of "Twilight" and this is the meat of the set. The cards feature the same image on the front and on the back and each card has a misty white and black border which acts as a dreamy keyhole into the scene the card is discussing. The backs feature writing which are surprisingly thorough for the plot of the film version of "Twilight." Unlike some movie card sets, the "Twilight" cards seem comfortable with including cards from the climax and coda of the film, so fans are likely to be very pleased by how thorough the card set actually is.

Chase Cards

The 109 card set features thirty-seven chase cards, of which all but seven are available in the packs. The bonus cards that can be found in the boxes include: Always cards, Different cards, In Pursuit cards and twelve costume ("Pieceworks") cards. The bonus cards range from the decent, to the near-impossible to find. Having opened only two full boxes, all I know is that the obvious grail card in the set is as hard to find as one might predict and I did not pull it in my boxes! Rather annoyingly, Inkworks did not define the costume card rarities, so some of them may be significantly harder to find than others.

The first level of chase card, found one in every eleven packs are the Always Cards. These foil cards fit together to form a nine-card mural of Bella and Edward together from the movie poster to "Twilight." The foil effect adds an additional layer of collectibility and the full mural looks good and will likely make the target audience swoon. Were Kristen Stewart and/or Robert Pattinson ever to do conventions, these would probably be one of the hottest sellers of the set.

That set is followed by the six "Different" cards, which are featured one in every seventeen packs. This annoyingly difficult set focuses on the isolation of the characters, like Bella, Edward, and the Cullens. These are bonus cards which seem more special based on their rarity, though they are foil-enhanced. The writing on the back further explores the characters and they are not bad.

That set is followed by the "In Pursuit" cards. The "In Pursuit" set focuses on the villain James and is a decent foil set. At one in every 23 packs, the "In Pursuit" cards are more rare than they are spectacular, but fans of Cam Gigandet ought to be thrilled by them!

The costume cards redeem the set for the most part. There are twelve Pieceworks costume cards and I have not heard of there being any variants within the twelve. The basic idea behind the Pieceworks card is that the card company gets a set-worn costume, chops it up and embeds it in a double-thick card with a window so fans can see and feel it! It is a cool idea and this might well be the closest that most fans will ever get to a piece of clothes worn by Kristen Stewart or Robert Pattinson. Unfortunately for fans, there is only one Pieceworks card from either of the big two (and only one from Taylor Lautner as Jacob as well).

Non-Box/Pack Cards

Inkworks does its fans a real service by not having a ton of cards to chase outside the individual boxes. The other seven cards not found in the packs or boxes are still fairly simple to find. There was the standard general release promotional card which was given out freely, as well as the one that was given out through the Inkworks website. These are pretty standard promotional cards and they were printed before Inkworks knew they were not releasing autographs in the set.

Fans who went to the Philadelphia Non-Sport show had the ability to get P-PS and there was Memorabilia trade show promo P-MS. Like the exclusive UK distribution promotional card, these are difficult to find, but are basic promotional cards. In other words, they look like common cards and have value only for their rarity.

The other two cards were the casetopper and the Hot Topic exclusive "Who Is Bella?" card. The HT-1 "Who Is Bella?" card was released only in boxes from Hot Topic stores. The value of these seems to have increased because many fans did not realize their value and simply tossed them when they found them in the boxes! As a result, this has become one of the more coveted cards from the set (in addition to a lesson that those not into card collecting ought to ask before doing anything with their new products!).

Finally, there is the casetopper. The casetopper is a very limited card of Edward Cullen called "Protector." It is another card that is more valuable for its rarity than anything else, though the text on the card is foil enhanced.

Overall

Inkworks has a hit with their "Twilight" cards and it is astonishing how valuable they truly are. So long as the "Twilight" bubble does not pop, these will remain one of the most valuable "Twilight" collectibles on the market and they are a great investment if anyone can find anyone who will sell them cheap to them. As it stands, they are drastically overvalued by the box, but that does not seem to be stopping fans from continuing to drive up the prices on the boxes. That only helps card collectors!

Star Wars Cards

CUSTOMIZABLE CARD TATOOINE BOOSTER BOX

REVIEW BY W.L.

The "Star Wars" Customisable Card Game, a game I intend to review from the beginning as soon as the appropriate parts are SAPed, had some real highs and some real lows. As Decipher moved ever closer to losing the license for one of its two establishing products, it seemed to get more and more lazy. Players became disenchanted because the game began to follow more of a script format and less of the creative play they had within the "Star Wars" universe from the beginning.

"Tatooine" was released after "The Phantom Menace" and awkwardly combined elements from the original "Star Wars" Trilogy with newer elements from the earlier time frame. The thing is, "Tatooine" was a much smaller set than most of Decipher's "Star Wars" products, which devalued the already near-worthless common and uncommon sets while at the same time making the rares disproportionately more expensive. The result is that boxes have a lot of worthless cards and very few cards of value and note.

Basics/Set Composition

"Tatooine" was the penultimate set in the "Star Wars" CCG and combined elements from both the original "Star Wars" trilogy and the prequel timeframe. The set focused on the role Tatooine played in the three films (at that time) the planet had appeared in. As a result, there are podraces, Jedi and laying traps for Luke Skywalker. The set is focuses on characters naturally on Tatooine and those who wander there during the first prequel film.

"Tatooine" consists of one hundred gaming cards from Decipher, Inc. Packs consisted of eleven cards and boxes had forty packs. Each pack had seven commons, three uncommons and one rare card. Cards were broken down fairly evenly between Light Side and Dark Side cards. The set consisted of thirty common, thirty uncommon, and forty rare cards. Of those forty rares, nine of them are reprints bearing the same game text, but an alternate image of the character. As a result, there are two versions of the card for Darth Maul, Qui-Gon Jinn and Aurra Sing (among others).

The "Tatooine" set is broken down into: 31 Character (cards focusing on the droids, aliens and other people of the Trilogy, like Sebulba and Grugnak), 1 Device (tools used to aid a character's natural abilities, in this case Darth Maul's Electrobinoculars), 17 Effect (cards that change the parameters of the game, like "A Million Voices Crying Out" when Alderaan is destroyed or Brisky Morning Munchen rejuvenating a Gungan), 3 Epic Events (cards with longer term changes to the game like the Boonta Eve Podrace), 26 Interrupts (immediate changes in the game, like Entering The Arena or Fanfare), 8 Locations (cards depicting places that form the "board" for the game, like Tatooine: Mos Espa or Tatooine: Slave Quarters), 5 Podracer (cards depicting the new, unique vehicles from "The Phantom Menace"), 1 Vehicle (creatures are devices used to move between locations, in this case an Eopie) and 3 Weapons (cards to arm characters with, in this case Maul's Lightsaber and Qui-Gon Jinn's Lightsaber).

Playability

By this point in the game, the game is completely unplayable. There have been so many rule changes and addendum that it is virtually impossible to play without owning each and every card Decipher put out for the game. As it stands, "Tatooine" is not playable on its own out of the box, there are too few cards to reasonably make a deck. This is intended solely as a supplemental set.

The basic idea behind the game is to assemble a deck of locations, people, equipment and action cards and either embody the Dark or Light Side powers in the "Star Wars" universe. Using that side, originally, the concept was to have free play to either control the galaxy and crush rebellion or fight for freedom. By this point, though, the game follows more of a script. As a result, specific cards counter other, specific cards with little ability for the player to be creative within the field of play anymore. The boxes of Tatooine cards do not come with a full guide to playing the game.

Rule Changes

The box of "Tatooine" cards comes with a single sheet of rule changes and a checklist for the set. The rule changes for this set simply govern the sidegame for the podrace. As a result, one might divert from the usual game, which involves tapping force and combating your opponent to waste some time racing. The side game is hardly interesting and so long as one player has Anakin and his podracer in play, the deck is more or less loaded against the Dark Side Players.

Outside that, the sheet has a few notes about technical changes from misprints and clarifications. There are no huge rule changes in this edition.

Highlights

Fans of the "Star Wars" Saga are likely to enjoy the fact that this set mixes both prequel and original "Star Wars" concepts. The result is a richer sense of the universe for the game and fans can test their thoughts on pitting Darth Maul against Luke Skywalker (well, with cards from other sets, not this one as there is no Luke in the "Tatooine" set, but the concept holds).

With so many great Jedi and Sith to play, I still find myself drawn to Aurra Sing. Aurra Sing is a bounty hunter revealed momentarily in "The Phantom Menace" and her presence within the card game illustrates how popular the bounty hunters are with fans. In this form - and she appears with both a standard version and an Alternate Image version - Sing is a Force Sensitive character who costs four to play but has a forfeit of only three. She does not initially appear to be a value, until one checks out her ability. She can use any stolen lightsaber and once per turn she can steal a lightsaber! She is immune to some attrition and has both a power and ability of four. In other words, she lives up to a bounty hunter's reputation for survival and has some skills to bring into play to weaken a well-armed Light Side player!

Collectibility

Unfortunately, by this point the "Star Wars" Customizable Card Game had pretty much tapped out its core audience. As a result, by the time one tries to get into "Tatooine," they are hampered by not

having much of a market left to try to sell to. This set is remarkably easy to collect as it does not have any ultra rares or foils to hunt down.

Unfortunately, the lack of excitement, as well as the lower number of cards in the set left "Tatooine" with less enduring value than most would like to admit. However, this was also severely short-printed and that gives it a little value it would not otherwise have. Investors seem to do well with this set, though how they find collectors to buy is a mystery to me.

Overview

"Tatooine" is too insubstantial a set to please me. As a result of how little there is, the Alternate Image cards not changing anything as far as the playability of those rares, and the tiny common and uncommon sets, boxes are far more expensive than whole sets are, which is the opposite of how things usually are. Go figure!

Battle Spirits TCG

REVIEW BY *PHOENIX*

In my monthly magazine, Shonen Jump they advertised 2 free demo decks of Battle Spirits Trading Card Game (TCG) per household. The picture looked cool so I got one for my brother and I. What they didn't tell you was how tediously long the game was.

What was included in the demo deck were various types of 'Spell', 'Nexus', and 'Spirit' cards, a few 'Cores', and a game mat with a few instructions on the back. The Cores are the basically you life points. Everything runs off these tiny pieces of plastic. The more cores you have on a monster, the more powerful it is; the more cores you have on a spell, the more effective it is the more you can do; same with Nexus. Just like any other TGC, there are different phases in the game: Start phase, main phase, battle phase, and end phase. The rules were all well and good (after I downloaded the instruction manual online.)

The problem with this game is that monsters become "exhausted," and therefore don't die. You and the your opponent go back and forth attacking and defending until all the monsters are "exhausted" then you go on to the next phase. Then when it's the next turn you can "refresh" all your monsters. This fores you to rely on your Spell and Nexus cards.

I found that towards the end I was getting very bored and just wanted to quit.

This game released 08.14.09. That Christmas season Band-ai announced that new starter decks and booster packs would be available to "stores worldwide." I only know of one store in my area that sells it and it's over an hour away. Almost a year has past, and I have yet to see it in any superstore in my area. I felt like they stretched the truth a little on that ad.

I LIKE THE GAME. I TRULY DO, AND I THINK IF I WERE TO GET MY HANDS ON SOME CARDS IT WOULD BE EVEN MORE FUN; BUT THE GAME JUST GOES ON FOREVER.



Yu-Gi-Oh a Sport?

WRITTEN BY THUNDER CID

When even thinking about cards as a sport how do most of us lump it? Do we compare the World Poker Tour to, say, curling? There is one card game I personally can vouch for that requires more mental alertness and nimble fingers than those half-baked five card studs in Vegas.

I'm talking about Yu-Gi-Oh. Yu-Gi-Oh, roughly translates to "Game King" or "King Of Games", is primarily a one versus one card game using 3 basic types of cards (monster, trap, and spell). A deck can have no less than 40 cards (which is ideal for the more experienced players) with a side deck of 15 cards (no more no less) used to switch out in between games.

The usual game is a best 2 out of 3 with both players having a start of 8,000 life points (4,000 for recognised tournaments). To start players will decide who goes first which can be done in many ways, my personal favourite high card on bottom goes first, and then draw 7 cards. Each round is set up in phases (draw, standby, 1, attack, 2, and end).

Phases:

Draw Phase-Simple draw a card (unless you are not able to by a card effect or you have no cards to draw in which case you lose the game).

Standby Phase- Usually nothing goes on during this phase unless a card specifies an action (i.e. lose life points, remove a card, etc. ...).

Phase 1- This is where you set traps, spells, and summon monsters.

Attack Phase- This is where you do battle with your monsters by attacking directly or battling your opponent's monsters.

Phase 2- This is where you have the option of laying anymore of your traps and spells (note: if you summons a monster during phase 1, you cannot summon anymore during phase 2 unless you can special summon).

End Phase- this is where your opponent's turn begins.

Cards:

Now I'm sure you are curious about the types of cards used in this game. As I said before you have 3 in general; monster, trap, and spell. Now it's time to tell you the more specifics behind them.

Monsters: Monsters can be normal, effect, fusion, ritual, Synchro, and token. Normal monsters are yellowish in background and really have no other uses than as tribute or setting up a defence.

Effect monsters are, well, monsters with effects. These can be broad so I won't go into details. Just pick up a pack and look for an orange coloured back ground monster and read. One common effect monster is the flip effect which has to be set before it can be activated (by you on your next turn or you foolish opponent who wants to destroy it).

Fusion monsters are purple in background and can be made by using a spell card called polymerisation and the two cards needed to fuse.

Ritual monsters are blue in background and are summoned from the hand by using a Ritual Spell card and sacrificing monster cards according to the Spell's instructions from the field.

Synchro monsters are beyond my knowledge actually (I retired before they came out) but from what I know they are white in background, kick a lot of ass and require what are called tuners in order to summon them. Again I apologise for my ignorance on these.

Tokens (now) are grey monsters that are brought out by other card effects and are mostly used for fodder. In my day we used beads, pennies, or in some cases Cheerios. To play monsters is essential. You can "summon" (face up attack position or vertical) or set (face down defence position or horizontal).

All fusion, Ritual, and Synchro monsters go into their own special deck that has no penalty against your main and side deck. Monsters with 1-4 stars (look under the name for stars) can be brought to the field immediately (unless it says otherwise).

5-7 take 1 tribute or 1 sacrifice (like feeding a little fish to a big fish).

7 and up require 2 tributes. There are special summons which allow you to bring a monster out without the need to sacrifice or may have other condition, I won't get into that but it's pretty easy to find out if you read your cards. And also there are conditions which some cards can and can't be played, just keep an eye out for them.

Traps: Traps (which are pinkish) are pretty basic (but still a kick in the crotch for the unsuspecting) forms of defence.

Example I have no monsters on my side of the field, but 5 face down in my spell/trap zone. The wise player would know not to attack but there are the few unfortunates that will try and make a gutsy move. BAM! I have activated a trap (let's say mirror force which destroys all of my opponents face up attack position monsters.)

Now that you know how awesome they can be let's talk about how to use them. First you can must set them face down during your move and wait until your opponents turn before you can activate them.

Next you have to figure out how it can be used (I like to play some that let me special summon as soon as my opponent starts his turn for extra security on my field). Last, and this is more of a tip, waste a good trap. Some cards are restricted to only one certain card a deck so be wise.

There are a few different types of traps you can use, basic, continuous, and counters. Basic traps are, as I mentioned before, lay and wait.

Continuous traps have a little infinite sign on them meaning they stay on the field until their conditions no longer apply or are removed from the field.

Counter traps are when you or your opponent activate a trap you can play it to negate or reverse

the effect of the previous trap (there are other effects as well).

Spells: Spells are a light blue colour and can be used in a variety of ways. There are a thousand and one ways to use each and every one (if you know a little about strategy).

Spells can be played without setting them on your turn or special ones that can be played on your opponent's turn (I'll get into that in a sec). First, like traps, there are basic and continuous, however spells have many more different types.

There are also quick play, equip, field, and ritual spells. Quick plays have a little lightning bolt on them and can be set like traps to activate on your opponents turn.

You can set a Q.P. on your turn and activated the very same turn. Equip spells (look for a plus sign) are designed to hook up to a monster for an extra boost in power or can be use to equip to your opponents monsters for a massive drain.

Field cards, which have a kind of windmill emblem on them, have a special place on the field that does not take up any space on your primary 5 spots.

These can be used to give all of your monsters that little extra boost needed to seal the deal.

Ritual spells have a flame symbol on them and are only used to summon ritual monsters (easy enough).

Chaining:

Chaining is again something I'm no expert on, but I know enough to give a kind of example (keep in mind I'm gonna nerd this part up a little).

A chain is when two or more card effects activate in response to the other card. The rule of thumb is that a chain resolves backwards in the order of cards played.

For example Player 1 plays a Monster Reborn spell card (Spell Speed 1). This spell card allows Player 1 to special summon a monster from either player's graveyard. They choose their opponent's monster, Dark Magician.

Player 2 activates a Call of the Haunted continuous trap card (Spell Speed 2). This trap card allows Player 2 to special summon a monster from their own graveyard as long as the trap card remains on the field. They choose their own Dark Magician.

Because Player 2 activated their card last in the chain, their card effect goes first. Player 1 now has no target for their Monster Reborn, so it is sent to the Graveyard and Player 1 doesn't get the monster.

Most chains are generally only a "Chain link 2", meaning only two cards are activated in a chain.

There are longer chains, however: Player 1 plays a Monster Reborn spell card (Spell Speed 1).

This spell card allows Player 1 to special summon a monster from either player's graveyard. They choose their opponent's monster, Dark Magician. Player 2 activates a Call of the Haunted continuous trap card (Spell Speed 2).

This trap card allows Player 2 to special summon a monster from their own graveyard as long as the trap card remains on the field.

They choose their own Dark Magician. Player 1 activates a Royal Decree continuous trap card (Spell Speed 2).

This trap card negates the effect of all trap cards on the field except for itself. This means that while player 2 has activated Call of the Haunted and it remains face-up on their side of the field, they are unable to special summon a monster.

Because both cards are continuous, unless Royal Decree is immediately destroyed (as part of the same chain), Call of the Haunted will be unable to special summon a monster.

Note that if Royal Decree were to be destroyed the next turn, or even in the next phase of the current turn, this does not mean that Call of the Haunted can Special Summon a monster; the Special Summon is activated upon activation of Call of the Haunted, and Call of the Haunted's activation and effect were negated, and it was not returned face-down, and cannot be reactivated. Player 2 activates a Dust Tornado trap card (Spell Speed 2). Dust Tornado destroys one spell or trap card on the field. Player 2 targets the Royal Decree.

Because a chain resolves backwards, the chain would play out like this: Dust Tornado destroys Royal Decree.

Because Royal Decree is no longer on the field, the next effect activated is Call of the Haunted, followed by Monster Reborn.

Because Dust Tornado was played after Royal Decree, the effect activates first, meaning the effect of Royal Decree never negated Call of the Haunted.

Question: But does the Monster Reborn work? It was activated, targeting a monster that was not effectively present in the Graveyard.

Answer: it will, but not the one chosen by the opponents Call of the Haunted (in this case Dark Magician). I do hope that made as much sense to you as it did to me.

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Egyptian War Tutorial

WRITTEN BY *PHOENIX*

Players: 3-unlimited

THE MORE PLAYERS, THE MORE FUN!

Equipment: An ordinary pack of face cards

Note: The more people you have the more cards you may need. You'll be dealing out the entire deck.

Objective: Get all the cards from your opponents.

How to play:

1. Deal all cards, except Jokers.

Variation could include them, but traditionally not played with them.

2. Don't look at your cards!

3. Each person plays a card, going around in a circle. This is where it gets tricky.

I suggest you sit on the floor.

4. If you see a 6, 9, sandwich, or double, you have to SLAP the cards to earn them. You get the whole pile of cards to add to your stack. Remember not to look at them! If you have very few cards, it's also good to shuffle them so no one can remember the order they were played. Remember! Objective is to get all the cards.

Sandwich: A sandwich is where one card is stuck between two of the same cards. For example: A 3 is played, then an 8, then another 3. <- That's a sandwich.

If you notice a sandwich after someone has kept playing then you can't go back and slap it. That goes for all cards. If someone plays a 9, then the next person plays a King, you can't slap the 9.

Double: A double is when two cards are played repeatedly. For example: Someone plays a 3 and the next person plays a 3. <- That's a double.

If you're having trouble figuring out who slapped the cards first, a good rule of thumb is to go with who is on the bottom.

5. The game is over when one person has all the cards. BUT WAIT! If you lose all your cards you can slap back in!

This is one of my favorite games. I hope you have fun playing it because it is addicting. Enjoy!

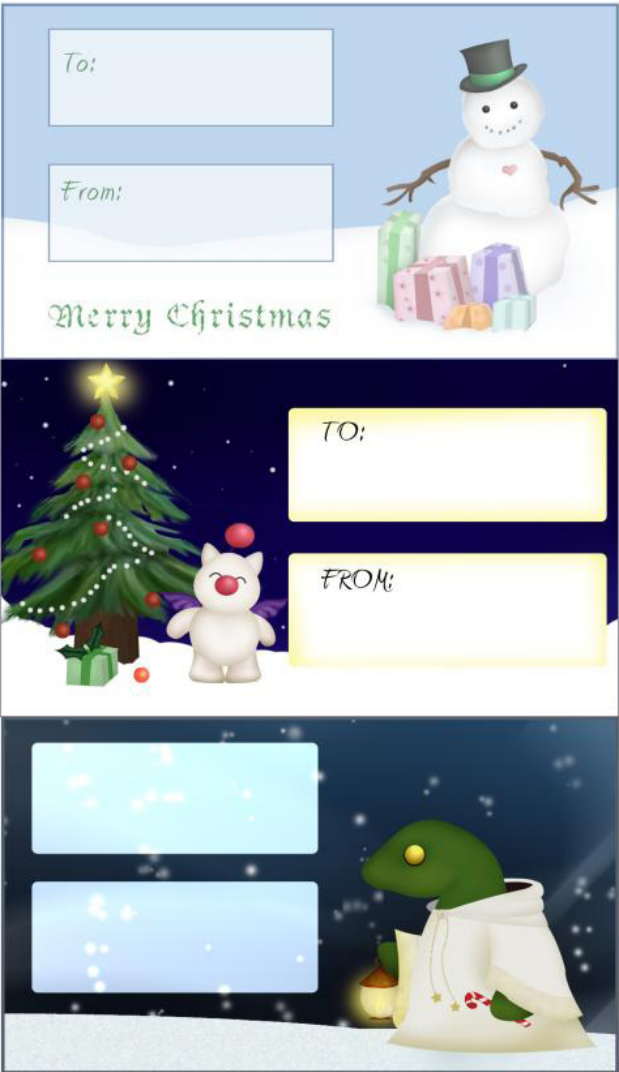
Phoenix

Christmas Tags

BY PIXISH

With Christmas approaching, we bring you your very own Elftown Christmas tags! Whether it's a loving gift to friends and family, or something sent across the world to a fellow Elftowner, these beautiful little illustrative tags are a gift from the Heralders.

Click on the image to view full size, right-click on full size to save.



A Great Game To Pass Time

The Game:

This game is great to play with friends when there is time to kill!

The leader begins by asking this question:

**"A man was found dead surrounded by 53 bicycles.
How and why did he die?"**

The rest of the participants then proceed to ask questions about the scene which can only be answered with a Yes or No response by the leader. (In the case of an ambiguous question, or if the answer could confuse the group, the leader should answer with "irrelevant") The game ends when the group gets sufficiently close to the answer, as deemed by the leader.

---This game requires the leader to be consistent with his/her yes or no responses so the group has a chance to question their way to an answer. If you are the group leader, make sure to read the "answer" carefully and build a world around those facts so you can more easily respond to questions about the environment. Example: If the leader responded "No" to a question about any animals being at the scene, he/she should not answer "Yes" to a question about a dog sitting next to the body. Sometimes a little coaxing may be needed to get the group on the right track. Saying something along the lines of, "you should ask more questions about the ____" can re-focus a group after a series of irrelevant questions.

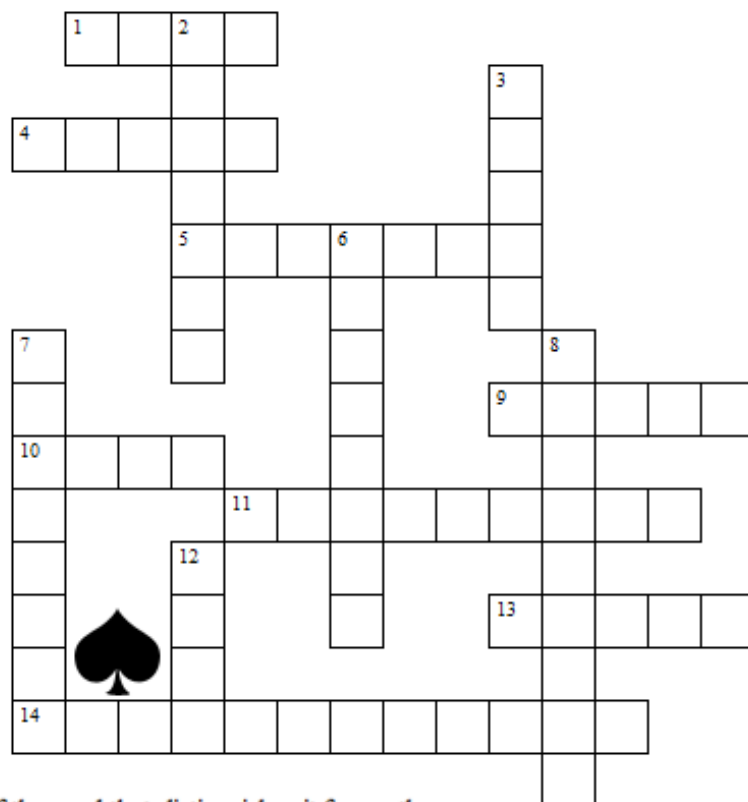
---If you are a member of the group, do not read the answer! As a member of the group, remember to occasionally re-ask questions to validate their relevance to the answer of the riddle.

Answer and Explanation:
The man was cheating at poker and was shot by one of the players who caught him. The 53 bicycles are Bicycle brand cards which have been scattered around him during the fight. A standard deck is 52 cards, but this man had an ace up his sleeve which brought the final count up to 53 cards. Tips for the leader: Bicycle brand cards generally come in red or blue, so pick one color and stick with it. Make sure you say BICYCLES and never shorten the word to bikes because it will point the group in the wrong direction.

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CARDS AND MORE CARDS

Issue 22

**ACROSS**

- 1 The side of the card that distinguishes it from others
- 4 It is thought that card games originated in this country
- 5 Before handing out the cards, what usually happens?
- 9 A popular gambling game.
- 10 People shout this in a fast paced game when identical cards are placed on top of each other.
- 11 Popular Wizards of the Coast card game: Magic the _____.
- 13 Cards used for divination and fortune telling
- 14 The name of the card game played in Yu-Gi-Oh! (2 words no spaces)

DOWN

- 2 A popular card game originating in Uruguay and now played all over the world.
- 3 Comic book villain who leaves playing cards in his wake.
- 6 The average playing card deck contains how many cards?
- 7 Single sided card used to send quick messages, usually from a holiday destination.
- 8 The more common name for the card game also known as 'patience'
- 12 What is it called when someone hands out the playing cards to the players?

FILL IT IN

- * Fill in each category with each answer beginning with the corresponding letter
- * When complete, send to [pixish] at pinketty_punketty@hotmail.com or in an Elftown message
- * Everyone's answers will be compared and the winner is the one who has the most unique answers (you get a point if nobody else has the same answer as you)

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Includes:

Alphabetical Index of Card Games
Classified Index of Card Games
National and Regional Games
Solitaire Games
Invented Games
...and more!

Cards Quotes

A guy who'd cheat on his wife would cheat at cards.

~ TEXAS GUINAN ~

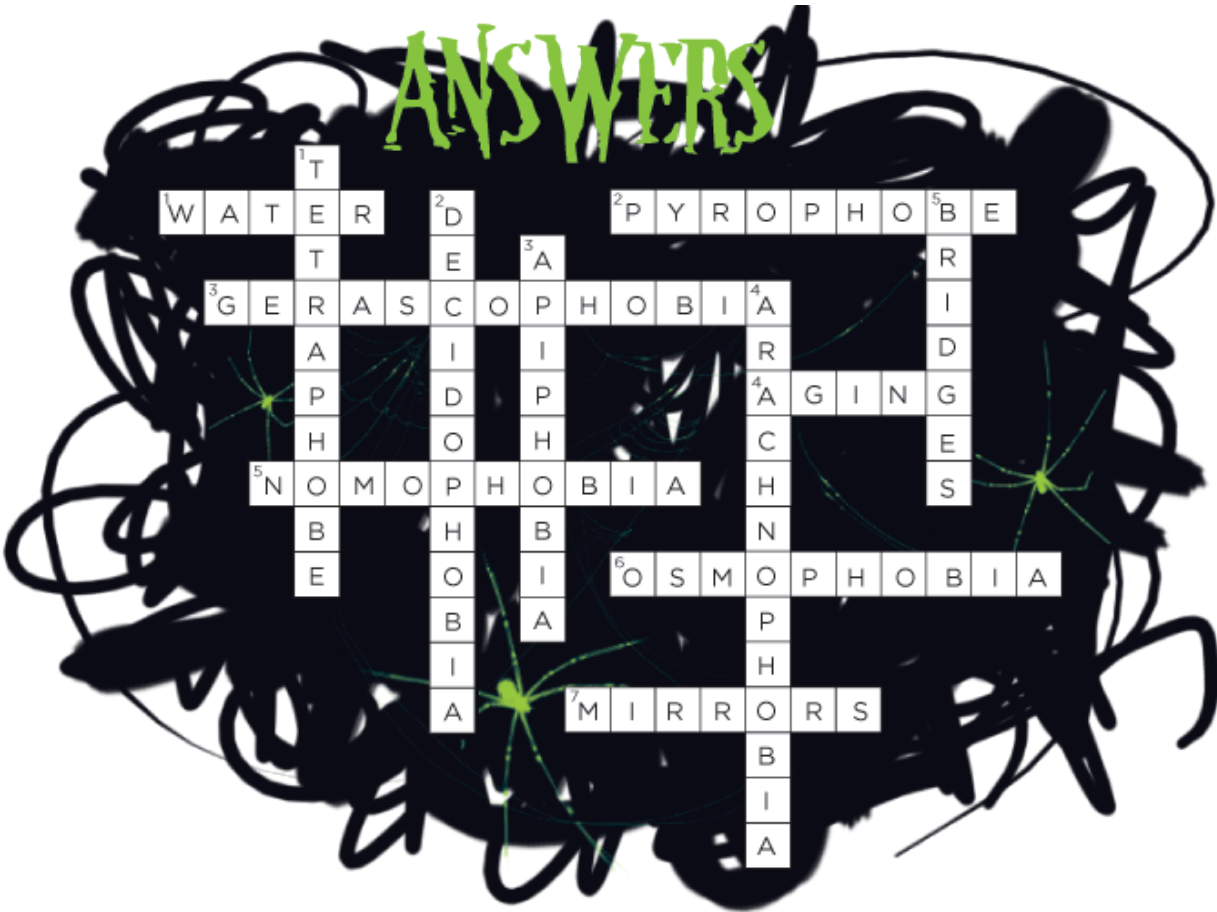
Cards are war, in disguise of a sport.

~ CHARLES LAMB ~

Each player must accept the cards life deals him or her: but once they are in hand, he or she alone must decide how to play the cards in order to win the game. ~ VOLTAIRE ~

In order to win you must be prepared to lose sometime. And leave one or two cards showing. ~ VAN MORRISON ~

Issue 21 Games Answers



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PHOBIAS & FEARS



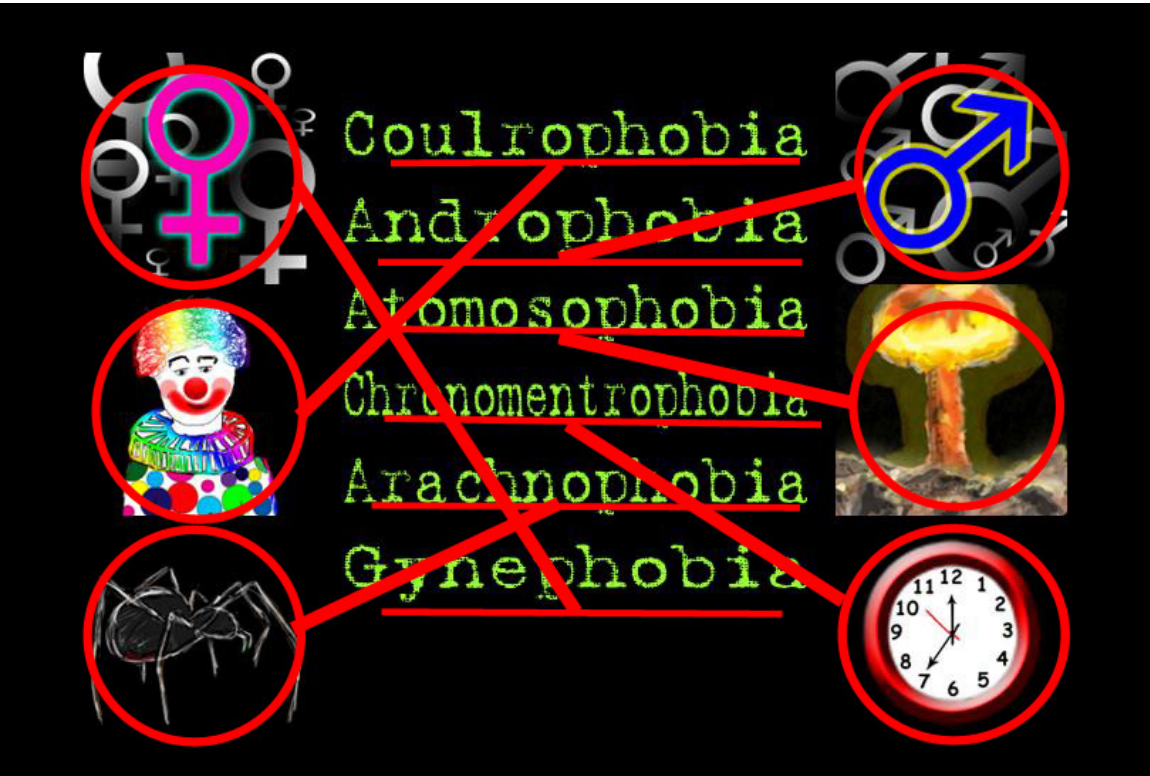
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