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### Cosmic Encounter

Our synthesis of ideas:

JOKER ADDS WILD CARDS TO GAME

You have the power to add wildness.

Game Setup: Take two Joker wild cards. Shuffle the remaining 8 wild cards into the deck. You will be dealt 6 additional cards as your hand.

Play: In an encounter, you may play a wild card as an encounter card. When cards are revealed, you declare it is as any valid encounter card. The wild card is immediately removed from the game after it's revealed. Any other player (not the Joker) may also play a wild card as any valid encounter card. At the end of the encounter, the wild card is given to the JOKER. When any wild card is revealed, any player may zap the JOKER. The JOKER does not collect the wild card and the player who played the wild card loses. If both players reveal wild cards in an encounter, both players lose and play passes. ( All Players | Reveal/Resolution )

WILD When you are a main player, before cards are played, you may declare one Encounter Card value to be "wild" for any player who plays such a card during that encounter. ( As Any Player | Planning )

SUPER When you play a Joker it is not removed from the game; it is discarded. ( JOKER | Resolution )

History

The Fun-loving Jokers enjoy humiliating the conceited, mocking the powers that be, and causing general chaos. They seek not to rule, but to satirize the universe.

Notes

This is a Resource type power.

[http://www.ideabout.com/fan\\_design/in\\_progress/joker\\_comp\\_art.html](http://www.ideabout.com/fan_design/in_progress/joker_comp_art.html)



### Fan Designed Cosmic Expansion Set - Current Work

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The Fun-loving Jokers enjoy humiliating the conceited, mocking the powers that be, and causing general chaos. They seek not to rule, but to satirize the universe.

## Discussion



**Bill Martinson** It seems problematic to define the entire purpose of the Wild card on Joker's sheet, rather than make the cards self-contained. For example, I get how you are attempting to let other players essentially "use" Joker's power for him by playing their own Wild card, but it's very weird to let people zap Joker when he is not \*using\* his power.

This leaves a gap when he has lost his power due to home colony count -- what then is the meaning of the Wild cards? The alien sheet cannot define or control anything when it is face down. The Wild cards should be self-defining, like the Invasion! cards in Cosmic Conflict. Currently, it seems that they will be essentially blank.

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Joker also needs a clear *\*use\** effect.

November 28 at 7:52pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** "Immediately removed from the game after it is revealed" seems to forbid game effects that would modify or target the revealed card in various ways. Whether that applies to everything across the board, or just effects that target one card but not the other, or just effects that would modify its value, etc. etc. I can't tell. Is this intentional? It's confusing.

November 28 at 7:56pm · Like



**Peter Olotka** Agree on remove immediately. Better is remove at the end of the Encounter. As to zapping Joker to kill "MIND'S use of wild card - seems weird enough to be funny. Joker is held liable for its pranks. Joker could zap itself to stop an opponent from using wild card.

November 28 at 8:18pm · Like



**Bill Eberle** That sentence has been amended to: "The wild card you played is removed from the game after the encounter."

Re: "when JOKER has lost its power" I'm fine with the idea that the "energy" for the wild cards comes from the JOKER and, if the JOKER has lost its power, players can no longer use Jokers as wild cards. Essentially the wild cards become worthless cards . . . adds the interesting dimension of players with wild cards deciding to help defend the JOKER's home planets when its power is being threatened.

The sentence about other aliens using wild cards has been amended to: "When you have your power, any other player may also play a wild card as any valid encounter card."

November 28 at 8:49pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** So would it make sense to make this a mandatory power that says something like, "When you or any other player wishes to play a Wild card, *\*use\** this power to let that player blah blah blah". I /think/ this could support the wackiness you're after while still playing nice in the sandbox with the game's mechanical needs. And perhaps even be

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pithier, since you wouldn't have to explain so much ... not entirely sure about that part yet, have to work through it some more.

November 28 at 8:54pm · Like · 1



**Sam Connolly** Wild cards do need a default value for when the Joker loses its power, though - otherwise, the Joker might lose its power between you selecting a wild card as your encounter card and you revealing it.

November 28 at 10:42pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** @Sean: That could probably be worked into the auto-lose clause. Off the top of my head, maybe something like this (giving just bits and pieces here, not the whole power):

Any main player, including you, may select a Wild card as his or her encounter card. When any Wild card(s) are revealed as encounter card(s), *\*/use/\** this power to allow the revealing players to name any encounter card... . If this power is zapped or lost, the revealing player(s) lose the encounter.

November 28 at 10:57pm · Like



**Stephen Sloboda** The complexity of this version of the card is absurd and unnecessary. I still like the original the best for its concept and eloquence, but here's a stab at this version:

Since Joker Cards are separate game elements, print them with their own rules. Joker Cards are worthless to other players (or see below). They are encounter cards that automatically lose against attacks and negotiates. They are worse than the deuce of clubs unless they are wild.

Tuesday at 4:11am · Like



**Stephen Sloboda** The Joker then can USE his power to give the Joker Card any value.

Alternatively, Joker Cards can have printed on them a Zap-like effect that cancels the Joker's ability, thus giving them a value in encounters with the Joker.

Tuesday at 4:13am · Like

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**Stephen Sloboda** Another idea: Allow the Joker to change the value of Wild Cards played by Main players it is allied with.

Tuesday at 4:16am · Like



**James Albright** I like Stephen Sloboda's idea better than the current iteration, personally. That way, the Joker cards can't be used against him (as it should be) and you can win with so much certainty, but you'd need the Joker on your side. Either that, or allow players to use Joker cards to become any alien for a turn-which would be pretty awesome-become Warpish for a turn? Or Merchant? Trader? And another played could zap your attempt with their own Joker? And the Joker alien gets to collect the used cards either way? Sounds pretty nifty.

Tuesday at 9:38am · Like



**Jack Reda** I think adding Joker cards muddles it up here. Joker IS the Joker- he makes things wild. You can go with the original idea of making artifacts into wild encounter cards, but I think using negotiates is better for 2 reasons: One, there are more negotiates than artifacts, and Two, Joker doesn't have to waste a good artifact card he would otherwise like to use.

Having the card change into any value is another mixed bag. You might as well write it into the alien description that it becomes a 40 (except for the odd game that has Anti-Matter or Loser in it). Making it into something Joker has in hand is more interesting to me. Joker can then change his opponent's revealed negotiate into something he has in hand as well. Since Joker sees the revealed encounter cards, he can mess aliens like Calculator.

Tuesday at 11:21am · Like · 2



**Peter Olotka** @Stephen Sloboda being absurd is my number one qualifier for a potentially fun alien. Being complex is my number one caution flag...ah the cosmic universe is a thing to behold. Also (general alien design principle) "Fair isn't funny!"

Tuesday at 11:26am · Like · 1

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**Bill Martinson** I think we're talking about two different kinds of absurdity here. Absurd and surprising gameplay outcomes are great! Absurdly complex and counterintuitive mechanics are ... not great. I think you both have the right goals, but let's figure out which kind of absurdity Joker is presenting. I'm tending to see it Stephen's way: it feels like the alien is "trying too hard" to be wacky, rather than being naturally wacky.

Tuesday at 11:35am · Like · 2



**Peter Olotka** I think that FFG has moved aliens to another level by giving certain aliens special "stuff", thus the Wild Cards. Plus it lets us figure out something funnier to do with them. I believe that the idea of having the whole game "go wild" is worth testing. Using Negotiates as wild is, well, more old school, like we might have done in the Eon days when we couldn't afford an extra for just one alien. I am a great believer in simplicity and with the current iteration I am at a loss as to what seems so complex about it> Play Wild, name what encounter card it is. Give to Joker post encounter or out of game if YOU are Joker. Both play Wild BOOM both lose.

Tuesday at 12:41pm · Like · 1



**Jefferson Krogh** I think what's throwing people is that JOKER's actual power is to actuate the Wild cards, and to collect them when other players use them. The execution of this idea is pretty simple. The way [Bill Martinson](#) worded it is simple and clear; it's just that it's a very different kind of power than we're used to.

As some like to play PENTAFORM as a universal house rule rather than a separate alien, this version of JOKER almost feels like a universal variant rather than a separate alien. Thus, some head-scratching.

At this point, I'd be fine playtesting either Phil's original design, or this one, or both, but I don't know that I have anything else useful to add about JOKER.

Tuesday at 12:57pm · Like



**Peter Olotka** @Jefferson Krogh for me this says it all "it's just that it's a very different kind of power than we're used to.."

Tuesday at 1:13pm · Like

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**Jefferson Krogh** I should add that very different kinds of powers are good things! I remember all the head-scratching when THE CLAW was added to the game. It's now one of my favorites because it's really different, fun to play, and has subtle effects on gameplay.

Anyway, hopefully tonight I can claim a small number of things in the cross-checking spreadsheet and work on that.

Tuesday at 1:16pm · Like



**Stephen Sloboda** Yeah, I was thinking maybe the whole set could have a "custom card" theme, where each alien adds their own special cards to the deck. We could go pretty nuts with that.

So here's another revision of my version, because I not only want the card to be fun and splashy, but I don't want it to be hard to understand:

Setup: Add the Joker Cards to the deck.

Joker Cards: Joker Cards are Encounter Cards with no value. They automatically lose to Attack Cards and Negotiate Cards. If both players play a Joker Card resulting in a tie, the defending player wins.

Joker's Power: As a main player or an ally, if you or the main player you are allied with reveals a Joker Card and the opponent does not, you MAY USE this power to change the value of the Joker Card to any other Encounter Card in the game.

Flare, Wild: As a main player, if you reveal a Joker Card and the opponent does not, use this to change the value of the Joker Card to any face value between 2 and 10.

Flare, Super: You may use your power normally even if the opponent reveals a Joker Card.

Notes: The Joker Cards are the Joker's offensive weapon, but also their own fail-safe. There's no need to remove them from game because they can be used AGAINST the Joker. Joker also doesn't need freebie Joker Cards because he can affect the game without even drawing one.

Furthermore, I don't know if this has been discussed yet, but Joker Cards as separate card types means the Joker is more susceptible to Plague. If he has a Joker Card, Plague will cause him to discard more. If he doesn't, the Plague will reveal that he has none, and that his power is not a threat.

Tuesday at 1:21pm · Like

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**Bill Eberle** Exactly. This really is a different kind of alien power; it's a power that has pieces of itself distributed through the deck whenever it is in the game. If and only if this alien has its power, these "Joker" cards can be played, by anyone, as wild encounter cards and become any encounter card that is in the game. The JOKER also has the advantage of being able to collect these bits of itself, the Joker cards, when other players play them and the disadvantage of having to remove these bits of itself when he or she (JOKER) plays them.

Tuesday at 1:23pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** @Bill: If the goal is for the Joker to have "pieces of itself distributed through the deck" then perhaps the other players should not be able to use those pieces. Instead of feeling like the Joker is ubiquitous through the deck, it feels like Joker paid the annual dues for everyone to use these cool new cards.

Tuesday at 1:35pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** @Stephen: It could be confusing to say that Wild cards lose to a Negotiate without additional clarification. This seems to turn the other player into Pacifist; I'll need to think about that. Also, a design principle to keep in mind is that the core game engine relies upon a binary resolution for revealed encounter cards: they must always resolve to an attack or negotiate; otherwise some other game effects break. (Some effects treat the outcome as binary, and have no idea what to do if some third, new kind of card appears.) Take a page from Morph ... any new kind of encounter card has three choices: (1) resolve to an attack; (2) resolve to a negotiate; or (3) immediately roll back or abort the encounter with no possibility of other effects coming into scope that need to know whether an attack or negotiate was revealed.

Tuesday at 1:42pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** @Peter: Part of the perception of complexity is that this is an alien power that other players "use" for you. That can be a big thing to get your head around, and I don't know that we've really even rolled it all around enough from an analytical perspective yet. It might be fine, it might be awesome ... but it's definitely non-trivial.

Tuesday at 1:46pm · Like

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**Peter Olotka** Does someone want to take a crack at short bullet point text for the wild cards? So other players don't have to read the Jokers power secretly upside down

Tuesday at 1:49pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** However, Stephen is definitely on the right track that the Wild cards should clearly define themselves as dead or loser cards. Thus, we know exactly what to do with them in the absence of Joker's power (whether he's zapped, homeless, or removed from the game), and this makes it more clear that it is the Joker himself who gives them their energy.

Tuesday at 1:49pm · Like



**Peter Olotka** Should we 00 the Wild Card in the event of a Joker power outage

Tuesday at 1:50pm · Like · 1



**Bill Martinson** @Peter: I was starting to do just that and had the following thought:

Wild cards can be used in place of an Encounter card ... so why not just make them an Encounter Card (on the appropriate kind of card template). Then ... what if they were "Wild Attack" cards, where their normal effect is that the OPPONENT chooses their value for you. Except when Joker is in the game and has the use of his power, he must *\*/use/\** it to let YOU choose the value instead of your opponent.

Tuesday at 1:52pm · Like · 2



**Bill Martinson** What's interesting about that is when the last Encounter Card in your hand is a WILD ATTACK, you have no choice but to play it ... ouch! Can you hang onto it long enough for Joker to get his power back? Can you maybe even *\*help\** Joker get his power back? This is starting to get interesting.

Tuesday at 1:55pm · Like · 2



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**Bill Martinson** Or when Joker is out of commission, can you successfully predict the right time to play your WILD ATTACK when the opponent reveals Negotiate, so it doesn't hurt you? I'm seeing some real dynamics come into play now.

Tuesday at 1:57pm · Like



**Bill Eberle** @Bill: Yes, as I imagine it, that's the sort of creature JOKER is. Everyone benefits. Of course, there's a price. If you play a wild card in an encounter, it's only because I am here and gave the card the power to be wild ... it's only fair that you give the card to me at the end of the encounter. Come home to mama. Then I'll employ the card for my own purposes, after which, alas, it will be gone forever.

Tuesday at 1:57pm · Like · 1



**Jack**

**Reda** <http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=276946275676217&set=pu.132086933495486&type=1&theater> Except fix the text so that it has nothing to do with the discard pile, etc.



**Fan Design Expansion Set**

Mockup of a wild card for Joker.

Tuesday at 1:58pm · Like ·



**Bill Martinson** @Jack: That version gives the effect only to Joker. I thought the desired effect was that anyone can use it if Joker has his power. In that regard, I think it would be better to make the WILD ENCOUNTER (or WILD ATTACK) card not

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mention Joker at all, and then let Joker's power do what it does.

Heck, players could even throw the WILD ATTACK cards into a game without Joker at all for a fun "poison" variant. (This to me gives the cards more gameplay value than 10 or 12 cards that can only be used when one particular alien is in play -- cf. the Witch Spell Book discussion.)

Tuesday at 2:03pm · Like



**Jack Reda** right, so fix the text, as I said. It's an encounter card was what I was driving at. Maybe with funny colors, but definitely with all the explanation necessary right on it (just the right text is all).

Tuesday at 2:05pm · Like · 1



**Christopher Aurel Oliveira** If the Wild Cards are usable by everybody... then Joker has no power. Would you play Virus if that meant everyone else also gets to multiply their ships by their cards AND retains use of their actual powers? Would you let everyone auto win if you were the Pacifist AND let them also retain their actual power? This is why as long as Joker cards are shuffled into the deck Joker is at best a non-power, because his "advantage" is shared by all while he has no backup power like every other player.

Tuesday at 3:22pm · Like



**Christopher Aurel Oliveira** I am convinced the only way a power like Joker can work is if his special cards are on his sheet and the only way other players can use them is to snag them via Negotiating and other such effects. I also believe they need to be only Encounter related cards. Here is a repost of how I think Joker should look: Game Setup: Place 10 Wild cards on this sheet. You have the power to be Wild. Whenever you are to draw cards from the deck, you \*may use\* this power to draw ONE Wild card among those from the deck you draw. All discarded Wild cards return to this sheet. Wild card text: "When played, you may declare this card to be any of the following: A Morph, A Reinforcement +6, A Crooked Deal +2 Negotiate, or a copy of any Encounter card in your hand (You must reveal the copy), if played as an encounter card, declare AFTER encounter cards are revealed" "If you are not Joker and you play this card, give it to the Joker."

Tuesday at 3:25pm · Like

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**Jefferson Krogh** I disagree, Christopher. JOKER is offering you a Faustian deal with these cards. Sure, you might auto-win this time. Or you might lose if your opponent played a Wild too. Either way, JOKER is gonna get that card, and now JOKER has an auto-win in his pocket. Are you sure you want to take that offer?

Like with TICK-TOCK. Do you really want to defend that planet, since that puts TICK-TOCK another tick closer to winning? Dig into what the alien makes the other players think, and you'll find the power's true value.

Tuesday at 4:01pm · Like · 2



**James Albright** If Pacifist had a clause where all negotiates can be played for an instant win for anyone (if the other player plays an attack card), but then after your instant win, you must give this card to the Pacifist, would that be as good, better or worse than Pacifist currently is? Answer that you'll see if Joker is problematic in his current form or not.

One problem is that after a few games, players would realize to just use Joker cards very sparingly, and often would just use them toward the end of the game, when it's win-or-die. By that point, Joker might be getting his Joker cards back, but he wouldn't necessarily even get a chance to use them!

Tuesday at 4:10pm · Like



**Peter Olotka** Only play testing will tell. I suspect there are a lot of twists and turns not only in the Joker's bag 'o tricks but in the way the myriad array of aliens in any given game will act and react to the WILD games.

Tuesday at 6:10pm · Like · 1



**Christopher Aurel Oliveira** Unless I am reading something wrong here Joker is always going to use these cards as Attack 40 unless Anti-Matter is present. This isn't different than Pacifist except the are less Wilds than Negotiates, the enemy players have no recourse of playing their own N, and no one else "shares" Pacifists power when they play an N against someone. How are people not seeing this?

Tuesday at 6:41pm · Like

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**Bill Martinson** I posted a mockup of a WILD ATTACK card to the Photos section, with explanation of how it works and the benefits in solving interaction problems.

Tuesday at 9:06pm · Like · 1



**Jefferson Krogh** Awesome, Bill. I really like the idea that these Wild cards could be used for multiple aliens/variants/effects.

Tuesday at 9:38pm · Like



**Ales Smrdel** Nice card, like the effect it has on the game. Does anyone have a clue what the current version of Joker is that will fit with this card mock?

Wednesday at 6:11am · Like



**Bill Martinson** @Ales: I think the corresponding power, based on Bill E's latest version, would go something like this. (Note that the Game Setup paragraph appears to be more fiddly now, but really it has been fiddly all along; this is just the first time we've tried to close all the gaps, and accommodate other powers that could have special timing for drawing their starting hands.)

Game Setup: When flares are being added to the deck, take 2 wild attack cards to begin your initial hand and shuffle the remaining 8 wild attack cards into the deck. When initial hands are dealt, you receive 6 more cards to complete your hand.

You have the power of Wildness. Whenever any player (including you) reveals a wild attack card, *\*/use/\** this power to force that player to ignore its game text and choose which attack card it becomes. After using your power, when encounter cards are being discarded, wild attack cards revealed by other players are added to your hand, while wild attack cards revealed by you are removed from the game.

Wednesday at 8:34am · Like

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**Peter Olotka** I wonder if having the Wild Cards always in the game diminishes Joker. FFG has a number of special alien pieces that are only in the game with a certain alien. There is no inherent reason to make the Wild Cards universal, just because otherwise they will be "wasted" as it were. How about making that option a separate WILD COSMIC rule set in the expansion set rules? That way we get the novelty of a JOKE game and the option to have them in if players choose WILD COSMIC.

Wednesday at 9:13am · Like



**Bill Martinson** @Peter: I don't think anyone would \*always\* have them in the game. They whack things out too much to ever become a staple. But having the option to throw them in once in a blue moon, just for something different, helps reduce the feeling that half a mechanic's worth of card slots were spent on one alien. To use up that many cards, an alien had better be truly awesomely outstanding - like a top 10 kind of power.

You are correct that a couple of aliens have special parts. Invader has three destiny cards, and Grudge and Saboteur have their own tokens. But these don't have the same feeling. Tokens don't have the perception of a scarce resource, because if we didn't get Grudge or Saboteur tokens on the card, we would just get more cosmic tokens, which everyone already has more than they can ever possibly use. So there's no real sense of "using up" the thick cardboard as a resource. No \*opportunity cost\* there.

Invader does have an opportunity cost of 3 cards, but that's a pretty low number, and Invader is a fairly exciting power concept. But once you have (for example) Joker uniquely using up 10 card slots and then say something like Witch using up another 10, the opportunity cost becomes significant and obvious: Those slots could have been an entire new \*mechanic\* that I could have used in any game, rather than 20 cards that are completely useless in 95% of all the games we play. Or they could even have been corrected versions of the 20 cards that are most screwed up in this edition. From a player perspective, there are lots of potential uses for that scarce resource that would be preferred over supporting an alien that the player may or may not even like.

So the theory is, if the cards can still work exactly as designed for the alien, but also have another use that reduces the sting of the opportunity cost, isn't that a win-win? Joker's effect on the Wild Attack cards is no less unique -- but the product is more versatile, and more likely to find favor with a wider audience of players.

Or, put another way, if we believe that Joker's interest level is actually \*dependent\* upon an ironclad exclusive hold on 10 cards, then perhaps something else needs to be improved to make it more interesting.

Is Reserve harmed by the fact that Reinforcement cards can be used without him? Nope ... it is a great power that gets played a lot, and he can do something great with those cards that \*nobody\* else can do.

Wednesday at 9:34am · Like · 2

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**Bill Martinson** But more to the point, how do you propose to \*forbid\* players from using them in this way? Put a stamp on the cards that says "This card may not be used unless Joker was in play at the start of the game?"

I'm not saying we make a big deal about using them separately. I'm just saying it's a \*feature\* that this is a possibility for those players who like to fool around with their components. If somebody has a complaint about the opportunity cost, the obvious answer is "hey, nothing is preventing you from experimenting with those cards in other ways -- that's what Cosmic is all about!"

Wednesday at 9:42am · Like



**Peter Olotka** Yes...a WILD COSMIC GAME rule set that lets players add them because its a fun quirky thing. I wanted to avoid the the compulsion to force them into general play because of their "footprint". We will face a similar issue with adding something on the order of Battle Wheels (Dune/Rex) to the game with a specific alien controlling their use.

Wednesday at 10:06am · Like



**Bill Martinson** Seems like that is taken care of on the rulesheet: "The Wild Attack cards are not normally added to the cosmic deck, but are included for use with the new Joker alien power." Done.

Officially they are Joker's property. Unofficially, we have not forbidden players from using them in their own creative ways, once in a blue moon.

Wednesday at 11:05am · Like



**Peter Olotka** Do you think the WILD COSMIC GAME (Aliens Gone WIld?) rule set is a problem, just to set a standard for a whacky wild game?

Wednesday at 1:41pm · Like

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**Bill Martinson** A problem in what way? Is this an existing proposal, or do you mean put something on the rule sheet that says you can play a WILD COSMIC GAME by using these cards without the Joker? If the latter, I don't see a problem with that, but trying to turn it into an official variant seems like overselling it a bit. Wednesday at 1:52pm · Like · 1



**Peter Olotka** Yes put something on the rule sheet that says you can play a WILD COSMIC GAME by using these cards without the Joker, official variance status is an elusive concept :)

Wednesday at 2:22pm · Like · 1



**Bill Martinson** I don't see a problem with that.

Wednesday at 2:32pm · Like



**Jefferson Krogh** I'm looking forward to seeing some creative use of these Wild Attack cards in the future!

Seems like the discussion has wound down. Shall we move this version of JOKER to the playtest pile, then? Is there a non-Joker-related one to look at next?

Wednesday at 2:46pm · Like



**Bill Martinson** Yes, how about working on something that isn't about changing your encounter card? I'm pretty well burned out on that theme.

Wednesday at 3:11pm · Like

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**Peter Olotka** Done and done....Bill will post up a BETA tomorrow AM and I have a 'something different' surprise for us to work on tomorrow...to further test out the cross checker

Wednesday at 4:59pm · Like · 1



**Christopher Aurel Oliveira** Still don't like it...

Wednesday at 9:21pm · Like