

WEATHERGUARD GOLD ~ 2009 SPELL SAGA FIRST VERSION



Dear Weatherguard, this letter is to acknowledge the debt you paid to own a piece of gaming history--The first ever index card prototype for Spell Saga.

Spell Saga was created somewhere between long drives from Nashville, Tennessee to St. Charles, Missouri (about 6 hours as the Honda Civic flies), and the dining room table of my former Father-In-Law.

Listen, can I be honest? Things were pretty bad back then. I had just--JUST become married that June, and I was alone. And very much overwhelmed. Retreating into a fantasy world which might contain a hint of a future (both mine and the stories) was just what I needed to do. It was a place for me to hide, and leave a part of myself. That's something I think people might do in an abusive situation. You take part of yourself out and hide it for awhile, until you can come back to it again. Maybe. I don't know, I've only been in the one (unless you count my family, and OH GOD, we are not going there. I don't have enough room on this letter)!

Andy (that was my father-in-law, was eighty-or-so years old. Ancient. He didn't act like it though He, my then wife, and her brother Jeep (older than us, but lived at home...a long story and not mine to tell) would often spend the days watching TV quite loud in the living room together. My ex and I were there every few months, sometimes weeks. Mostly on holidays. It was sort of a safe space for me. And it always smelled the same, like flour and coffee ("THESE ANTS!" Andy would scream every time he went into the kitchen for more coffee, shouting over the TV his personal updates on the insect war constantly thriving in his kitchen). I would ignore it all, headphones plugged into an iPod video, listening to the same songs over and over again as I scribbled ideas at the kitchen table. He had a vinyl tablecloth I would have to roll out of the way if I wanted to make things.

I still remember the first time I played with these index cards. I dropped out of the world for about thirty minutes or so and become completely immersed in this horrible new world I had created. I knew right away something special had just happened. It was like a magic trick. One which would need a lot of work. There were hardly any rules!

Looking over these cards, I am noticing a lot of interesting details. The first of course, being our hero is named "The Last Bard". The masks from Deck Two ~ The Forest started here, and there's a harp, and two revolvers. The Green Song makes a fairly early appearance in its original namesake: Song of The Crumble. The Lost Pixie is here as well, though it was my original intention that our hero would eat the pixie when he grew hungry enough. I'm not sure what an "old fashioned haggie box" is, but I like the name. We've got the Lover & Lilly Mandrake's Gentleman's house (originally she had a name, and it was Abilene--The Hero was named Exodus...). None of the enemies seemed to have names yet, except the Cockatrice, Hickibob & Goblins. And we have folk, and some familiar places. One of them, "The Land of His Enemies", finally made it in name as a holofoil card sent out to everyone who spent a bunch of money on the fundraisers. It is also meant to be the last card made for Deck One ~ The Highlands.

Oh, and one majorly important feature: the deck was two sided. Yeah. I came up with that in the shower. A terrible idea! But it was my brain's first attempt in creating a story with moving, ever-changing parts. I based it on the idea of a cassette tape. There walso magic-quakes (I hated them as soon as I came up with them, but I needed some sense of doom or drama as I began), and the last tower was a bit bigger I think, and the treasury gave you a Spell-Song instead of an instrument. Probably the biggest difference in The Crumbling Tower was it originally had a guardian you would have to fight.

It's been almost nine years since I first played with these cards. A lot has changed, not just in the game, but my life as well. I still remember my ex-wife calling me at work, in my new life where I was divorced and remarried. It was a fight--immediately. Just as it always was. And then she was crying, and she told me Jeep was gone. That her father was too. I told her I was sorry. And she told me she had a kid with someone. I sort of just nodded into the phone, half in shock (2012 had already been a rough year) and half in shame that I couldn't react more maturely in front of someone who had damaged me beyond all comprehension.

I still haven't dealt with Jeep's passing. Imagining him playing the game was a big inspiration behind Deck Two ~ The Forest. I have trouble finding those memories of him, and that time in my life. I recently tried to find the exact address of Andy's House using Google maps, and even though I drove six hours to get there every few weeks for two full years, I can't for the life of me remember the way. Sometimes you put parts of yourself away for safekeeping, and sometimes you lose those things you had to hide. That's what Spell Saga means to me, in some ways. It was part of myself I could hide away, and find whenever I needed it, and share it accordingly. I guess that's art.

-mE.

In this box you will find a stack of index cards created in just outside of St. Louis, Missouri, USA.