

Deckbuilding Basics

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Deckbuilding Basics

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[GRIAN]

Statement of unnamed... *unnamed?* Not unknown? Hold on... (*papers shuffle*) ...Wasn't it 'unknown' on the desert one?

...Yeah, I thought so... weird. Why would they be labeled differently? Etho was pretty consistent about his formatting, at least from what I've seen so far.

I guess we'll find out. Statement of unnamed, regarding an encounter with a... trading card collector. Interview originally transcribed ten years ago, August 8th, 2012. Statement begins.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

[Click]

[GRIAN]

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[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

I found the ad on Craigslist.

I know, I *know*, never trust anything you find on Craigslist, but before all this happened, I'd kind of made a hobby of browsing ads on internet listings and sometimes even going in person to check them out. It was all just for fun! The worst consequence I'd ever gotten was an awkward moment or two and a missed bus.

And to be clear, it was never a defining aspect of my personality. Or I. Well. It wasn't anything I was *passionate* about, which is why I can still *tell* you about it. But it was definitely something I did, usually when I was bored. Opened a new tab and started looking around for the weirdest listings I could find.

So of course his ad caught my eye. He'd titled it something like "Deckbuilding Help Wanted!" and it was listed as local to my area, so I clicked through and found a brief description of his situation- He'd recently gotten into some obscure trading card game, he needed some help with building his own deck, and he wanted to meet in person at the local library. He'd even included a picture of himself, a normal-looking white guy smiling at the camera, to prove he wasn't a murderer. In retrospect, maybe that should have tipped me off.

Well, all I know about trading card games, I *think*, is that one of my high school friends blew his entire savings on Magic cards this one time and then had them confiscated by administration, so I couldn't offer him any advice except maybe "Actually list which game you're trying to build a deck for" and "Try the games store instead of Craigslist." My curiosity was thoroughly piqued by this point, though, so I contacted him about meeting up.

I wasn't *really* expecting a reply. Most of the weird listings I reached out to back in the day didn't bother- I think they could tell I just wanted to have a bit of fun at their expense. It *probably* wasn't hard. I'm not a very good liar. I- I think.

But he got back to me within the next few hours, and we arranged to meet the next day, after work. He seemed really eager. In retrospect, that also should have tipped me off, but at the time I just assumed he was even weirder than I'd thought.

Look- I *know* there were a lot of red flags here. I *get it* if you think I'm stupid for going. I do too! But I'm going to stop pointing them out now, because we've established that I *so* shouldn't have gone, and it's time to tell you about the *guy*.

We met in the local library, like we'd planned. He was waiting for me at a table in the back, staring at the front door like he'd been sitting there for hours, a notebook and a binder full of those clear plastic sheets with pockets for cards set out in front of him. I walked over, a little surprised he was there at all. You really never know with these kinds of guys. That time with the missed bus I mentioned? I was waiting *hours* for some guy trying to sell me a haunted Lego set who never showed.

The guy introduced himself as Beef, which must have been short for *something*, although I can't imagine what, and invited me to sit down, so I did. Right across from him. He studied my face for a bit, and then picked up a pen and started fiddling with it.

"Kinda looks like you've already got a deck there," I said, because I hadn't come to this meeting to sit through awkward silences.

He sighed and said that that was exactly the problem he was faced with, actually. Apparently he'd

found the cards in the binder abandoned on the bus, and he'd been planning on keeping them, but whoever they belonged to, a Joe something? I can't remember. But whoever it was had cared enough about them to stick a bookplate in the front, so Beef wanted to return them. Not before he'd assembled his own deck, though, because the game- *whatever* it was; the cards in his binder didn't look like Magic cards, and there weren't any Pokemon on them, and I don't know any other trading card games- had caught his interest.

I thought that was weird, because everyone knows anything left on the bus operates under finders-keepers rules, but I'd already established that he was a weirdo, so I just went with it.

He asked me if I wanted to help him out with all that, and I said sure, because that was what I was there for, technically. Mostly I wanted to see how far I could take this, now that I was actually here and talking to him.

He said, "That's a huge help, thanks! Oh, what was your name again?"

So I told him.

And, okay. I don't know how to say this without sounding like *I'm* one of the internet weirdos. And I'm fine with you guys thinking I'm stupid! I'm less fine with you guys thinking I'm weird. Well- then again, I did come to the *VOID Institute* for this one. You're all the weirdos already. So.

He took my name.

I told him what my name was, *whatever it was*, and he stopped fiddling with his pen and started writing. I followed his gaze down to his notebook. He'd outlined the shape of a card there, and he was filling in the spot where the title goes with what *must* have been my name.

Except, with every neat letter, I could recognize it less. It was like it was being *drained* out of me. *Extracted.*

Like I was being *juiced*.

He took my name.

I wanted to run right then and there- who wouldn't! But I, okay, I know I said I would stop talking about all my missed red flags. It's just, I just assumed it was my brain malfunctioning, and that I'd be fine in a few minutes. And this was a top-tier internet weirdo! I didn't want to go back home and tell my boyfriend "Yeah I met up with the trading cards guy, but I left after five minutes." Which was *stupid*, I know. But it meant that when Beef started asking me questions about my life and hobbies, I didn't run out of the library screaming.

The rest of the conversation is kind of a blur. I remember the questions he asked me, but I can only really remember *that* I answered. I don't know what I said. I just remember watching his pen scratch against the notebook paper in his blocky handwriting, filling in the part of the card where the attacks go.

There was something transfixing about it. I was lightheaded, by that point. Like I'd just given blood. I think if I'd stood up, I would have just fallen right back over. Maybe that's why I didn't just get up and leave, at that point. It felt like I didn't have anything left in me to keep me upright, if I had.

Really, I'm not sure he *didn't* take my blood. He was wearing an apron splattered with the stuff, after all. Yeah, yeah, another red flag. I thought it was *paint*. So would anyone! For all I know, it *was* paint. He didn't say!

Better story if it's blood, though. And I think I'm allowed to make some things up about him, because he cut all the important parts out of me and used them as fodder for his *stupid trading card game*.

I don't... I don't know who I am anymore.

I don't mean this in a poetic sense. I mean that I don't know anything about myself anymore. I don't know my name. I don't know what I do for a living. I don't know what I do for fun. I don't know what I love. I don't know what I hate. I don't even know what my favorite kind of *soup* is, because he asked me about that too, and wrote it down on his card, and I *let* him.

It didn't take him long to get the attack section filled out. It *feels* like it should have taken him longer to... *juice* me for my personality. But it didn't. It can't have been more than fifteen minutes since I'd sat down before he finished off the last attack, whatever it was, and started sketching. It didn't take me more than a few seconds to realize that he was sketching *me*.

I was feeling all... lightheaded and empty, at that point, and all I could think was, well, at least he can't steal my face off my *skull*, so I didn't steal his pen, or just... push my chair over and run. At this point we were past red flags and into, I don't know, a crime actively in progress. But I'm stupid. And I was *tired*.

And so he did. He took my face.

It's not- I still *have* a face. Obviously. But I can't recognize myself in the mirror anymore. My boyfriend hit me with an umbrella when I came home that night because he thought I was a burglar, and I couldn't even shout at him that I was- *whatever* my name is. We got it worked out eventually, once I had a few bruises, but I think he's planning to break up with me.

Honestly, I don't blame him. *I'd* break up with me, too, if I could. I'm just glad Beef didn't ask about him.

He just finished sketching me, closed his notebook, smiled at me, thanked me for my help, and left me sitting there alone in the library, drained completely dry of self.

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[Click]

[GRIAN]

Most of this one is unverifiable, for... fairly obvious reasons. There's no name on the file, absolutely nothing identifying about our statement giver- Etho *did* include a picture, here, but even looking at it I can't really tell... what I'm looking at. It's like there's nothing there *to* see. Which is... extremely frustrating, because this *could've* been a potential way to try and track down Joe Hills without going through Cleo, if it wasn't the *least helpful statement ever*.

(Groans)

I tried to find the online listing the statement giver referenced, but if it ever existed it seems to have been deleted. Not surprising, given it's been ten years.

I wonder if he's got a full deck by now.

[Click]

End Notes

this statement was once again written by my lovely delightful co-writer zeph! the idea for this statement was also theirs. i hope you guys enjoyed reading it as much as i did! also go give beef's season 9 and his insane minecraft card game some love, it's wild.

additionally, i have now compiled the list of some other archives fics and authors i recommend into a handy dandy [rec list](#), so go check that out if you want some more excellent content in this au while you're waiting on the next statement!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!