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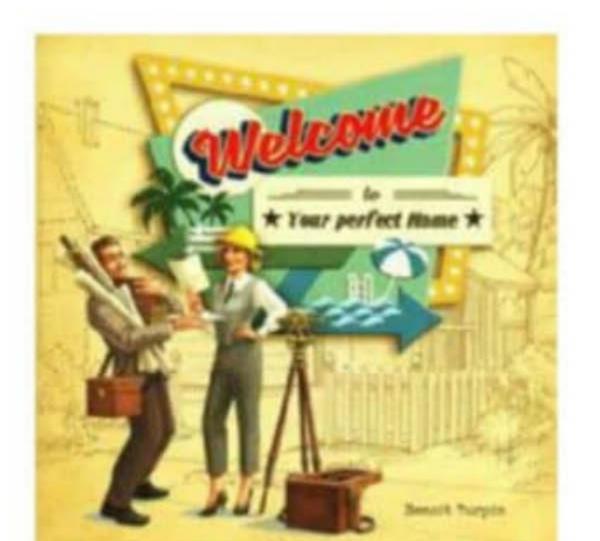














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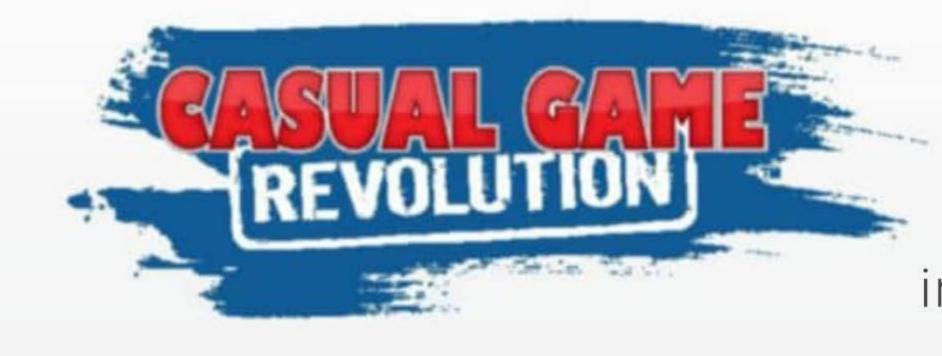
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"A casual board (or card) game is played in under an hour, set up and taught in under 10 minutes, and requires some light strategic thought. Casual games are not specifically marketed to children, but can be enjoyed by anyone from older children to adults."



ARREST the TIME BREAKER... ...and RETURN with them to the TIME

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Will You Be the Next Hero of the Reef?

Welcome, aspiring Heroes! Many magnificent contestants have signed up for the tournament, but only a handful will be chosen to join the Tidal Blades — the elite guards of our island realm. To succeed in the tournament and be chosen as a Tidal Blade, you must compete in challenges held in the three arenas, rise to the top of the Champion Board, and protect the realm from the ever-increasing threat of the monsters from the mysterious Fold.



Tidal Blades: Heroes of the Reef, the newest game from Druid City Games, transports players to the island realm of Naviri. It is an aquatic world full of brave heroes, magnificent shell technology, and monsters from the depths!













It has been 15 years since the Great Battle; 15 years since the Arcanists from the Citadel of Time made their terrible choice and created the Fold; 15 years since the last assemblage of Tidal Blades. The Arcanists folded space and time to stop the onslaught of creatures from the depths, but now new monsters have appeared, the hard-earned days of peace are coming to a close, and the islands need protection. A tournament has been called, the arenas are ready, and the inhabitants of all the islands gather as young heroes from across the realm compete to be named a Tidal Blade: Hero of the Reef.

In Tidal Blades: Heroes of the Reef, each player takes the role of a young hero competing to be named a Tidal Blade. The tournament takes place over five days and nights. By gathering the needed resources, signing up to compete in challenges, and timing your arrival at different islands, you can make the most of your hero's turns and rise in the ranks

of the contestants.

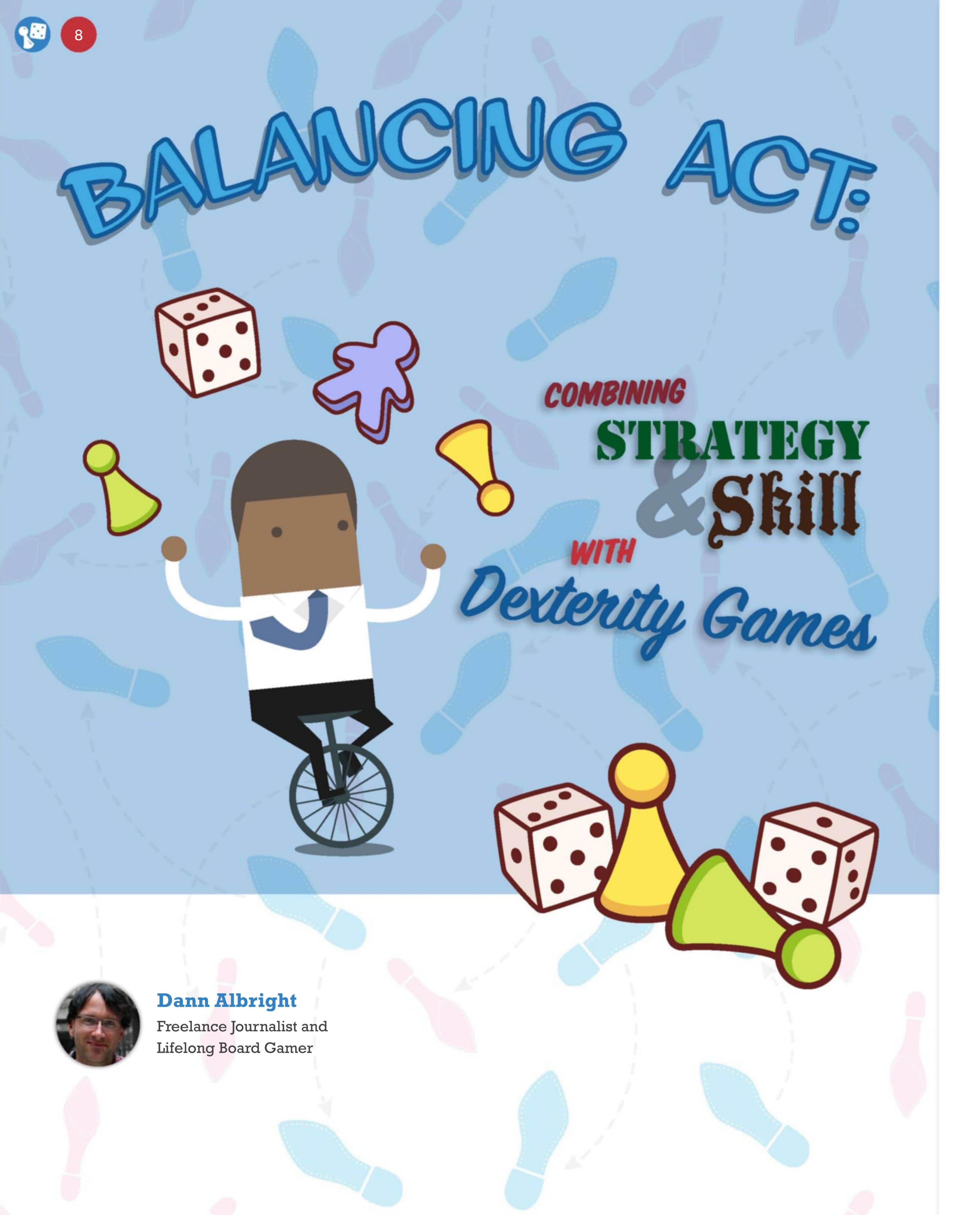
Each day you will send your hero to take actions on the different locations and undertake challenges. Each action will gain you the resource or effect listed on the action space as well as the location bonus. At the arenas, you may then attempt a challenge that matches your location, and at the Fold you may battle a monster.



Completing challenges and fighting monsters will advance your character in the four traits of Focus, Spirit, Resilience, and Synergy. Each hero will be judged at the end of the five rounds based on the challenges they have completed, the level of each of their traits, their standing on the Champions Board, and the monsters they have fought.



Each of the four heroes has a deck of unique powers and abilities which will guide and inform your choices in the game. Will you play as Axl, the hot-headed descendant of Tidal Blades? Or will you wield the Trinite sword as Dust, the lone traveler from across the Droskan desert? Or step up the competition with Caiman, the grizzled Croc mercenary? Or use your wits to the fullest as Eko, the young Betalod obsessed with knowledge and monsters? The tournament is ready, monsters are threatening, and the islands need new Tidal Blades. Choose your hero and join the tournament!





Nost board games are a battle of wits. You use your strategic skills against your opponent's, throw in a bit of luck, and may the best gamer win. But not all games use this same set of skills.

Dexterity games require a deft touch, balance, foresight, and quick reflexes to secure the win. When you combine dexterity and tabletop games, you get a unique experience that's almost more sporting event than board game — and a whole lot of fun.

Interested in taking a swing at it, but you're not quite sure where to begin? There are so many dexterity games that it can be hard to figure out which you might like. So we've collected nine of them here that we think you might like, based on what other activities or games you might already enjoy.



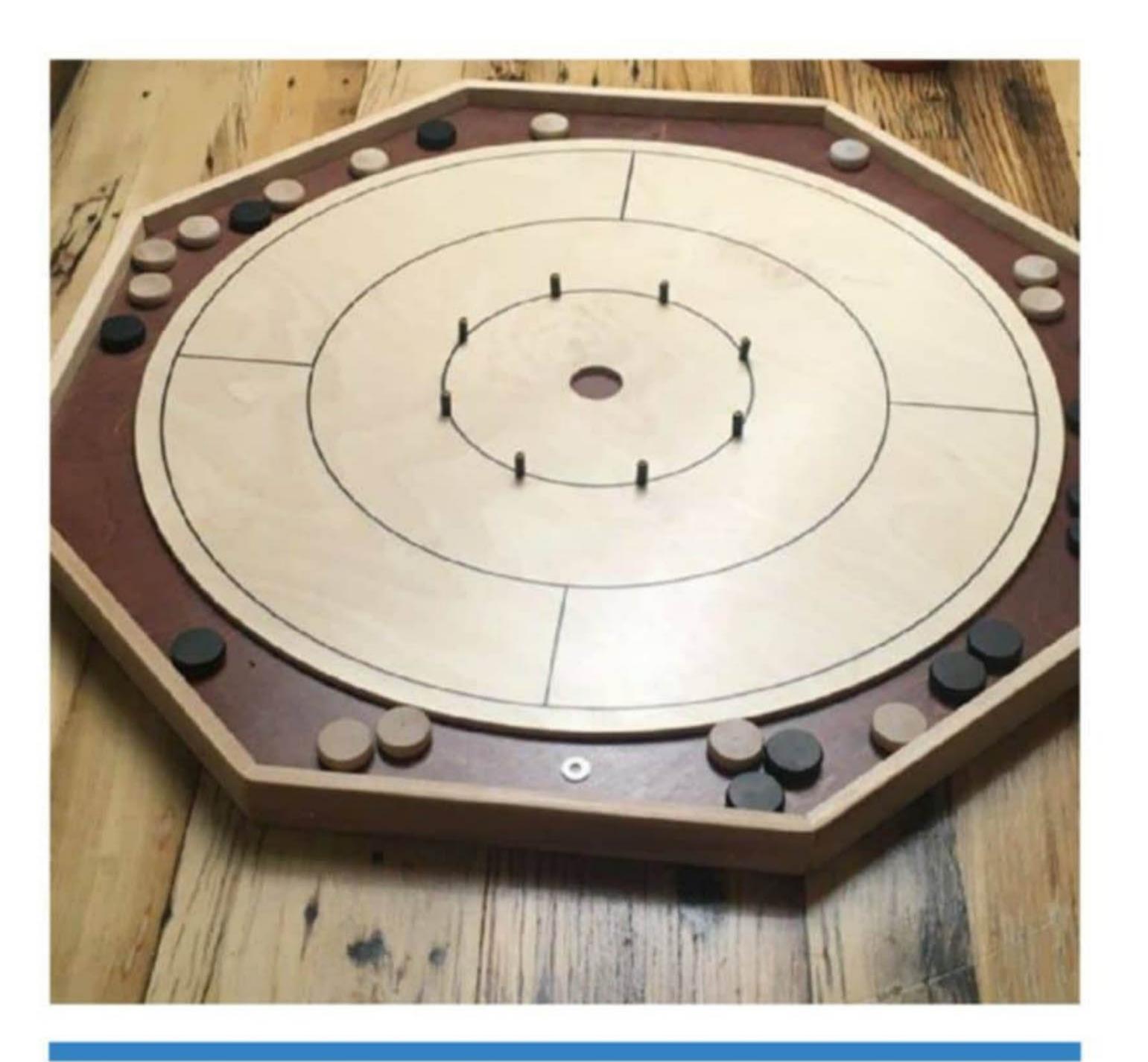
For fans of shuffleboard: Crokinole 1-4 players, 30 minutes

We'll start with a game you're probably familiar with: shuffleboard. In shuffleboard, you push discs across a surface and try to get them to stay in the scoring area. It's a bit like bocce ball.

When you play it on the table, though, you get one of the most popular dexterity games around: *Crokinole*. The earliest known *Crokinole* board has been dated back to 1876, and combines elements of shuffleboard, curling, and marbles in a tabletop game.

The circular wooden board is 26" in diameter, and the rules are simple to learn. You flick your wooden disc towards the center of the board, and the closer you get your disc to the center, the more points you score. If you can avoid the posts around the inner circle, you have a shot at the 20-point mark in the center of the board.

Of course, you can also knock your opponents' discs out of the center. And that's when it gets really fun.



A standard Crokinole board. Photo by Eliot Phillips (hackaday on Flickr), licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.



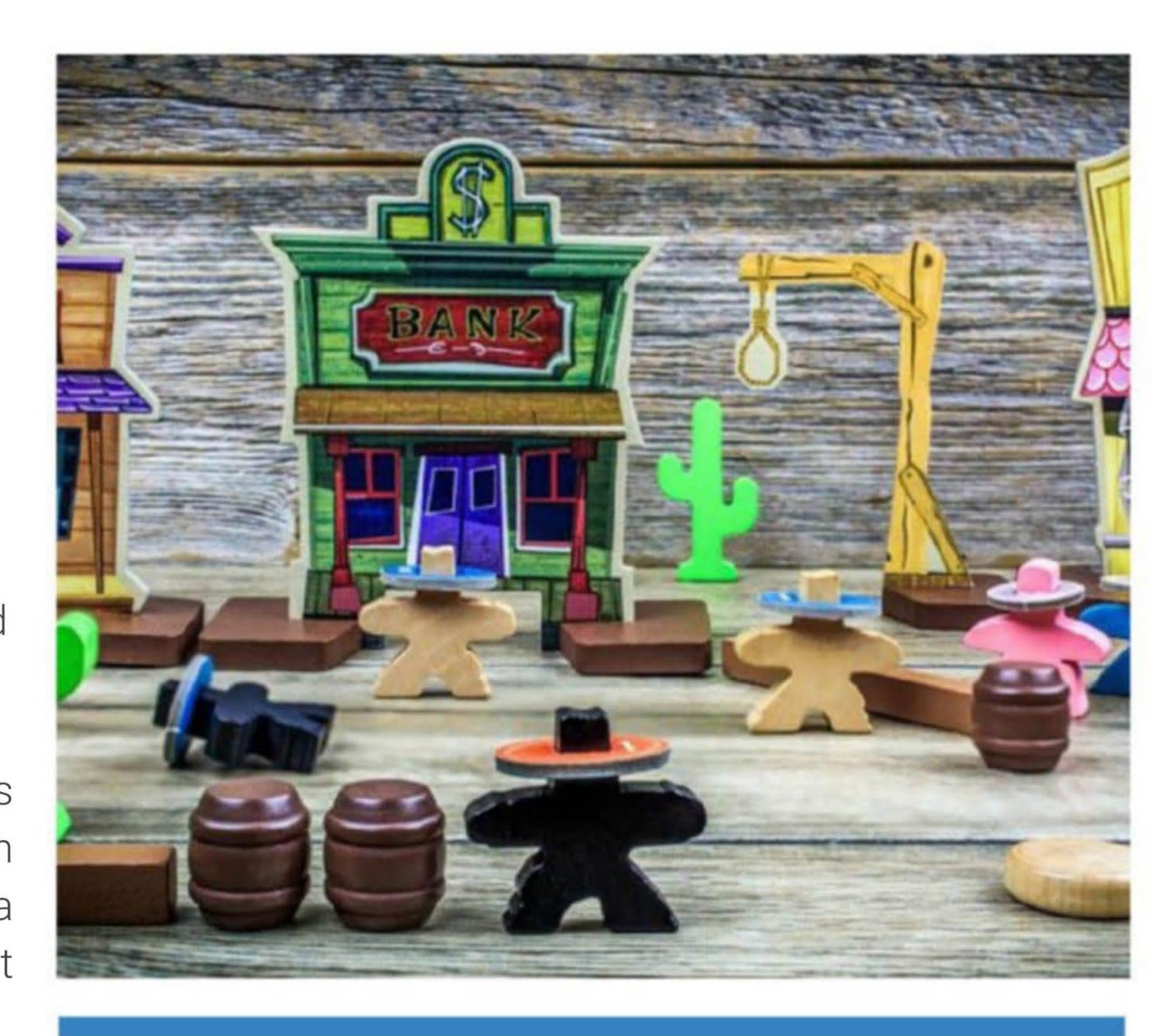


For fans of paper football: Flick 'Em Up! 2-4 players, 45 minutes

Remember flicking paper footballs around desks in school? You needed a deft touch to get your football over the edge of the desk without going too far and falling off the edge. It was a combination of aim, dexterity, and physics.

Flick 'Em Up! By Pretzel Games brings many of the same fun factors to the table. Instead of simply flicking toward a goal, though, you'll flick your cowboys around the map to enter and exit buildings, flick bullets to shoot at your opponents' cowboys, and try to satisfy the victory conditions of the scenario.

You'll need good aim to hit the opponents' cowboys and enter buildings, but you'll also want a soft touch when you're trying to move your own cowboys. It's a tenuous balance, and Flick 'Em Up! will absolutely put your flicking skills to the test.



Flick 'Em Up. Photo by Scott King Photography.



For fans of air hockey: KLASK 2 players, 10 minutes

Air hockey is a classic arcade pastime, but few tabletop versions can match it. One of the best ways to get the same thrill of ricochets, blocks, and goals is with **KLASK**. Instead of air jets, though, you'll be playing with magnets.

Your game piece is a black magnet on the top of the board - but you control it by moving a corresponding magnet on the bottom of the board.

Three magnetic obstacles sit in the middle of the board, and if you get too close, they'll stick to your game piece, making it harder to move the ball toward your opponent's goal. And if two or more of them stick, you lose the point.

You also lose the point if your piece falls into the goal on your side of the table. If you can shoot the ball into the hole on your opponent's side of the table, you win the point. It sounds easy. But when KLASK heats up, things get rather difficult.



For fans of destruction: Terror in Meeple City 2-4 players, 45 minutes

Okay, so "destruction" isn't really a game or activity. But sometimes you just want to go on a rampage. And Terror in Meeple City by Repos Production is all about rampaging (in fact, the European edition is called just that: Rampage).

Each player takes on the role of a monster wreaking havoc on a cardboard city. Buildings consist of cardboard floors supported by meeples acting as pillars. By flicking discs, dropping wooden monsters, "throwing" wooden vehicles, and using your atomic breath (blowing on the board), you aim to cause as much destruction as possible.

But you'll have to be careful — sending a meeple off the board penalizes you for wasting food. If that all sounds ridiculous, it's because it's a ridiculous game. But when you feel the need to destroy some buildings and eat some unsuspecting humans, it's a fantastic choice.



Terror in Meeple City. Photo by Scott King Photography.



For fans of Tetris: Drop It 2-4 players, 30 minutes

Just about everyone has played Tetris. If you haven't, you probably know the basics: you drop blocks to make complete rows and score points for those rows. Drop It by KOSMOS is a bit like that...but with more chaos.

Instead of nicely shaped blocks that fit together perfectly, you have an assemblage of circles, squares, and diamonds that never fit together quite how you want them to. And if they touch another piece of the same color or shape, you lose your chance to score. The same goes with the color or shape forbidden zones on the side of the board.

You'll try to stack your shapes as high as possible, but as they shift and your goals change, you'll need to strike a tenuous balance.



Drop It! Photo by Scott King Photography.





For fans of balance boards: Hamsterrolle 2-4 players, 30 minutes

Have you ever used a balance board? You set a flat piece of wood on top of a round one and try to keep your balance directly in the middle. It's not easy. Neither is **Hamsterrolle**.

The main "board" of Hamsterrolle by Zoch Spiele is a wooden circle — like a hamster wheel — with "fences" along the inside. Players have seven wooden pieces of various shapes and sizes. The first to place each piece in the wheel wins.

But you'll have to be careful where you place them, because when the wheel becomes unbalanced, it starts to tilt...and might cause pieces to go flying. As a penalty, you must collect any pieces that fall out on your turn (which you still have to place later).

You'll need to place your pieces precariously, hoping they will fall out on an opponent's turn, while trying to avoid causing pieces to drop on your turn. This requires a steady hand, a good sense of balance, and nerves of steel to make it work not to mention a bit of finesse.



"Hamsterrolle - Level: Awesome." by Rob Masters (rdmasters on BGG), licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.



Junk Art. Photo by Scott King Photography.

Junk Art is a little like Jenga in reverse: instead of taking items out of the tower, you're adding them. But you still lose if you're the one to knock it down (in some cases, anyway).

Instead of just providing a single way to play, Junk Art by Pretzel Games gives players lots of options. Many of those options are provided by cards, adding an element of randomness and replayability to the game. There's a trick-taking mode, a race mode, a mode that has specific restrictions on shapes and colors, and a whole lot more.

If you like stacking things and playing card games, you can combine the two with Junk Art. Just combine them very carefully if you want to win.



For fans of card houses: Rhino Hero

2-5 players, 5-15 minutes

Want to stack something other than wooden or plastic pieces? How about cards? Rhino Hero takes classic card-stacking and adds a new twist to test your skills. Each turn, you'll place wall cards on top of the previous player's roof card, creating a higher tower.

Pretty standard, right? But it's not quite that simple. Roof cards may have special requirements on where the wall cards go or if the next player has to play an extra roof card.

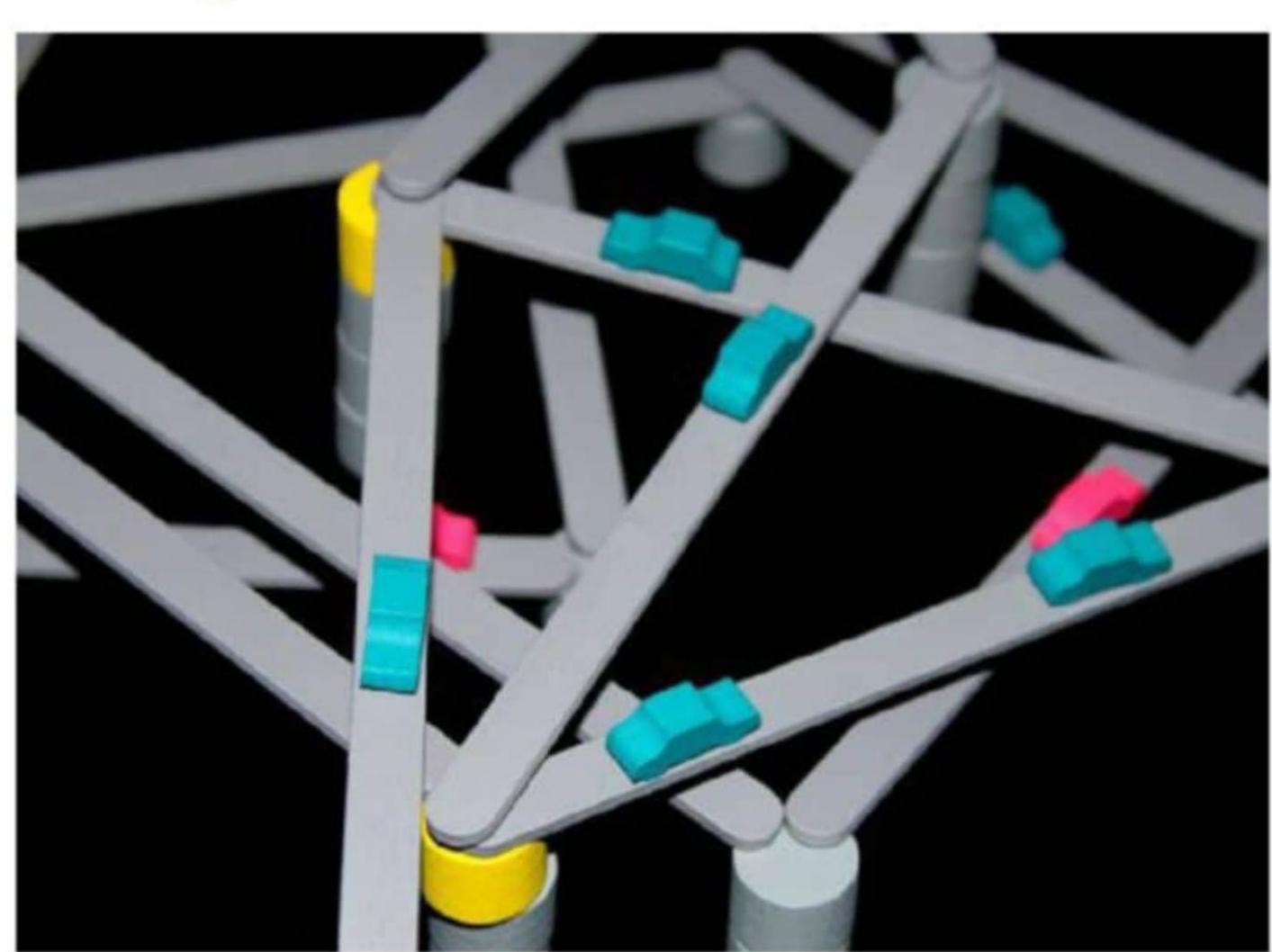
Rhino Hero probably requires the steadiest hand of all the options in this article, because you're building a single tower of cards and it can get very tall, very fast.

If you want to build even higher, keep an eye out for the special giant edition of Rhino Hero. It was printed in very limited numbers and is hard to find — but if you can get your careful hands on it, you'll build a massive tower to be proud of!





For fans of popsicle-stick building: Tokyo Highway 2 players, 30-50 minutes



"A game of Tokyo Highway!" by Erik Yurko (kalchio on BGG), licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

If you have built a popsicle stick bridge in a physics class or have tried to create an architectural masterpiece out of matchsticks, you'll appreciate Tokyo Highway by itten immediately.

Each turn, you can place a cylinder, a road, or a car. Stacked cylinders are connected by roads (basically big popsicle sticks) but they're never at the same level. No taking the easy way out here! When you place a road that crosses another road, you can place a car on it.

Once you've managed to balance all of your cars on precariously placed roads, you win. Sounds easy, right? Try it for yourself and see if you still think so.

Get ready for a lot of laughs — and chaos.



Dexterity games come with a healthy dose of hilarity. You'll always run into things you don't expect, accidentally knock something over, or put an opponent in a terrible position. But after adding a few of these games to your game night, you learn to roll with the punches, hone your handeye coordination, and master the art of the flick.

You can never predict what will happen in a dexterity game. And that's a big part of why they're so fun! ::























AnnaMaria Jackson-Phelps

Board Game Blogger and

Faco Enthusiast

he first thing you'll usually notice about a board game is the box it comes in. Great box art can draw your eye from across the game store, or stop you mid-scroll through social media. It's not the player count or time, or even the description on the back that grabs your attention. Think the box art is just some pretty pictures to decorate the box and board? Think again.

aybe the game you chose has a minimalist style that stood out among busy artwork of other games. Or maybe it immediately conveyed the theme of the game. While the very nature of art is subjective, it's generally agreed that art adds enormous value to a board game. From that eye-catching first moment to bridging the space between theme and mechanics, a game's artwork influences not only the buyer, but enhances the gameplay and overall enjoyment of the game.

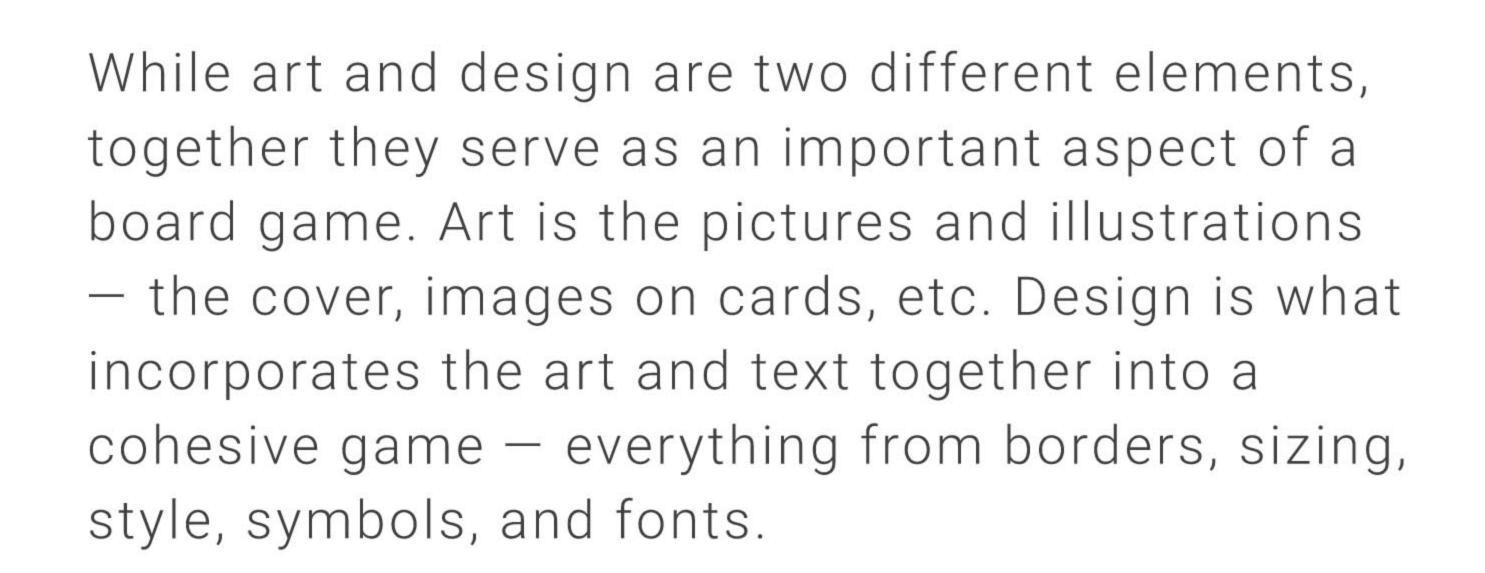
Entire online communities have sprung up around the subject. Creative workgroups such as Tabletop Art Design on Facebook revolve around the development of game art, while Instagram accounts full of board game art can garner tens of thousands of followers. The art and style of a board game are discussed in board game reviews. There are even awards specifically for board game artwork. So how is it that a board game's artwork impacts the design or overall enjoyment of the game?

Art has been an integral part of games for quite some time. From Egyptian Senet boards to Roman dice towers and Chinese Go tables, games popularized in ancient civilizations were highly decorated and enhanced with art. It didn't take early game makers long to recognize that beauty and entertainment often go hand-in-hand, creating games that were visually soothing or stimulating. (Another plus: they made lovely decorations!)



Senet gaming board inscribed for Amenhotep III with separate sliding drawer, circa 1390-1353 B.C.E (photo by Brooklyn Museum)

Spring 2019 | CG 19



Together, art and design serve several purposes in the development of the game. In addition to providing eye-catching images to pique the interest of potential buyers or backers, it also serves to evoke the theme and creates a dynamic background for the game's mechanics. When theme and individual mechanisms blend seamlessly together because of the artwork, the results become an immersive and engaging experience.



Dixit cards and box. Photo by Erik Yurko (kalchio on BGG), licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

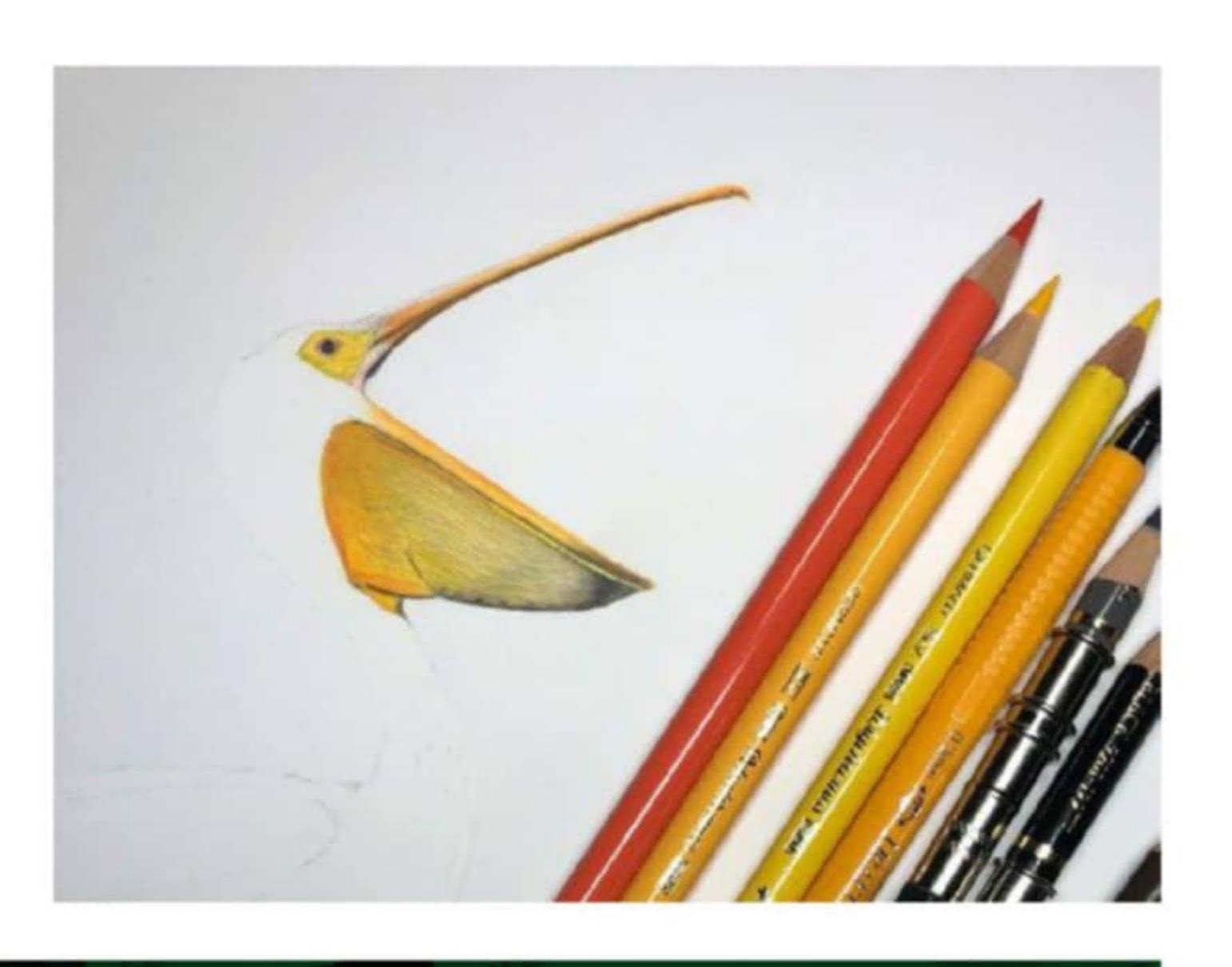
Theme Building Exercise

How does art enhance the theme? Think of some of the games you've enjoyed over the past couple years. Dungeons & Dragons has devoted entire manuals to the look and design of beasts and settings. Fernanda Suárez's bleak art in Dead of Winter evokes chill and desolation, while *Dixit* gets most of its whimsical, storybook feel from the charming illustrations by Marie Cardouat. Regardless of whether players are familiar with a game, the artwork already sets the tone before the first turn is taken.



Whether the designer turns over their prototype to a publisher to complete, or they're Kickstarting or selfpublishing, contracting the right artist is a major element of development. Some designers may start with an idea or style in mind and look for an artist who has a portfolio in that style. It's common to see calls for art like "Looking for an artist who does caricature" or "Looking for Rococo-style art."

More often you will find that publishers or designers will go through portfolios of artists or online galleries to find what they're looking for. Natalia Rojas and Ana Maria Martinez were working on nature-inspired artwork for years before providing the bird art featured in Wingspan.



"Two years ago, I partnered with my lifelong friend Ana to launch a small online company to sell wildlife art and started showing our work on social media," explains Rojas. "Soon after, we were contacted by Stonemaier Games, who gave us the opportunity to work on this amazing project."

Wingspan art in progress by artist Natalia Rojas. Wingspan cards photo by Stonemaier Games.

A Work in Process

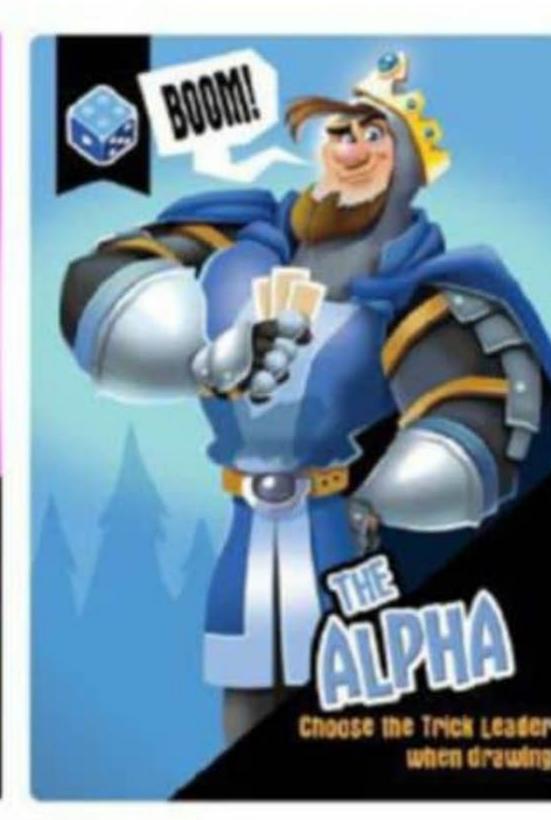
Occasionally the developer might even be the artist. Matt King's recent release Carrot & Stick features all his own drawings. Art for board games is enormously collaborative. Once a publisher has found an artist (or artists) they'd like to work with, there's plenty of backand-forth discussion. Is it exactly what the designer and publisher had in mind? What does it look like when resized? Does the artwork need to be digitized (the process of making a digital image from a painted or hand drawn one)? How well does the color/tone/detail mesh with the concept?

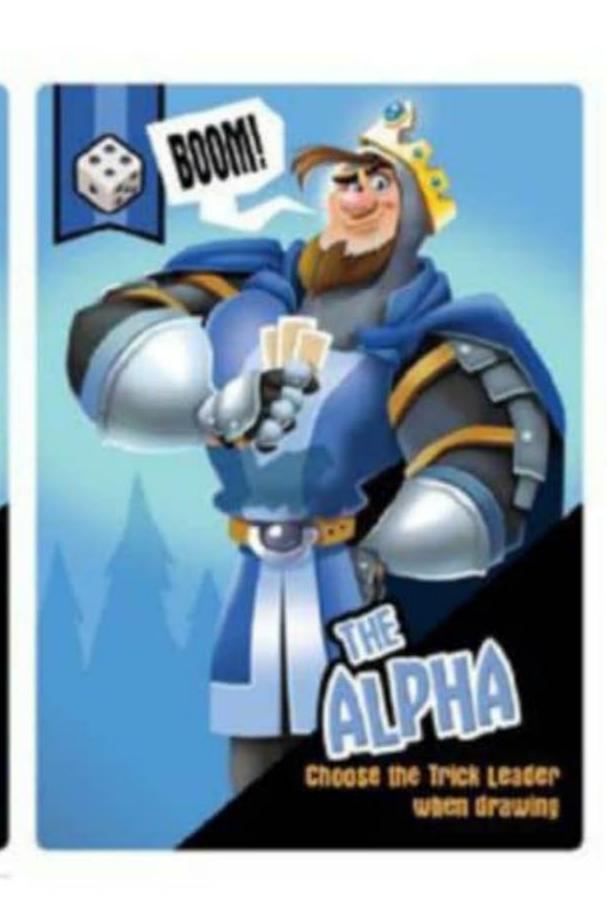
"If I am working for a client, it depends on how much of a vision they already have," King explains. "If they need me to set the style, then I will inevitably have more input. However, many people have a clear idea of style and content beforehand, and I just need to adapt that style to their needs. When working for a client, it depends on how much of a vision they already have, but a good level of direction without micromanagement is helpful, and the more detailed the notes on work-in-progress the faster the process."











Heroes and Tricks card artwork from start to finish by Dustin Foust

That process usually takes several steps from start to finish. From concept to final image, there may be many revisions based on publisher feedback, changes from playtesting, or even last-minute adjustments for printing. When Eduardo Baraf of Pencil First Games worked with artist Dustin Foust on *Heroes and Tricks*, we can see that there was gradual development of the image throughout the game design. This development might even take place on a grander scale, as color palettes shift, or details are added or removed as more artwork is added to the game.



Game board from Raiders of the North Sea



Card artwork for Gladius by Cheryl Young Art

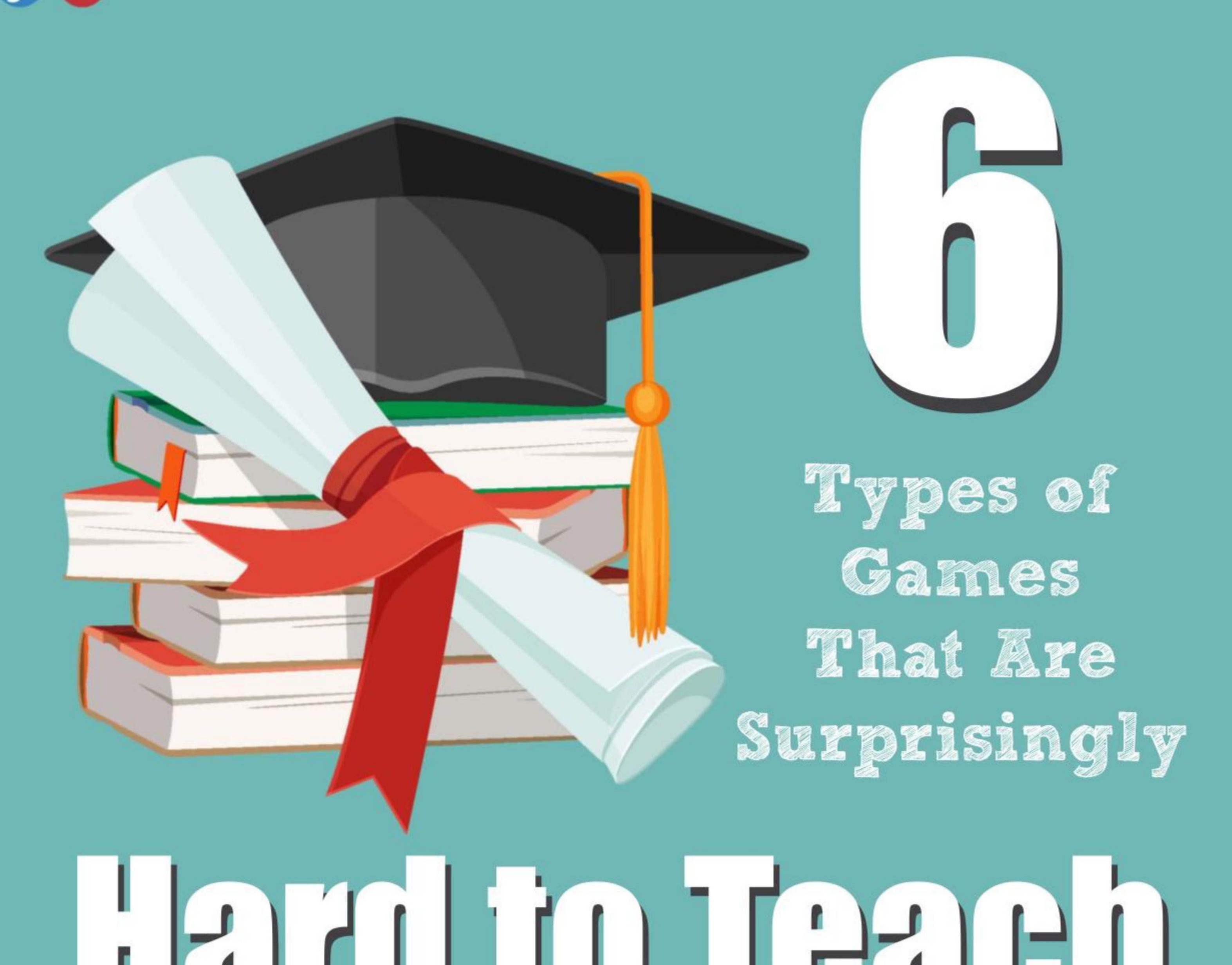
Artwork for board games can have unusual imitators as well. In *Oaxaca*, the art for the meeple figures is confined to a component that is one inch tall. Images may need to be quite large like Mihajlo Dimitrievski's board used in *Raiders of the North Sea* by Garphill Games. Or there might even be need of dozens and dozens of images like the cards created for the upcoming *Gladius* by Cheryl Young Art.

Despite its deceptively trivial appearance, an incredible amount of energy and thought goes into the development of art for board games. Individual game mechanisms are the crunchy, important bits, and theme can pique someone's interest, but good artwork can hook a player long before they even open the box. ::



Learn more about these games and more at kidstablebg.com





oard games can be hard. Sure, we take it in stride. But how many other hobbies ask you to take a reading comprehension exam before moving onto an oral presentation, all for some good fun? In this top 6 list, we take a look at those sneaky games that seem like they should be easy to teach...until, to your horror, it all falls apart.



Kurt Refling Writer, Tabletoppist, Ex-curator, Geek Ludique. @KurtRefling



Hidden information games.

Picture this: you're three rounds into a game of The Resistance with your extended family. For some people this may already be a nightmare, but things haven't really gone south until Uncle Bob perks up and asks: "Say, what does my red card do again?"

Sometimes you just can't ask. From the many secrets of social deduction games to the complex hidden scoring of Euros, an innocent question could lead to a big advantage for experienced players. Worse, the wrong question in a traitor game could ruin the whole session.

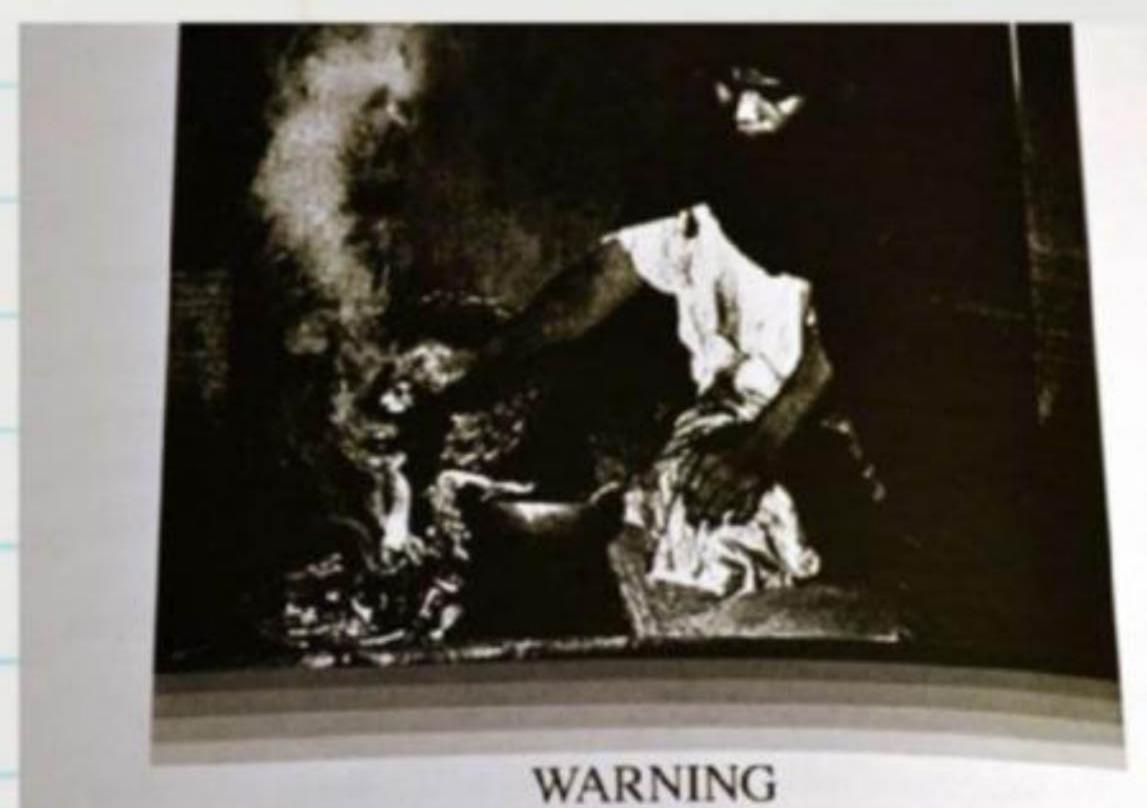
Volunteering to teach a hidden information game is an act of confidence. How sure are you that your instructions will be so good that nobody has to ask? Given how perfect-for-parties social deduction games can be, it's a tricky balancing act: they would love this. But will they get it?



Okay but really, don't tell anyone!



Games with deceptively playful themes.



This game is absolutely unplayable on Mushrooms!

Fair enough.

With some board games, one look at the box will tell you everything you need to know. How likely is it that Advanced Civilization is going to be a walk in the park? But not every game is so easy to read. And when your kid cousin grabs Dungeon Petz to ask for a quick game, you're in for a rough time.

Some games have just the right cocktail of cute art and funny ideas to seduce exactly the wrong crowd. Who would have guessed that a game like Galaxy Trucker would leave your fun little ship in a dozen pieces scattered through space? Or that the calming sea life of Reef Encounter could get players scratching their heads with its Tigris

a warning for any would-be psychonauts.

Maybe the creators of these games have made fashion... well, I think you deserve what you have a mistake choosing to nestle their complex coming to you.

& Euphrates-inspired subtlety? Then there's the mechanics in themes so far off the beaten conundrum faced by the bizarrely complex track. But there's something to be said for psychedelic trip The Mushroom Eaters - a diversity. Perhaps there's some level of poetry game so complicated that the designer has left to the whimsical theme getting a revving engine behind it. Either way, I do know one thing: if you underestimate Prêt-à-Porter because it's about

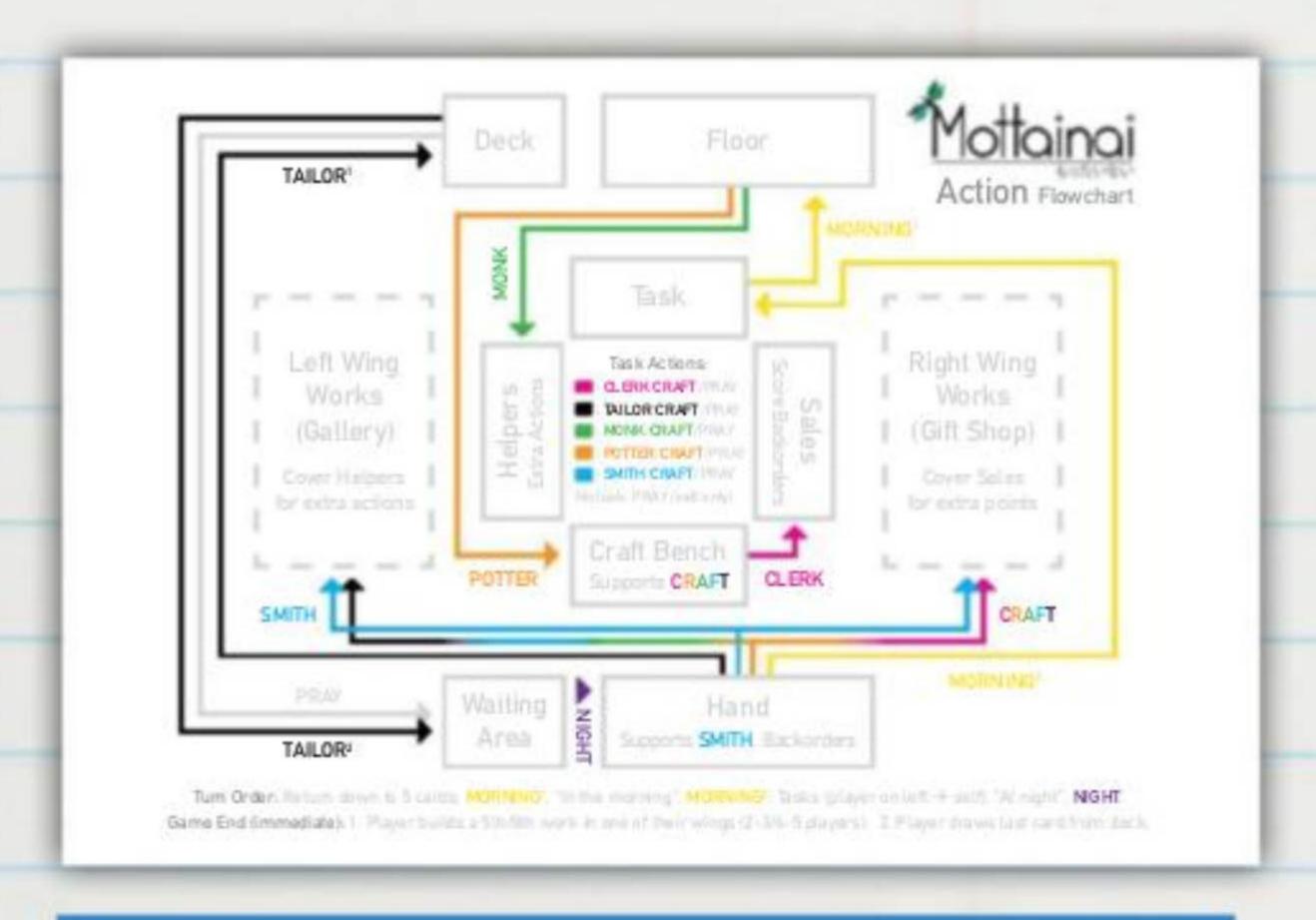
Games with multi-use components.

This is a simple card game, right? Right, Carl Chudyk? Sometimes things aren't as simple as they seem.

When learning a new game, we humans like to make neat little categories to remember where things go and where they come from. Wood is used for roads and settlements - it comes from the forest. Brick is used for roads and settlements - it comes from the brickyard. Stone is used for cities and development cards - it comes from the quarry. But what happens when things aren't so straightforward?

Let's look at the game Mottainai. Mottainai is a little deck of cards and a mat for each player. is that it's hard to know where to start explaining The cards come in one of five colors, and every when everything is tangled together like turn, you play one of them. Many users have headphone cables in a pocket. When designers constructed helpful aids for what a turn of get creative with the different ways their puzzle Mottainai looks like. Here is one of them.

The trouble with Mottainai (and many of its India to Race to the Galaxy, sometimes less is siblings: Innovation, Impulse, and Glory to Rome) more. More...difficult.



Oh. Oh. (Flowchart provided by Zak Eidsvoog Design)

pieces fit together, it can be a beautiful thing... but it can also be a real headache. From Sail to

Games with a lot of tiny rules.

Have you ever caught yourself saying "this one's about the tricked-out bicycles? Games built on pretty easy to learn"... until you realize it's not? such a simple idea that, knowing them, it seems There's nothing quite as demoralizing as the obvious. But how much is really going on there? moment when, teaching a game, you realize just Do you even really know what a bicycle looks like? how many times you've said "oh, one more thing..."

knows there's plenty under the hood. But what But what happens when you don't flip a monster?

When you sit your friends down for a game Some games are built like a sports car. There's a of Munchkin, the premise is simple. Flip a card, whole lot of engineering behind it, and everyone fight the monsters, level up. First to level 10 wins.

What's the difference between my hand and the cards on the table? Why do I have a monster card in my hand? And what do you mean I can cheat as long as no one is looking?

There are hundreds of games that are less, shall we say, infamous, that face the same problem. Castles of Burgundy may be as simple as using your two dice to do four things, but what are all these buildings for? There's a certain sinking feeling to that slow trickle of rules that seemed so easy from far away, but so much more involved when you take a closer look.



Something like this?

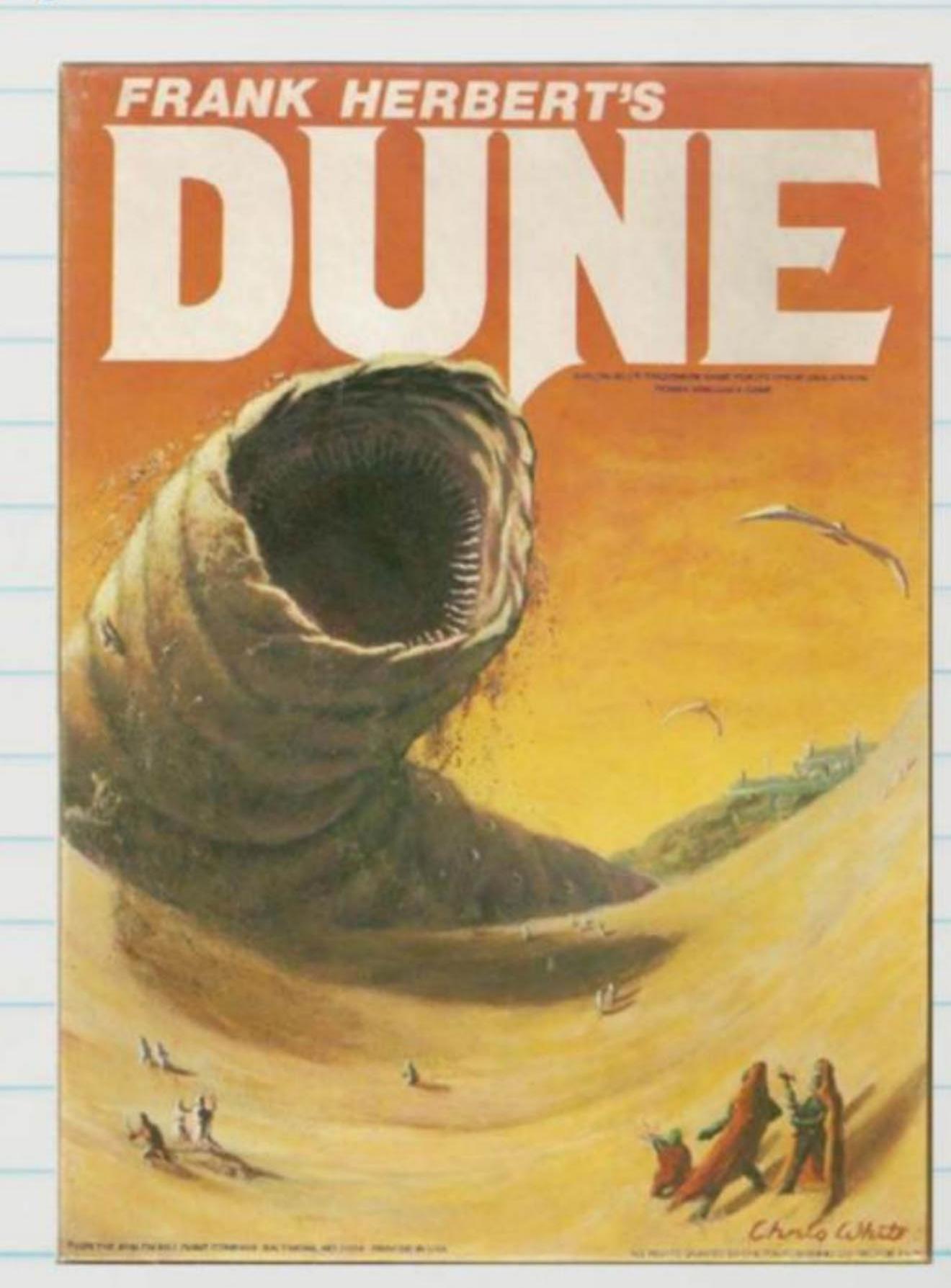
Highly asymmetric games.

So you've been at this for a while, and by now, you're pretty good at teaching board games. Maybe you've even started teaching the tables you're not playing with, teaching your friends at the other table how to play Terra Mystica and popping back in time to explain Terraforming Mars. But have you ever tried to teach the same group six different games at once?

One of the first truly asymmetric games has been around for decades: Dune made a splash in the seventies, pitting The Bene Gesserit against The Fremen and four other factions, all with their own unique powers. Sometimes this even meant different victory conditions.

Today, we're seeing a new dawn for truly asymmetric games. With Vast making a big splash in 2016 and Root hot on its heels, there's a new wave of games that are more than a little different. You may be sitting beside your friend - but are you really playing the same game? With different roles, goals, and mechanics, teaching a group an asymmetric game is like a marathon of new rules that only apply to one person at a time.

this kind of game might be to give your friends homework. You learn your part, I'll learn mine! But when your curious friend pulls Vast off the shelf with that look in her eye and says "I've heard of this one...," you'd better be ready.



I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I Speaking from experience, the best way to teach will face my fear. I will teach this game.



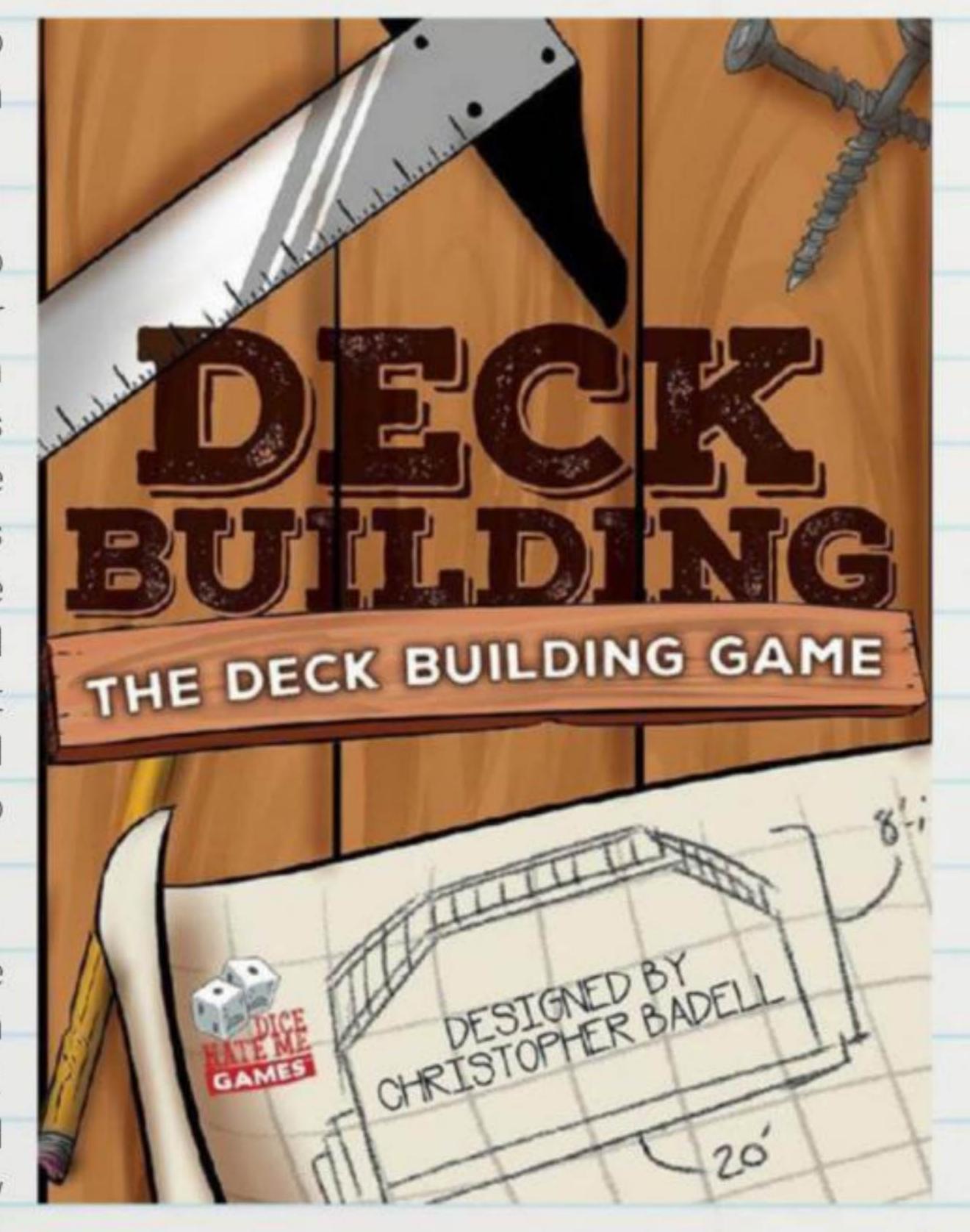


Games with super novel mechanics.

From where we stand today, deck builders are so common that you can probably list off a few in your head right now.

But it wasn't always that way. Flash back ten years to 2009: the Spiel des Jahres committee awards their prestigious Game of the Year award to Dominion, a fresh new idea that turned building a deck of cards into its own game. In spite of near-universal praise from the gaming community, the Spiel des Jahres audience - German families - had some trouble with the confusing new mechanic. It's been said that Dominion's mixed reception was the catalyst for the creation of the new Spiel des Jahres award for "Expert Game of the Year," introduced just two years later in 2011.

In short: novelty can be a delight, but it can also be an obstacle. It's easier to learn something new when you can compare it to something you already know. When your players are already spending a good chunk of brainpower discovering a completely new mechanic, they may only have so much bandwidth left to listen to the rest of the rules.



Not this. Well, actually, kind of this.

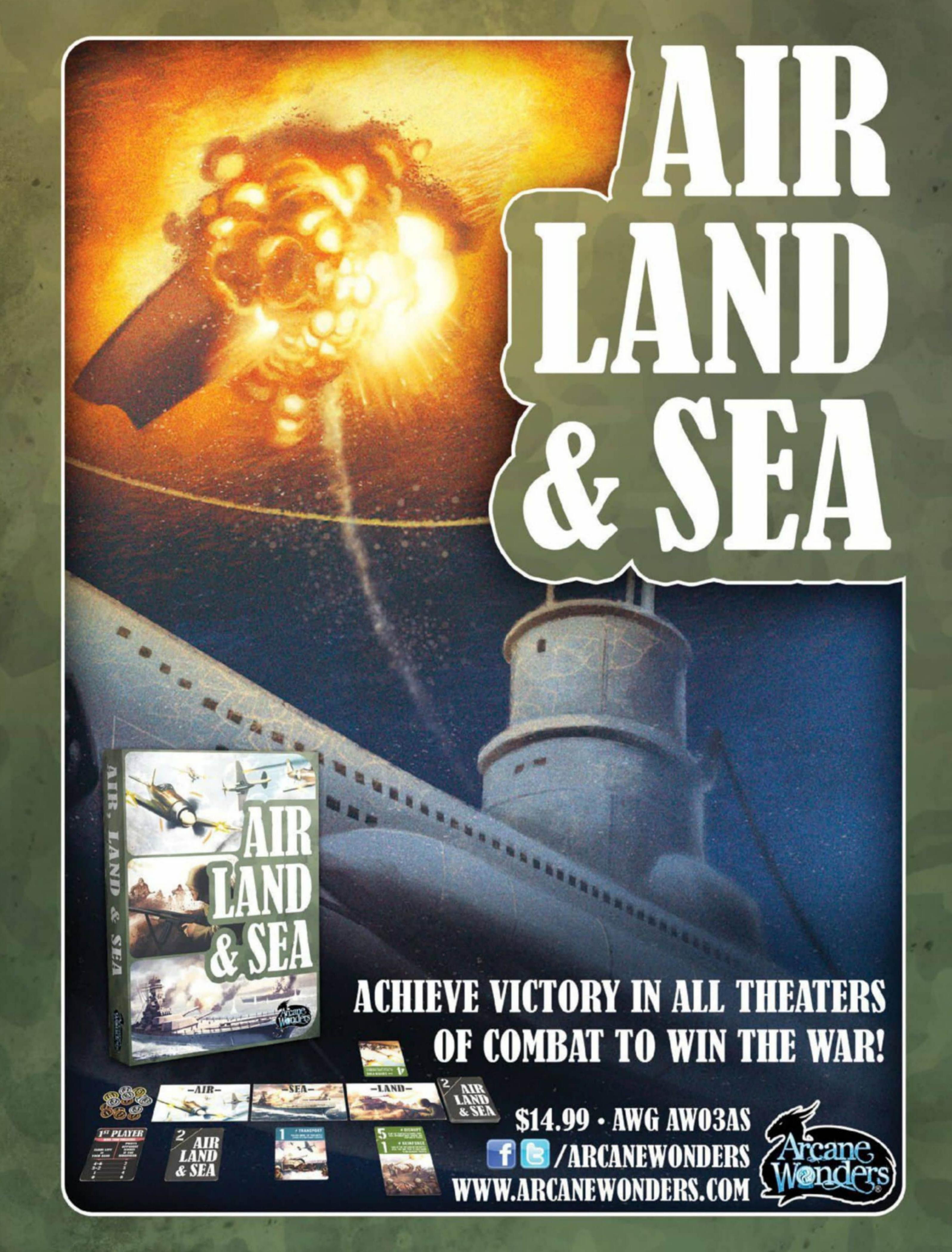
Closing Thoughts

Teaching games can be tricky. To be the game teacher is to promise an understanding, to read an audience, to trawl a memory, and to do it all without making anyone's eyes glaze over. To teach a game well you must engage your audience. But I know you can do it. You got this far, didn't you? 🔃

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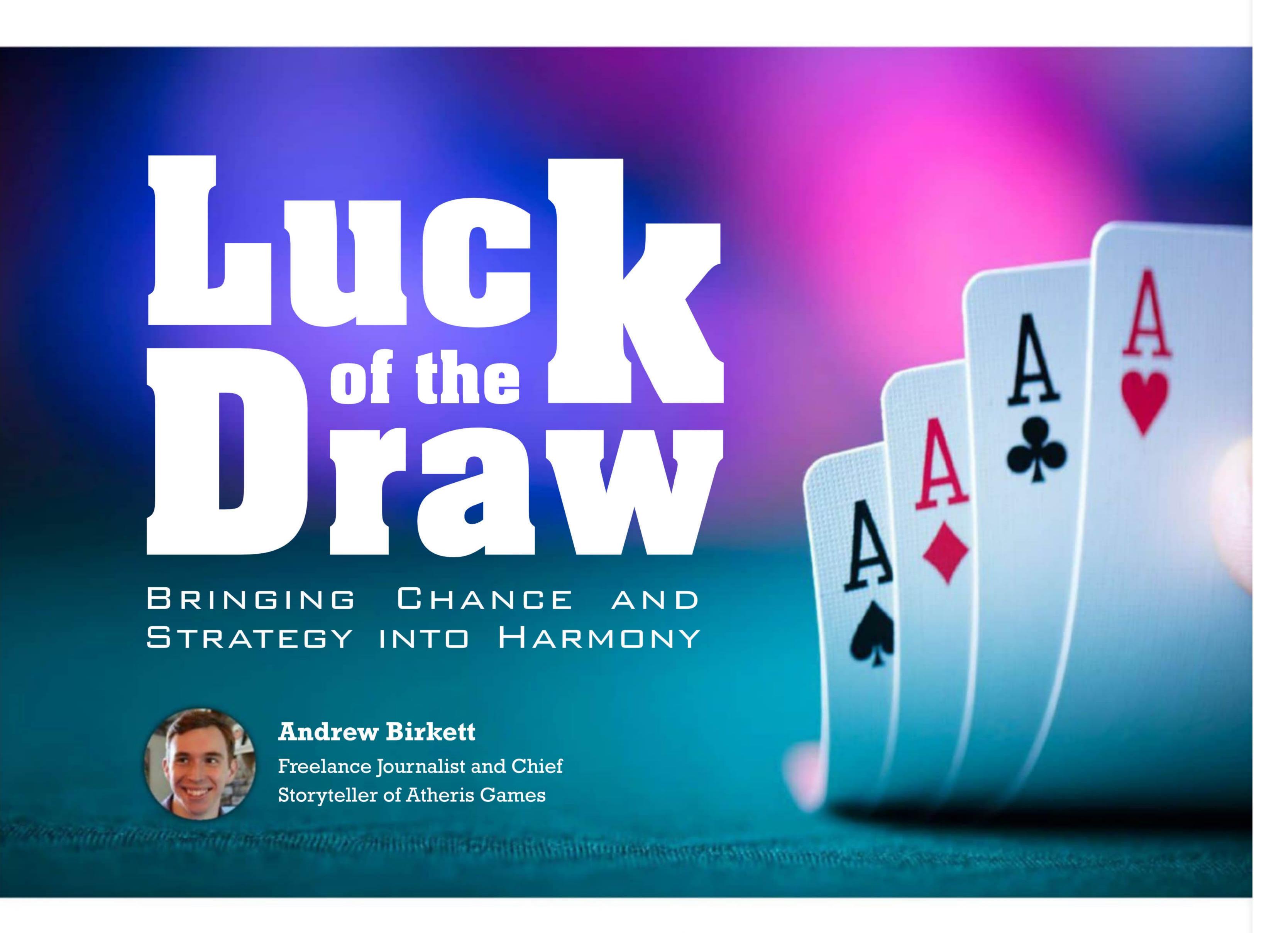
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Pare've all been there: the outcome of the entire game coming down to WW a single dice roll. Who hasn't grumbled "you got lucky!" when on the losing end of that situation? Are we simply being a sore loser, or is there merit to this statement? All too often, board gamers have this experience. Even with the perfectly planned-out turns and actions, one bad dice roll can completely undo all of that effort. For some, removing chance from a board game means players must rely solely on strategy to win. But is luck really such a bad thing? Let's look at how modern game designers introduced mechanisms that balance chance and strategy to create an engaging and exciting experience.

A Game of Chance

Mike Mihealsick, Lead Developer at Coalition Game Studios and Developer at Big Kid Games and Penguin & Panda Productions, defines "luck" in gaming as a moment when "players are rewarded or penalized by external factors that are independent of performance, and that cannot be fully anticipated." By Mihealsick's definition, few games completely evade luck. A large proportion of board games use luck

or chance-based mechanisms —rolling dice, drawing cards — to determine the outcome of a player's turn, and that's usually for the best. Luck can make things more exciting, add variability, and ultimately create memorable experiences.

> But not all luck is good luck. Sure, you might have certain games where it feels like "the dice betray you." The issue becomes more pronounced when a majority of the gameplay relies on chance, as players find their decisions have less of an impact on the outcome of a game. If your actions don't increase your odds of winning, why bother playing?

Strategy Guide

Board gamers tend to equate strategy board games with long, drawn-out experiences with few elements normally associated with chance-based mechanics.

They think of heavy, dry "Euro" games. Fans of strategy games feel that their critical thinking and decision making plays an essential role in their likelihood of winning. So does less luck in a board game mean more strategy?

J.R. Honeycutt, Game Designer at Waitress Games, doesn't think so. "Luck and strategy don't exist on the same spectrum — they're not opposite ends of the same thing." Honeycutt, like many other game designers and developers, argue that strategy and luck/chance are not always inversely correlated.

To show that luck/chance or lack-there-of does not necessarily dictate a game's strategic depth, let's begin by showcasing a few games that have

> close to no luck involved: Chess, Go, and Tic-Tac-Toe. Chess and Go are both heavily-strategic games in which optimal play is rewarded with victory. So much strategy is incorporated in a game of Go that people were amazed when Google's AI was able to beat a championship Go player in 2017. However, despite the fact that the same degree of luck is present

in all three games, the level of depth is astronomically different. Tic-Tac-Toe is a solved formula. Even though no luck exists, hardly any skill does, either.

The Perfect Blend

strategic depth, can vary. Mihealsick points out that "what's important for many games is that their inherent predictability is obscured, and that it is obscured to the Honeycutt also emphasizes that the risk/reward

How much chance a game has, compared to how much—Up cards are in Forbidden Desert, can allow players to anticipate upcoming turns and plan accordingly.

correct degree for the game's experience." Elements of payoffs are important. If an action takes more time or a board game that *appear* to be random could have a resources, then it should pay off more in victory. The limited number of variables. Observing a mechanism—risk factor means there is a greater chance of a certain with a certain variability, such as how many Storm Picks—action failing. But if you're behind in a game and likely to

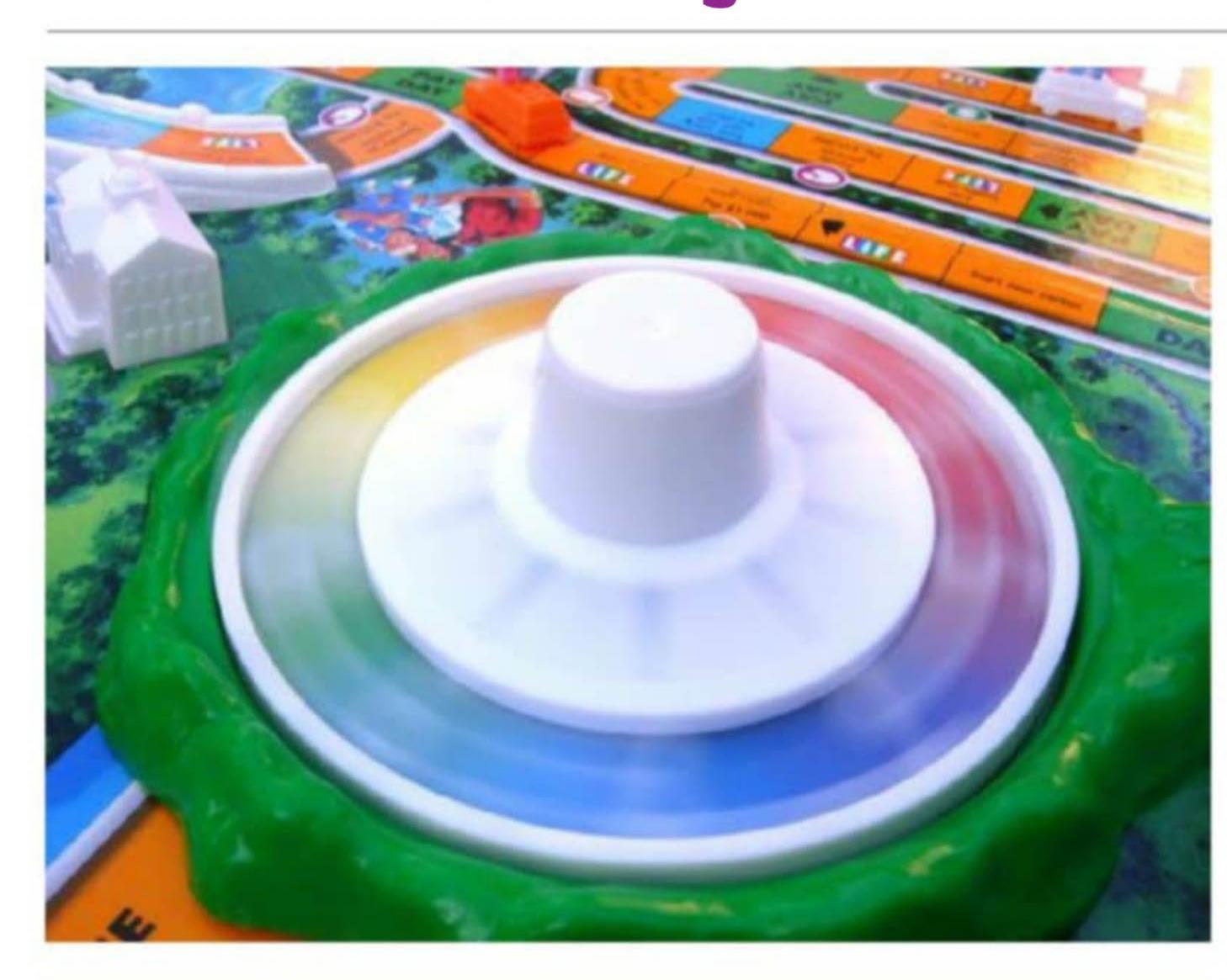


lose, it's worth taking the risk if you still have a chance at winning.

Finding a balance between strategic gameplay and chance-based mechanisms is crucial in game design, and varies based upon the genre of game being developed, the play time, and a multitude of other factors. Some games do an excellent job of obscuring predictability while still allowing for great strategic depth. However, others have faltered by incorporating too much chance without enough agency or decision making for players.



Let's Talk Luck Mitigation



"Spinner" by Paul Fisher (thetorpedodog on Flickr), licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

One of the most well-known mechanisms associated with chance is contained in a plethora of mass-market games from yesteryear — roll-and-move — including Monopoly, Sorry, and Life. Rolling a die or spinning a wheel and hoping for a positive outcome can be fun but certainly not strategic. However, with the correct mitigation techniques, the result of the die role can be predicted, altered, or even rerolled depending on the game. Additionally, the outcomes and decisions which the dice affect may be more obscured. Rather than simply reading off the number rolled and moving that many spaces, a dice roll can impact which actions are most promising for your precise situation.

Several games have cleverly implemented mitigation techniques which make dice rolling strategic. One wellknown example is **Champions of Midgard** by Grey Fox Games. In Champions of Midgard, players are leaders of Viking clans competing for the most glory, which is gained through defeating enemies. This same glory can be lost when a player is blamed for failing to defend the city against attacks.

Champions of Midgard is a worker placement game with dice allocation. Players obtain and assign dice and must roll them to combat foes. The trick to the game is that players have the ability to determine how many of their dice they assign to particular tasks. If they assign too many, they may waste precious resources. But if they spread themselves too thin they may lose their fights and therefore not gain any glory. Additionally, they may choose to reroll as many of their dice as they'd like. These mechanisms allows the players to determine their fate, even though it is partially decided by the results of a random dice roll.



Another game which utilizes dice rolling is Machi Koro. In Machi Koro, players are newly elected mayors trying to grow their humble towns into burgeoning cities. Players have set establishments in their town such as Wheat Fields and Bakeries, which generate coins when certain numbers are rolled. They can spend their hard-earned coins on new establishment cards, such as Convenience Stores or Mines, that trigger more coins on different rolls. Though players are simply looking for numbers on dice, the way they purchase cards can change the course of the game for them.

Machi Koro's fundamental principles are set on probabilities. When rolling one die, the chance of obtaining each number is equal. However, when a second die is added, the probabilities are no longer Machi Koro. Photo by Scott King Photography. equal. Since the two die results are dependent upon one another, there are some results which can occur rolling a one on the first die and a six on the second, more often. This leads to middle numbers being more or a three on the first die and a four on the second. In common while low or high numbers are more rarely fact, there are six ways to obtain a dice roll of seven rolled. For example, a seven can be obtained through when utilizing two dependent die.



Let's Build a Deck

Another mechanism traditionally rooted in chance is hire workers, construct their empire, and generate drawing a card from the top of a shuffled deck. The the revenue necessary to stretch the borders of their classic example is the children's game Candyland, kingdom. where players draw a card and move to the next space on the board that matches the color on the card drawn.

So how can players be strategic when drawing random cards from a deck? By deciding what goes in (and given identical starter decks which allow them to accomplish that.

As the game progresses, players will need to purchase new cards in order to earn victory points and win the game. The currency generated by cards in the starter decks will let players purchase additional cards to be what comes out) of the deck. **Dominion** by Rio Grande added to their growing deck. Some cards generate more Games helped launch the deck-building mechanic that currency, while others allow you to draw additional has spurred an entire genre of games. In Dominion, cards or even remove cards from the deck. Players players are monarchs who dream of expanding the are essentially deciding what strategy they want to reign of their empire. To do this, the players are each—use to buy victory points, and construct their deck to



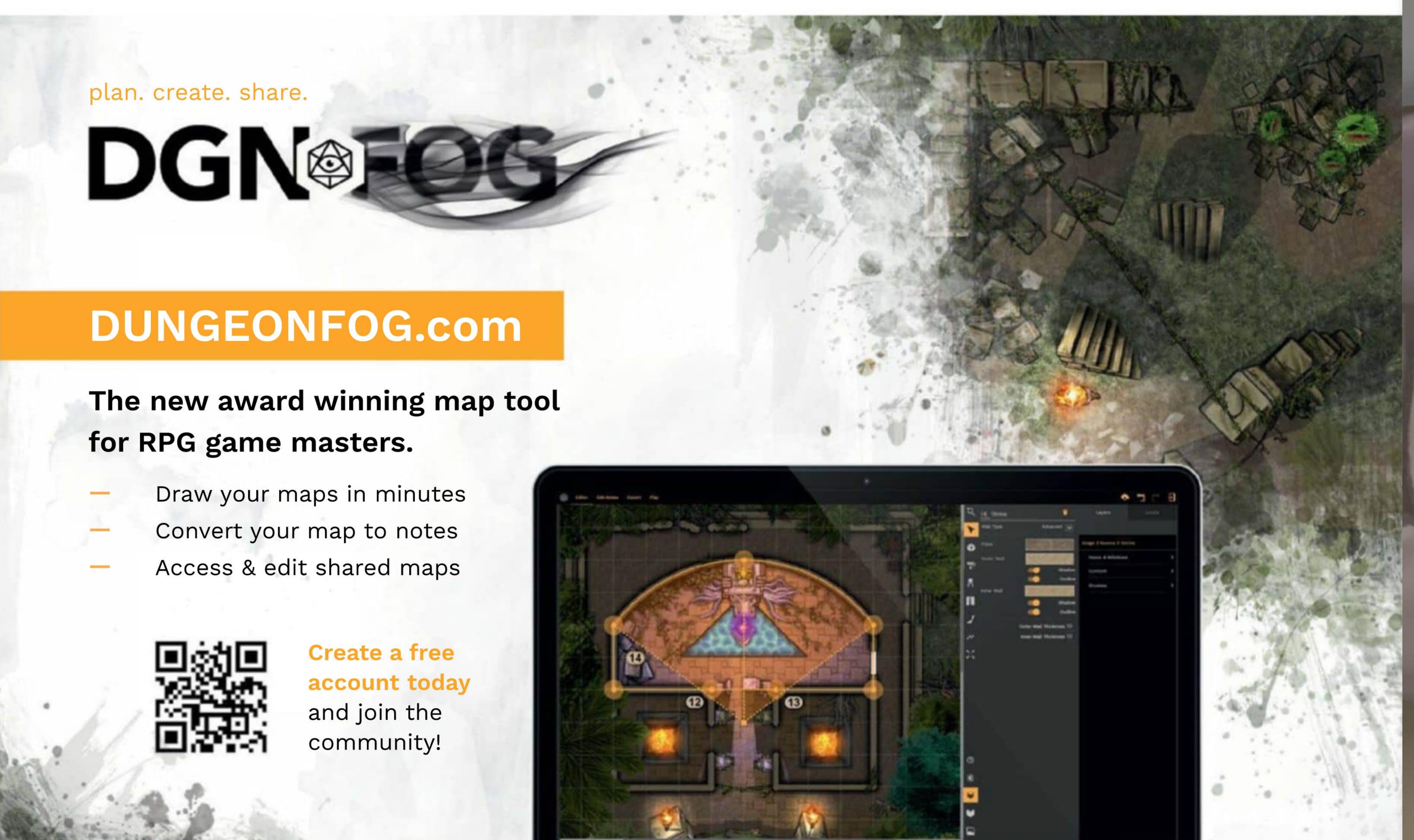


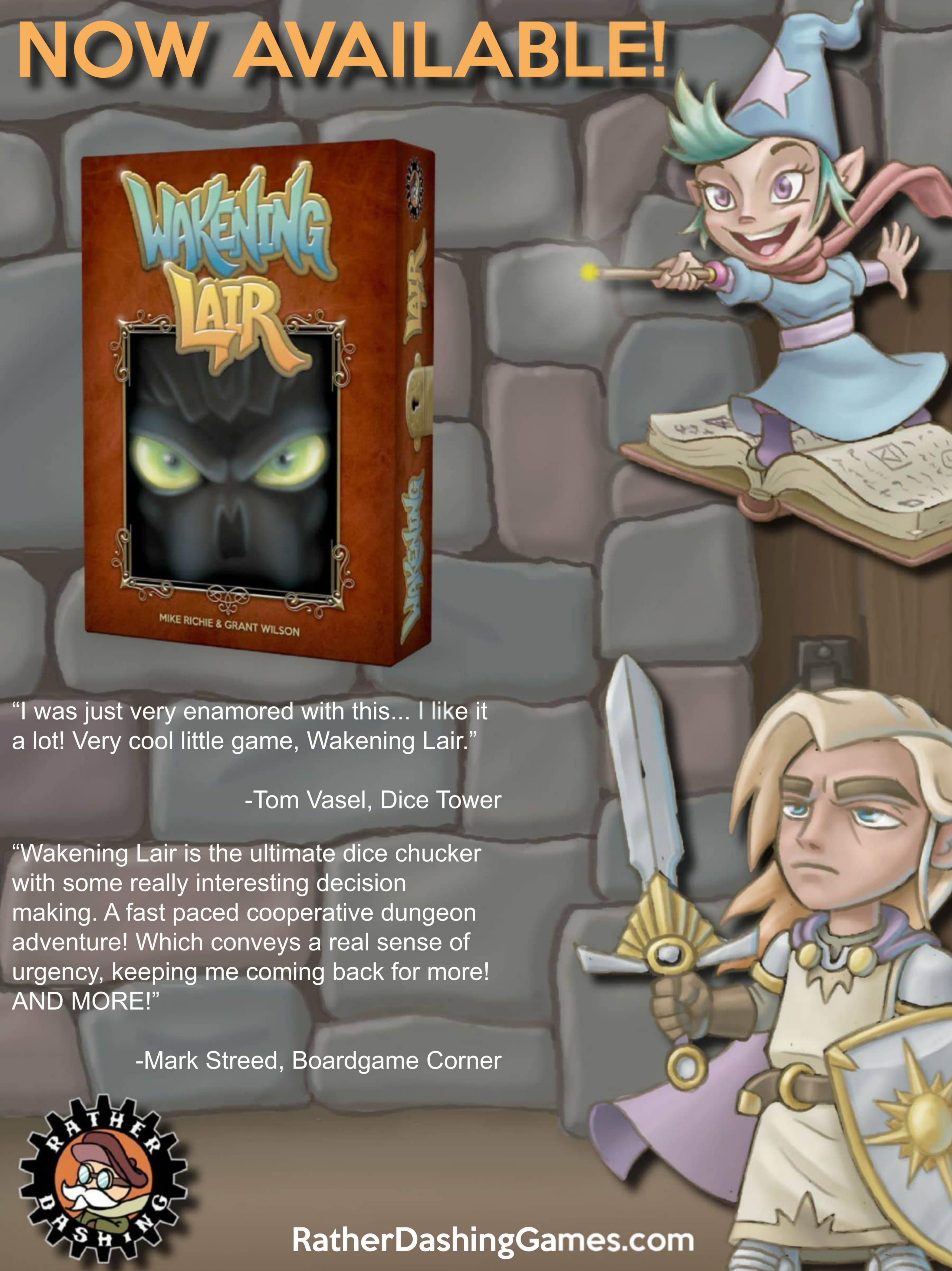
Creating Your Own Luck

When dice rolling, card drawing, or any other luck-driven Do you feel that strategic games can incorporate mechanism is part of a board game, it can create an luck? Why? Share your thoughts with us by tweeting engaging and positive game experience. Even strategy- to Andrew @atherisandrew and CGI @CasualGameRev heavy games can (and should!) incorporate a little bit on Twitter with the hashtag: #CGILuck of chance to make things interesting. The complete absence of luck is not necessary to create a more strategic game experience for players. On the other hand, if a board game relies too much on chance, a bad dice roll can undo a player's careful effort and be disappointing.

If a game seeks to be strategic, there needs to be a way for players to mitigate the effects of chance-based mechanics in order to give players agency over their decisions. Modern publishers have since designed games that let players choose how to mitigate or even bypass luck. By allowing players to reroll dice, manage probabilities, or change the contents of a deck, victory can be achieved through sound strategy...and maybe a little bit of luck. 🔃











INDIE GAME STUDIOS



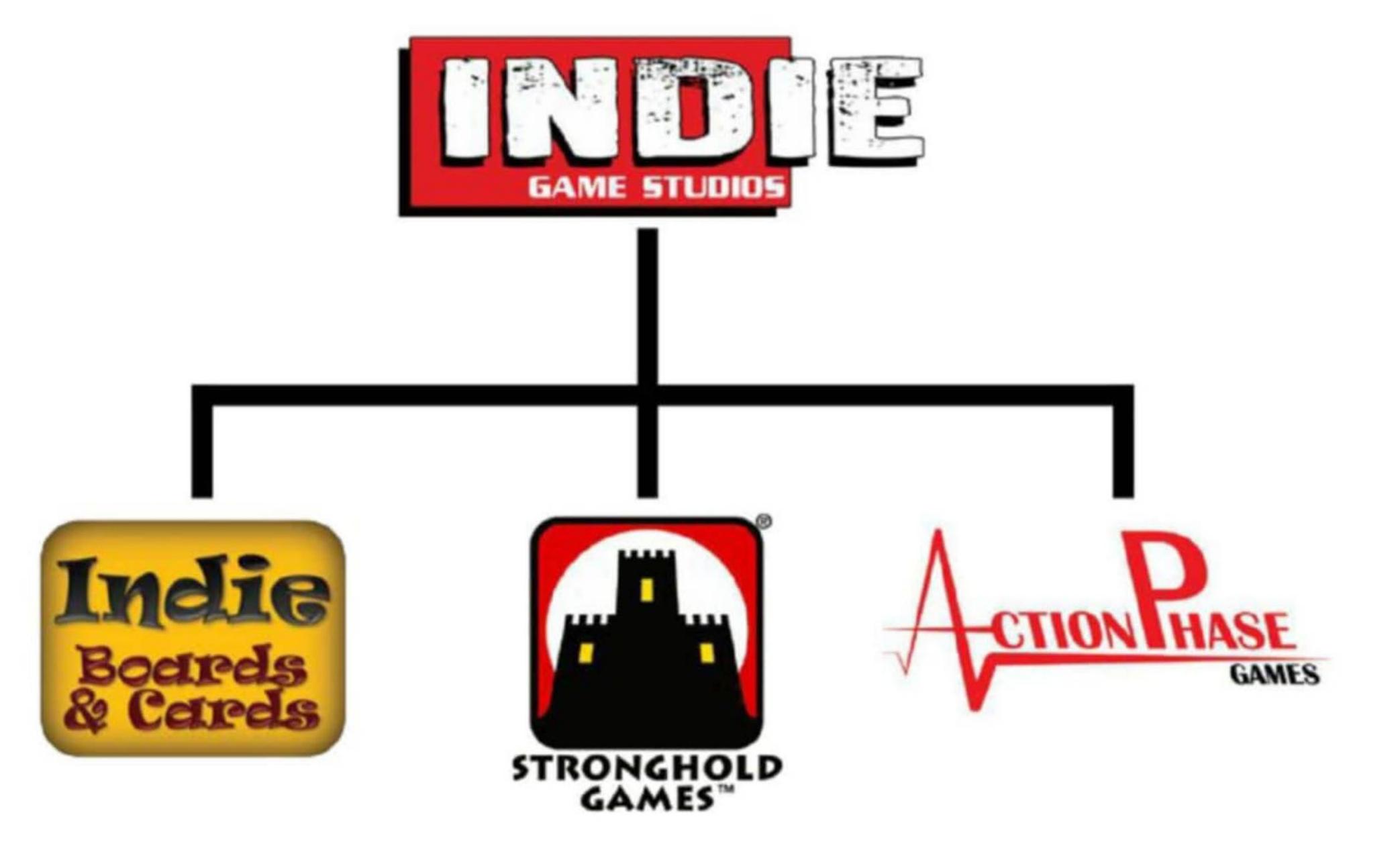


TEAMING UP TO FORM A NEW STRONGHOLD IN GAMING

WHILE MANY GAME ENTHUSIASTS SPECIFICALLY SEEK OUT COOPERATIVE GAME TITLES THESE DAYS, IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO THAT THE CONCEPT OF A COOPERATIVE BOARD GAME DIDN'T REALLY EXIST. IF YOU WANTED TO PLAY A BOARD GAME, YOU PULLED OUT MONOPOLY, SORRY, OR MAYBE ABSTRACT STRATEGY GAMES LIKE CHESS AND CHECKERS. THEN IT WAS A MATTER OF DIGGING IN TO COMPETE AGAINST FRIENDS AND FAMILY. MOST VETERAN GAMERS LIKELY HAVE AT LEAST A STORY OR TWO ABOUT AN EVENING GOING SOUTH DUE TO SOME OVERLY COMPETITIVE PLAY, WHICH HAS PROBABLY FUELED THE RISE OF COOPERATIVE TITLES AND EXPERIENCES. PEOPLE LIKE TO COOPERATE — IT'S SIMPLY MORE REWARDING TO WIN WITH PEOPLE RATHER THAN WINNING OUT OVER THEM.



Jesse Tannous
Writer, Gamer, Editor, and
Professional Nerd



Indie Boards & Cards and Stronghold Games have merged their organizations into a new company called Indie Game Studios. This new company also includes Action Phase Games (acquired in 2016), with all three brands being maintained separately. According to their press release, this move makes Indie Game Studios one of the largest hobby board game companies in the world. Getting the opportunity to chat with former President of Indie Boards & Cards and now CEO of Indie Game Studios Travis Worthington, and President of Stronghold Games Stephen Buonocore was reminiscent of that preference towards cooperation in gaming, only for business.

WELL WORTH THE EFFORT — INDIE BOARDS & CARDS



Worthington and Buonocore share many similarities in both how they became involved with the board game hobby industry and the creation of their individual companies. For Worthington, his love for gaming started in junior high school playing *Dungeons & Dragons*, even as he recounted that he had stepped away from gaming for many years. In 2009, he began his journey creating Indie Boards & Cards with a handcrafted version of his first game *Triumvirate* being constructed in his garage.

Seeing the success of his hand-made game prompted Worthington to hire professional graphic designers and illustrators to improve the overall quality. It was at the popular German board gaming convention SPIEL, commonly referred to as the Essen Game Fair, that really propelled Indie Boards & Cards into their next phase.

Worthington felt it was necessary for him to bring multiple games to his exhibitor table for an event of that scale. He sought out quality print-and-play designs online to make commercially available at the convention, one of which was titled *The Resistance*. His plan was perhaps almost too successful, being one of the only people manning his table that year. Reminiscing about those early days at Essen, Worthington explained, "We were much more successful than we probably had a right to be in the first four years of the company, publishing four games that continue to sell well to this day."





AT ITS CORE — STRONGHOLD GAMES

explained how he always found himself coming back having to interact. specifically to board gaming: "I saw that this was the best way to game." He continued, "We're social beings and sitting around this table and competing or cooperating around the board."

This realization, along with the missed opportunities he was observing in the growing board game industry of the early 2000s, motivated his decision to start his company. In 2009, Buonocore started Stronghold Games and through a combination of bringing great games back from obscurity and overseas partnership titles, built it to what it is today. After many years of running things himself while also maintaining a separate career, Buonocore realized he needed to devote his attention towards his growing business and develop a team. It was during this transition when Stronghold Games released Terraforming Mars — a huge hit both critically and commercially.

Buonocore was quick to explain his life-long love of all Both entrepreneurs started with a similar passion in the types of gaming and stated, "I've been a gamer for every hobby and saw massive successes with the right titles, day of my life since childhood, and I've gone through which propelled their overall growth. While perhaps every stage of gaming." Be it video games, Collectible unknown to them at the time, their eventual partnership Card Games (CCGs), or online multiplayer games, he was being forged while attending important events and



IT'S ABOUT WHO YOU KNOW

Proving how important it is to always remain polite and This partnership came together naturally, and we really to each other over the years. Buonocore remembered, "we grew up in the business virtually at the same time and almost at the same rate, and just as friends would do, we would help each other at conventions with logistics, with space, and this is just the kind of way we collaborated." While seemingly insignificant, these interactions constructed the foundation of trust upon which the two would eventually base their decision to merge their companies.

No one makes it in the world solely by themselves, and Worthington reinforced this notion: "This industry is pretty close knit; a lot of the different publishing companies know each other well and work together.

courteous to your neighbors as a convention exhibitor, worked and interacted a fair amount ahead of time. It's the pair recounts their experiences working in proximity something that I don't know a lot of people understand about this industry, how close knit it is." According to Worthington, this close-knit atmosphere of the industry



is one of the friendliest industries I've ever worked in." gaming populace."

The concept of a merger can bring up a lot of This "mindshare" concept is their effort to keep gamers negative connotations about people losing jobs, tuned into what they are working on and releasing. or one company struggling to stay successful by Buonocore elaborated: "We want people focused on itself. Not wanting to let the speculations run wild, our games. Not every gamer is going to buy every Buonocore touched on what really helped fuel game I produce, but we want them to say, 'what is the decision to merge: "I think right now in this Stronghold doing?" and now that they are merged with industry we've reached a turning point — it's a very Indie, 'what is Indie doing?'" While they have merged crowded landscape, there is just too much product—into one organization, both Buonocore and Worthington out there," he explained. "So companies, especially—mentioned how each company will continue to focus companies of that mid-range size, need to gather on the areas where they have seen success.

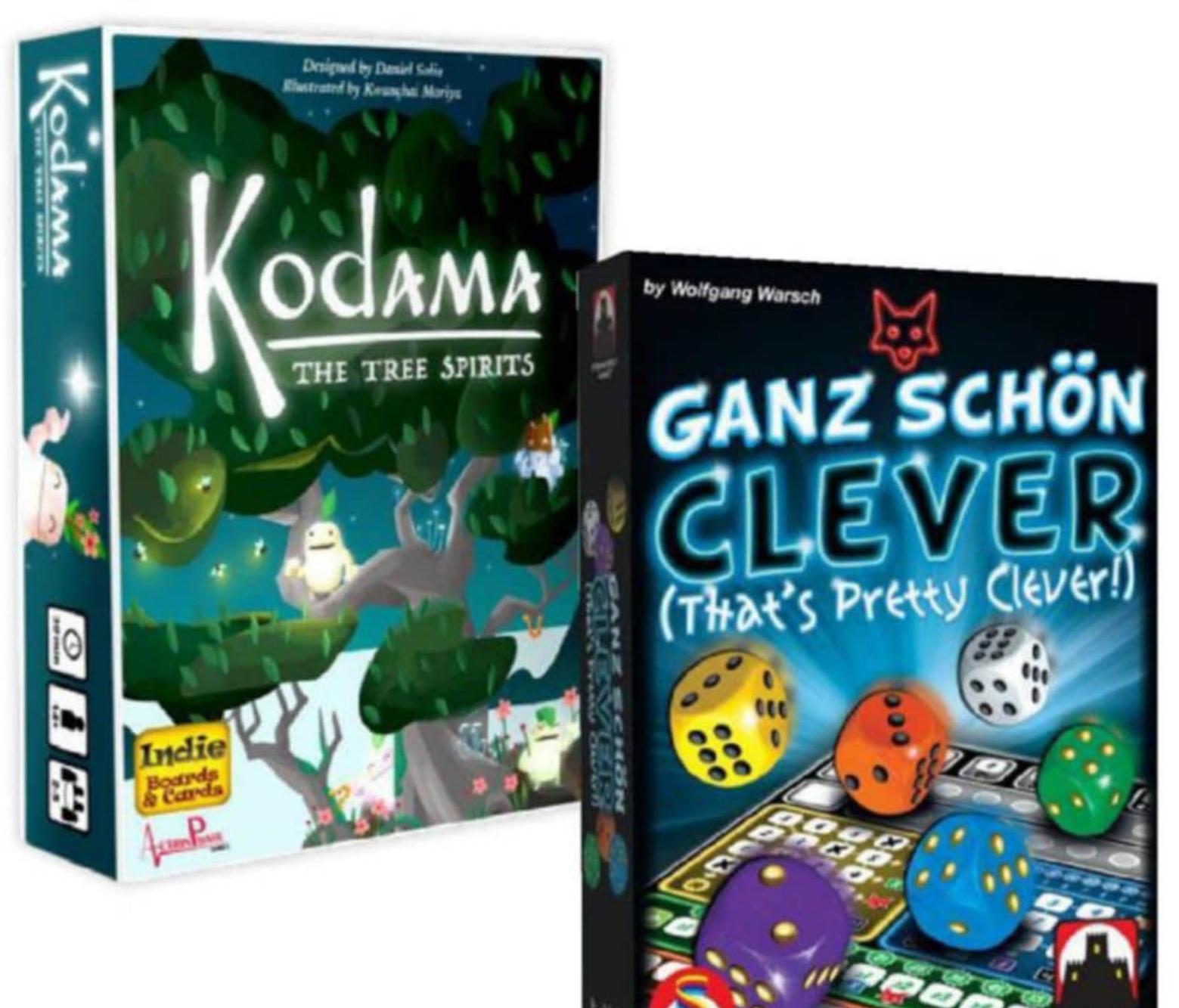
breeds a positive environment to which he stated: "This more what Travis has termed 'mindshare' of the

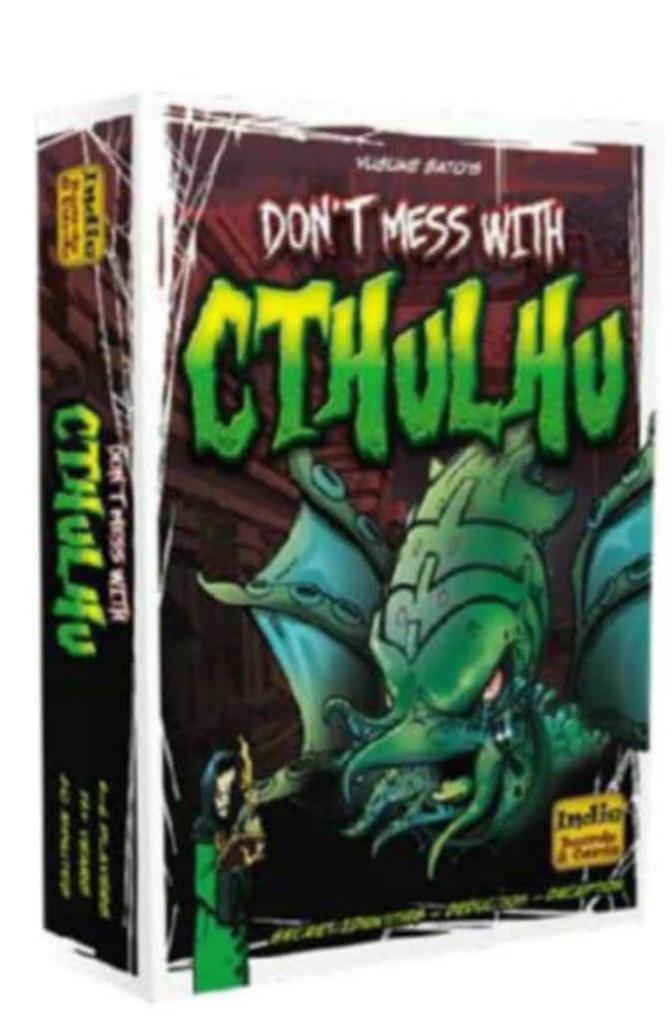
EMERGING THOUGHT LEADERS

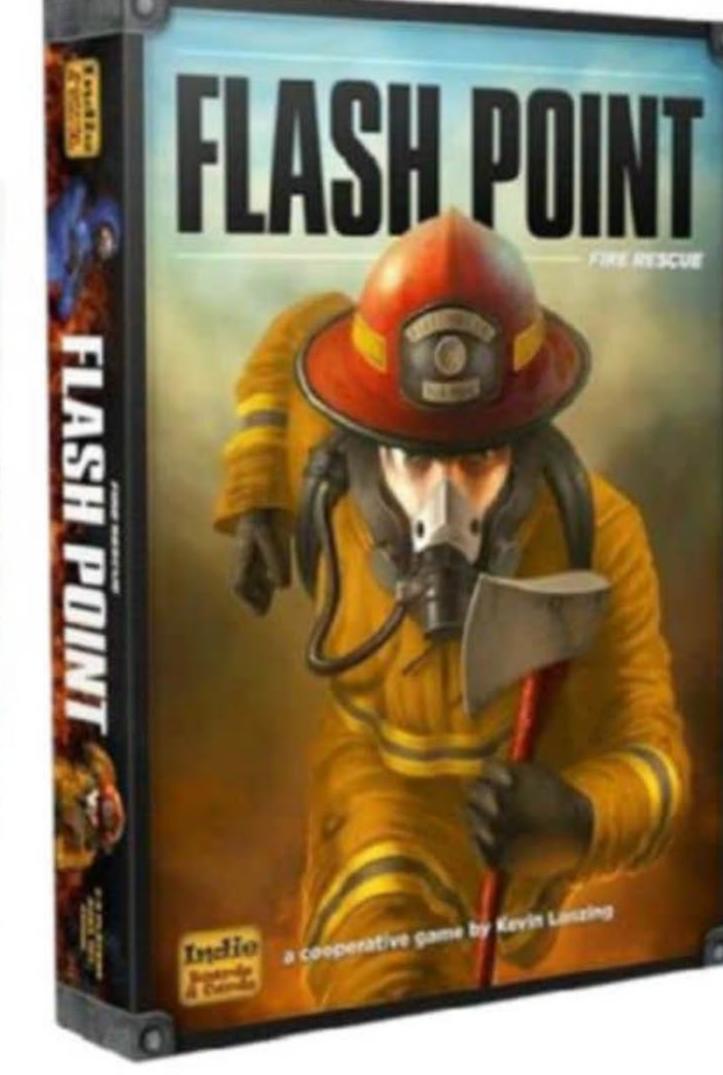
Neither company seems to be losing their identity, and product development infrastructure where we can which Buonocore reinforced: "We are going to see the work together even if the games are different. We are brand differentiation continuing; Stronghold does lots—able to increase the professionalism of our companies of Euro games and lots of partnership games. We've and continue to produce strong products." got complementary personalities and adding the right people behind the scenes is really going to help us moving forward."

Worthington agreed with this idea and added, "We haven't had a lot of product overlap, from a product perspective

Worthington also pointed to the competitive nature of the gaming industry right now as a key factor in the decision to merge. "Both of our companies were very fortunate to start at sort of the Internet age of board gaming, where there was a lot of openness and people we will continue to focus on the areas where we as looking for new games," Worthington explained. "There individual brands have been successful in the past." He were lots of people buying games from small publishers. went on to explain what sorts of benefits merging has We are in a time now where there are probably more on their joint efforts and clarified: "There are certain small board game publishers than the market wants, functions particularly like marketing, manufacturing, and it's very, very competitive to get your game noticed."







Both Buonocore and Worthington seem convinced that the increase in personnel and focus will enable their teams to work on bigger and better projects. According to Buonocore, the added staff and support the merger brings allows for larger projects like a collector's edition of *Terraforming Mars* to become a possibility. He also mentioned that Kickstarter projects are not only a possibility, but very likely. While he was unable to tackle such demanding projects before, the experience and support of Indie Boards & Cards will enable the team behind Stronghold Games to breach into the realm of Kickstarter projects. With more resources comes bigger projects, and with a little cooperation it certainly seems like Indie Game Studios has a lot of potential. ::



Stephen Buonocore



Travis Worthington







Winner of our Best Casual Game of 2018 award, Welcome To... takes the rolling out of roll-and-writes, using cards to bring more strategic choices to the genre.

DEEP WATER



Naomi Laeuchli Game Reviewer and Casual Game Groupie

Players are city planners. Each takes a sheet that shows three rows of houses. There are eighty-one construction cards, each with a house number on one side and a special effect on the other. You shuffle these and divide them into three stacks. Each round you will flip over the top card of each stack and place them to the right, so that for each stack you will have a house number and an effect. Players then choose one of these three combinations. More than one player may choose the same combo. You then add the house number to one of the houses shown on your sheet and may choose

When adding a house to your sheet, you may choose any of the three rows and add the number anywhere in the row. order. So, for instance, you cannot give a house the number five if it is to the left of number three. If you cannot legally place a house number, you receive a permit refusal instead (these are worth negative points at the end of the game).

One of the card effects allows you to build a fence between houses. When one or more houses are enclosed together by

fences, these are housing estates. Three city plan cards are dealt at the start of the game; each requires different-sized housing estates to complete. You score points for completing these, and extra points for being the first player to do so. However, the numbers must appear in the row in ascending Estates are also worth points at the end of the game. Other effects will make your estates worth more points, let you build pools and parks (worth points at game end), adjust the house number you are placing, or even duplicate a house number (but this will cost you points). The game ends once a player completes all the city plan cards, receives three permit refusals, or has filled all houses on their sheet. The player with the most points wins the game.

> Welcome To... brings something both original and fresh to roll-and-write games. The house numbers you select are important, but the effects really make a difference on your final score. There isn't much player interaction but the game's adaptability for different player counts is

fantastic and there's no down time, as turns are simultaneous. The theme works well with the mechanics, and gameplay feels smart and balanced. Whether you win or lose, it's a satisfying experience.





Junk Orbit features three planet locations: Earth, the Moon, You then draw a new junk tile for the city. The game ends and Mars, each with several cities around their edges. The once a planet's draw pile runs out. Moon is connected to both Mars and Earth. There are three draw piles for junk tiles, one for each planet. During set up, a junk tile is placed at each city of each planet. Players each take a colored ship, placing it on the starting city, and the game begins.

The goal is to pick up junk and deliver it to its destination city, earning the number of points shown on the tile. On your turn, you launch one junk tile from your ship's cargo. The number of points it is worth is also the number of cities it will move. You may choose which direction you will launch it from your ship: either left or right around the planet. You then move the tile that many cities; if it reaches a city that connects two planets, the tile may move to the other planet and continue moving in the same direction it was moving before. If the tile stops on a city that is occupied by another player's ship, the ship is hit and drops one of its junk tiles. If the junk stops at its destination city, you deliver it and place it in your score pile; otherwise it is added to that city's junk tiles.

After that, you move your ship the exact same number of cities that the junk moved, but in the opposite direction (for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction). If you have any junk tiles in hand whose destination city is your final stop, you may deliver them and place them in your score pile. Finally, you pick up all junk tiles that are currently at that city and place them in your ship's cargo.

The setup for this game is onerous. Sorting out the tiles and selecting the right ones for your player count takes awhile, but once the game starts, it is smooth and absorbing. There is something almost puzzle-like in the way you plan and string together your moves, choosing which direction to send your ship and junk, and which junk to simply spend as movement points and which to save. There are also advanced rules you can add for more "take that" elements, as well as more complex scoring, which offers some nice adaptability based on your group. Junk Orbit is a great pick-up and deliver game that really stands out from the rest.

Welcome To...

to use the effect.

By Benoit Turpin













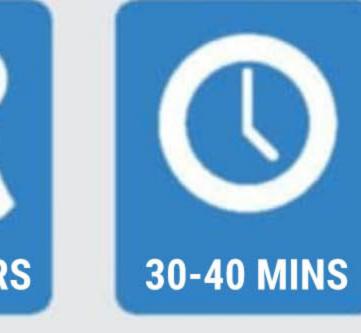








Junk Orbit Designed by Daniel Solis















INTERACTIVE

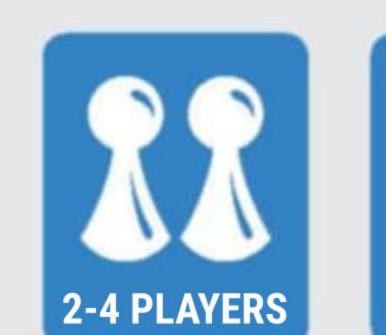


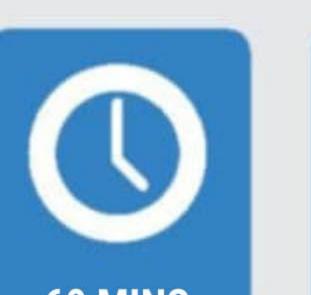
There are several terrain tiles, so you can create a variety—You may not move onto a space occupied by another player of different maps to race across, placing a blockade token or over mountain spaces. Some spaces force you to discard between each tile. Each tile is made up of a grid of hexagons. cards to move onto them or remove cards permanently from Every hexagon on the board shows what resource you need, your deck. and how many of that resource, in order to move onto it. Each player is given a starting deck, and the game begins.

necessary movement points, and take the blockade token four cards. (If your deck runs out, reshuffle your discard pile.) from the board (thus affecting only the first player to reach it).

The Quest for El Dorado

Designed by Reiner Knizia





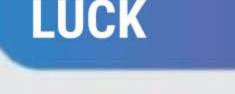




STRATEGY









INDEPENDENT

After movement, you may buy a new card from the market by playing money cards, or use non-money cards, which are You start each turn with four cards and movement is resolved worth half a coin each. There are eighteen different card types first. Cards can be worth money (some hexagons may in the market place, but only six are available to buy at any require money for movement), movement across jungle, one time. When a stack is depleted you may choose from and movement across ocean. You cannot combine multiple—any of the cards. The stack you choose from is then moved cards in order to move onto a hexagon; however, you can into the empty slot, and you will only have six card types to use leftover points from a card to move across more than choose from again until another stack is depleted. Cards you one hexagon. When you reach a blockade, you spend the buy are placed in your discard pile. You then draw back up to

> Once a player reaches El Dorado, the round is completed so that everyone has an equal number of turns. If more than one player reaches the city, the winner is whoever has the most blockade tokens, and the game ends. The tie breaker is a nice mechanic which incentivizes you to keep ahead of the others through the game and works nicely with the race theme.

> The Quest for El Dorado is a unique blend of deck building and racing. The artwork on the cards is fantastic and thematic, even if the map tiles are a little lackluster. Players have flexibility in plotting their course across the map, and the path you choose also affects the cards you need to buy. You can block an opponent's path, and the many different map configurations ensure an exciting race to El Dorado every time!



Haunted roller coasters, riddles, and bones...

The Catacombs of Horror

NEW!

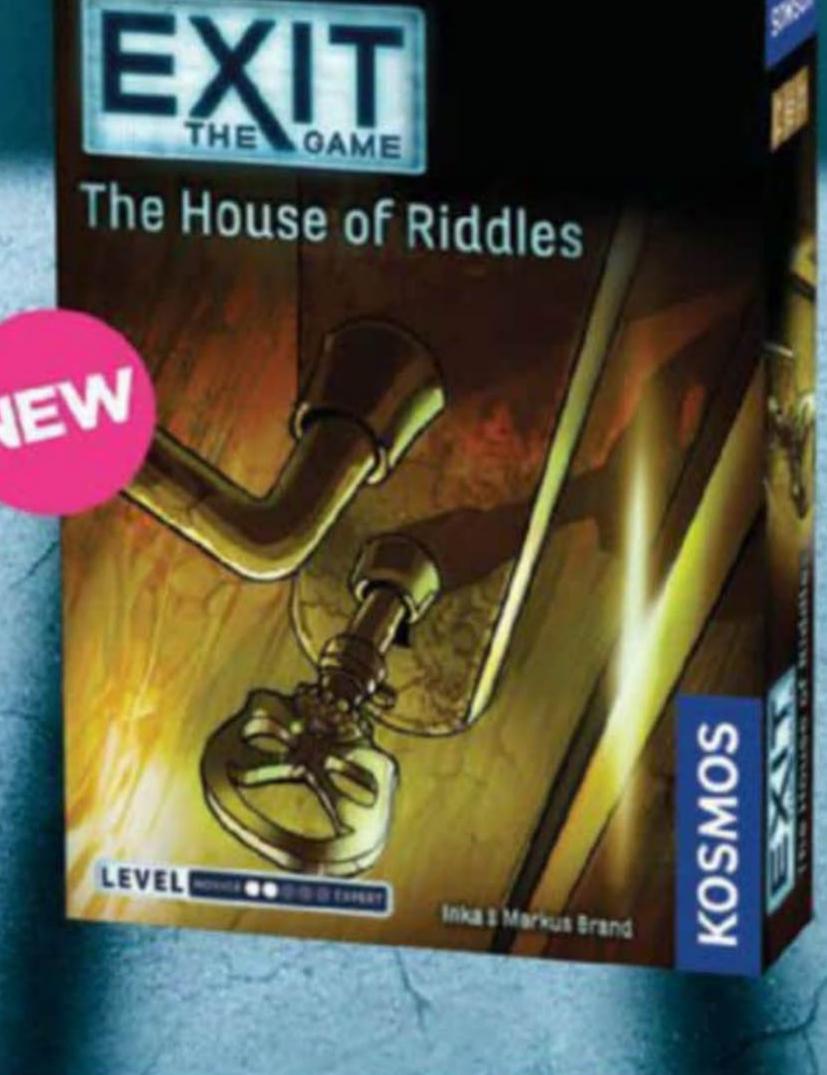
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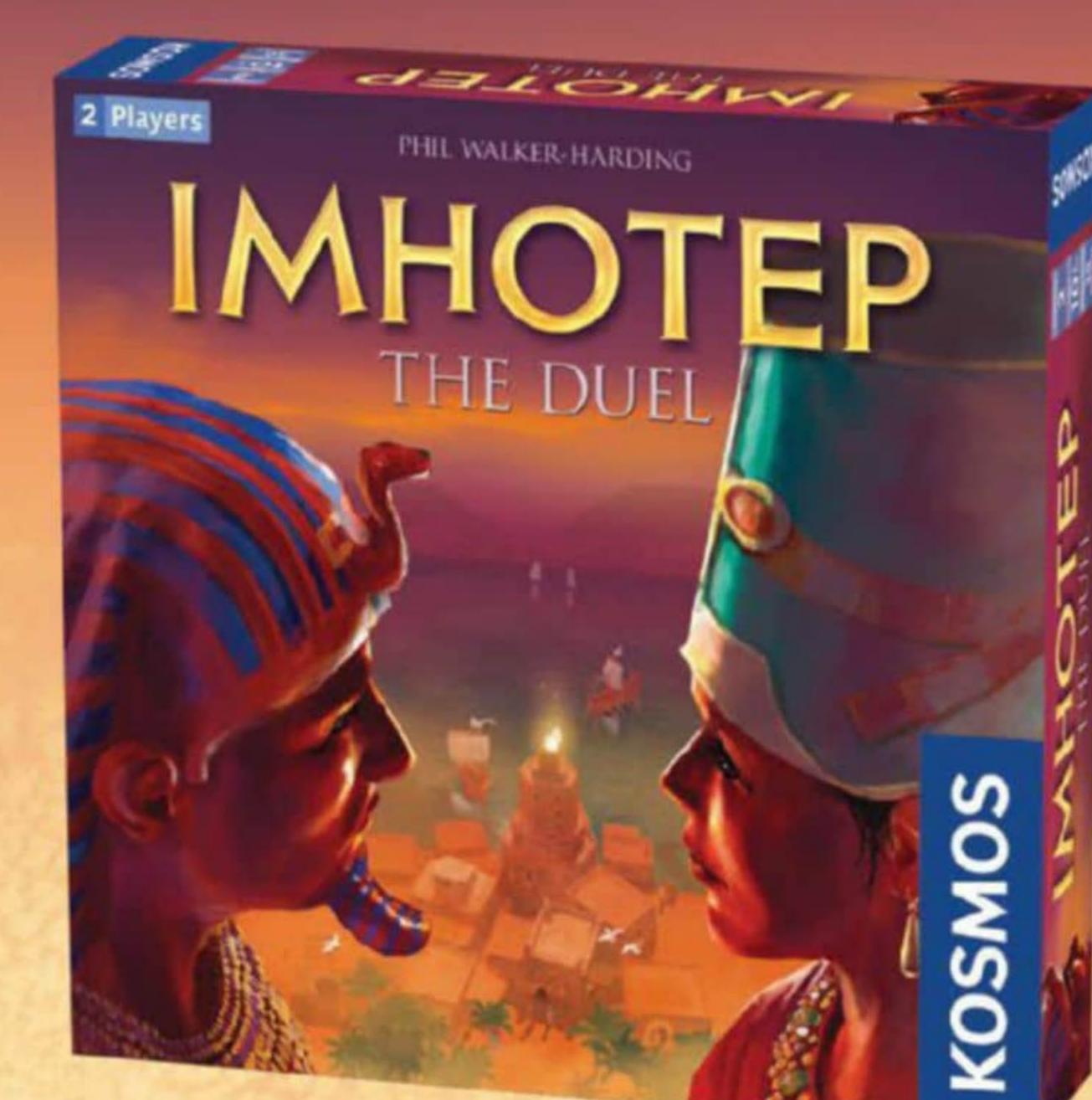
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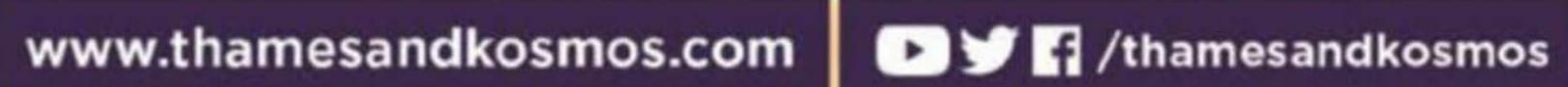




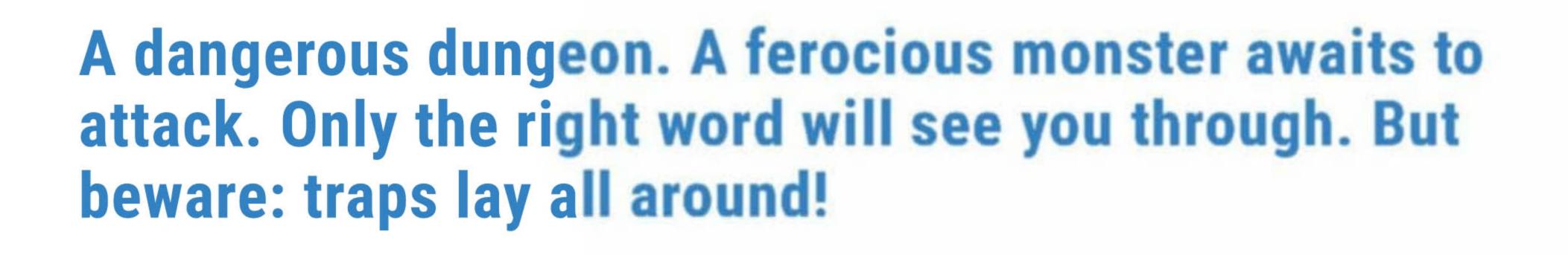
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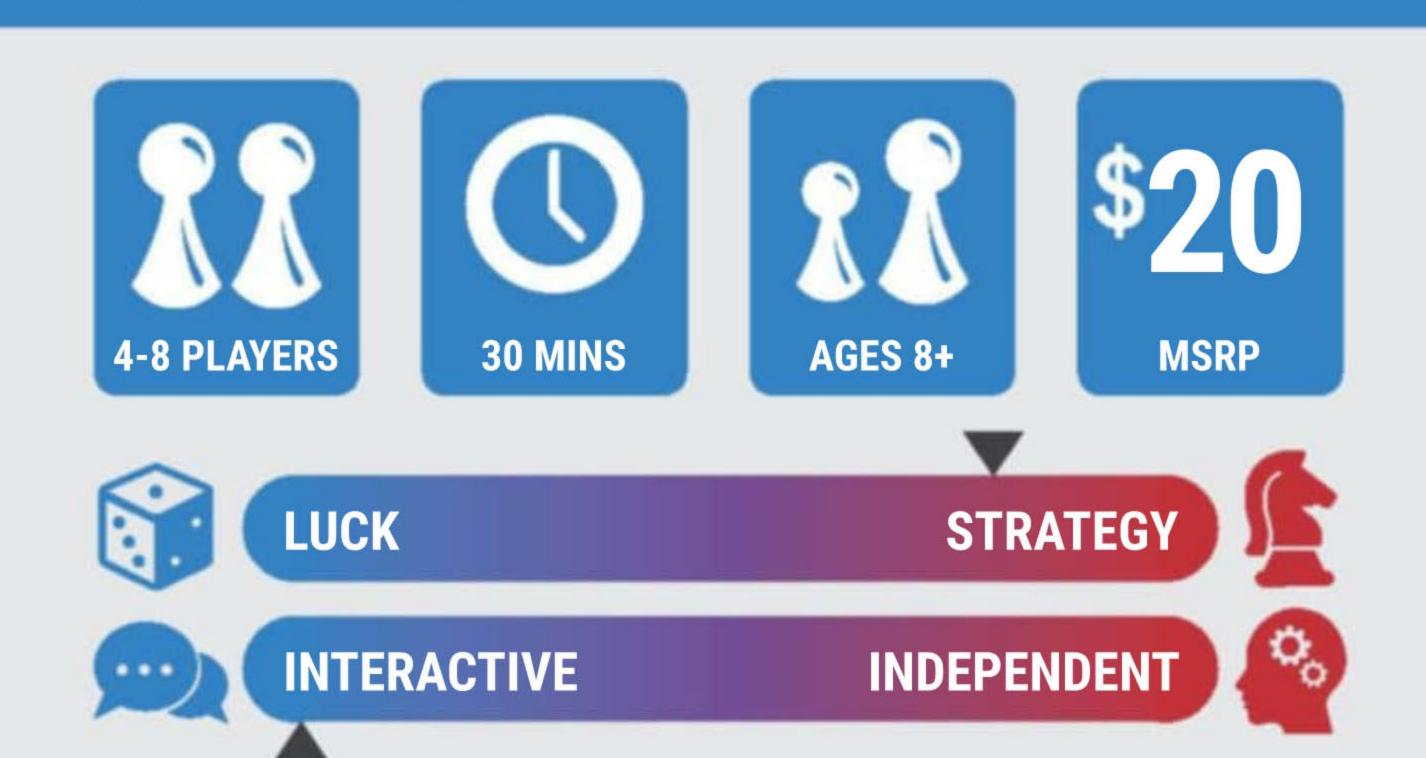


Trapwords is a thematic party game that feels like Codenames meets Taboo. The dungeon is created by stringing five dungeon-room tiles together. Both teams place their token at one end and one of five monsters is randomly chosen and placed at the other. Both teams take one of the mini book components included in the game. Each round, both teams draw a word card and slip it into their book. A cut out in the book shows which word the opposing team must guess. Working together, each team writes down a number of trap words equal to the number on the room the opposing team is on.

A different person on your team is clue giver each round. The clue giver looks at the word their team must guess (but does not see the trap words), the timer is started, such as darkness (forcing your team to close their eyes and they start giving clues. Your team may only make while guessing) or a flood (requiring the clue giver to five guesses. If the clue giver ever says one of the trap give clues in one breath without inhaling). words, your team runs out of guesses, or time runs move into the next room of the dungeon. Then the other team tries to guess their word. If neither team moves during a round, the monster moves one room closer.

Trapwords

By Jan Březina, Martin Hrabálek, Michal Požárek





out, your team fails. If the team guesses the word, they When a team starts a round in the room with the monster, they will guess their word as normal, but the monster will have a unique ability that affects the round, such as limiting the number of guesses your team is allowed or forcing the clue giver to only use ten words. If your team guesses your word, you defeat the monster and win the game.

> The rules get overly complicated in what are legal clues and trap words, but if you all use common sense it works out well. The curse cards are a lot of fun and often silly, and the different monsters offer a nice variety. There's a great sense of team cooperation as you come up with the trap words together, and the role of clue giver is challenging as you try to guess what words might be forbidden. Trapwords has a few more rules than similar word games, but the immersive experience is well worth it.

Each player is an archaeologist with one of four uniquelythemed dig sites. Every round, each player will place a tile onto the board, trying to enclose certain squares in order to score points.





To set up a game of **Scarabya**, every player takes a board It's enjoyable to choose your own dig site (will you take frame and four large board squares that are placed within the traditional desert, the depths of the ocean, an icy the frame. You can place them in a different configuration—setting, or explore the jungle?) and the ability to change each game, but all players must have them oriented the its layout between games adds replay value. The fact that same way as each other. These four large squares are you are going to be drawing the tile cards in a different composed of a grid of smaller square spaces, some of order each game also means that you have to adapt your which feature rocks or scarabs. After each player takes—strategy as you go along. a set of twelve *Tetris*-like tiles, the game begins.

Every round, a card is drawn from the mission deck that shows an image of a tile. Each player finds the matching tile in their set and places it, using it to cover spaces on their boards. When placing a tile, you must always—offers quite a lot of interaction. But the standard game is place it so that at least one side connects to a previously placed tile. It can never overlap the board frame, rocks, or other tiles, though it can cover up a scarab. After each player has placed their tile, a new card is drawn. If you can legally place a tile on your dig site, you must otherwise discard it.

Whenever a scarab space is enclosed by tiles, rocks, and/or the frame into a space of four squares or less, you place a point token on top of it, worth the number of squares in the enclosed area (up to a maximum of four). The game ends once the mission deck runs out and all tiles have been placed or discarded. Players then count up the point tokens on their boards, and the one with the most points wins.

There is no player interaction in the standard rules, though there is a fun two-player variant that has you both working on the same dig site, alternating who places the tiles, and scoring points for the scarabs you personally enclose, which more about competing to find the best solution to the puzzle. Scarabya plays quickly yet feels quite satisfying.

Scarabya

Designed by Bruno Cathala, Ludovic Maublanc



















INTERACTIVE







Players then take their turns. On your turn, you may the game ends, and the player with the most points wins. discard two or more cards to draw new cards (always drawing one less than the number you discarded). You may also play as many cards as you want.

Designed by Bill Lasek

















INTERACTIVE

STRATEGY

INDEPENDENT

The board is made up of hexagons, and each player. There are two types of cards you may play: movement begins by placing their koi fish token on one of the and natural beauty cards. Movement cards have a series starting hexagons. Players may choose which edge of of arrows — black arrows indicate required movement the hexagon their fish will be facing. Throughout the and blue arrows are optional. Your koi must perform the game, the direction your fish is facing is important for movement in the order the arrows are printed. Movement determining movement. Lily pad tokens are placed on can be going forward, jumping over a hexagon, or rotating the board and dragonflies are placed on top of them. one or more hex faces. Natural beauty cards let you place Rock tokens are placed as well. Six weather cards are rocks on the board (rocks block movement and must be dealt facedown and each player is dealt a starting hand. jumped over), lily pads, or frogs (frogs eat any dragonflies adjacent to them). Finally, you may also place cherry Each round (other than the first) will start by revealing one blossoms. When a cherry blossom is placed, it pushes of the weather cards. These each have unique affects, all adjacent tokens (except for lily pads and rocks) back such as spawning extra dragonflies or moving koi fish one space. If a koi fish ever occupies the same hexagon unexpectedly around the board. Next, dragonflies spawn as a dragonfly or frog, it eats it. Dragonflies are worth on any empty lily pad and each player is dealt three cards. three points and frogs are worth one. After seven rounds

> Koi is a visually stunning game with a large table presence. The board and the components (particularly the koi and weather cards) are beautiful — and so is the gameplay. There is often a ripple effect in movements, as your opponents' choices will frequently have you adapting and changing your plans. Cherry blossoms can change the whole board, as a blossom will reactivate if moved by another blossom, and these chain reactions are something to see.

> Maneuvering your koi to face the correct direction, planning out the use of your cards, and blocking players, is both strategic and challenging. There is something particularly satisfying about a well-planned turn as your fish darts around the board gobbling up dragonflies.





With the rising sun, the songbirds sing. They call to their mates and declare their territory. You are a forest spirit, helping your favorite bird color prosper in secret. Play songbirds of varying volume from your hand to see which flock will win the delicious berries dangling from trees. The loudest birds win the day, and with each songbird played comes a new opportunity to switch your allegiance to the winning color. Don't forget to play songbirds





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Winner of a Mensa Select award, Tiki Topple is a game of hidden information, hand management, and board manipulation.







Each round, nine tiki pieces are placed on the board in a column. Each player is given a secret tiki card, which

shows which tiki they will earn the most points for Cards can remove the bottom tiki of the column, move moving into first place in the column, which tiki will a tiki to the bottom, or move a tiki up the column from earn the next amount of points for being second or one to three spaces. Players take turns playing cards higher, and which will earn the least amount of points and manipulating the tikis. The round ends when for being third or higher. You have a hand of cards. only three tikis remain on the board or all players are out of cards. Players score points based on their secret tiki cards, and then a new round begins. After a certain number of rounds, the player with the most points wins.

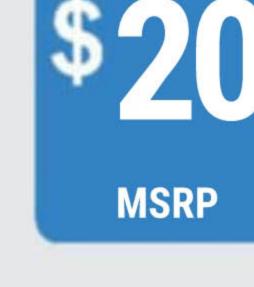
Tiki Tople Designed by Keith Meyers

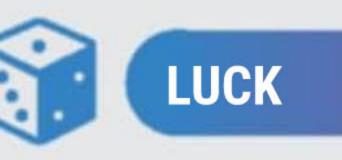














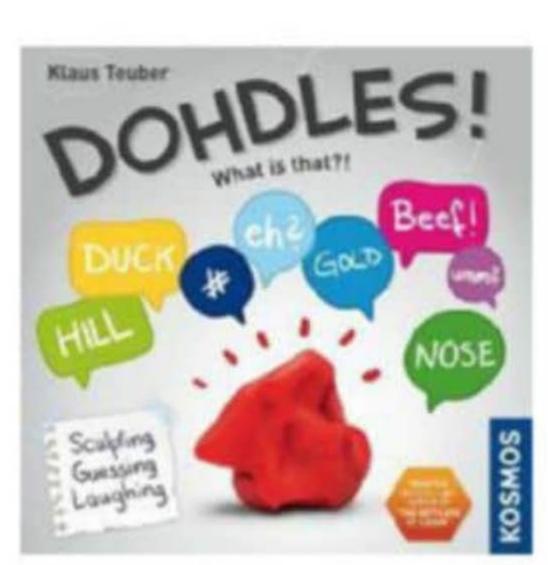


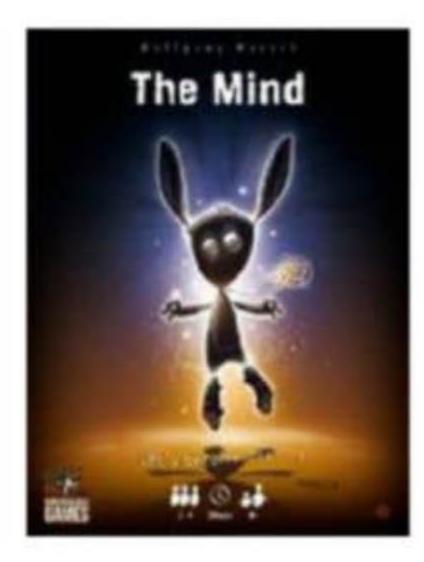
This new edition of the game is colorful and the components are high quality (although two of the tiki colors are difficult to differentiate). Manipulating the row of tikis to move yours into prime position is difficult and requires careful planning, and that's while you're trying to predict your opponents' moves. Tiki Topple has fast rounds, simple rules, and is both challenging and neatly designed. 🔃

OTHER RECOMMENDED GAMES 🍂

For a complete list, visit CasualGameRevolution.com/games













Wombattle is Major Fun!

The Major Fun Award was developed by noted philosopher of play Bernie DeKoven nearly 20 years ago. This internationally recognized award celebrates games that are innovative, easy to learn, fast to play, and fun for players of all ages. Out of hundreds of submissions each year, only 12–15 games earn this honor. You can delve into hundreds of great games for kids, families, and friends at MajorFun.com.



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Somewhere in the universe, wombats gather in parties to find a champion. All creatures are welcome, facing challenges ridiculous and sublime. In fact every time they play, the challenges will change since the players themselves shape them. A word, a memory, a drawing, a gesture, even a song could be the key to unlock the heart of the judge. Wombattle

The Components is a wacktastic party game driven by an unexpected dexterity element and whimsically weird art.





There are two key elements to Wombattle: the throwing board and wombat cards

The throwing board is actually the game box with an insert covered with colored holes. The lid of the box is nested vertically behind and serves as a backboard/backstop.

The 16 double sided wombat cards will inspire each challenge during the game. Each card depicts a wombat and other friendly animals engaged in various activities. The wombat might be doing mundane tasks like grocery shopping and hanging pictures. Then again, the wombat might be cliff diving or landing on the moon. Packed with little details, each card has a Richard Scarry-esque quality to it, inviting the viewer to look again to discover new parts of the scene. It's impossible to overstate the how the whimsy and charm of the artwork helps create the world of the game.

The Mechanics

Each round in Wombattle, players will face a challenge set by the judge (a fellow player). The shape of the challenge is set by a feat of dexterity, a wombat card, and the imagination of the judge

The feat of dexterity determines the category for the round. The judge bounces a marble off the backstop and into the grid on the throwing board. The hole where the marble comes to rest has a color, and the color of the hole determines the category: Arts, Movement, Bravery, and Me-me-me. Once you have the to round; it's a negotiation, a dance that creates a safe space category, the judge selects a wombat card. The wombat card and the category will now combine in the mind of the judge to create a challenge.

The judge presents the card to the group and, based on the category and some aspect of the scene shown on the card, crafts a challenge that connects the two. Each player will do his or her best to face the challenge and the judge will select a winner. That player will place an obstacle cone in the throwing board. Then the players vote for the solution they enjoyed the most. These votes will be tallied at the end.

The game continues with a new player serving as judge each round until one player has placed all his or her obstacle tokens into the board.











What Sets This Game Apart?

The general insanity and collective sense of fun Wombattle creates makes the game a wonderful experience.

The categories themselves are a mix of standard party game fare (drawing or gestures) and elements that are fresh. Bravery? Come up with something memorable or daring. Me-me-me? A challenge that relates to the judge in some way.

Players themselves set the boundaries of the game from round for everyone to have fun. It's an unexpected and wonderful risk - to leave so much room in the game for players to explore and define the limits of the game. And in some ways, this makes Wombattle more activity than game — But that's OK.

Wombattle is focused on fun, first and forever. It's an arena for laughter and silliness.

Final Thoughts

Wombattle embodies an essential element that inspires the Major Fun Award: the simple joy of play. This joy is open to everyone. Any time, anywhere. Wombattle gives us permission to be playful. And it deflects attention away from winning. If you're playing to win Wombattle, you should be playing a different game. Wombattle is a vehicle for laughter and fun and a reminder to not take yourself or the game too seriously. To this end, each player writes down a reward they will give (a high five?, a compliment?, a cookie?, a hug?) and places it in the box. The winner will draw one and the player with the most votes will, too. It might not be a paragon of sophisticated game design but

Wombattle is a work of demented genius. It soars because it is a source for the creative semistructured joy we discover through play. 🖸

Stephen Conway

on duty as Major Fun and host of The Spiel





YOUR TURNS

A Spotlight on the Gaming Community

What are your tips for a great game night?

FOOD)

"Keep plenty of snacks and drinks available, but make sure they are game friendly: no greasy fingers or spilled soda on game pieces!"

-Joseph Orthner

"Finger foods, drinks, and lots of napkins."

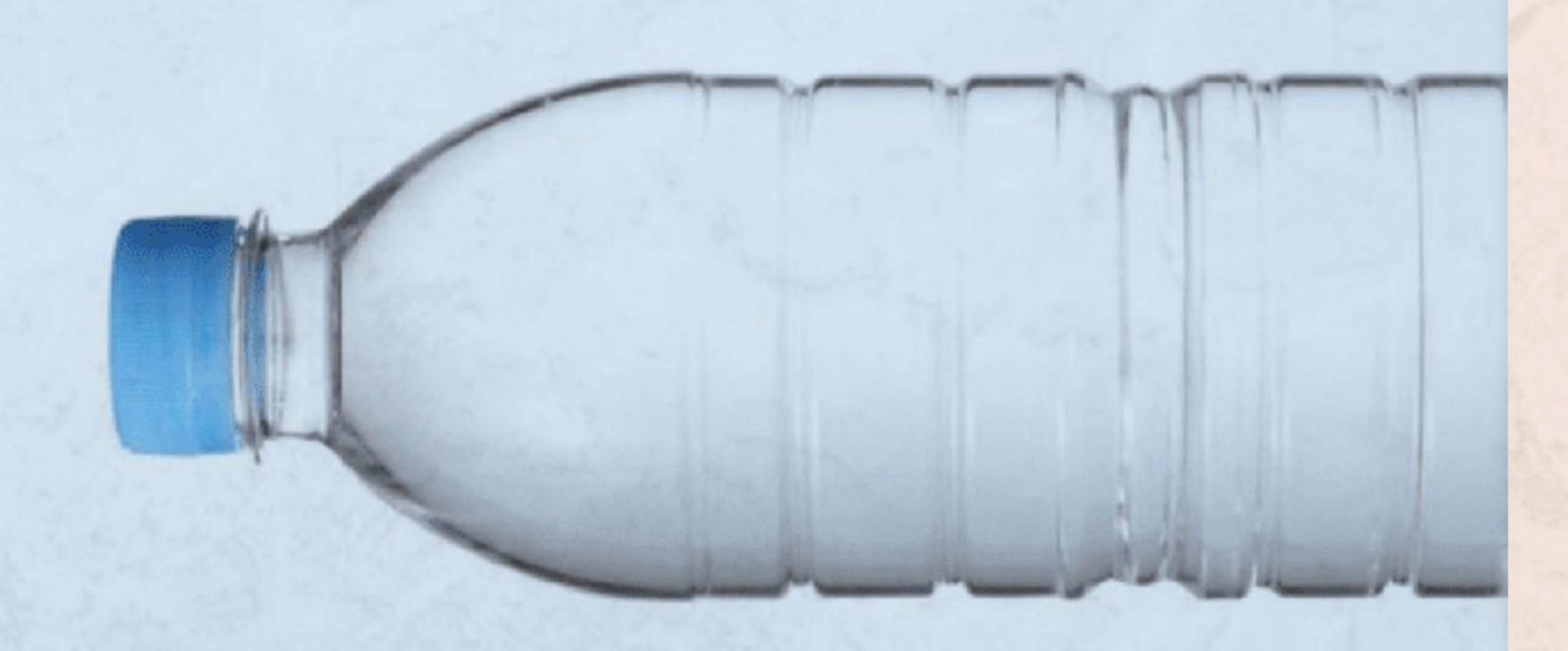


"Potluck snack table....AWAY from the gaming." - Will Green



"Non-messy snacks, both healthy and less healthy, and bottled drinks."

- Amanda B.



ATMOSPHERE

"Be comfortable, you might be at the table for hours! Some of our quests come in pajamas."



"Come for fun, not to win. Have some icebreaker and mixer activities throughout the night to help people get to know each other more. Theme the night, including the ice breakers and mixers. Costumes or styles with decor to match."

— Erik Winter-Villaluz

"Music playing quietly in the background makes for a fun atmosphere. My tip is to create a gaming playlist beforehand with a variety of fun songs that everyone loves — songs from the '80s are usually a big hit."

— Patricia Parsons

"A good cushion for your tush."

— Amanda Dishon





FRIENDS

"A great game night is based around camaraderie. Remember that it's an excuse to see friendly faces. Treat them as such! Be upbeat, and enjoy the journey of the game!"

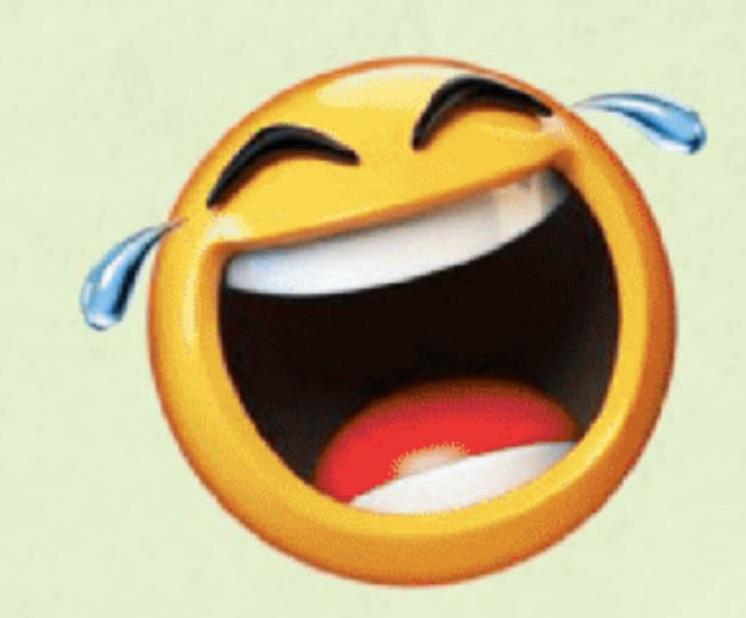
— Glenn Flaherty

"I think a great game night starts with the knowledge of who you have over. You might really enjoy playing a game, but you need to understand what type of games the others in your group might like."

— Sarah Kuipers

"Good natured people, open minds, and lots of laughs."

— Gene O'Neal









GAMES



"A variety of games that do not go on forever. Keep everyone's interest by playing several interesting and fun games."

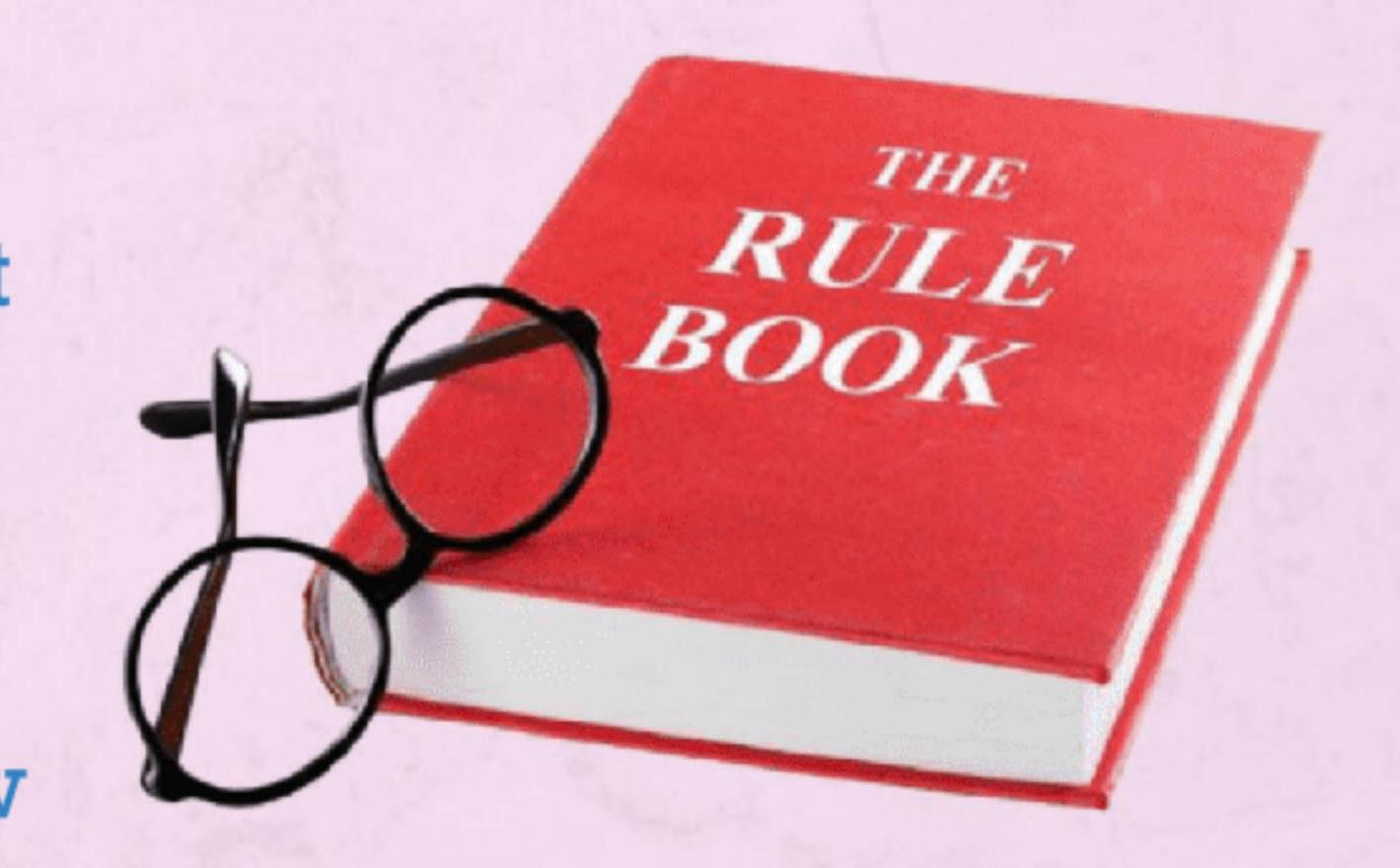
— Debbie Erickson

"Have several games
picked out of varying
length and complexity.
Refresh the rules.
Relax...it's about fun and
hanging out."

— Baker Mitchell

"Make sure you re-read the instructions on games you haven't played in a while. Nothing stops a fun game like frequent pauses to look up rules."

- Ryan Longfellow



GALAXY TRUCKER











Be Evil...ish

