

THE WANDERING CHILD PHENOMENON

What is the Wandering Child Phenomenon? Put very simply, the Wandering Child Phenomenon is a cultural craze that has swept through Japan like a tsunami since its inception in mid-2026, and is now beginning to make itself known in America.

In the early and mid 20's, concern was growing in Japan over the decline in physical and emotional health among that country's youth. Physically, the children were suffering from multiple ailments stemming from spending all day interfaced into the net, eating fast food, living in cramped quarters and polluted cities. Obesity, carpal tunnel syndrome, muscular and nervous degeneration, laziness and respiratory illness were reaching record highs. Emotionally, their problems ranged from a general state of apathy induced by Net-preoccupation to severe nervous breakdowns and panic attacks brought on by the increasingly brutal and competitive standards of Japan's schools.

In 2024, the Japanese Parliament appointed a special commission of politicians, industry leaders, child psychologists, pediatricians and sociologists to discuss the problems plaguing Japan's youth. Their goals were to find a way to keep Japan's children physically fit, mentally keen, emotionally balanced, and yet, have them retain their competitive edge in the marketplace.

The answer came in the form of an old anime TV series. The children of Japan had fallen into a rut, and the best way to get them out of that rut was to give them something to achieve and aspire to. They would create games for the children to compete within. But it wasn't until Segatari stepped forward nearly a year and a quarter later that the commission began to make positive strides.

Segatari, a former industry-leader in the creation of Net-based games, had recently lost much of their net worth thanks to some bad corporate decisions that resulted in the suicide-deaths of nearly half of its board of directors, as well as its president and vice president. The company's new president, Genma Saito created the framework for the first of the Wandering Child games, CrecheMon.

CrecheMon was originally designed to be Japan's answer to the home-cloning craze. The genetically-designed pets they engineered were small, cute, inoffensive, well-suited to a crowded home environment and, ultimately, disposable. With the advent of Virtuality, Segatari created a game-structure that allowed the players to "duel" their pets against one another with virtual special effects and a nerve-control technology that allowed the players to remote-control their pets. But the true genius of Segatari's plan was yet to unfold.

Segatari used the grants from the commission to create a nationwide chain of hostels in Japan, and they set up a massive network of cellular repeaters, computers and satellites, with three Artificial Intelligences to monitor this network. They hired Medtechs to staff these hostels, and then they began to market their games.

CrecheMon. It was a buying craze unrivaled in the history of Japan. You bought your child a home creche and a small V-term-like device and they would breed genetically-engineered pets. Any child over 11 could then, with the permission of their parents and the consent of a child psychologist, join the CrecheMon League. Upon joining the League, the child would become legally emancipated, but still a ward of the State. The children would then wander throughout Japan, moving from hostel to hostel and camping in-between, playing games against other League Members during the day and taking Virtuality-based schooling on their V-terms in the evenings. The League would then monitor their grades and their win/loss records through the cellular uplink in their V-terms and assign them "League Money" (good for buying food and merchandise at the League hostels) for the duels they won and the Virtuality-based homework they completed. While the system was far from perfect, it fostered competitiveness, physical fitness and self-reliance among the children that chose to leave home and join the league, and the grades maintained by the Leaguers were still high enough to compete with the grades of students who remained in traditional schools. As an afterthought, Segatari also hired teams of Solos and Sysops to monitor the children and protect them from predatory adults and other dangers that might await them on the road. They also hired Wandering Kids with outstanding win-records to become "Villains" and add a bit of dramatism to the games.

Soon, two other game companies, Nintactivision and TigerSoft, contributed their entries into this new gaming craze, following Segatari's example and setting up nationwide resources for their own player-leagues. Nintactivision's entry, Feud-Fighters, was designed to be more popular with older (14 and up) players, while TigerSoft's game, Heart of Magic, was marketed towards girls. All of the games were designed to get the children away from home and away from sedentary lifestyles.

The government commission, now renamed the Wandering Child Consortium (Or WCC), had accomplished what it had initially set out to do, and the benefits were good all around.

In early 2027, President Windham initiated contact with the Japanese government regarding the Wandering Child games. The Eden Cabal had become a problem, and he needed a way to control and monitor children. Unfortunately for kids in America, Windham and the ISA were nowhere near as benevolent as the WCC.

WANDERING CHILDREN IN AMERICA

In mid 2027, Segatari, TigerSoft and Nintactivision began setting up shop in America. Because it is much larger than Japan, however, they could not achieve the saturation that they did in Japan. In Japan, Wandering Kids were never more than a two day hike away from a league hostel, but in America, you could go for a week of hiking through dangerous territory and still not reach another hostel. The three companies were forced to pool their resources and the governmental Grants provided by the ISA, and set up "Unified Gaming Centers" throughout America. The idea worked so well that they took the concept back to Japan and set up UGC's there, as well. When they released their games on the American Market, the revenues they made more than made up for the losses they incurred. A feeding frenzy struck the Malls of America, and American parents jumped at the chance to send their kids wandering around America.

Unfortunately, the ISA has hired far fewer Solos and Sysops to monitor the children. Instead, they have pooled together ten satellite-based AI's to monitor things.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

The three companies that make up the Wandering Child Consortium make their money from two sources: The sale of their merchandise, and the money given to them by the Japanese government and the ISA. The Governments pay the WCC to educate the children, which is much cheaper than keeping the kids in school. Under the traditional system of schooling, the ISA would annually disburse about \$3500 to each school for each student attending. Since the Wandering Child games feature monitored virtual education, saving the ISA the time and trouble of paying for teachers, administrators, school buildings and utilities, they are able to disburse a reduced amount of money to the WCC; about \$1500. The WCC takes \$300 of that to pay for its needs, invests \$100 into a health/dental insurance fund and circulates the remaining \$1100 amongst the Wandering Kids in the form of UG Dollars. And since UG Dollars are only good for buying stuff at Unified Game Centers, the money circulates back into the system. If a kid neglects their studies, the WCC's computers make a note of this, and the WCC's AI's kick in, transmitting instructions to the kid's V-term to make them lose games. Eventually, the child is forced to redouble their scholastic efforts so that they can make up for their lost wages.

Is the money recirculated to the players enough for the kids to subsist on? Unless they are diligent students and expert duelists, it isn't. Even if they restrict themselves to a diet of kibble and ramen, their budgets are still quite lean. Most are forced to call Mom and Dad at least once a month for money to get by -- which they are happy to send, because it's still much cheaper than caring for their kids at home. Many Wandering Kids have taken to foraging, fishing and hunting in their travels between cities to supplement their diets.

KIDS ARE DISPOSABLE

Alright, so you're asking how *any* parent could conceivably go along with this. Well, this is 2027. Parents are constantly fed misinformation and disinformation about sending their kids off to become nomads. It benefits the parents first and foremost by allowing them to work for sixteen or more hours a day without worrying who is feeding and watching the kids. In Japan, where the laws are strict and the protective resources are greater, Wandering Kids rarely

come to harm. America needed convincing, however, and the media was all too happy to do it.

What really sold America's parents, however, was the ability to relinquish responsibility for their children. With more and more children becoming carbon plague victims, juvenile delinquents or worse, parents are desperate for alternative means of caring for and coping with their kids. And the WCC's media blitz, portraying only the positive side of the Wandering Child Phenomenon was quick to assuage any fears, misgivings and guilt the parents were feeling. It also helps that the children actually beg to be allowed to live this way.

How many Wandering Kids actually come to harm in America? Well, aside from the beatings that they will inevitably take from GoGangers, MegaViolents and other Yogangs, less than 2% of them ever suffer anything worse than a broken limb or borderline malnutrition.

WELCOME TO THE ISA

Although the Wandering Child system works nearly flawlessly in Japan, the ISA is another matter altogether. The ISA loves the system and uses it to manipulate, control and monitor children for signs of the Carbon Plague, but they have less concern for the safety and welfare of the children. And America is fraught with dangers that don't exist in Japan. Flesh peddlers, perverts, white slavery merchants, kidnapers, some fringe elements of Final Quarantine and some Clarkers are known to predate Wandering Kids in America. The ISA has also thoroughly infiltrated the system with Raptors. Raptor Wizards and Scanners travel the countryside fulfilling their dramatic roles as "Villains" and diligently collecting data on the kids they duel.

GAMES WITHIN GAMES

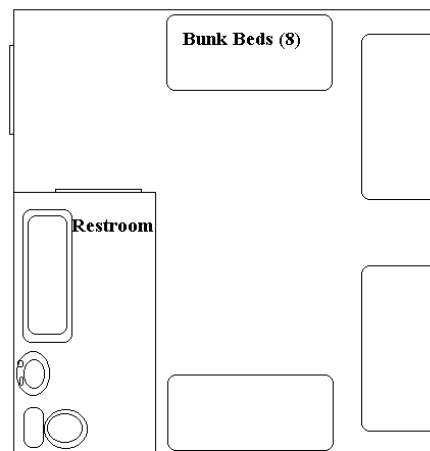
Not all of the WCC's problems in America come from the ISA. Networkers and Wizards have been known to hack the game just for the fun of it. Beastieboys have corrupted the CrecheMon home creches and genetic templates for their own ends. The Eden Cabal has a team of Rache-AI's constantly monitoring the WCC's data. Tinkertots tamper with the hardware, V-punks tamper with the software and MallBrats shoplift

thousands of dollars worth of goods from Gaming Centers and sell it off at high discounts.

The Eden Cabal regards the Wandering Child games with a mixture of alarm and extremely-guarded optimism. Sure, the ISA has thoroughly corrupted the system, but the designers of the system did originally have the best interests of the children at heart. Morgan, in particular, thinks that the games are beneficial, both in teaching the children strategy and as a recruitment tool.

UNIFIED GAMING CENTERS

A Unified Gaming Center is much like a combination hotel, arcade, and strip mall all combined into one. Each Center is staffed by one full-fledged Medtech ("Senior Resident Advisor") and three student Medtechs ("Junior Resident Advisors"), one Netrunner ("SysOp"), Two Solos ("Security"), two Techies ("Maintenance") and a few mundane staff members (clerks, maids, janitors). Their jobs are to monitor and maintain the health and well-being of Wandering Kids who pass through the

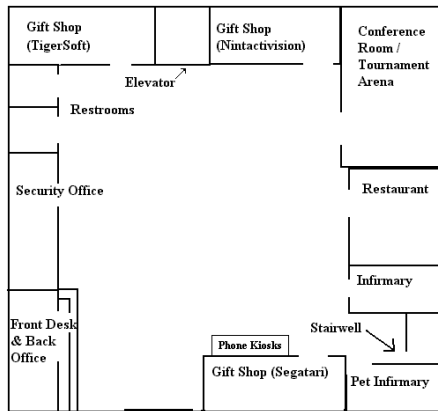


TYPICAL ROOM LAYOUT

UGC, and report this information to the WCC's computers. And you can bet that the ISA has its eyes and ears among the staff and Raptors wandering through the halls.

Each UGC has at least 30 dormitory rooms, with 8 bunk-beds to each room. Any league member may stay at a UGC free of charge at any time, for however long they need to. Sleeping arrangements are NOT co-ed, although rampant, lurid tales abound about midnight rendezvous made in the UGC's barracks and hallways.

The main lobby of the UGC includes a check-in desk, a bank of phones for calling home, an infirmary for humans, a second infirmary for pets, a security office and three gift shops maintained by Segatari, Intactivision and



A Typical Lobby Layout -- Unified Gaming Center, Southeast Night City

TigerSoft. These gift shops sell games and accessories, but they also sell clothes, food prepacks, camping equipment, toys, and even light weaponry (tasers, paintball guns, knives and the like), all of it heavily decorated with corporate logos.

The Security team maintained by the UGC is equipped with two decommissioned police interceptor automobiles. With everything else they provide, the WCC decided against the use of Spinners.

WANDERING CHILD MALL-STUFF

CRECHEMON

Segatari CrecheMon Home Creche - \$900

The Japanese answer to home-cloning kits. In cities that have very little room for humans, much less pets, the CrecheMon is the perfect answer to the home-cloning craze.

CrecheMon are a form of genetically-designed pets. Most are about the size of a hamster; the largest are the size of a cat. These creatures have been genetically designed from the DNA of existing creatures and made into idealized pets. Over 40 types of CrecheMon have been created by Segatari's crack team of Geneticists and more are on the way. They're cute, cuddly, can be

made to sleep for up to 18 hours a day, they don't shed, they have soft claws, cannot breed and are easily litterbox trained... They're perfect pets to raise in a cramped urban apartment.

Your CrecheMon Home Creche comes with four basic genetic templates and can grow creatures in eggs or an internal womb. You insert the template, select the sex of the creature you're breeding, place a few of your hairs into the pheromonal-imprinter and Poof! one week later, out pops your CrecheMon; a perfect docile pet that is programmed to be obedient to you. Needless to say, many kids will use their home Creche to grow pets for their friends, which is just fine with Segatari, because the creatures cannot live without their specially-made CrecheMon food.

Extra templates can be bought, traded, won in contests, found on the Net or decoded by diligently watching the episodes of the CrecheMon cartoon.

What happens when a kid gets bored of their CrecheMon? Their parents simply buy a "Black Pill" at the local toy store. The Black Pill painlessly kills the CrecheMon, then (rather ghoulishly) internally converts it to hard plastic, leaving a furry (or feathery or scaly) plastic statuette behind. CrecheMon that are lost or abandoned don't last long. If they aren't made into a meal by stray cats or killed in traffic, they die from not being fed the proper enzymes. If a CrecheMon dies, and the parent wants to avoid awkward questions, they can take the creature to a Unified Game Center, plop down \$40 in addition to the regular cost of the pet, have a new pet quick-grown and have it imprinted with RNA from the previous pet.



The CrecheMon Home Creche comes with enough raw materials to grow 2 CrecheMon.

It takes a Difficult *Kitbash* roll to make the Creche accept non-CrecheMon genetic templates, and another Difficult roll to disable the pheromonal imprinter. It takes a Difficult

Daktari roll to balance the enzyme and chemical levels in the Creche to prevent the resultant animal from being growth-accelerated, having its claws softened and/or becoming dependent on the enzymes and chemicals found in CrecheMon food. It takes a N. Impossible roll to prevent the CrecheMon from being born Sterile.

CrecheMon V-Battle CrecheDeck (with 4 Collars and CrecheMon League Membership Kit) - \$200

Having a home Creche means you can grow CrecheMon, but do you have what it takes to battle them? No, not until you get the CrecheMon V-Battle Crechedeck!

The CrecheDeck is a small dedicated v-term about the size of a gameboy. It has a joypad and four keys. What does the CrecheDeck do? Simple. It allows you to control your CrecheMon virtually. The CrecheMon collars that come with the CrecheDeck contain electrodes similar to those of V-trodes. These allow the kid holding the CrecheDeck to send instructions directly to the CrecheMon's brain. You can make it go left, right, forward, backwards and you can make it jump.

Now, try as they might, the creators of CrecheMon couldn't make pets that could breathe fire, shoot electricity or spray water. What they *could* do was create V-sims that mimiced these effects and build them into the collar. To anyone wearing V-trodes, it appears that a CrecheMon can do a whole lot of amazing things. To someone not wearing V-trodes, however, the CecheMon seem to be doing some odd sort of pantomime.



Like everything CrecheMon, this system is built for upsell. Once you have the CrecheDeck, you need to buy "Special Moves" for your CrecheMon. Four Special Moves cards come with the CrecheDeck, but they're generally weak and useless. These Special Moves are keyed to the four buttons on your CrecheDeck and allow your CrecheMon to launch some visually stunning Virtual Attacks against other people's CrecheMon. The whole Virtual battle is monitored by the CrecheDeck of the duelists involved, much like an interactive video game. While the animals themselves aren't harmed, it

appears that they're fighting pretty fiercely. And once the CrecheDecks decide on a loser, the losing animal's collar induces the animal into a deep sleep. Winning a duel means you earn UG Dollars. Losing means you get Game Money deducted from your account.

When not used as a remote control for your pets, the CrecheDeck also has an online teaching program. Through this, you can do schoolwork (made more interesting and more fun by having CrecheMon present) and earn UG Dollars for completed assignments. They can also be used to download and watch the CrecheMon cartoon series.

CrecheDecks contain a tracking device, a cellular uplink that broadcasts the win/lose statistics and schoolwork of that trainer to Segatari's central computers, a "Panic Button" that summons police and WCC Solos to the location of the CrecheDeck, and a DNA/Voiceprint/Fingerprint/Dental record of the child who owns the CrecheDeck.

Individually-sold CrecheMon Special Moves cards - \$5 - \$100 based on rarity



Virtuality cards that interface with your CrecheDeck and the control collars on your CrecheMon to make it look like your CrecheMon is launching devastating attacks against your opponent's CrecheMon. A competent V-punk can forge Special Moves cards with a V. Difficult *Private Idaho* roll.

Individually-sold CrecheMon Templates - \$15 - \$200 based on rarity

You can buy the templates of your favorite CrecheMon and clone it off as many times as you like. Well... Except for the fact that most Rare CrecheMon templates are designed to degrade a little bit every time they're scanned by the Home Creche's laser scanner. A V. Difficult *Daktari* skill roll is necessary to duplicate templates.

CrecheMon Special Moves Starter Deck - \$60

A deck of 20 Special Moves cards. Most of the cards in the Starter Deck are fairly common, although there are a few powerful moves.

CrecheMon Special Moves Booster Pack - \$20

A pack of 10 randomly-packaged Special Moves cards or variable power and rarity.

CrecheMon food - \$5 for a week's supply

Contains all the vital nutrients and enzymes to keep your CrecheMon alive.

CrecheMon Sleep-Inducing Rod – \$15

Variable-setting device that can electronically tranquilize a CrecheMon (and other small animals) for up to 8 hours. Useless as a weapon against humans.

CrecheMon Expansion Kit - \$20

Contains the embryonic materials necessary to grow two CrecheMon in your Home Creche

Individually-sold Crechemon Pets - \$20 - \$80 depending on rarity.

Don't want to buy your own Home Creche? Well, you can go down to the UGC and buy any pet you want, even the rare ones. It is cheaper to buy a pet than it is to buy the template and materials to make them. It is also faster. A pet can be fast-grown in 8 hours.

CRECHEMON CREATURES

Templates for the following four creatures come with the Home Creche. They can be bought for \$15 at the UGC's.

Witchycat - A sleek black cat-hybrid with huge golden eyes and long, streamlined ears like those of a fox.

FooFoo - A chihuahua-sized yellow and red dog hybrid with the build of a bulldog and the appearance of a Chinese Dog of Foo carving.

Zoomi - A hamster-sized groundhog-like creature with huge eyes, a lush coat of brown fur and the ability to stand up like a meercat.

Krow - A very intelligent blackbird-sized crow hybrid. Can learn to speak hundreds of words and phrases.

Common CrecheMon:

Puffu – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A guinea-pig hybrid with stunted legs and long fur. Looks like a tribble. Fur color varies.

Rappid – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A sleek gray rabbit hybrid that can hop nearly 40 miles per hour.

Coonoku – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - Sort of like a cross between a ferret and a raccoon, about 3 feet long from nose to tail tip. Gray and black in color.

Ursaguma – Template Cost - \$20 Pet Cost - \$30 - A cuddly, brown, teddy bear-sized bear hybrid with an extremely soft brown pelt.

Oinku – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A pink pig hybrid with stubby legs, grows to the size of a football.

Kitlet – Template Cost - \$20 Pet Cost - \$30 - A silvery fox-hybrid about the size of a jackrabbit.

HooHooHoo – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - - A barn-owl hybrid with snowy-white and tan markings, about the size of a cockatiel.

Meeleen – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - A very large gecko (about the size of a ferret) with a chameleon's ability to change color.

Palamute – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - A dog-hybrid with distinctive black and white markings that grows to the size of a cat.

Mockallow – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - A parrot-sized mockingbird hybrid with a swallow's tail and gray, black and white markings. Very territorial and protective of its owner despite attempts to make it docile.

Funkey – Template Cost - \$20 Pet Cost - \$30 - A kapuchin-monkey hybrid about a third of the size of the real thing. Extremely clever and adept at picking pockets.

Certops– Template Cost - \$25 Pet Cost - \$35 - - A miniature triceratops the size of a football, has green and yellow markings.

Rottshund – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - A dachshund hybrid with rottweiler facial features and markings, chihuahua-sized.

Trunks – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - a light blue elephant the size of a rabbit.

Staygo – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - Stegosaurus without tail spikes, about the size of a small cat. Green with gray armor plates.

Quakks – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A duck hybrid with mallard markings, half the size of the real thing.

Sheldon – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A turtle hybrid with colorful mosaic shells. About the size of a

Trundler – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A skunk hybrid, white with black stripes. No scent glands. Half the size of regular skunks.

Volurat – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A grayish-brown hybrid of various rodents with a gerbil-like tail. About the size of a guinea pig.

Crokuss – Template Cost - \$15 Pet Cost - \$20 - A blue, black-spotted frog the size of a guinea pig. Its skin, amusingly enough, exudes an oil that smells like Old Spice cologne.

Saddog – Template Cost - \$18 Pet Cost - \$24 - A morose-looking dog the size of a rabbit, bred from basset hounds and bloodhounds. Brown, white and tan colored. Has an incredible sense of smell.

Uncommon CrecheMon:

Kangoo: – Template Cost - \$30 Pet Cost - \$36 - A pudgy kangaroo hybrid about a foot tall. beige to white color.

Skreeyah – Template Cost - \$65 Pet Cost - \$40 - A falcon hybrid with gray and blue markings about the size of a parrot. More likely than any other CrecheMon to run away.

Deinonice – Template Cost - \$65 Pet Cost - \$40 - A hybrid of the dinosaur Deinonychus and modern amphibians. Has sticky pads instead of claws. Tiger-striped red and orange.

Kirobat – Template Cost - \$30 Pet Cost - \$36 - A brownish bat-hybrid with the facial features of a marten.

Koolah – Template Cost - \$30 Pet Cost - \$36 - A Koala-bear hybrid with light brown fur. The size of a teddy bear.

Howlah – Template Cost - \$55 Pet Cost - \$38 - A wolf/dog hybrid with a snowy-white coat, chihuahua-sized.

Hisstori – Template Cost - \$30 Pet Cost - \$36 - A non-poisonous snake hybrid with a rattle and cobra's hood. Dark gray with bright red eye-spots on its hood.

Pandow Template Cost - \$55 Pet Cost - \$38 A pudgy miniature panda bear hybrid, also teddy-bear sized.

Keesah – Template Cost - \$65 Pet Cost - \$40 - A cheetah hybrid about the size of a rabbit. Tan and white with black spots.

Rare CrecheMon:

Nekojuku – Template Cost - \$135 Pet Cost - \$55 - A golden- and silver-striped tabby cat hybrid with enlarged eyes, ears and a long fox-like tail.

Ooshiro – Template Cost - \$160 Pet Cost - \$65 A dinosaur hybrid engineered to resemble (without infringing on proprietary rights) Japan's favorite giant lizard. Green, stands a foot tall.

Pegaponi – Template Cost - \$150 Pet Cost - \$60 - A mini-horse about the size of a guinea pig with large cockatiel-like wings. It can't fly, but it can glide.

Whyvern – Template Cost - \$120 Pet Cost - \$50 - A Coelophysis/pterosaur hybrid. Ungainly and somewhat ugly, the first attempt at breeding a dragon. Green and gray, rat-sized with cockatiel-sized wings. Able to fly.

Very Rare CrecheMon:

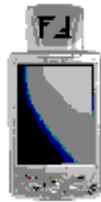
Dragowing – Template Cost - \$180 Pet Cost - \$70 a lightweight hybrid of modern lizards, dinosaurs and pterosaurs, it's like a miniature red dragon the size of a rat with wings the size of a crow's. It can fly.

Kirinichu – Template Cost - \$200 Pet Cost - \$80 Bred from modern and fossil horse DNA to resemble the mythological Kirin, it's a silvery-haired horned horse about the size of a chihuahua.

FEUDFIGHTERS

Nintactivision FeudFighters Deck Keeper - \$150

Nintactivision's entry into the Wandering Child phenomenon, FeudFighters is a Virtuality-based collectable card game not unlike other trading card games from earlier eras, save that the game plays out in Virtuality.



The game is filled with all sorts of mythological monster cards, spell cards and trap cards which are stunningly depicted in Virtuality (An earlier version of FeudFighters existed in Netspace, but the cost of cybermodems was prohibitive and the danger to duelists from rogue Netrunners, AI's and wandering Anti-Personnel programs made this earlier version of FeudFighters impractical).

The FeudFighters Deck Keeper is a dedicated V-term that reads the V-cards of the dueling players, animates the ensuing battle effects, and extrapolates the results of the duel based on a complicated rules framework that takes into account the power of the cards used and the players' strategic use of their cards and combinations thereof,.. And, like the CrecheDeck, it also has an interactive teaching program, keeps a record of the owners DNA, voiceprint, fingerprints and dental records, tracks their location and Win/Loss tally, and keeps track of the player's location via cellular uplink.

Individually-sold FeudFighters Cards - \$5 - \$200 depending on rarity and how powerful they are.

A V-punk can forge FeudFighters cards with a V. Difficult *Private Idaho* roll.

FeudFighters Starter Deck - \$100

A deck of 50 beginning V-cards. There are six different varieties of Starter Decks available. No cards



found in any Starter Deck is considered rare, but they do have a few powerful cards that can be used to a player's advantage if they assemble their playing deck strategically.

FeudFighters Booster Packs - \$20

A small pack of 10 random cards of variable rarity.

HEART OF MAGIC

Tigersoft Games' Heart of Magic Spell Scepter - \$175

Although the least popular (at present) gaming system produced in coalition with the Wandering Child consortium, mostly because most boys consider it to be far too "gay" for their tastes, Heart of Magic is gaining a strong undercurrent of support from girls between the ages of 9 - 13. The Heart of Magic system is like the FeudMonsters trading card system, except that you collect "spell chips" and duel with those. Spell chips come in the form of little bejewelled heart-shaped bangles that players wear as jewelry when they're not in use.



When activated, the Scepter overlays you with virtuality-illusion clothing that you choose from a virtuality catalog (these outfits are designed by Japanese designers in their forties with an unhealthy fascination towards seeing scantily-clad preteen girls. Most boys consider them to be extremely effeminate). Players plug in spell chips, wave the sceptre at the other player, call out incantations and the Scepter's computer creates Virtuality effects mimicing blizzards, fire, lightning and other sundry attacks and defenses.

Like the FeudFighters Deck Keeper and the CrecheDeck, the Heart of Magic Spell Scepter contains a teaching program, it keeps track of its owner's DNA, voiceprint and fingerprints, tracks them owner by homing beacon, keeps track of

their win/loss record, and gives them GC Dollars for their wins and homework.

Heart of Magic Spell Chips - \$5 to \$75 each, depending on rarity.

Marketed in the form of gaudy jewelry, spell chips come with easy-opening prongs that may be attached to earrings, bracelets, hair accessories, necklaces and other bits of jewelry. In addition to the various sundry spell attacks, defenses, snares and so-on, Heart of Magic also has chips with "limited edition" costumes on them. A V-punk can forge Heart of Magic spell chips with a V. Difficult *Private Idaho* roll.



Heart of Magic Starter Jewel Box - \$75

40 Spell chips and an assortment of 10-karat gold bracelets and necklaces that are guaranteed to turn your wrist and neck green within a month. A Starter Deck of spell chips with no rare cards.

Heart of Magic Booster Bracelet - \$25

5 Spell Chips on a cheap silver bracelet.

OTHER MERCHANDISE

Mozambique Imports "Whistler" Pedal-Scooter - \$550.

A favorite among American Wandering Kids, the Whistler is a electric-scooter that is powered by a



combination of solar power and pedalling. On a sunny day, when the driver is putting effort into pedalling, the Whistler can reach speeds of 60 mph, but it is usually tops out at about 45 mph. The Whistles comes standard with a sidecar,

which many Wandering Kids convert into kennels for their CrecheMon. SPD=5.

Sierra BSA Jamboree Puptent - \$35

A square bundle of waterproof nylon that fits inside a frame backpack, all you have to do is turn the crank on the side and the Jamboree slowly expands into a one-man thermal pup tent with a padded floor and a sewn-in sleeping bag. Turn the crank in the opposite direction and it refolds itself into a neat bundle. It was originally intended for the Boy Scouts, but that organization's rosters are at record lows in 2027.

WANDERING CHILD GAMES WITH NON-WANDERING KIDS

Ok, it's natural that some non-Wandering Kids might want to play the WC games. That's perfectly alright.

Any of the following Yogangs can choose to include WCC merchandise in their starting equipment: Arcorunners, Beaverbrats, Goldenkids, Glitterkids, Mallbrats, Networkers Tinkertots, Vidiots and V-punks. These characters may choose the following packages to fill the slots in their starting equipment roster:

- A CrecheDeck, 2 CrecheMon creatures of your choice, and a starter deck of CrecheMon Special Move cards.
- A FeudFighters Deck Keeper and about 100 V-cards.
- A Heart of Magic Spell Scepter and a Starter Jewel Box

In addition, BeastieBoys may choose to take the CrecheMon Home Creche as one of their starting items.

Any non-Wandering Kid rolls their *LUCK* + *Streetsmarts* to determine how successful they are at playing the game. V-punks use their *INT* + *Private Idaho* to determine their success. Wandering Kids use their *INT* + *Shogi*.

WANDERING KID

"Nekojuku! I summon you!"

"You won't defeat me. I took first place in Provincials."

"Put your skills where your piehole is."

You are one of the fortunate ones. Your parents gave you your freedom and let you leave home to pursue your dreams. You took up the wandering lifestyle like your cartoon heroes; traveling from town to town, dueling other kids like you and living off your winnings.

Some kids don't understand your devotion to the duels and the wandering lifestyle. They play, but they're weak. You can whip them without even trying. You've developed a dueling repertoire with unbeatable combos and battle strategies that amateur players can't compete with.

The life you lead isn't for everyone. You had to learn to be self-reliant, because there was no running home to mommy every time you got a skinned knee, a cut or a black eye.

WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE

You dress for the road. Hiking boots, durable pants, sturdy jackets with internal heating coils that are capable of keeping away the chill and a hat to keep the sun off your face. Interspersed with all of this are the logos, merchandise and trappings of your game of choice.

You are easily recognized as a player of your game of choice. You wear enough recognizable logos to mark you as a duelist, and enough badges denoting your many honors so that anyone who dares to challenge you will know who they're up against.

SUBCULTURE

The Wandering Kid movement is an artificial subculture created and encouraged by a powerful alliance of Megacorporations, politicians, and social science majors who call themselves the Wandering Child Consortium. Your typical Wandering Kid is ambitious and competitive, but they are also compassionate and team-oriented, which is the perfect mix of attributes for the Corporate Sararimen of the future.

That being said, you don't really know about the maneuverings or motivations behind your subculture's inception; you're too busy having fun and living it up. You travel around the countryside, dueling against competitors and living life like it was one great big adventure. At night you camp, cook your dinner over a small campfire and take your virtuality-based school lessons.

You and your fellow Wandering Kids travel in small packs for safety -- usually in groups of three or four. Everyone does their part, from the breakfast dishes to nightly watches and helping each other complete homework assignments.

Dueling is the focus of your journey, and the process by which you duel is as formalized as any Duel of Honor from previous ages. You are expected to follow a strict form of protocol while issuing a challenge and conducting your duel, although it is also expected of you to trash-talk and otherwise try to psych out your opponent.

BELONGING

To be a Wandering Kid, you had to get your parents' permission first. They bought you the stuff you needed and you hit the road, beginning your journey. Many wannabe Wandering Kids never get farther than the town's outskirts before calling their parents and pleading in teary voices for their parents to come pick them up.

You didn't do that. Your first few weeks on the road were a struggle. You ached all over, you never seemed to find anything fun about the journey you'd set out upon, and other players would whip you easily. But you kept with it, winning here and there, making trades and eventually learning to rely on yourself.

Once you reached this point, you hooked up with others like you. Maybe they played different games, or maybe they played the same ones as you. Maybe they were better than you and became your mentors, or maybe you were better, and decided to take them under your wing.

Winter came, and it was miserable, but you made it through alright. You'd passed another rite on your way to adulthood. You've been on the road for a while now, and you don't think you could ever go back to living with your parents, being

cooped up in school half of the day and living by their rules.

YOUR ALLIES AND ENEMIES

Traveling around as you do means that you meet all kinds. You like V-punks and MallBrats -- they got the wares you want and can't get in the merchandise shops. Beaverbrats are fun, and surprisingly easy to beat, but if you get too cocky, they kidnap your CrecheMon and shave it bald. GoGangers and Megas think you're easy prey, and most of the time, they're right. If you play CrecheMon, you've instantly made an enemy of 75% of all Beastieboys. The other 25% admire you for your dedication to your animals and actually think that they're kinda cool. Goths ignore you, Squats will try to rob you and Guardians don't understand you at all.

SLANG

Call Home: To give up, to call your parents and ask them to take you back.

Bad Hand: Someone who is at a complete disadvantage. A loser.

Double Threat: Someone who has mastered more than one game.

Zookeeper: Someone who has his own Creche and grows lots of CrecheMon.

Bottom Dealer: A cheater.

YOGANG SKILL: SHOGI

You are a modern-day master of games. Like the Chess masters of old, you're learning to combine disparate elements into groups that will afford you the best combination of results. The benefits of what you're learning on the road extend beyond the game itself and into other areas, as well.

Specializations:

Self-Reliance = +2 to Survival

Gaming = +2 to Whiz

Coordinator = +2 to Strategy

Survival: You're an experienced camper and hiker, and can easily survive the road between towns. You know how to cook, set up and strike camp (Easy), Fish and hunt small game (Difficult), scale fish and skin prey (Medium), make repairs to your camping equipment and mend holes in your clothes (V. Difficult) and

even make repairs to your gaming equipment and treat minor illnesses in CrecheMon (N. Impossible).

Whiz: You're a master of games. You can easily master any game that requires strategy. Be it net or virtuality-based, board or card games, if you are able to observe it for a number of hours equal to 15 minus your *Shogi* skill, you are able to use this specialty to play it.

Strategy: You can coordinate the efforts of a group of individuals, recognizing their unique abilities and synergizing their efforts into cohesive and productive teamwork. When coordinating a team exercise or effort, you are able to split up and add points from your Strategy Skill to other members of the team (Example: Carol the Wandering Kid is coordinating a team consisting of Bob the Beaverbrat, Ted the Beastieboy and Alice the EcoRaider on a raid of an animal testing facility. She has a score of 7 in Shogi and her specialty is in Strategy. Therefore, Carol has 9 points that she can split up and contribute to the rolls of the other members of the team. Bob is working at picking a difficult lock. Carol gives him 5 points to his roll, and he cracks the lock. Ted sneaks into the facility and Carol gives him 2 points to boost his Blend roll. He makes it. Carol then assigns the remaining two points to Alice who is creating a distraction. Until Alice spends those two points, Carol cannot help anyone else with her Strategy roll).

IF YOU'RE A WANDERING KID:

- 1) Tell me your name, age and sex.
- 2) Describe what you look like.
- 3) Besides your V-trodes, pick four different things from the list below that you are currently carrying:

- A CrecheDeck, 2 CrecheMon creatures of your choice, and a starter deck of CrecheMon Special Move cards.
- A FeudFighters Deck Keeper and about 100 V-cards.
- A Heart of Magic Spell Scepter and a Starter Jewel Box
- A Sierra BSA Jamboree Tent
- A CrecheMon Home Creche
- A Mozambique Imports "Whistler" Scooter
- Paintball gun
- A Netlink Wrangler codegun shaped like a prop from your game of choice.