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Cosmic Encounter

http://www.ideabout.com/fan_design/completed/aliens/mart.html

Now in BETA . . .

THE MART SELLS CARDS TO OTHER PLAYERS

Game Setup: After all players are dealt their initial hands, create a "store" of face-down cards on this sheet. Look through the three "store supply decks": Cosmic cards, Rewards, and unused Flares to choose cards for your store. Select a combined total of two cards per player. (eg 3 player game = 6 cards.)

You have the power to sell. Your store is not considered part of your hand. Other players may not look at it or draw from it. When you are not a main player, after alliances are formed, you */*may use*/* this power to secretly show one of the main players one card from your store. That player has 60 seconds to make offers for that card, following the normal colony/card(s) rules for deals. Your side of the deal must be only the offered card. If there is no deal, there is no penalty and the card is returned to the store. If the card is sold, you take the top card from any of supply decks to restock your store. Discards are not part of store supply. Afterward, the encounter continues as normal.
(Ally Only) | (Optional) | (Alliance Phases)

WILD

Discard two cards from your hand. Then take two defensive rewards.
(Any player) | (Optional) | (Any phase)

SUPER

Choose one card from your store and add it to your hand.
(Any player) | (Optional) | (Any phase)

History

The gregarious Marts evolved the ability to pass antibodies by way of physical contact, in a way that other races call a "handshake." The Marts have been shaking hands with all the aliens since reaching the stars, adapting their customs to the commerce of the cosmos. The eager and friendly Marts hope to be on every corner of every planet very soon!



Fan Designed Cosmic Expansion Set - Current Work

February 15 at 1:01am

People Who Like This

[Dawn Olson](#) likes this.

Discussion

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Christopher Aurel Oliveira This power is completely ignorable very rarely if ever will be useful... how is this in BETA? This is nowhere close to how good Angler is...

February 15 at 2:28am · Like · 1

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Sam Connolly Standard Lucre-for-service problem; if nobody's willing to deal with it, it has no power, since they suffer no penalty and it gains no reward.

This is allegedly a fan-designed expansion, right? I'm going to look at the comments from every single fan who posted in the pre-BETA thread and see what they think of this version.

Matthew Scrivner: Seems to be driving at the standard Lucre-for-service problem and suggests the Emporium receive its own special deck (rather like the Schizoid is getting) so that the effects it sells will be powerful and unique. Neither comment addressed in this version.

Jack Reda: Wants the standard Lucre-for-service problem to be addressed by giving this alien some reward if turned down. Not addressed in this version.

Gerald Katz: Standard Lucre-for-service problem. Not addressed in this version.

Bill Martinson: A whole host of problems, including Lucre-for-service, an un-Cosmic name. Even specifically points to "If it can only offer the card in the deal, then its deals are unlikely to go anywhere" (without additional carrots/sticks) as a problem; that's practically anti-addressed in this version.

Sam Connolly: Seconded Bill's complaints, including the standard Lucre-for-service problem.

Christopher Aurel Oliveira: Suggested letting the alien add an unsold card to its hand to encourage deals and avert the Lucre-for-service problem.

Greg Filpus: Another Lucre-for-service complaint, ignored like all the others.

Sensing a pattern here? Here's a hint: EVERYBODY had exactly the same objection. NOBODY liked the "everyone can ignore this power and then it does absolutely nothing" problem. This wasn't just one or two lone voices; this was literally everybody who commented except Jefferson Krogh, Bill Eberle, and Peter Olotka - and even then Peter freely admitted that the alien may very well be horribly underpowered with that bug and that he didn't care about game balance at all as long as the power looked shiny.

So after everyone other than Peter, Bill, and Jefferson pointed out a fatal flaw in the power, the response was... for Peter, Bill, and Jefferson to, as Peter described in the Set Design group, go behind closed doors, write a version of the power that completely ignored what everyone else said, and then force it into BETA?

As it stands, this isn't a "Fan-Designed Cosmic Expansion Set"; this is a Peter/Bill/Jefferson-Designed Cosmic Expansion Set. The peanut gallery can feel free to chime in with comments, sure, but apparently they don't actually count. So tell me, what exactly is the purpose of this Facebook-based design process? Is it actually to listen to the collective ideas of the community, or is it just a cheap gimmick to drum up enthusiasm and boost sales? If it's the former, you might want to actually read a single post made by absolutely anyone outside of your little triangle, since any one of them will tell you why this version of the alien is fundamentally broken, and putting this alien into BETA was absolutely a mistake. If it's the latter, we all have much better things to do with our time than to play along with this charade.

February 15 at 3:07am · Like

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Jack Reda I think it just needs to have the result effects switched. If the deal happens, then it happens, and Mart (Emporium is a much better name) gets what he gets from the deal. If the deal doesn't happen, THEN he should get to draw from a deck of cards (and I would add that he can put the drawn card in his hand or in his store.

February 15 at 7:48am · Like



Bill Martinson Christopher and Sam, I truly feel your pain. It's hard to see something you have loved for so long go in a direction that you know in your gut is not good for it, and difficult to accept how little influence we truly have at the end of the day. However ...

The owners of the game have the right to choose what is made. They are not obligated to accept or address our concerns. They are not obligated to value conventional design principles, and are free to prefer Cosmic Encounter to be developed more as a toy than a game. Most important, they've paid the dues; if they want to design it for themselves instead of us, that is their right and privilege. It's their property. We are just tenants. They get to choose the furniture and paint colors and wall art even if we hate them.

This leaves three basic choices: (1) accept the agenda, (2) keep trying to fight it, or (3) recognize this situation for what it is and find something more constructive to do. Pick the one that makes you most happy.

February 15 at 8:08am · Like



Peter Olotka Well, aside from the personal attacks, which I don't understand, I must confess that I have trouble with the prejudgements that everyone will ignore this power. Here is an example. I as MART have the 40 for sale to my good friend Christopher Aurel Oliveira who has only two cards in his hand and is about to lose the game giving the win to my good friends Jack Reda and Sam Connolly. Christopher has three colonies, and I only have two (being a weak power who no one will deal with). Jack and Sam remind Christopher that the MART is a worthless alien and that he would be morally bankrupt to consider buying a card from it. Christopher, however makes the deal, I get my third colony. He defeats the potential winners and being the next player wins his first encounter and then lines up against my former good friend Jack Reda to go for the game win. I offer a stopper from the store to Jack. Christopher forcefully reminds Jack that he would be a total hypocrite to deal the the MART, since he was a vehement opponent. Jack, however succumbs to the Mart's generous offer and buys the Card. I get my fourth colony. Christopher is vexed and mutters that the Mart is indeed a worthless alien. Is this scenario fatally flawed in some way that I am missing? As to the issue of getting an alien into BETA. The way I see it, the STORE concept was one of several from the last round of brainstorming. We posted it up and it was discussed for some days and then no comment for several days. I took the no more comments to mean that further discussion was not going to be forth coming. I asked Jefferson if he would take a crack at a BETA version. Jeff said sure and emailed me the copy with this note: "I took the core of Bill M.'s writeup and completed it using the group's feedback and filled in the blanks where needed." I am sorry to have been not as involved with this round, but my wife has been ill and I have been recovering from eye surgery. This fan designed expansion set project was my idea. I love the input of players and value the participation. None of us agree with each other on all matters. I guess I am always taken aback by players getting angry about the process and angry at me. I feel that if If an alien makes it into BETA, its just a step. If it truly is bad it will not make it out. So it's just a form of closure to a phase in the process. I have trouble seeing the difference between Jeff cobbling together a BETA from comments and Bill Eberle and I tweaking it and posting it up and previous aliens that went up. I think Bill Martinson did some final passes which we tweaked. One time we ran a poll about (an alien feature?) and went the majority. That's a bit tedious for every piece of content however and in general I prefer to keep the process informal, fun and funny.

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I am not comfortable with lots of rage and anger about this and I will try to be better at my role. As to who gets to choose what gets made. It's really Fantasy Flight, our publisher. I had to battle a bit for things I wanted from time to time. I won some and lost some. When we put up prior aliens to BETA they were then revised through several versions.

February 15 at 9:13am · Like



Peter Olotka Also, I am more than happy to have players take on my function. Anyone interested in being the moderator? We could rotate it with each new piece of content. It's fun! Don't forget to wear your armor. And whoever is moderator can set their own style of interaction. Any takers?

February 15 at 9:16am · Like



Bill Martinson Peter, I think the source of the conflict is largely that some of the fans have made the mistake of assuming that their own goals align with yours. Discovering that this is not the case has of course led to disappointment, frustration, and a sense of disenfranchisement. It is increasingly apparent that the content you and Bill want to design is fundamentally different from the content many of us want to purchase.

The natural assumption from a fan's perspective is that his or her participation is supposed to help achieve a compromise where the designers' and fans' desires are both ultimately fulfilled through some kind of iterative melding process: that mutual understanding will lead to the classic synthesis of form and function into the proper balance. But that assumption has also proven itself false, as form continues to dominate.

The pattern I have observed is that players' concerns are repeatedly dismissed and they are given to understand (indirectly) that their philosophy of the game is wrong. The majority of the beta content produced thus far still has significant issues, or is just plain not wanted; yet these designs are repeatedly sent into beta with a comment like "don't worry, maybe Kevin will reject it". When one participates in designing something, and the best one can hope for is that it will ultimately be rejected, this of course is highly demotivating.

I don't think this can be fixed. It stems from a fundamental difference in what you want vs. what your customers want. If you perceive that this process is "fun" for the average participant and is achieving consensus, please believe me when I say with no intended malice that from my perspective it is doing neither in the general case (although for some participants I'm sure it has been enjoyable). This general perception is based on the comments I read here, my own (subjective) experience seeing resignation where there should be excitement, the comments I read in other venues (where people may perhaps feel more free to be bluntly honest), and, most important, the lack of numbers. The page has nearly 1000 "likes" and you hope to multiply that significantly, yet there are probably fewer than 10 active participants. This more than anything should be a clear sign that the process has not been "fun".

It is possible that an open design process is not going to produce the results desired by either side. If others are like me, they may simply be too left-brained or too bourgeois to enter into the mindset required to design things primarily for looks and then "see what happens". That doesn't make sense to me and — whether right or wrong — it isn't what I want from the game. It may just be that some of us are the wrong followers for this newer "vision" of Cosmic Encounter and will continue to perplex with our inability to drink the kool-aid. :-)

February 15 at 11:36am · Like

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Peter Olotka Thanks Bill, but you misread my sense of this. We think that the game is flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of content. And it is fine with us for the fans to have at it with us as bystanders. Jack Reda is an admin on ce facebook. Perhaps he could be the point on the fan expansion. Many of my reactions to features has to do with trying to see if players can come up with ideas that are very different from what has gone before. And I think many fans share that. Perhaps the term BETA is incorrect for the content that moves into cross check. I was seeing crosscheck as a formal process that could improve or eliminate content. And so by moving content into cross check we could then have a systematic way to adjust / improve / eliminate things that don't work. Does that make sense to you?

February 15 at 12:53pm · Like



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Jack Reda I think Martporium has potential, but there is valid concern that it can be too easily ignored. This is why I advocate for more consequence for when a player doesn't deal. Mart will get something in the deal, so rewarding the deal doesn't make as much sense to me as giving Mart something if the other player refuses to deal. The flip side of this though is that there's nothing to prevent Mart from putting a lot of crap in his store knowing that players won't deal, and just letting him draw a card every encounter he isn't a main player. This is why I originally felt that if you don't deal with Mart on the card he's selling you, he'll get the card himself.

February 15 at 1:10pm · Like



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Matthew Scrivner Will there be an excel spreadsheet put up on Google docs for cross checking?

February 15 at 1:55pm · Like



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Jacob Meraz What if Mart could have a "fire sale" or an "everything must go" sale, where he could find some way to dump all of his "store" cards for new ones if he is saddled with crummy cards (a 4, a negative attack, and a bad flare, for instance). Kind of like that crazy guy who throws his electronics off of the roof of his store in the television commercials.

February 15 at 2:01pm · Like

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Peter Olotka Yes I will put up an excel for the Martporium Store when the dust settles. On Jacks idea to let Mart get the card if no deal is reached, seems that I would get all the good cards Never agree and keep them all for myself, right?

February 15 at 4:05pm · Like



Peter Olotka What does everyone think of Jacob's fire sale? That could be funny.

February 15 at 4:06pm · Like



Bill Martinson Well, the fire sale is pretty irrelevant until the power is fixed so that it cannot be simply ignored. (Being able to refresh your stock is meaningless if hardly anybody comes into your store.) If the argument against this is that the power might get to do something, with the right opponents, when you have an attack 40 to sell, on the last encounter of the game ... well, that's not very compelling.

This power is still a Hertz knockoff; hopefully that is obvious. It's completely ignorable and is also a re-hash of a previously published power, thus meeting neither the left-brained nor the right-brained design goals. So it would seem that the first order of business is to address that issue, and then see if a fire sale still makes sense with whatever you end up with at that point.

And if you really want to demonstrate that this is truly a fan-inclusive approach, then while the hood is still up you can also recognize the dislike for "Mart" and give it a name that sounds like a Cosmic Encounter alien. There are tons of appropriate options here: SHOPKEEPER, PROPRIETOR, VENDOR, PEDDLER, DEALER, BARKER, HUCKSTER, HAWKER, ARMORER, QUARTERMASTER, PROVISIONER, or any other choice that fits into the universe and sounds like an alien rather than a Wal-Mart building.

February 15 at 6:16pm · Like



Peter Olotka Um, the name MART was suggested by a fan. I personally like Emporium. But I don't have a dog in the name fight. As to this being truly fan inclusive I remain your humble servant. The "your" is plural. There are many fan opinions. The name Mart being exhibit A. My contribution to the Mart naming question was to make the case that there is no official naming convention. We can easily do a vote for the name and what ever gets the most votes, thats the name. If fans feel strongly that names must follow a convention or if there are to be rules of characteristics that make an appropriate alien name for the fan expansion set. It's all fine by me. Truly! While we love doing this, we think that the less we have to do, the better. I am happy to put up the spread sheets and maintain google docs. Bill is fine with archiving discussion and posting up the appropriate text when it makes it out of whatever process players would like. Please remember that we are just trying to figure out what works.

February 15 at 6:44pm · Like

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Jefferson Krogh I was the one who suggested MART, and if it's causing Bill's teeth to gnash unnecessarily, I'm totally fine calling it something more prosaic, even if I completely disagree with Bill's insistence that Cosmic names must be just so.

I'm totally fine with just about anything that gets people to chill out a bit, actually. We're talking about adding some bits to a game, which I think is supposed to be fun.

My suggestion is this: to encourage more participation and more voices in this expansion, let's set up an e-mail address for fans to submit content to. That would bypass this process completely, but I think it would draw out folks who are shy or reluctant to get yelled at on the Internet. Set a deadline.

Let people who want to submit expansion content to other fans for feedback, in a workshop environment, do that here or on BGG or wherever.

Everyone who participates, though, should keep in mind that what gets published will be curated and developed by Eon and FFG. It will be them, in the end, not us fans, who decide what's best for that expansion. They're trying to thank us for supporting the game all these decades by giving us an entire expansion of stuff we helped make (though remember, they'll end up editing and tweaking as usual). Let's make the most of it, and keep some perspective, and have some fun.

I'm off to Dundracon, where I will spend several days having fun playing games instead of arguing about them on the Internet. I'll see you all next week sometime.

February 15 at 7:04pm · Like



Bill Martinson Message received. As the chief "prosaic*, insistent, yelling, unnecessary teeth-gnasher who needs to chill and get some perspective," I can take the hint. You don't need to set up an email channel; I'll just go away and mind my own business and you can tell everyone the ogre has gone home to scratch himself and dig worms out of his ears.

* For those who don't know, prosaic means "lacking poetic beauty". It's pretty shocking that I was unable, until now, to recognize the enduring poetic beauty of "Mart" when you consider my surname. Go figure.

February 15 at 7:54pm · Like



Peter Olotka Bill - that was a pretty prosaic response, if you ask me. Actually Jeff had an interesting suggestion which I liked. That was to have another design channel for players who would like to think through an entire design by themselves and then post it for play testing by others. That process is not mutually exclusive to the group posting up group design commentary and it could produce more content.

February 16 at 9:07am · Like

http://www.ideabout.com/fan_design/completed/aliens/mart_v02.html
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Peter Olotka We would like to avoid a "one size fits all" content design process. A number of aliens in waiting were listed a few posts back. So I would encourage players to grab one that suits their fancy (or concoct a new one) work on it solo or with a small group that you might like to put together and then when you have it in a decent form, send it in an we can put it up for play testing, then add it to cross check. If it's one of the ones on the public lists list here just let me know so I can steer others to a different one. If its a new concoction, surprise us. So we can start a parallel track of solo / small group development and use the FB crowd as play testers when aliens or other content is ready. What does everyone think? Bill and I might try that out ourselves (risking the sight of players running screaming from our offerings :)

February 16 at 9:17am · Like



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Allen Varney For the ignorability problem, how about this: In a challenge when he's not involved, the Mart chooses a card from his Store and puts it up for sale to BOTH players in the challenge. They have 60 seconds for each of them to offer him a deal. If he doesn't like either deal, he gives the card to any player for free, then draws a replacement card for his Store.

February 16 at 10:30am · Like · 1



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Peter Olotka Nice touch!

February 16 at 6:14pm · Like



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Gerald Katz While mechanically it is different, that reminds me too much of Fido. That might not be a bad thing, vis a vis Aura/Mind, Insect/Plant of Eon past, but I am noticing it.

February 16 at 6:42pm · Like

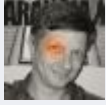


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Gerald Katz If someone is about to win the game and Emporium has a card that could stop him, sure, great incentive to buy the card. However, until then, the card can just sit there, even the Attack 40. Newbie players I can expect to make use of the power, get that 40, and get an early easy colony. More experience players will just let it sit there. Knowing definitely no one has the 40 is more valuable than having it for one encounter, and there's no way Emporium is selling the 40 to Clone.

February 16 at 6:47pm · Like

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Allen Varney Okay, second try: Before cards are played in the challenge, the Mart can turn up the top card of his store and force both players to "make him an offer." Each main player must lay before him, face up, one card from his hand, plus an additional card for each base the Mart has in that player's home system. A main player can avoid offering any cards by instead offering the Mart a base.

The Mart chooses one offer, takes the cards or base, and gives the store card to the player who made the winning offer. (The player who made the losing offer takes back the offered cards.)

If the Mart player doesn't like either offer, he must instead give the store card to any other player for free, and both main players return their offered cards to their hand.

February 17 at 2:25am · Like



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Peter Olotka A power that works by having players just knowing that it holds certain cards that it can make available when the game is on the line is interesting. That is, in fact, a power that functions by simply existing.

February 17 at 9:23am · Like



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Gerald Katz @Allen - Better. It's possible no one will offer something Mart likes for a medium card, such as Reinforcement +1 or Attack 10. They aren't terrible cards but Mart still has to give them away. It's a downside but not really hurting. It depends on the players.

February 17 at 8:44pm · Like



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Gerald Katz @Peter - I disagree. The player holding the card that someone can use later is still not doing anything until then. Having the card does not help you get colonies, cards, ships, or depriving others. The sale needs to be forced.

February 17 at 8:47pm · Like



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Cosmic Encounter I think that alien powers influence player choices all the time and that influence contributes to complex situations. An example would be keeping low cards when aliens are in the mix that are vulnerable to them... Sorcerer, anti

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matter, loser. It's more of a multi dimensional view of a powers impact on the game, than simply "Does this get me more stuff?"

February 18 at 6:40am · Like



Gerald Katz Holding low cards to play against Anti-Matter and Loser is a strategy against them but those powers don't lose strength. The strategy against Emporium would be "everyone ignores it", and the player has no power.

February 18 at 5:41pm · Like



Bill Eberle Ah but you might not be able to resist certain offers . . . each "sell" is a new situation. The challenge for Mart/Emporium is to discover how to be successful in each new situation . . . which is the whole point.

February 19 at 4:14pm · Like



Jefferson Krogh Cosmic has aliens that suit a variety of player's styles. Some players like the certainty of knowing exactly how their power will play out every time. Macron and Virus are good examples of those.

Then some players like to use powers that channel their opponents into less than optimal tactics, like Filch, The Claw or Loser.

Some players enjoy using psychology on their opponents, manipulating them or tricking them. Cosmic has aliens for that as well -- Sorcerer, Gambler, Calculator. These aliens make the player play against the other players, not just the other aliens. This alien, Mart or Emporium or whatever, is one of those aliens. A large part of its power will come from the personality of the player, his ability to read his opponents, his ability to sell. It will shine in some hands, and wither in others. Some opponents, like Gerald, will be as immune to the charms of the Mart as they are to any other sales pitch. Some opponents will succumb, as some people succumb to sales pitches in real life.

I understand the opposition to this kind of alien, but I'd ask those opposing to remember that the game already asks its players to sell during every encounter -- during the Alliance phase. The wheeling and dealing of alliances is one of the most frequently mentioned strong points of Cosmic Encounter. This alien simply extends that to a different arena. Yes, its power will vary widely depending on who's playing it, but that alone shouldn't disqualify it.

February 21 at 12:17am · Like

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Gerald Katz Anyway, why not just call the alien Hurtz? Ethic was a Lucre power made non-Lucre.

February 21 at 9:48pm · Like



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Jefferson Krogh The reference would still work today, it's true...

February 21 at 10:44pm · Like