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Homing in on Gaming

I'm afraid a little apology is in order. What with a major snafu during typesetting and some inflexible vacation plans, the last issue got to most subscribers over half a month late. You deserve better. I'm sorry.

I hope you liked the larger issue, tho. We'll be repeating that again as we get more material from readers, and hopefully will increase our regular size as readership increases.

But mostly here I wanted to share with you some thinking I've been doing about games. I wanted to use this column and skip the feature this time because these thoughts are really pretty subjective and this is the place for me to spout off.

I guess it all started shortly after I began working on computer games. As part of the learning I tried out dozens of video classics and current top sellers. And I looked at some of the products that were just emerging from creative design. These were all so entirely different from the kind of product I was planning on designing that I suddenly realized what a wide and diverse world of things it is which we call games.

Think of it — from solitaire to the Olympics. It includes military simulations, puzzles, organized sports and fantasy role-playing. Gamers span the spectrum from infants playing peek-a-boo to octogenarians at their weekly chess match. Do all these activities have in common some fundamental element which allows us intuitively to classify them all as "games"?

At first I thought it might be the aspect of make believe or simulation. After all, we call dramas "plays" — perhaps for this same reason. In truth, many games require this element of "putting yourself into" a role or "pretending" to believe something you know is false. But it is hard to find this kind of "play" in, say, football or Mastermind.

A second possible link among games is the element of strategy. However simple, doesn't every game pose some questions or problems for you to solve, or in some other way give you a chance to "participate" in the outcome by making key choices somewhere during the process? Put this broadly, I'm sure everyone would agree that all games are strategic. But the trouble with this definition is that most everything else in life slides in too. So cooking supper is a game, or filling out your income tax form (honestly). And trying to sort out "game-like" strategic questions from "non-game" ones just leads me into a morass of contradictions.

The same problem bedevils me when I try the 'rules' approach. If "having rules" is the fundamental notion we have of gaminess, then VisiCalc will be the next Pac Man. But watch any group of kids for more than five minutes and they will demonstrate how important rules (and temporary obedience to them) are to play any game.

Some pundits have suggested that games are all fundamentally ways to work out our aggressive, competitive instincts in a positive social setting. "Playing at War" rather than making it, perhaps. Again, a lot of truth in this focus. But you'd have to exclude all the solitaire games where the aggression is highly abstract and relies upon "the clock" or "my last score" for an object. You'd also miss all the essentially cooperative games — from some currently popular board game titles to old favorites such as playing jumm rone or "volley tennis" where you try to keep a volley

ble. No, aggression puts a nice zing into a game, but it isn't fundamental.

Having set up and proceeded to knock down all these straw men, I bet you're expecting that I'll get around to telling you what I think. Well, I'm not gonna. Because I don't know. But it does trouble me.

Why does it trouble me, I'll bet you're thinking. Why nitter and natter around things like this when we all know a game when we see it. Who cares if there is but one basic concept underlying the idea or perhaps a set of concepts which, when joined in certain patterns, results in a game (Socrates knew how to handle this sort of objection to his ramblings, of course: "Ah, yes, of course. A pattern of things, not just a single one. How could I have been so stupid. And now if you'll finally satisfy me on this subject, tell me exactly what is the unifying thread by which you can always recognize this pattern when it appears . . .")

Well, the reason it bothers me is that I'm beginning to see, especially in the computer or video gaming field, a lot of things called games which really aren't. It's great to have a device which a child can manipulate to draw colored pictures on the screen. But it's an electronic crayon, not a "coloring game". The same for teaching kids to count or spell. A program which asks for the right answer to a problem and then rewards it with a visual display is not a "counting game" or a "spelling game". It's a quiz. And however glossed over, I always knew a test was different from a game.

I'd even go further (and it's here that I differ from probably most of you) and say that most of the products currently passing for games in the video field are misnamed. Repetitive "shoot-em-up" target practice, or race/dodge/eat mazes, however leveled and made more or less difficult, are puzzles or activities, but not really games. The only real games out there are the ones where the program directly responds to your actions and presents you with new challenges and decisions to make based on your input. Of course this is the more difficult type of game to make, since your moves have to be anticipated and dealt with during the design. But that is probably why they are still games — you're really playing against the designer, trying to smoke him or her out in the elaborate system they erected to hide in.

Of course when you add a second or more real players, practically any activity can become a game. There's just naturally going to be surprise, competition, strategy and all the rest when 2 gamers get together, no matter what they're doing. I remember a friend of mine stuck in a warehouse job writing up different BINGO cards with the various products taking the place of the numbers and letters. Whenever one order picker got 5 products in a row on her card, she got a coffee break & the others filled in for her. There's always a way to deaden the boredom, thru games.

Which brings me to my limited conclusion so far: Whatever else a game is, it has to have interaction between people. Attack, Negotiation, Cooperation, Bluffing, Out-Psyching, Surprise — these are the kind of things which have to be happening between people for any structure to become a game.

It is this aspect of gaming which the computer field has barely touched. And it is this isolation from others which has kept many of us away from computer 'games' in the past.

masters, or simulate space battles far more realistically than any paper or cardboard, but until they can make the complex dynamics which go on between players impact upon the program and the screen, we're not getting the full play value.

But the field is very new and there are some hopeful signs that the industry is turning to group gaming as a viable market. If this is so, it'll be a boon to most of us board gamers who have had to watch a lot of solitaire junk clutter up space which should have been devoted to innovative ways to make electronics social, playful, and fun.

This latter mission is the task we here have set ourselves in this new medium. As we go along I will keep you abreast of our thoughts and discoveries as they apply to the fundamentals of game design. But I'll always try to keep in touch with the basics of human interactions. At least for this generation, nothing can match the power of a few multi-billion byte players getting together for a little fun.

P.S. Due to the above mentioned typesetting problems, the last issue contained a real doozy of a paragraph on page 15. The real text should read as follows:

Can the Pirate Wild flare holder hint? What if one loses the card to someone else? To the discard pile? Does one

have to announce it when one is hiding the Lucre? *Editor: Sure you can hint. That's like a pirate's map being discovered, right? But if you lose it to another or to the discard pile, you may no longer have the authority to assure that treasure is there, and it isn't. You can hide it publicly or privately, as you like.*

If the Fungus has a Fungus flare or Schizoid flare played against the Fungus what happens to the Fungoid stacks? *Editor: If the Fungus Flare is played, the stack counts as one token. When the Flare is lost, the stack returns to the Fungus. If the Schizoid Flare is played, the stack counts as one token for the new player of the Fungus color, and the stack remains until separated by the Warp.*

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LETTERS

from Mark Paul, Dover, NH:

I would like to introduce myself as one of Eon Products' biggest fans, and offer some suggestions about your line of games. While I enjoy Cosmic Encounter and Darkover, and find Quirks, Runes and Hoax excellent games, I think your best product and your greatest contribution to the hobby is Borderlands. I own every game that Avalon Hill, GDW, Fantasy Games Unlimited and almost every major company produce, and I truly feel that Borderlands ranks with Kingmaker, Diplomacy and Civilization as perhaps the best boardgame on the market. I hope in the future you upgrade the quality of its materials. It's hard to put out \$20.00 for a game with a paper mapboard (although I myself have bought 3 sets) and the format of a game of this brilliance deserves at least to be on a par with your other boardgames. I'm glad that each game in your line is developed and added to by several expansion sets and by your Encounter magazine.

The downfall of other game companies has been the mass production of games with no follow-up on products already in circulation. It's nice to know that an Eon game is not stagnant, but is alive and will improve and change as the state of the art progresses. Keep up this fine quality of service to gamers everywhere.

Editor: Wow! Them's some nice words about us, Mark. Thanks very much (beam, glow). We kind of went the other

way on your suggestion, bringing Borderland's price down to \$15. To print the map on heavy cardboard and get the folds, cut, binding, etc. would be prohibitive for us at our game volumes. Someday, however, if enough people feel about it as you do, why I can already see the heavy mapboard, deluxe editions, tournaments, private island where we re-create the map and play it life size each summer . . .

from Jeffrey Field, Vashon, WA:

What's the word on ENCOUNTER back issues? Are they available, and for how much? (Now it looks like I'm going to have to find money somewhere to pick up RUNES).

Also, how is it that there are no blank CE cards available? I know you've got them, they're still in expansion sets #4 and #8. Couldn't you just grab a bunch of them for mailing (I'd like a score or two) next time you wander through the printing house? My problem is that I like to have orderly and complete collections. So when I see contributors' powers I like, I run into a problem when gaming them. I've figured ways to make acceptable facsimiles of the power cards, but flares have me stumped. Thus, I need the blank cards. All of this leads me neatly into the next paragraph.

This is it, my latest Hot Idea, which I present to you. Expansion set #9 seems to wrap up the CE expansion set line, with its 75th alien and complete rules book. But

suppose you put out one more, not so much as expansion but more of a supplement set. What I have in mind is simply a set of blank components. Power cards with one half white for typing on and some white transfer lettering for the front space background, some numbered but unnamed moons, and even, yes, blank deck cards for flares. This way those die-hard Cosmic Encounter fans can continue to expand the Cosmos neatly and orderly, from their own ideas or those myriad suggestions contributed to Encounter (some even occur in The Space Gamer.) So what do you say?

And finally, a different subject entirely — Darkover. I have recently become interested in the series by Marion Zimmer Bradley, but was amazed and confused by the number of volumes it contains. I soon got lost amongst Ace Science Fiction and Daw Books, copyright dates, and “the Friends of Darkover”. So, because you put out a game (excellent, I hear) on the subject, I am turning to you as authorities. Could you, would you, supply me with a list of Darkover books and their chronological order? I would like to read them, not in the order they were written, but in order of the planet’s historical timeline, i.e., although Darkover Landfall was written in 1972, is it the first in the series?

Editor: I'm afraid I can't be much help on Darkover. Yes, Landfall was the first book of Darkover, establishing the early history of the colony. Stormqueen would also be very early, in that sense. But the rest are not so easy to sort out, being filled with internal references as the only guide I can think of. I'm sure one of the "friends" has them down pat in order, but we were more interested in the fascinating gaming environment she created than in the details of characters and family lines, etc. When doing the game I started out trying to order them too, but soon became confused and just read them as I could get them. They seemed fine that way, too.

Thanks for the idea for set #10 for CE. We always swear off any further sets for a while when we finally get a new one out, so now is not a good time to propose one. But it's a good idea and who knows . . .

The blank CE cards we had were some decks we had run off that way when printing a flare deck or other deck. They ran out and we're not going to open perfectly good flare decks to steal a few blanks to sell by mail. That's the kind of business practice that got us where we are today, unfortunately. But the next time we do a deck run, I do think I'll sneak a few more blank decks into the order.

You bet, back issues of Encounter are available. Hundreds of them. My wife is after me to burn them (she has some canning jars that would go nicely on those shelves) but any we can get rid of at \$2 each will justify my pack-rat ways and get me out of hot water. So, now's the time, collectors.

from Lawrence Folland, Guelph, Ontario:

My wife and I frequently play Cosmic Encounter, it being our favorite board game (we have over 40 boardgames). One variation we enjoy is having a moon in the warp — “Warp Moon” which the first player in the warp, after it is emptied, must sit on. This allows some of the less pleasant moons to be used more than once. Sometimes it causes competition to get into the warp for good moons!

Editor: Sounds like fun - pick one at random and put it in the warp to start the game. I imagine the Praw in set #9 could slow up the race to find out what it is, however.

from Jim Hazlett, Wintersville, OH:

I really enjoy ENCOUNTER. Of the 30 or so powers presented in issues I've read I'm using about 20 in my game. I saw in issue #3 that you're offering a free subscription for people who send in RUNZLES. What about the people who've sent in 10 or more powers or moons? I think they deserve something.

Editor: What! Fame & glory aren't enough? Oh, tempora; oh, mores.

from Tom DeMarco, Riverside, NJ:

During shipment in Borderlands are boats and ships required to end their movement bordering fully or partially on the owning player's territory, or can they end their movement bordering completely on enemy lands?

Ed: They can end up bordering completely on enemy lands.

Also, during shipment, does a riverboat or ship pick up or drop off tokens from the friendly land(s) it borders for free, does it use a movement point to pick up or drop off tokens, or does it have to move before it picks up or drops off tokens.

Editor: It picks up and drops off for free, and can do so at the start or end (or both) of the move as well as during it.

Finally, when multiple shipments can be made, can 2 or more riverboats move along the river together to generate a higher total for boat passage purposes? If so, do they have to end their move in the same section of the river?

Editor: No, shipment moves must be taken in turn, the only way to avoid boat passage problems is to bring one up to the obstacle and stop there. Then bring the second up and with the added support of the first boat perhaps it can now overpower an opponent on the bank and continue.

from David Allsopp, South Yorkshire, England:

If the Filth power changes hands during the course of a game, and as a result some tokens have to be removed from bases, can these tokens establish a new base in the system, or do they have to return to existing bases? And what happens if Insect or Plant use Filth's power?

Editor: Unfortunately, the tokens have to be removed to existing bases. Same goes for someone sharing a base with an Insect or Plant who suddenly becomes Filthy. Reeks, doesn't it?

from Joe Golton, Springfield, PA:

I would love to see a “Power Feature” column which would thoroughly explain a power every issue. By this, I mean asking readers in advance to submit comments, stories, and questions about a specific power which you could collaborate into an article. This would make it easy to check up on a power before the game starts since all the information needed would be in one place. I would suggest doing Schizoid first, then moving on to other often-asked-about powers.

Editor: Sounds like a good idea, Joe. Our lead time in producing this journal means folks would have to get stuff to me a month before the issue cover date (by October 1 for the November/December issue) but I'd love to give it a try if readers respond. Shall we try the Schizoid, folks?

from Mark Gilston, Johnson City, NY;

I enjoy the Eon games I have played very much, and I think the journal is a wonderful forum. I hope it continues and grows. The Runzles in #3, however, certainly do not have unique solutions! I got as far as six for #1 and #2 and stopped. Here are my solutions: #1 TOPPER, TOPPLE, ROBBER, LOBBER, FOXIER, FODDER; #2 BUDDDED, RUDDER, BUGGED, JUGGLE, BUDGET, BUDGIE; #3 CIVIC; #4 MEWER.

My favorite game currently (aside from poker which is similar) is Cosmic Encounter and I always enjoy reading ideas for new powers. Beach and Rasfield's were wonderful, and having been taught the game as always using four powers per person (it wasn't until Eastcon that I ever tried using fewer) I appreciate the multiple power powers suggested by Allen Varney. I don't care for Donny Cherrf's moons, they seem much too severe. And Stuart Scheinman's powers are very weak for the most part. Kevin Baker has some ingenious ideas but I would recommend the following changes for balance and playability: The Alarmist can also ally with himself as a main offensive player, thereby bring up to 8 tokens into the cone unless restricted by alliance-affecting powers; Paranoid also uses his power as main offensive player waiting until after cards are played before deciding how many tokens to commit to a challenge. He can if he wishes decide not to bring any tokens into the challenge (unless, of course, he is zapped); Satellite may opt to have the players pass their lowest card to the left or right instead of their highest. This gives him a slight edge in dealing with powers such as Anti-Matter and Loser (and could be quite devastating if his opponent is Doppelganger!), and it rounds out the power nicely as a manipulative effect. I would like to see Kevin or someone else develop flares for these powers. Some are readily apparent: Super Cube would add his attack card to the square of the tokens in the challenge, while Wild Cube would square his attack card.

We in our playing group have come up with a nice CE variant for people who are very familiar with the powers. At the beginning of the game all the flares (except Schizoid) are dealt out equally among the players but no one gets any powers. Instead, players may play a flare at any time, and then get the use of the represented power for that challenge. Once a power has been used, it is discarded and out of the game. The flares are separate from the hands and not subject to any edicts except Cosmic Zap (which negates the specifically zapped power). Flarezap may be used as an additional Cosmic Zap. Reincarnator takes one power at random from this discarded powers, Hurtz may lease a discarded power, and Plant steals one of your opponent's powers being used during the challenge when it is planted, after that challenge both powers are discarded. There is much interesting strategy involved in this game. Because of the transience of power, using too much too soon leaves you very weak in the end game since once you have used your power (flare) cards, you never get them back. We play that you may still play power cards even if you have lost 3 home bases, but that rule is optional. Another way to play it would be to use the Wild Flare effects rather than the actual powers.

I have a question about Hoax. If one acquires multiple sets of different tokens on one's turn (by tax, spell, or by knocking out another player) can one only buy multiple pieces of information from the same player? We have been playing this way and it often seems to lead to a snowball

victory for the first person to be falsely identified.

Editor: Thanks for the Runzle solutions (I blush for I used a very abridged dictionary for my "unique" ones and obviously am in no class with you word sleuths) and the Cosmic criticism and variation suggestions. The game method you suggest sounds like a lot of fun to veterans. On Hoax, yes you have been playing properly. So long as it is his turn, a player can continue to buy information while the tokens last. Sounds like you guys should be careful on your first calls!

from Ted Schmeckpeper, Columbia, MD:

Some Borderlands questions:

TRADE - Are the rules meant to allow two players to agree to the following: they will each trade all their resource tokens to each other; then they will trade all their (new) resource tokens back to each other. Thus each player ends up with exactly what he started with, but they can place their tokens anywhere.

Editor: Yes, they can make that trade. We meant to make trade wide open, so long as two players can agree on it.

SHIPMENT - (rule 4-B) Does the "shipment by foot" rule mean (a) you can move any # of tokens from territory A to an adjacent territory B, but, that's all your shipment for the turn; or (b) you can move ALL your tokens to any adjacent territory?

Same question for other shipment modes, i.e., on a given turn can I make a single horseback shipment, or use all my horses (if possible)? A single horse chain, or as many as I have? A single boat, or all my boats?

I guess the question comes down to this. Am I supposed to choose a single shipment mode, and then make as many shipments via that mode as I can usefully make? or, is shipment supposed to be much more limited than that? We played it the former way, since it seemed we were getting nowhere using the latter interpretation. However, if anything, events seemed to move too quickly the way we ended up playing it.

Editor: Likewise, we meant to make shipment quite restrictive. So if you have only one shipment move (which is the case at the start of the game) you must choose a mode and make a single shipment by it (by foot, from territory A to territory B; by horse chain along a single chain; by boat using just one boat.) Of course if you gain another shipment move, you may use it to make your second shipment via another mode if you wish.

ATTACK - (Rule 5-F, last paragraph) It sounds as if you're supposed to get "commitment" of allies before you actually make an attack. Does this mean that, once you move any pieces involved in the attack, "committed" allies can't change their minds? Or, if they can, and your attack then fails, do you move all your pieces back to where they started, and look for a new attack?

Editor: You don't make the attack until allies have decided. Then, if you can succeed, you attack. If not, you make another attack similarly, if you can. Rather than actually moving all the pieces necessary into the attack, we play it by simply pointing out how it can be done and then negotiating for allies. We just wait until everyone has made up his or her mind, and then do the attack. It is seldom the case that anyone wants to renege.

Some Cosmic Encounter questions:

WRACK - Can the Wrack torture tokens out of the cone?

Suppose A attacks the Wrack, who defends with 4 tokens. "A" has 3 cards left, and the Wrack removes them all from A's hand. I would guess that A's turns ends immediately and play passes with nothing further happening, right?

Same situation, but A has more cards. On his last "torture" the Wrack draws A's last challenge card. Does W lose the challenge? What happens to A's allies?

Editor: Good question, Ted. In the first case A's turn is over. In the second case, however, Wrack has lost and A has won, just as if he played his last challenge card to do it.

AMOEBEA - AM attacks player B, then oozes out all his tokens from the cone. Is the challenge still concluded normally?

Editor: Yes, with Amoeba attacking with card plus allies plus 0 of his tokens.

MISER/EXTORTIONIST - I assume that the Miser is precluded from the Extortionist's power only with regard to his hoard and not with regard to his regular hand, correct?

Editor: Right.

HURTZ - (These questions could be handled by house rules, but how would you rule in a tournament?)

Can H "advertise", i.e. suggest items to other players that they might wish to lease?

Editor: Sure.

Can either the Hurtz, or other players, search the powers, flare deck, etc., for what they might want?

Editor: No, Hurtz waits for a specific request.

Can the Hurtz examine the item before he sets his price?

Editor: No, leads to too much "seeing what's in there and what's not".

After the Hurtz searches the deck for a card, should the deck be shuffled?

Editor: Yes, so his special knowledge of what's coming up is lost.

NEGATOR - N's opponent plays a card face down. N says "You should reconsider the decision you just made to play the TYPE of challenge card you just played . . . that is, if you played an attack, play a compromise, and vice-versa." Is this legal?

Editor: No.

In general it seems that N can be extremely bothersome if he carefully phrases what it is he is negating; in fact he can fabricate to his own purposes quite easily. For example, player A asks players B and C to ally (6 player game); N says "I think you should change your mind about asking for any allies". A says "My decision was not the general decision to ask for some allies, but the specific decision to ask B and C." N replies "You had to decide to ask for allies, before you could decide which players to ask." Etc., etc. Who's right here? Please clarify just what the Negator is supposed to be able to negate?

Editor: I dealt with this in issue #4 in answer to some good questions from Joanna Beatty. Basically, unless the player defines his decision in some way, it is the specific decision as defined by the game rules.

PACIFIST - Does the Pacifist collect consolation cards when he wins by playing a compromise? The easy answer is, of course not, since he has lost no tokens. But the Zombie can collect consolation without losing tokens - so the easy answer won't suffice. Do you have to LOSE the challenge to collect consolation?

Editor: The easy answer is right. The Zombie does lose his tokens (read the card) he just loses them to another base, not the warp.

(General) - May we assume that, if powers seem to conflict, the power from the basic game or earlier expansion set has precedence? (I don't know of a specific instance of this, but I'd be surprised if there were none. A hypothetical example: according to the Parasite's power, only the Force Field or Magnet can prevent him from allying; if a flare, moon, or whatever would appear to also be able to prevent him, does it, or not?)

Editor: Ted, we spent many sleepless nights trying to make sure that you couldn't come up with a valid example. I'm not saying you can't, but I'm not going to open the can of worms you suggest without being led to it kicking and screaming.

ORACLE - Can he look at his opponent's Kicker?

Editor: Yes.

Can he play a Kicker after looking at his opponent's card?

Editor: Only if his opponent has played one already, or if he has announced that he will do so before opponent selected his challenge card.

MACHINE - What happens when it plays a Timegash? Does it get a single challenge, or can it play til it runs out of cards?

Editor: It just gets a single challenge.

SEEKER - I have asked the question (before allies are in), "Do you intend to try to win this challenge?" The response was "I don't know, I'll decide after I see who allies with who". Is this a legal response?

Editor: No. The answerer must decide about his intentions right then. But it is a chancy question, as intent "to win" is harder to prove than "to play 8 or more."

SCHIZOID - Concerning the 3rd restriction on its "other game condition" ("does not require remembering past events"); does the example on the card ("Winner must . . . fail to make a deal.") constitute a legal or illegal condition?

Editor: Legal, by all 3 restrictions.

Is the restriction intended to assure that a win can only occur when both conditions are met simultaneously, and that it is immediately apparent to anyone (without having to remember) that both conditions are now satisfied?

Editor: Yes, if I get your drift.

If so, are the following interpretations correct?

1) "exactly zero foreign bases, and must have had at least 10 tokens in the warp at some time." Illegal, because of the "at some time".

Editor: Yes, illegal.

2) "three or more foreign bases, and must have at least 10 tokens in the warp." Legal.

Editor: Yes.

3) "exactly four foreign bases, and must have just now failed to make a deal." Legal, unless having to remember even a few seconds into the past is disallowed.

Editor: Right, we allow short-term memory.

4) "at least three foreign bases and fail to make a deal" (The example on the card) Legal, though not precisely stated - would have to be interpreted as if it was written like example 3) above.

Editor: Right, tho I doubt you could state it precisely enough for all (example 3, for instance, refers to "just now" which is terribly vague . . .)

REINCARNATOR - Should we think of the Reincarnator as having a primary power (his current reincarnation), and also a secondary power (the ability to reincarnate)? Could he thus be Zapped twice in the same challenge?

Editor: Yes. If the Reincarnator itself is zapped, it must play powerless at the start of the game, or keep the old power once it has one.

(General) - What is the "official" way to play multiple powers? We never use this option, but there appear to be ways for it to "creep in", for example, if the Hertz is in the game. If I'm Chronos, and I've rented the Virus, can I use both powers during the challenge? If not, do I have to state which one I am? Or do I just use whichever one I want, and am then prevented from using the other at any later time during the challenge?

Editor: "Officially", if you rent a power in a single power game, that is your power for the challenge, use it or not. But I suspect you and I are among a small minority playing single power games.

Along the same lines, I can imagine lots of questions about certain powers entering the game via Hertz. I'll ask just one, to get a feel for your interpretations: If I lease the Reincarnator and then lose the challenge (and I'm the Mutant), which of the following happens?

- a) I just discard the Reincarnator and play continues.
- b) I draw a new power, say the Wrack, and am now both the Mutant and the Wrack; and throw away the Reincarnator.
- c) I draw a new power, keep it, and throw away the Reincarnator and the Mutant.

Editor: Option c (in line with Plant or Insect becoming Reincarnator for a challenge.)

WORM - Can he reposition the cone to a planet in his system where his opponent already has a base? (Assuming the Worm also has tokens there) If not, why not?

Editor: Sure he can.

DEUCE - When he draws a new hand (having one challenge card remaining), does he keep that last challenge card, or discard it along with edicts, flares, etc.? If he keeps it, does he draw just 6 cards?

Editor: He discards it along with the others.

When the Deuce plays a kicker, does it affect his regular challenge card, his "second" card, or both of them?

Editor: See letter from Bob Trezise, issue #4. It affects the regular challenge card.

WITCH - What kind of limitations are there on the Witch's curses?

Editor: See letter from Bob Stout in issue #4.

Which of the following curses are legal?

"All your tokens will count as (Witch's color) tokens in all respects" (game probably ends immediately, so this has got to be ruled out, at least after the first time it's ever used, but, what's the general rule that disallows it?)

Editor: The game operations the Witch can affect are spelled out on the card, and token color is not among them (we saw that one ahead of time!)

"If you use a lucre in any way you lose it." (All the player's lucre returns to the bank as soon as it's counted in a challenge.)

Editor: That one is okay.

"If you select any tokens, you must OK the place you pick them from with the Witch."

Editor: Fine by me.

"You must attack a planet where you already have a base, if possible."

Editor: Great.

"All your attack cards become compromise cards."

Editor: Perfectly Hoyle.

"If you use an attack card, all your other attack cards magically fly to the discard file."

Editor: Why not?

"Your compromise cards become "attack 1" cards."

Editor: But of course.

"You must refuse all deals, except those proposed by the Witch; the latter you must accept."

Editor: Reasonable, to be sure.

"You must give any consolation cards you acquire to the witch."

Editor: Bold as brass, but legal.

"You must play your lowest attack as offensive player, and your highest as defensive player."

Editor: No problem.

What happens if a curse conflicts with another player's power? For example, "You may not ally", but the Magnet then forces the player to ally.

Editor: The Witch has precedence, clearly. Timing is not in conflict.

The Witch loses, and curses; during the next challenge, someone Zaps the Witch. Do her previous curses still hold?

Editor: No, as spelled out on the Witch power card.

DEUCE (again) - Concerning the Deuce's "side" card:

Can the Sorcerer switch it?

Editor: No.

Must it be an attack, if the Loser has declared an upset?

Editor: Yes.

Can the Oracle look at it?

Editor: No.

Can the Visionary "perceive" it?

Editor: Yes.

Can the same card be played a second time against Chronos?

Editor: Yes.

How does a challenge between the Deuce and the Calculator work?

Editor: Deuce's "extra" card is figured in after the totals (including Calculation) are arrived at.

Can the Laser pick it at random?

Editor: No.

Do the Witch's curses affect it?

Editor: Yes, if appropriate ("all your Attack cards are worth 2").

DELEGATOR - Does it have to be a main player in order to use its power?

Editor: No, involved means as main player or ally.

DOPPLEGANGER - The Dop attacks the Healer and gets his cards from the Healer. The Healer now has no more challenge cards (unlikely in the extreme), but as he reaches for the deck the Dop quickly plays face down the attack card, and hands the compromise back to the Healer, thus preventing him from drawing a new hand. Legal?

Editor: No way. The Healer was authorized to draw when the Doppelganger took the cards. He can still do so.

Same situation, but the Healer was attacking the Dop. When he hands over the cards, it would seem that his challenge is over. So, what does the Dop do with the cards? If he must give one back, to allow the challenge to conclude, what about the case where the Healer only had 1 challenge card to give him? What happens to the card?

Editor: In either case, Doppelganger discards them ("otherwise" rule on his card).

TERRORIST - The Terrorist booby traps his own middle planet. On the first challenge of the game he is a winning defensive ally, and returns a token from the cone to that planet. Does the bomb explode?

Editor: Yes, the booby.

BUTLER - The Void refuses to tip the Butler, so the Butler positions the cone to attack a planet where the Void already has a base. Legal? (If not, why not?)

Editor: Legal, if a legal challenge can be made there (on the defensive player).

CHRONOS - Is his opponent prevented from re-using a kicker card on the replaying of the challenge?

Editor: Yes. See letter from Bryan Stout in issue #4.

WILD DEUCE - The Vacuum uses his last challenge card during his turn. Can he then play the Wild Deuce, draw a new hand, and have another challenge?

Editor: Yes.

SUPER CRYSTAL - If an agreement is reached, does the "canceled" challenge count as one of the Crystal's challenges for his turn?

Editor: No way.

SUPER GAMBLER / SUPER SKEPTIC - May the number of additional tokens "at risk" be greater than the tokens that the Gambler, Skeptic currently has outside the warp?

Editor: Sure.

WILD SIREN - The Parasite plays the Wild Siren as the Warrior is drawing a new hand, and names "kicker 2" as the card. The Warrior draws two of these beauties. Does he have to give BOTH of them to the Parasite?

Editor: Ambiguous. I'd rule both in tournament play as cards are physically drawn one by one.

WILD MAGNET - Can this card be used to prevent a kicker from being played?

Editor: You bet.

WILD LLOYD - Does the word "required" really mean that? There seem to be very few times when I have to pay a player Lucre. Can't I take money from the bank to pay the Extortionist, or the Ethic, for example?

Editor: What do you think this is? Monopoly? This is the real world. Try getting money from the bank to pay your rent. That's why the Wild Lloyd is so nice. Almost as good as a credit card.

WILD MACHINE - When a player "programs" his hand, must he "set aside" his flares and edicts, so that other players can see about how many he has?

Editor: It's up to you and your physical dexterity.

Where do Kickers go in a programmed hand?

Editor: Right in there with challenge cards.

If consolation is to be drawn from a programmed hand, can the hand be shuffled and mixed with flares, etc. before the cards are drawn?

Editor: No, tho the flares etc. can be placed on either end, behind one's back.

from Quentin Long, Los Altos, CA:

Your favorite friendly neighborhood Californian lunatic here, writing to you from the heart of Silicon Valley on a wondrous word-processing system (Apple II+, Applewriter II, and MX-80).

Got some questions for you:

1) How does one handle the Wild Wrack versus the Zombie? Version A: Since the Zombie never goes to the Warp in the first place, he needn't pay any attention to the Wild Wrack's annoying demand. Version B: If the Zombie doesn't put tokens into the Warp, he cannot use his power; ergo he becomes vulnerable . . . and if he *does* put tokens into the Warp, he's the Zombie still — evidently, the Wild Wrack is a cross between the Extortionist and Cosmic Zap (i.e. a Zap that can be bought off).

2) What happens when the Gambler and the Sorcerer are opponents? Does the Gambler's declaration apply to the card he *picks*, or the card he *plays*? I'd say that since the Sorcerer goes off *before* cards are revealed, and the Gambler goes off *when* cards are revealed, what happens is that the Gambler ends up gambling on the card the Sorcerer picked (assuming a switch). Meaning he's crazy to gamble at all; unfortunately, gambling is a compulsory act . . .

Editor: Hi, Quentin. Good to hear from you after so long. Are these Valley questions?

1) *The Zombie complies by putting tokens into the warp. But upon attempting to do so, he finds these tokens miraculously conveyed to bases he has. Is that a Valley answer?*

2) *You got it baby. (Sorry, I can't talk Valley yet.)*

from Mike Vrtis, Evergreen Park, IL:

I have all of your games and expansions except RUNES (which *looks* good but probably would never get played among my circle of illiterates) and the CE Expansion Kit #5 which I am ordering now. With the exception of DARK-

OVER, which is *too* weird for me to convince others to attempt. I have gotten many hours of enjoyment from all your products. My personal favorite is HOAX, but my kids like the simple versions of QUIRKS (including the one found in Issue 1 of ENCOUNTER), while my brothers like COSMIC ENCOUNTER, and my friends like BORDERLANDS. Keep up the good work - and thanks for coming out with ENCOUNTER.

Editor: Thanks Mike. My kids like Quirkings best, too.

from Mike Richards, Reading, PA:

Too bad these tournaments move around the country so drastically. I would have liked to defend my Origins '82 Championship this year, but Detroit is too far. I played in the Chicon World Championship last year, but if it wouldn't have been for Peter sneaking me in as an exhibitor, I would have had to pay \$70 just to enter the CE Championship. Do you have any idea what the tariff is for Worldcon this year in Baltimore? Is there any way to participate in that tourney without going through the entire convention process? I, for one, have no interest whatsoever in any other aspect of that convention, especially for \$70+.

It would seem that a game convention, like Origins or Eastcon, would be more appropriate forum for a game World Championship. As I recall, at Chicon IV last year, there were barely 50 entries in the tournament. At Origins in '82, there were about 100 and that number was limited by available games only, not by willing bodies or available space (we played outside).

Further, your exhibitor's booth sales at Chicon were poor as compared to Origins sales where visitors were game oriented as opposed to being book, film and Nazi artifact oriented. Bring the World crown to our conventions! (Unless there is a major reason that I'm unaware of for not.)

Someday you ought to publish a world ranking of players - tournament winners or those you feel have world class talent. I can see the future ahead — Cosmic Encounter Invitational or the Cosmic Encounter Pro-Am or the Cosmic Encounter Member-Quest or the Dinah Shore Cosmic Circle Tournament or the Cosverrary Tournament or the first to win Wimblectounter . . .

Editor: I like your vision, Mike. As the proud spouse of the co-winner of the First Cosmic Encounter World Championship (1976) I recognize the importance of tournaments (I saw her talents there and seized them shortly thereafter — the rest is history and diapers.)

You raise some good points. We got into this as science fiction fans, and SF cons were the first (and receptive) home for CE. We owe that network a lot. On the other hand, our sales and current support derive mostly from the gaming community. So we have mixed loyalties and allegiances. I expect that numbers will eventually call the tune. Til then, however, bear with us and pay the price for glory (I'm going to severely chastise Peter for his indiscretion and don't anybody else expect to get sneaked/snuck in.)

from David Wilson, Allston, MA:

The problem with communication via ENCOUNTER is that more questions contingent upon previous answers crop up before the original questions are answered. For example, my last letter to you contained a sequence of events towards the end of a challenge — this presupposes that a challenge has a distinct beginning and end.

Timing parameters are also important for the Wild Wrack, which states its power is contingent upon the player's number of tokens in the challenge. It cannot be invoked before the offensive player points and loads the cone. But at what point in the challenge is it no longer eligible to be used? After tokens have left the cone, can the Wild Wrack be used based on the number of tokens which were involved?

It seems there are two schools of thought — strict interpretation of the wording or interpretation based on the spirit of the entity. At one point you told me the Super Dictator could not point the cone at a moon, since the card specifically says "planet" (even tho moons did not exist when it was written). This supports the strict interpretation theory, while the "spirit" theory would argue that a moon is a viable object of the power. Similarly, the Purity Moon (#94), taken strictly, would allow Kickers and Lucre to remain while the spirit theory would say to remove them. Moon Flare (#27) states that the flare to be received is to come from Expansion Set #4. Now with #8 out, this is impractical to implement besides being contradictory to the spirit of the game. This is surely a case where updating maintenance is called for.

Are you aware that this wonderful game was a decisive factor leading me towards a career in programming?

Here's a hodgepodge of questions and responses to ENCOUNTER #3: most of it deals with how the Schizoid relates to the sequence of events in a challenge.

First, let's deal with mandatory vs. voluntary powers. Sometimes it isn't always clear what the intention is - Dictator and Macron, for example, are worded ambiguously. Ted Schmekpeper's list was helpful, but raises some questions. He lists both the Assassin and Vulch as mandatory, which is consistent with the wording. But does that imply that other players are obligated to remind these powers to act? It makes more sense to consider them voluntary powers and set a reasonable limit to the amount of time they take to act. In either case, can the Vulch pick up a rebirth and immediately play it on himself?

Also, the wording on the Insect power is consistent with Mr. Schmekpeper's listing it as mandatory, while your argument to Michael Richards in ENCOUNTER #2 implies it's voluntary. Should we assume the Super Insect is voluntary and the regular is mandatory, like the Reincarnator? Incidentally, the Reincarnator power uses the word 'may' in reference to the Insect's power. This is a moot point when the Insect opposes a voluntary power, but in a case such as Insect vs. Doppelganger, the Insect would go for it with a boring hand and not want to with a good one. What's your verdict?

It's not always clear how some powers should act when silenced. How about the Doppelganger, a mandatory power who requires speech to function? What about Demon and Bully - can they just forge ahead and assume others will realize they're exercising their powers? Does the Gambler simply lose use of his power when silenced? And why does Mr. Schmekpeper consider the Gambler a voluntary power? He *must* declare it (whether lying or not) and the opponent has the option of accepting or rejecting the declaration.

If a player has been told "you may not play a Compromise" with the wild magnet, is there any reason he can't circumvent the intended effect via use of the Wild Mesmer? The holder of the Wild Magnet could thwart him by saying "You may not play the Wild Mesmer", but could then not prevent a natural compromise.

Is this last sentence on the Void's power card still in effect, even though the Force could conceivably revive him? If so, what happens to other player's tokens in his systems? When his color comes up in the destiny pile? Should everyone flee his system to other bases or now have bases with a higher degree of protection?

When does the Crystal act? As each ally is coming in? If so, can they retreat entirely when they realize what he's up to? Or should the Crystal wait until all allies are in, doing his fine tuning after the players have committed themselves to one side or the other. Can he affect the user of the Wild Doppelganger?

Your answer to my questions published in ENCOUNTER #3 supports my thought that, indeed, Rebirth is a 'between challenge event' and that Mobius Tubes is played at the start of a challenge. However, your answer to Ed Day contradicts this when you write "The Negator cannot make a negation between challenges, but can make it as early in a challenge as he wishes, which is the same thing". But it's not the same thing, for the Negator (or any power or flare which states "once per challenge") cannot be used on a between challenge event (besides Rebirth, Wilds Crystal, Reincarnator, and Schizoid come to mind). Right?

I now see that in your response to Quentin Long, you are not saying that the Schizoid could win by those terms, only that the terms should be considered valid. My main objection was that you never really answered the final quote in Mr. Long's letter: The Schizoid could win through conventional means, but not by means of his own terms (unless he happened to have the Wild Witch flare or Power Trip Moon). This is indeed putting himself at a serious disadvantage, since he doesn't even know if these entities are in the game when he writes his terms.

In light of this, what could the Schizoid possibly write that would not be able to be met by all players? Some conditions are harder to achieve than others (3 tokens on each outside base would be more difficult for Macron to meet), but with so many flares, moons, etc. in action, almost any combination is possible (even the Zombie, at times of power loss, can meet a criterion of tokens in the warp; a condition of collecting consolation can be met even by the Empath or Pacifist, when zapped). If the condition is not connected to the possibility of a win, what are some examples of invalid terms? We had one game where the terms were eminently valid (3 outside bases and possession of two moons), but it was impossible to win them after the Vanish Moon had been revealed!

The phrase "remembering past events" still remains nebulous since you didn't address it in your latest response in ENCOUNTER #3. We play that anything happening since the last 'start of a challenge' is considered a current event. Thus if the terms are "Have 4 bases and play a Mobius Tubes", a player could win if he has 4 bases when he plays the tubes, or if he achieves 4 bases anytime before the next challenge begins. Do you agree, or do you consider something earlier in the challenge as a past event? If so, must the player have the specified number of bases at the exact moment the second condition is met?

We've gotten over the notion that a win must occur at the end of a challenge, but I see now where it originated - out of courtesy to the Schizoid! Before he existed, wins always came naturally at the end of a challenge. But with his birth came a concept hard to understand (especially in light of above paragraphs). We started playing that at the end of

each challenge the Schizoid would announce if there was a winner. If so, he would be zapped before he announces who the winner is (or are), but not after. Thus, the holder of a zap should be reasonably sure that he's met the conditions before deciding not to use it.

These last two sentences still seem valid, but now with a variety of sneaky ways to win, it makes sense that a challenge can be left uncompleted because of a win. It is no longer a valid defense to play a Compromise against a player going for his 4th base and holding the Wild Miser, for he can claim a win before you can get the flare from him in consolation. It is also apparent that the Schizoid must be on his toes at all times to make sure he notices when someone has met the conditions. It would be easy (and unfortunate) for a player to win and never realize it because the Schizoid's in the kitchen getting a coke. This I believe was the basis for pausing at the end of each challenge to determine if the game was over. Do you have any suggestions on how to circumvent this problem? Should we disallow those with short attention spans or weak bladders from playing as the Schizoid?

And if the win is considered instantaneous, can the Super Vacuum act to stop it? If the sequence of events is tightened up as I suggested in my correspondence of approx. April 15, the answer would be 'yes'; otherwise, it's rather nebulous (like the Schizoid) and reflects what I referred to as "bugs". Sorry, but we're only human.

Sorry also about insulting you by use of the word 'newsletter' but a rose by any other name . . . Keep up the good work.

P.S. I'd be happy to have Boston area players contact me for games. It's David Wilson, 56 Brighton Ave. #47, Allston, MA 02134

Editor: Thanks for your continuing vigilance, David. The problem is that it is just impractical to continue a system of individual responses to individual questions. The game has grown tremendously and the number of devoted players has certainly kept pace. But sales have not yet grown to the point where we can hire anyone but the original designers, and to require the kind of service you want would be a full-time job. Our loyalties are stretched, and ENCOUNTER seems like a reasonable way to deal with the situation. Please try to save your thoughts for this medium, so at least many other players can have the benefit of them. Since we go to press about a month before the first of the earlier cover date month, that gives you precious little time to read an issue and respond. I realize. But it seems the right timing to compromise the demand for currency with the demand for reflection.

On your specific questions: No, once you have left the cone the Wild Wrack number is zero, which invalidates the power.

You make a good point on the need for updating the moon powers, given the inclusion of Set #8, Kickers, and Lucre. We don't have a good system for this and are remiss. Yes, the clear implication here is to continue within the spirit of the instructions.

I'm delighted that CE was an influence in your career choice. It was on mine, too.

Certainly, the fact that a power is mandatory but fails through lack of presence to use the power to its own advantage does not require that other players remind it of an opportunity. But the Vulch can get a Rebirth and play it

My argument to Mike Richards dealt with the Insect Super Power, and all Flares are voluntary, regardless of the underlying power. The insect itself is certainly mandatory ("you copy your opponent's power").

On other "mandatory vs. optional" powers, yes the Doppelganger is forced to draw from the deck when Silenced unless he can con another into giving him the cards. The Demon and Bully may be used normally since their response is not required. While the Gambler always declares (thus avoiding the Silencer), he may lie, which is his essential power.

The Wild Mesmer can circumvent the Wild Magnet, since the Wild Magnet affects the card as played, and the Wild Mesmer affects the card's effect as revealed.

The Void's last sentence is still in effect unless the Force acts immediately. If not, the bases remain but have no further challenge possibilities against the Void.

The Crystal acts on each player as or after he or she enters the cone (it's option) and affects the Wild Doppelganger player similarly (as to number).

A "Between challenge event" comes at the end of the previous challenge, so certainly the Negator can affect those events.

The Schizoid's terms should be valid given the start of play conditions. If moons are in, they can be involved. If Vanish comes up, only the original conditions are likely to prevail, and then only upon Schizoid losing his power. As for memory, I'd go with the current challenge in tournament play.

As for the weak bladder question, I'd leave it to the possible winner to note the conditions and wrest from the now relieved Schizoid the truth.

On the Super Vacuum, certainly it can stop the win, if played in a timely manner. Like everything else in games (see my note in the Editorial on kids & gaming) it all depends on the willingness of players to recognize fair play.

Urbana Encounters

Editor: Bryan Stout from Urbana, IL has come up with a raft of new powers for your perusal and enjoyment. I'm reprinting the best of them (including the Alchemist, by Steve Craven) here complete with Flares Wild & Super. Hope you try some out.

KLENCH

You have the power to retain. You never need to discard a non-challenge card, unless you are out of challenge cards and must get a new hand, or if a Flare states that it must be discarded after use. Therefore zapped Flares, and played Edicts and Kickers are returned to your hand.

Wild Klensch: If a player draws a card from your hand you would rather keep, show him this card and demand that he return it after looking at it, and draw again. If he draws it, or an identical card, again in the same drawing, he keeps it.

Super Klensch: When a player gets to draw from your hand, you may first lay aside any or all of your non-challenge cards, except this one. If this card is drawn, you do not replace those cards in your hand until that player finishes drawing.

ALCHEMIST

You have the power of transmutation. At the start of each challenge you may change one token anywhere on the board to the color of another player, except to your own color. You may not leave two different colors on a moon.

from Amyellen Leib, Los Angeles, CA:

Herewith is the entire collection thus far of "Wild Flairs" that I have produced. When I am again employed (I am not now) I will be ordering the whole game from you — my set is so worn as to be ridiculous and the masses of tape on the box are looking quite shabby (sigh!) Good luck. (signed) Lady Starshine.

Editor: What followed was a collection of newsletters published by 'The House of the Running Turtle' apparently sent to a group of CE devotees announcing various game nights and interesting facts. A few samples: "Suppose you had the Schizoid power - you know, the one that allows you to change the win conditions of the game and everyone gets to ask a "yes or no" question about what you have decided constitutes the win. But not only that, you have been blessed with the Super Silencer! This allows you to silence everyone in the game. But, so? you might ask. So you then can keep everyone from determining your win condition. Mikie of fuzzy head suggested that one." Also: "Because it is the editor's prerogative to mention anything she wishes, I am also going to bring up my "Special Party". I am having a Lady Godiva party. This is something rather like a Tupperware party but that the merchandise is somewhat more 'Adult'. Shall we say that this is your opportunity to find out just what those wonderful Kama Sutra powders and 'Personal Lubricants' taste like." Finally, "Lloyd Almighty! I'm a Gambler. I might Plant a few puns, CE style, if I can Wrack my Mind enough but I've been Dragon, Witch is ok if you'd beGrudge me that Will. But you be the Judge of whether it Hurtz or not for I'm a Diplomat of sorts and although you'd say I was deVoid of Ethic I won't be a Skeptic for I do not do this for Prophet. It's Crystal Clear my Disease is some kind of Virus. But I've an Aura about me and with the aid of my Vacuum Machine the Filth in this place will be cleaned in time for the next Cosmic Encounter." Oh, my. I guess it's really true, what they say about California.

The tokens do not change back if you lose your power. (For extra tokens, you can order extra sets, borrow tokens from Dune or Darkover, or make your own facsimiles.) Do not use in a 2-player game.

Wild Alchemist: When the destiny pile is flipped you can change the disk revealed to another player's color. Lay the disk aside and replace it with that player's star disk. No other disk may then be changed to that player's color.

Super Alchemist: You may change the tokens to your own color, if they are not on a foreign planet.

GORGON

You have the power to paralyze. If you win as a main player, neither your opponent nor his allies may move any of their tokens except to go to the warp. This paralysis lasts until the player whose turn it is then starts his next turn (unless a player is paralyzed again during that time). A paralyzed player takes his turn by collecting a lucre, flipping one disk of the destiny pile, and passing play to the next player.

Wild Gorgon: If you win as a main player, your opponent may not use his power during the next challenge in which its use is possible.

Super Gorgon: Anyone you paralyze while holding this card also loses the ability to play non-challenge cards and spend lucre.

KRYPTON

You have the super power. You may use the Super Flare ability of any Flare you hold, if either of the following is true: 1) If the Super Flare explanation is self-contained, i.e. it can be used without using that alien's normal power, you may use the Super ability as stated. 2) If the Super ability is an extension of that alien's normal power to different circumstances (e.g. as an ally, against different players, at a different time of the challenge), you may use that alien power in the alternate manner, but not in the normal way the power is used. You may not use a Flare's Wild and Super powers both during the same challenge. Use only in a game with Flares.

Wild Krypton: You may play this card as if it were your power's Wild Flare, even if you still have your power.

Super Krypton: At the start of each of your turns you can draw a card at random from the unused Flares and add it to your hand.

FEDERALIST

You have the power of representation. When you are a main player, each ally also plays a challenge card. If any allies lack challenge cards, they do what they would as a defensive player lacking them. You then look at the cards your allies played, and choose one card from yours and your allies' to represent your side. Then without looking you choose one card from those played by your opponent and his allies for his side. The cards not chosen are retrieved by their owners and the challenge concludes with the cards chosen. Your opponent may look at the card for his side and use any abilities on it (eg. play another with it if the Deuce). Any powers, moons, etc. that affect the card chosen (eg. the Visionary, Compassion) are applied separately to each player on the appropriate side(s), if possible. If your opponent is the Oracle, you choose and reveal the card for your side before anyone on the other side plays. If he's the Insect, you each choose the card for the other side. Do not use in a 2-player game.

Wild Federalist: Whenever you lose a group of tokens for the same immediate cause, you only need to lose one token as a representative of the group. The rest stay on or return to bases.

Super Federalist: You may look at each of the opposing side's cards before deciding which to choose.

METAMORPH

You have the power to transform. When you are a main player, at the end of the challenge you may change your opponent's power to any unowned power in the game. If you lose your power all transformed powers revert back to the original powers they correspond to.

Wild Metamorph: When any player begins a turn you may specify another player, including yourself, to take a turn instead. After that turn play continues to the left of the one who lost his turn. This Flare may not be used again until the player who lost his turn finishes his next turn.

Super Metamorph: You may look at your opponent's hand before deciding how to transform his power.

SHAMAN

You have the power to conjure. At the end of each challenge you win as a main player, you may summon a cosmic maggot and place it on any planet where you have a base. (Use upside down Lucre or spare tokens for maggots.)

Effect: As the last action of every challenge, each maggot devours one token on the planet it occupies. The token it

devours belongs to the player with the most tokens on the planet — you choose between ties. Your tokens are ignored by the maggots as long as you have your power. Devoured tokens are permanently destroyed for the rest of the game.

Movement: Before they devour or new ones are summoned, maggots move to adjacent planets, crossing system boundaries (if the Warpish is in the game work his planets into the circuit). The number of planets they each move is the number of attack cards played in that challenge. If a maggot starts in your system you decide which direction it moves. Otherwise, for each maggot you and the owner of the system it's in each hold up 1 or 2 fingers at the count of three — if the total is odd it moves clockwise; if even, counter-clockwise. Maggots that end on the same planet move together from then on, but devour one after another, the target token for one figured after preceding ones have devoured.



Challenge: After he flips the destiny pile, a player may choose to challenge all the maggots on one planet in the indicated system. You are the defensive player (you may not attack maggots yourself). A maggot challenge is just like a normal challenge, except that maggots are each worth 5 towards the total, 1 for consolation. Tokens lost in the challenge go to the warp; lost maggots are taken off the board.

Rampancy: If you lose your power, maggots go rampant. Your tokens are the first choice to be devoured, followed by the player with the most tokens on the planet — in case of a tie, the first tying player found starting with the offensive player and going to his left. If a maggot starts movement in your system pick a player to do the finger trick with to determine the direction it moves. In rampant maggot challen-

ges there is no defensive player or card — compare the value of the offensive total, figured normally, to the value of the maggots (10 each now) plus allies. Anyone may ally with rampant maggots, and you may attack them like other players.

Miscellaneous: Maggots are immune to the Filth, but not to the Spider. If a maggot doesn't devour for two challenges in a row, it's removed from the board.

Wild Shaman: At any time you may summon a maggot into the warp, where it will stay and devour a token at the end of each challenge. The token it devours belongs to the player with the smallest (positive) number of tokens in the warp — resolve ties as with rampant maggots. A player may challenge it like a rampant maggot, ignoring the destiny pile; win or lose, attacking tokens go into the warp. If it doesn't devour for two challenges in a row, remove it. Use once and discard.

Super Shaman: You control the movement of all maggots, both direction and distance (up to 2 planets). You choose which tokens they devour.

✓ ENTREPRENEUR

You have the power to invest. In any challenge, after cards are played but before they are revealed you may place some of your Lucre in one end of the cone: 1 Lucre if you have tokens involved in the challenge, up to 3 if you do not. This Lucre adds to the total of the corresponding side. You do not have to be invited to invest, and you do not have to invest in the side you have tokens involved in. If the side you invest in wins or deals, take the Lucre back and take an equal amount from the box. Otherwise the invested Lucre goes to the box. Use only in a game with Lucre!

Wild Entrepreneur: Each time you buy cards from the deck, you get 1 Lucre back from the box for each newly-bought card you show to the other players. It comes from the box even if the Dragon is in the game. (max of 4)

Super Entrepreneur: You may invest with up to 3 Lucre if you have tokens in the challenge, up to 5 if you do not.

✓ BOOKIE

You have the power to place bets. In each challenge, as the last thing before cards are revealed you may announce that you are taking bets on its outcome. Any player wishing to bet gives you a Lucre — which you keep — and says which side he is betting on. After all bets are in, if one side has fewer Lucre bet on it, it is the dark horse. Resolve the challenge normally. Any player who bet on the winner gets 3 Lucre from the box if the winner was the dark horse, 2 Lucre if not. If a deal is reached, all betting players get one Lucre from the box. There is no gain for any other result. A player need not bet on the side he has tokens involved in. You may bet only if no one else does, by putting one Lucre in the warp and announcing the side you bet on. You get 2 from the box if that side wins and 1 if it deals. Use only in a game with Lucre!

Wild Bookie: You may bet on challenges without the Bookie. Before cards are revealed pay any amount of Lucre to the box and announce the side you bet on. If it wins take double the amount back, if it deals, the original amount back.

Super Bookie: You may bet just like other players, ie. you pay one Lucre to yourself, say which side you bet on, and get 0-3 Lucre from the box depending on the result. You may do this whether or not others bet.

SPIDER

SIMILAR ✓ MEDUSA BUT SPONGER

You have the power to entangle. Without your permission, no player can take a token off any of your home planets, or any planet on which you have a base, unless all of his tokens are on those planets. Such tokens which are killed are left just outside the planet they were on, and are treated as if they are not there. They do not go to the warp until either you permit, or you lose your power or vacate the base (if it's foreign). Mobius Tubes, Warp Break, etc., neither free them from you nor revive them. You must flee the Filth, but you may prevent others from doing so if your power controls the planet. After one challenge the tokens die of the smell.

Wild Spider: If you win as a main player, take your opponent's hand. At the start of each challenge you must return him at least one card, including a challenge card if he must play one and doesn't have any. If the time comes that he must discard his hand, you may do it for him. You can look at his cards but not play them. The Extortionist cannot extort in this process. If you lose this card, return the rest of the hand.

Super Spider: Your power extends to planets adjacent to planets you occupy, without crossing system boundaries.

✓ TORTOISE

You have the power to hibernate. You may raise a barrier around your system, shown by separating your hex from the central hex. As long as you hibernate behind the barrier, play continues in every way as if your system and all in it were not in the game (except you still keep your power while hibernating). However, none of your tokens may come out of the warp for any reason while you hibernate. You can still take turns and participate in challenges while hibernating if you have tokens on foreign bases. If a player gets your color while you hibernate, he must flip the destiny again. You come out of hibernation if you lose your power. Other than this, you may only go into or out of hibernation between challenges, that is, after everything has happened in one challenge and before *anything* happens in the next. When you leave hibernation you cannot go back until at least one challenge has finished. Do not use in a 2-player game.

Wild Tortoise: At the start of each challenge you can flip over all your tokens on one planet. No tokens can be moved on or off the planet, and it may not be challenged, until they are flipped back. You may do this when your color appears in the destiny pile, and must do it when you lose this card.

Super Tortoise: You may take your tokens out of the warp and use your Lucre while you hibernate.

New Ones from New York

Editor: Mark Gilston of Johnson City, NY (a folklorist and co-winner of the Eastcon CE tournament) has sent in a number of new Cosmic Encounter powers for us to savor. Read on.

Well, here are some powers that have come out of our group of players. The basic idea for the Pragmatist came from Tony Miller. Bob Schofield outlined the Cannibal, the Teddy Bear and the Loan Shark which I substantially changed. All the rest are my own inventions along with all the Flares. I hope people enjoy them.

FACTORY "Power to recycle" When you normally take cards from the deck, you may take as many as you would like (up to the number to which you are entitled) from the top of the discard pile.

WILD FACTORY Instead of being discarded, all cards played go to you. When you play a card it remains discarded. (Clone, Filch and Vulch get to go first).

SUPER FACTORY You may take your cards from anywhere in the discard pile if you choose.

FUDGE "Power of manipulation" As a main player or an ally you may alter the outcome total of a challenge by as many tokens as were involved in that challenge. i.e. if 14 tokens were in the cone (offensive player and offensive and defensive allies) and the defensive player had 3 tokens on the base, the Fudge could add or subtract 17 to either (but not both) players' attack total.

WILD FUDGE If any players refuse to deal you determine how many tokens each loses to the warp (up to a total of six).

SUPERFUDGE You may use your power even when you are not involved in the challenge.

CANNIBAL "Power to devour" Whenever your color is flipped you choose one shared planet to go into an "eating frenzy". For each token you have on that planet you send another players' token into the warp (from the same planet). i.e. If the Green Cannibal disc is flipped, and he has 3 tokens on a base shared with blue and red; green removes three enemy (blue or red or both) tokens to the Warp from that base.

WILD CANNIBAL You may take from your opponent one card for each token he has in the challenge.

SUPER CANNIBAL When your color disc is flipped you cannibalize an entire system rather than just one planet.

GLITCH "Power of indecisiveness" Once during each challenge you may take back or change one game action. (for example decide you didn't want to play your Zap which got unzapped, or you actually wanted to play an attack 15, not a 10 or you really meant to bring 4 tokens in as an ally, not 2). Other players may *not* rescind their actions which were a direct result of your negated action (so in the example above, the unzip would remain played, but you could not subsequently play the zap until the next challenge).

WILD GLITCH You may play a specific game action in two alternate ways and then decide on which to use once the result is known. For example you may play two attack cards choosing one or the other once your opponent has revealed his (but you must reveal both of yours) or you could ally with two different amounts of tokens deciding after the challenge which number you really wanted to be involved with etc.

SUPER GLITCH You may allow another player to take back or change a game action instead of yourself.

LAWYER "Power to regulate" (use only with lucre) (do not use in games with Diplomat) Whenever any player wishes to make a deal, he must pay you one Lucre or you determine the terms of his part of the deal. If neither player pays you a Lucre you decide whether they will deal or not, and exactly what the terms of the deal will be. Note that the Lawyer himself gets nothing from the deal excepting possible Lucre unless he is actually one of the two main characters in the challenge. The Lawyer does not get paid for the Wrack's terms or the Judge's fiat since these only involve one character. The Assessor may give the Lawyer a token instead of a Lucre.

WILD LAWYER By paying a dealing character two Lucre you may buy your way into a deal. *You* now make the terms with the other player and the bought out character is removed from the dealing. If you trade bases or cards you gain the benefits and take the risks.

SUPER LAWYER Even if you are paid, all deals must have your approval or the players involved are considered to have failed to deal.

LOAN SHARK "Power of usury" On any challenge in which the Loan Shark is a main player he may give an attack to another player. On that players' next turn, the Loan Shark must be repaid a higher card, an Edict or one Lucre for each challenge he makes. If the player cannot comply, he must either pass his turn or give the Loan Shark a base.

WILD LOAN SHARK If you ally with a player, he must then ally with you with four tokens at the next available opportunity if you ask.

SUPER LOAN SHARK You may specify which type of repayment you are to receive (i.e. a higher Attack, Edict or Lucre - in a Lucre game) when you give away your card. If the player cannot meet your requirement he must forfeit his turn (or second challenge) or give you a base.

MERCENARY "Power of risk" (use only with Lucre) When a player would normally put tokens in the cone, or when a player's tokens are attacked on a planet (or moon) the Mercenary may offer to risk his own tokens in place of the player(s). In return he must be paid an agreed upon number of Lucre. If the player loses, the Mercenary's tokens go to the Warp (or Void or Fungus) instead of the player's. If the player wins, the Mercenary returns his tokens to any of his bases. Note that the player, *not* the Mercenary, plays the Challenge, Cards, Deals, pays the Assessor, Butler, etc. The Mercenary may risk tokens on both sides of the challenge for both main players and their allies. He may ally separately from risking tokens so he may have more than four tokens on each side of the challenge. He only gets ally benefits from *allied* tokens. The Mercenary can *not* take the risk in a deal. if a deal is to be made, the Mercenary returns his tokens to his bases but keeps his payment.

WILD MERCENARY A main player in a challenge may (if you agree) pay you to take over his position in a challenge. You become the main player and he becomes your ally.

SUPER MERCENARY You get a share in the spoils, all your tokens in a challenge gain benefits as if you were an ally. Winning offensive tokens move onto the planet and winning defensive tokens gain cards from the deck or tokens from the Warp.

MERCHANT "Power of sale" (use only with Lucre) At any time the Merchant may show one of his cards and offer to sell it. He quotes a price in Lucre and anyone who meets the price may buy it (begin with offensive main player and proceed clockwise to determine the order of opportunity to buy).

WILD MERCHANT You may sell permission to land on one or more of your bases.

SUPER MERCHANT When you buy cards from the deck you get two cards for each Lucre you spend.

PAWNBROKER "Power of storage" (use only with Lucre) Once per challenge you may buy one unrevealed card or one token from the Warp (any color). The card may be either a card which should have gone to another player (he gets to see it but you don't) or the top card in the deck (no one gets to see it) or a card which was played but not revealed. This

privilege costs you one Lucre. (paid to the offended party or the bank if you take a card from the deck). In order to regain the card or token in question the player must pay you two Lucre, and anyone who wishes the card from the deck may buy it from you for two Lucre. A player may rebuy their card or token at any time. You need not return tokens or cards if you are zapped but may not buy anything that challenge.

WILD PAWNBROKER Once per challenge you may buy any revealed Flare for two Lucre. The original owner may buy it back for three Lucre.

SUPER PAWNBROKER If the Pawnbroker has one of a player's tokens, he may not buy anymore tokens out of the Warp until he buys back the Pawnbroker's token, similarly no one may buy any cards until they have bought back the cards of theirs kept by the Pawnbroker, and no one may buy cards from the deck until the Pawnbroker's card from the top of the deck has been sold to another player.

SAMURAI "Power of determination" If a player would normally gain consolation from you because they have played a compromise, you may refuse to give it to them. You may opt not to take consolation if you play a compromise.

WILD SAMURAI If your color comes up in the destiny pile, you may refuse to be challenged. The disc is flipped again and the challenge continues.

SUPER SAMURAI If another player compromises, you may opt to take consolation from him! (for the insult) If you compromise you may force your opponent to take consolation from you.

SNOB "Power to decline" When you get cards, other than for a new hand, you may immediately discard as many of them as you wish.

WILD SNOB You may refuse to deal with another player (that you consider "beneath your status"). His tokens go to the Warp but yours don't.

SUPER SNOB You may refuse a new hand. You discard the old hands until you get one with which you are satisfied, then you must discard this Flare.

SPIRIT "Power of movement" You may rearrange your tokens among your bases at the beginning of every challenge.

WILD SPIRIT Upon discarding this Flare the direction of play is reversed. (clockwise vs. counter clockwise).

SUPER SPIRIT When you put tokens into the cone, you may bring as many tokens as you wish (up to the number you have available).

SPY "Power to sabotage" When you are not involved as a main player or an ally in a challenge you may replace one of the cards played with one of your own. You keep the card you replaced.

WILD SPY You may rearrange the destiny pile as you wish.

SUPER SPY You may replace both challenge cards with your own.

SUPPLIER "Power to aid" (use only with Lucre) If either or both main players give you one Lucre, you must either give them 1 to 4 cards or come to their aid with 1 to 4 tokens. If you are on the winning side you gain all the benefits of being an ally. If you aid with tokens, these are in addition to regular alliances (so the Supplier can get up to 8 cards or tokens as an aiding defensive ally).

WILD SUPPLIER You may sell the use of your power for the challenge. You must agree on the price (in Lucre).

SUPER SUPPLIER You may give one main player up to 4 cards or tokens and he must pay you one Lucre if he has it.

He may refuse to use your tokens or cards and return them, but the Lucre remains paid.

TEDDY BEAR "Power of cuteness" When one or more tokens are removed from a base where you have tokens, you may bring one along "for the ride". History: It is not possible to avoid loving these frisky fellows. For more millenia than anyone can recall these sweet and mischievous balls of fur have been sought as mascots on interstellar spaceships.

WILD TEDDY BEAR How can anyone fight something so cute? Your opponents attack cards only count half their face value!

SUPER TEDDY BEAR You may not be attacked on a base where you have only one token. (PROSTITUTE)

PRAGMATIST "Power of opportunism" (use only in multi-power games with Lucre) You may sell the use of one of your powers for the challenge for one or more Lucre.

WILD PRAGMATIST You may buy more powers which aren't currently in the game for 4 Lucre each. You pay your Lucre and pick your power randomly.

SUPER PRAGMATIST You may sell the use of your Flares. You sell them as Wild Flares, but if the buyer has that power, the Flare acts as a Super Flare while he is using it.

WARNING

The use of flares in a multi-power game can be hazardous to your sanity!

When expansion sets 6 and 7 came out we sat around guessing what the Flares would be like. Our Flare for 'Terrorist' is good and different enough so that people might want to try it instead of the original.

WILD TERRORIST You may bomb the cone. Upon playing this card all the tokens in the cone immediately go to the Warp and the current challenge is ended. Discard the Flare after playing.

SUPER TERRORIST You may program your bombs (a time fuse). After writing which planet the bombs are on write how many safe landings can be made before the bombs go off! (This makes people far more nervous because they never know when even a seemingly "safe" base will explode).

Here are some Edicts we have tried with fairly successful results:

BANCRUPTCY Immediately lose all your Lucre (play on any player at any time) (I can't recommend this one highly enough!)

TAKE TWO Players tokens are returned to their original bases (even out of the Void and from the Fungus) player is dealt a new power(s) and begins fresh. (Play on any player before their challenge begins).

(I suggest that this be limited to being played only once on each player) This one leads to a long game, but it can be a God send if one person is just trouncing everyone else or if you can't stand your power.

NO! (Do not use with Mesmer) Stops any game action. (Play at any time).

(For those irritating moments).

BABEL Stop the current challenge. Everyone in the game must make a deal or *all* lose three tokens out of the game (even Zombie) (Play at any time. Current challenge is negated and play passes).

(This one is fun and adds a nice twist to the game. It enables 6 player victories once in a while when everyone is ready for something new).

RUNZLES

Editor: Here we go again. These Runes Puzzles are based on the method of forming letters in the game RUNES. These are submitted by Mark Gilson who thereby wins a one-year extension to his Encounter subscription. Mark was also kind enough to submit clues with each. In each case the Runesticks already in the boxes belong there, and more must be added in some boxes to form the six letter words.

1) A LONG JOURNEY

A Runes puzzle for the clue 'A LONG JOURNEY'. The puzzle consists of a 6x6 grid of Runesticks. The top row contains Runesticks for 'A', 'L', 'O', 'N', 'G', 'J'. The second row contains Runesticks for 'O', 'U', 'R', 'N', 'E', 'Y'. The third row contains Runesticks for 'A', 'L', 'O', 'N', 'G', 'J'. The fourth row contains Runesticks for 'O', 'U', 'R', 'N', 'E', 'Y'. The fifth row contains Runesticks for 'A', 'L', 'O', 'N', 'G', 'J'. The sixth row contains Runesticks for 'O', 'U', 'R', 'N', 'E', 'Y'. The Runesticks are arranged to form the words 'A LONG JOURNEY'.

3) KEEP IT DOWN

A Runes puzzle for the clue 'KEEP IT DOWN'. The puzzle consists of a 6x6 grid of Runesticks. The top row contains Runesticks for 'K', 'E', 'E', 'P', 'I', 'T'. The second row contains Runesticks for 'D', 'O', 'W', 'N'. The third row contains Runesticks for 'K', 'E', 'E', 'P', 'I', 'T'. The fourth row contains Runesticks for 'D', 'O', 'W', 'N'. The fifth row contains Runesticks for 'K', 'E', 'E', 'P', 'I', 'T'. The sixth row contains Runesticks for 'D', 'O', 'W', 'N'. The Runesticks are arranged to form the words 'KEEP IT DOWN'.

4) FAR OUT

A Runes puzzle for the clue 'FAR OUT'. The puzzle consists of a 6x6 grid of Runesticks. The top row contains Runesticks for 'F', 'A', 'R', 'O', 'U', 'T'. The second row contains Runesticks for 'F', 'A', 'R', 'O', 'U', 'T'. The third row contains Runesticks for 'F', 'A', 'R', 'O', 'U', 'T'. The fourth row contains Runesticks for 'F', 'A', 'R', 'O', 'U', 'T'. The fifth row contains Runesticks for 'F', 'A', 'R', 'O', 'U', 'T'. The sixth row contains Runesticks for 'F', 'A', 'R', 'O', 'U', 'T'. The Runesticks are arranged to form the words 'FAR OUT'.

Win a free subscription (or a one-year extension)! Submit a set of Runzles suitable for publication (4 or more) and get a free sub to ENCOUNTER upon their use in the journal. All submissions become the property of ENCOUNTER. (Please include solutions with your submissions so yours truly isn't up all night with Runzelutis.)

2) CARRY ON

A Runes puzzle for the clue 'CARRY ON'. The puzzle consists of a 6x6 grid of Runesticks. The top row contains Runesticks for 'C', 'A', 'R', 'R', 'Y', 'O'. The second row contains Runesticks for 'N'. The third row contains Runesticks for 'C', 'A', 'R', 'R', 'Y', 'O'. The fourth row contains Runesticks for 'N'. The fifth row contains Runesticks for 'C', 'A', 'R', 'R', 'Y', 'O'. The sixth row contains Runesticks for 'N'. The Runesticks are arranged to form the words 'CARRY ON'.

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