

Whimsy Cards

by
Lion Rampant
Sometime in the 1980s

Transcription by Brandon Blackmoor

Around a decade ago, a little company called Lion Rampant came out with a neat game device called Whimsy Cards. This was a deck of cards with plot devices on them. Each player would get one at the beginning of the game, and would play them at some point during the game when it would make the story more interesting (or make the PC's lives more difficult!). If the GM liked the use of the Whimsy Card, the player might get another one to replace the one she played (use of Whimsy Cards is always subject to GM approval and/or modification).

Whimsy Cards influenced quite a few games, although you haven't been able to buy Whimsy Cards themselves for several years now. You can, however, buy Storypath Cards from Three Guys Gaming. Storypath Cards are just as much fun, and in many ways are superior to, Whimsy Cards (for one thing, you get more cards). I suggest you run right out and buy a pack or two of Storypath Cards.

To give you a feel what Whimsy Cards were like, this is a listing of the various cards that were found in a Whimsy Card deck.

Abrupt Change of Events

Suddenly things are not happening the way they were a moment ago. Alliances switch, secrets are revealed, and new information surfaces.

Added Animosity

The ill-will between characters grows past current levels. This animosity can be openly expressed or harbored secretly in the heart.

Bad Tidings

Someone gets bad news. It might affect play or it might be news of distant and still important events.

Bizarre Coincidence

Two or more things come together against incredible odds. Old friends (and enemies) run into you in the supermarket, you just happen to have the rare item you need in your closet, etc.

Change of Heart

A character's feelings change and alter a decision. Pirates spare prisoners and hassled innkeepers decide to make room for you after all.

Double Jeopardy

Failure carries a double penalty. It could mean the normal penalty doubled, but it could also mean a penalty in addition to the normal one.

Draw a Blank

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Emotional Release

Strong emotions are let out. What are the emotions, and what triggers their sudden eruption? Is it a healthy release or a wild tempest?

Envy

Someone covets something that another person has. The envy could be expressed as an outright attempt to get the object of desire or something more subtle.

Erratic Behavior

Someone or something exhibits wild, unexpected behavior. Could be party members, enemies, mounts, spells, or equipment.

Error of Judgment

Someone's better judgment fails. The trouble that ensues depends on the specific error that is made.

Extreme Caution

Someone exercises extreme caution. Is the caution necessary, or is it exaggerated? What is the disadvantage from using so much caution?

Greed

Desire for wealth diverts a character from normal activity. The object of this desire can be specific (e.g. a certain necklace) or general (e.g. gold!).

Horrible Failure

What was a simple failure becomes a disaster. Attempts to persuade people backfire, arrows strike the wrong targets, and the wrong demons get conjured.

Inopportune Arrival

Someone or something shows up to the chagrin or disadvantage of someone. Unwelcome relatives and hated enemies are possibilities.

Internal Conflict

Conflicts arise within a person or within a group. How did these conflicts come about? How can they be resolved? Are they hidden? Poorly hidden?

Jealousy

The green-eyed monster rears its ugly head. How does the jealousy show itself?

Joy

Delight floods a character, making the world seem beautiful. What brings about this wonderful feeling?

Lasting Impression

An impression is made, or an old one is reborn. Emotional experiences return to a character affecting actions or something happens that will leave an impression for years (e.g. a scar).

Malice

Wrath rises in a character toward someone or something. Even if the anger can be held in check, it will affect the person's behavior.

Misguided Love

Love affects a character in ways others fail to approve of. The character seems out of control. (To the lover of course, the love is true and wonderful; to others, it is misguided.)

Misplaced Trust

Undeserved trust is or has been placed in someone or something. "Faithful" hirelings desert, "sturdy" ropes break, and politicians are believed.

Moral Dilemma

A character is faced with a moral question. What should the character do? What are the personality traits or personal values that make the decision difficult?

New Role

You take over another character, either of a player or of the gamemaster. The original owner can ask for it back and veto your actions while you have the new role.

Ominous Omen

Something suggests future evil, an event that portends calamity, misfortune, or death. The players might not understand the significance of the omen.

Parting of Ways

People or things go their separate ways. The parting can be happy or sorrowful, anticipated or sudden. Depending on the circumstances, those who part might meet again.

Personality Clash

The personalities of two characters come into conflict. The cause of the clash and the gravity are up to you. How could the conflict be resolved?

Pity

Sympathetic sorrow for another person affects a character's actions. This pity might provoke action or merely set a mood.

Pivotal Decision

Someone is faced with a decision that will affect something dramatically. A potential ally chooses sides, or a leader chooses a plan of action.

Second Chance

Someone gets a second chance. Maybe that bullet missed the heart after all, or maybe the character realizes something that allows a second skill attempt. You must give the reason.

Sloth

Someone is very lazy. Guards become lax, squires neglect their duties, and bartenders give you slow service.

Something Missing

Something that should be here is not. The seriousness of the lack depends on what is missing. It could be your sword or a friend you were supposed to meet.

Special Circumstances

Unusual conditions change the normal course of events for good or ill. The circumstances can be personal, such as character's mood, impersonal, such as the weather.

Spectacular Success

What was a normal success becomes spectacular. Those rare, unexplainable feats are now possible. The gamemaster must watch this card because it is easy to abuse.

Sudden Reversion

Suddenly someone or something reverts to the way it used to be. People revert to earlier patterns of behavior and problems go back to the way they were at the beginning.

Tables Turn

Something in the situation reverses, an advantage turns in to a disadvantage, a disadvantage turns into an advantage. It is a surprise to all.

Things Are Not As They Seem

Characters have been deceived, perhaps without malicious intent. The truth need not be known now. A good card for a secret note to the GM.

Trade Places

You take over the role of another character and the player who was running that character takes yours. Either of you can end the trade at any time.

Turn for the Worse

Things were going well, but suddenly something comes up that changes things for the worse. What is the change? How can those affected overcome the new problem?

Uterior Motive

A character has motives besides those that are already known, and the ulterior motive can conflict with the surface motive. A good Whimsy for a secret note to the gamemaster.

Unexpected Aid

Much to your surprise, aid shows up. Aid could be anything from fog that helps you sneak into an enemy camp to the arrival of the cavalry. But does this aid have a price?

Unexplained Consequence

Someone's actions have results that were not, perhaps could not have been, foreseen. The result can be good or bad, minor or extreme.

Unexplained Event

Something happens. You don't know why.

Vivid Detail

Break into the storyline to describe something in detail so the whole group can share the image. You cannot directly change the course of events, but you might inspire the GM.