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### **Bill Martinson Cosmic Encounter**

Philosophical Musings on "The Artifact"

(a concern, and a positive suggestion with new gameplay possibilities)

One question I've had about the The Artifact artifact from the beginning is this: How will it affect the non-exalted players' feelings about the game, this expansion set, and "us"? It's easy for us to overlook this question, since if you're reading this, you're exalted!

In many social games, the idea of a player having special status is usually tied to some kind of achievement, and thus other players tend to look up to the "alpha" players who have that status. But in this case, the special status is not achieved, it's arbitrarily given; we got it because way back in 2011 we clicked "Like" on facebook.

Normally that would be fine ... it's really not all that different from getting a special alien power card because you went to GenCon 2000. But what makes this situation different is the fact that the special status is something you can use against the other players /always/, and something they can use /never/. Once the list of names is finalized, there is a permanent have/have-not list that lasts ... well, forever.

Which makes me wonder how various exalted players will end up using this card in our play groups: Use it all the time and smugly enjoy the opponents' discouragement? Decline to use the extra text? Leave the card out altogether?

Now, to (hopefully) bring this philosophical issue around to something practical, today I was wondering if the concept could be slightly tweaked so that the "exalted" part is less of a ha-ha-I-crush-you-even-MORE-and-you-can-never-do-this-to-me effect and more of a we-all-get-to-do-this-even-COOLER-thing effect because our exalted guy is the one who played the card. The card's baseline text would still be game-relevant (but not earth-shattering), and the exalted text — when played by somebody who is on the list — would kick it up a notch in cool factor — but /not/ be a brute-force "the special guy whacks you even harder" effect.

This is not to say that as the exalted player you would be forced to play something that helps everyone equally. On the contrary, as with Mobius Tubes and similar effects, you still control WHEN it happens, and thus can maximize its value for yourself, or minimize it for someone else. But this advantage comes about /naturally/ through situational play, rather than brute-force through card text that says "Bob always benefits more."

So instead of being the guy who comes back with a special sword to terrify and dominate his former neighbors for the next 40 years, you become the explorer who brings back the delicious exotic fruit to the village; the guy responsible for making every village picnic just that much sweeter. YOU still get to control it, because you have to be the person who plays the card (and thus it won't happen in every game, which is GOOD). But when it's played, everyone anticipates it, rather than dreading it.

When somebody else has the card, sometimes they would even try to get it into your hands so it can be played for its full effect. (Imagine, for example, if Mobius Tubes gave everyone 4 ships normally, or all their ships if played by the exalted player. If you and Bob have a lot of ships in the warp, Bob will want to get that card into your hands ... via a deal, compensation, Philanthropist, Trader, whatever.) More possibilities for interesting player interactions!

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So here's an example I thought of today to try to illustrate the concept:

Plays to shuffle all non-encounter cards from the discard pile back into the deck. If played by an exalted player, every player may also draw two flares from the unused flare deck, choose one to keep, and include the other one in the deck reshuffle.

Now /you're/ still the exalted special-status player, /you/ still strategically control when the card is used in "full" mode (such as when others have flares but you do not, giving yourself a larger boost, or when you have several encounter cards and thus are best able to /keep/ the new flare you just got) ... but the whole thing is now generally positive for everyone in your play group.

You bring them the coolness.

Thoughts?

## People Who Like This



**Jefferson Krogh**

Information Systems Manager at Kennerley-Spratling



**Phil Fleischmann**

University of California, Irvine



**Ales Smrdel**

Engineer V at ComTrad

## Discussion



**Bill Martinson** Rats, I forgot to mention this: One thing I like about the suggested illustration is that it makes The Artifact an effect that does something to /all other artifacts/ ... something that the name sort of implies it maybe might do.

December 10 at 12:12pm · Like

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**Jack Reda** I do like trying it to artifacts in some way, though the "get your own flare" is a nice effect as well. It could be that when played, you deal out all discarded artifacts, or something, and if played by the exalted ones, you also get your own flare out of the discard pile too.... or something.

December 10 at 12:22pm · Like



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**Jack Reda** Something else I was thinking about was it's nice and all to have our names appear in teeny tiny text in the rules book, but since it's a list of names that were part of the Facebook project, maybe the rules should just point to a link or a special Artifact page on the CE Facebook that new players can like and then become a part of.

December 10 at 12:23pm · Like · 1



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**Bill Martinson** I like how the proposed approach makes exalted players like the Wizard in the video game Gauntlet. Other players want the Wizard to be the one who uses the potion, because it is strongest in his hands. It's a special status that helps everyone and makes it fun to be the Wizard.

December 10 at 12:25pm · Like · 2



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**Peter Olotka** Very Cosmic thinking!

December 10 at 2:19pm · Like



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**Peter Olotka** I think the "what" should still percolate for a while as we plug ahead, but the essence is very nice

December 10 at 2:20pm · Like

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**Bill Eberle**

Wonderfully expressed, [Bill Martinson](#). Exactly the right kind of "stepping back" and asking "what are we really trying to do here?" that is most useful. Thank you.

Awhile back I was inspired by a post from Jacob Meraz and a series of articles by [Bernie DeKoven](#) to write a tech tantra article about the challenge of discovering new directions for Cosmic Encounter and some thoughts about strategies for finding new ways to "break the rules" of the game. <http://www.ideabout.com/techtantra/ttt11.html>



**Tech Tantra Thursday - Bill Eberle**

...really inspired me. I emailed Peter Olotka and said Jacob's post "made every bit of my work for this series worthwhile" . . . because it started me thinking about the dynamics and the specific psychologically significant moment when one or both players suggest a Negotiation and players decide an...

December 10 at 4:01pm · Like ·



**Bernie DeKoven**

I can't believe that I never saw that post. Very much appreciate learning of this, and how you are interpreting and incorporating my ideas (someone recently called them "teachings" - I never thought to apply that term to what I do, I guess ...See More

December 10 at 7:39pm · Unlike · 1



**Gerald Katz**

Shameless plug: This is why I proposed my idea of allowing you some ability based on a randomly chosen name. The ability gives honor to The Exalted but for everyone else who plays the game they aren't being snubbed, so to speak. Then again,...See More

December 10 at 9:07pm · Like · 2

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**Ales Smrdel**

@Bill Martinson: Very inspiring thinking which I hope will help this development process to break and mend the card rules to benefit the game and players.

Removing the extreme positive or negative emotional response from the player and s...See More

December 11 at 7:07am · Like · 1



**Joshua Hart** I think Bill's idea is pretty great. Having the Exalted effect be something for everyone increases the options/strategy as Bill said. Good stuff. I also like the idea that James Albright mentioned. He proposed that other players could pay a fee of some sort to use the Exalted effect. It lets the numerous players who do not contribute still play the card by the rules and get all of its effects.

December 12 at 9:07pm · Like