



Free Game # 38 from Invisible City Productions, Inc.

## **An organism-swapping card game for three or four players. by Sharon J. Cichelli and Jonathan A. Leistiko**

### **Object:**

To end the game with the most points in symbiotic pairs and royal symbiotes, ideally while hosting the symbiote.

Keeping control of the symbiote makes it easier to gather royal and paired symbiotes.

### **You Need:**

- A poker deck.
- A double-sided symbiote / parasite marker.

### **Setting Up:**

- Shuffle the deck of cards and deal out three cards to each player. You may look at your cards and arrange them however you wish to, but you should keep them secret.
- Set the deck face-down in the middle of the table to be the draw pile. Take the top card from the deck and place it face-up next to the draw pile to start the discard pile.
- Place the symbiote marker in front of the dealer with the symbiote face up.
- The player to the left of the dealer goes first.

**Play:**

On your turn:

- Draw from the draw pile until you have three cards in your hand.

If you have the symbiote at the start of your turn, you get to draw up to five cards instead of just three. If you have the parasite, draw up to two.

- Either draw one more card from the draw pile, or take the top card from the discard pile.
- You may play one or more symbiotic pairs or royal symbiotes face-down in front of you. A symbiotic pair is a pair of cards that adds up to 10. A royal symbiote is a Jack, Queen, and King. If all cards in your pair or royal symbiote are the same suit, then they're worth more points. They score as follows:

- ◇ Symbiotic pair: 2 pts
- ◇ Royal symbiote: 3 pts
- ◇ Matched symbiotic pair: 4 pts
- ◇ Matched royal symbiote: 6 pts

- If you have any cards left in your hand, you must discard one card face-up to the discard pile. If you drew from the discard pile this turn, you may not discard the card you drew. If the suit or the value of the card you discard matches the card below it, call out, "Sym-biote!" and move the symbiote clockwise a number of players equal to the number on the card you discarded. If the top card on the discard pile is a Jack, Queen, or King, then the symbiote moves counter-clockwise one, two, or three spaces respectively. Ensure that the symbiote marker shows its symbiote face when it reaches its new host.
- Remember that hosting the symbiote at the start of your turn allows you to draw up to five cards.

- *What about the tens?*

Since there's no "zero" card, the tens have no cards to pair with to make symbiotic pairs. This makes the tens *parasites*. When you discard a parasite, do not place it on the discard pile; set it aside (out of play) instead. The symbiote moves just like it would if a matching card had been played to the discard pile, but the symbiote marker flips over to the parasite face when it reaches its new host.

- If you have the parasite at the start of your turn, you only get to draw up to two cards at the start of your turn. If you have more than two cards at the start of your turn, then you must let another player randomly pick cards from your hand to discard one at a time until you're down to two. If any of these discards would trigger symbiotic or parasitic movement, then it does so.

## **Winning:**

The game ends when there are no cards in the draw pile at the start of a player's turn.

Flip all of your symbiotic pairs and royal symbiotes face-up and add up their values (as listed above in **Play**). If you end the game with the symbiote, score an additional point for every symbiotic pair or royal symbiote you have. If you end the game with a parasite, then lose one point for every symbiotic pair or royal symbiote you have.

The player with the highest score wins. Ties go to the player with the symbiote (or without the parasite).

## **Variants:**

### **Open Research**

All symbiotic pairs and royal symbiotes are played face-up, not face-down.

### **All-Night Lab Session**

Use a double deck of poker cards instead of a single deck of cards.

### **Teacher's Pet**

I have no idea of what this is, but the title is too good to lose.

## Origin and Credits:

Sharon and I made up this game between 3 and 5 AM on February 15th, 2003. Our sleep/wake schedules were off a little from taking naps the preceding afternoon (Actually, I slept from 6 PM to 2 AM that afternoon, so I actually had an early sleep instead of a nap.), so we stayed up talking and doing little chores.

Somehow, the conversation turned to our friend Frank from our Monday night gaming group and his occasional "Symbiote!" outburst. A story: Once upon a time, Frank was in a **Paranoia** campaign. In one episode the players went to R&D, where they were forced to play *Wheel of Symbiotes*. A player would spin the wheel; the emcee would cry out "Symbiote!"; a randomly chosen symbiote would be attached to the player; and the player would die a painful, messy death. (Yeah, I know that a symbiote is supposed to be helpful, not harmful. That's why it took place at R&D; they were still working out the kinks.)

This scene made a lasting impression on Frank. Every now and then during game night, he'll cry out "Symbiote!" for no apparent reason. It's silly and odd, but also pretty funny. Sharon and I decided to make up a symbiote-themed game just for Frank. Now people around the world will take up the cry, spreading symbiotic joy wherever they go.

This one's for you, Frank.

Thanks to Ben, Toshi, and Sharon for playtesting. Additional thanks to Ben for totally revamping the parasite rules. Special thanks to Frank for the inspiration. As usual, thanks to Sharon for editing.



Free games monthly from Invisible City Productions, Inc.  
<http://www.invisible-city.com/games/>