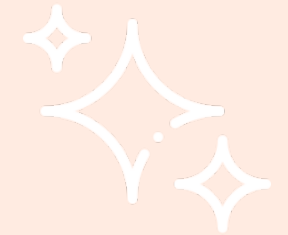




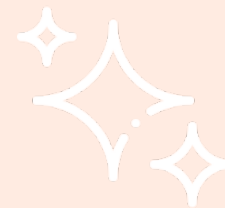
Slow Down and Look at the Stars

A zine of Hope, Joy and Mundanity



SLOW DOWN AND LOOK AT THE STARS

A zine of Hope, Joy and Mundanity



This zine, '*Slow Down and Look at the Stars*' was created by *Farid Nad* in collaboration with *Zulkifli Ziyad, Valis, Umar Sharif, Nana, Allyson Tan* and *Danni S* from the Malaysian queer disabled community. The work was commissioned by Innovation for Change - East Asia and first published on eastasia.innovationforchange.net in November 2022.

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Foreword



Hullo! Thank you so much for picking up this zine, hopefully found in a community centre near you. The making of this zine was such a journey from beginning to end, and there's so much I want to share.

Being queer and disabled, we have unique experiences as folk with intersecting identities living in the margins. We can't seem to help but find ourselves othered even amongst our own folk. Heading to a queer meetup only to have it not be wheelchair-accessible. Being in a disabled space only to be constantly misgendered.



In times like those we turn to creating new communities, where our identities are not only accepted, but also seen as mundane. That's what we sought to do here in our zine too. I reached out to fellow queer and disabled folk all over our home of Malaysia to come together to create something that would echo that sentiment.

All in all, the seven of us have put our hearts and minds together to bring our collected curation of creations into one zine. We hope that it can be a gentle reminder that there's always some hope, joy and mundanity in life, and we can afford to slow down and look at the stars.

With love,
Farid Nad
Project Lead



Collaborator Spotlight

Zulkifli Ziyad
[@rempitcore](#)



Dia/dia
19

*Transmasculine Non-
Binary*

Neurodivergent

A funny little guy just making things worthwhile. Zul loves consuming and creating art in general, which includes drawing, photography and even the occasional music-making. Also the local "online" friend, ask dia for any sort of meme and dia can probably find it for you.

Photography **'Meet the Pacinkos!'**

I had the idea of creating a photo collage and ended up making it to the theme of a primary school notebook, because when I think of joy, I think of my time back in primary school. I tried to convey that there is joy in something as mundane as a dinner together. The people you see in those photographs happen to be queer and/or disabled folk and I wanted to share a reminder that it's alright to slow down, along with the hope that the world is not as bad as it seems to be.

Collaborator Spotlight



Valis
[@valistarrii](#)

*Transmasculine Non-
Binary*

They/him
21

*Neurodivergent
Depression & Anxiety*

Where you find things being created, you'll find Valis. Their absolute passion is making stuff, be it art, writing or games (both digital and analogue)! They love inviting people into new experiences through their creations, and can usually be found tucked in a cosy corner napping, or eagerly talking about colours and robots.

Illustration 'Let the Flags Fly'

The main inspiration for my piece is basically embracing the best parts of the two intersecting communities, and to showcase the love and beauty we are capable of. I also wanted to showcase the inherent beauty of a queer couple in a moment of mundane intimacy.



Collaborator Spotlight



Nana
[@nanawrote](#)

They/her
37

Non-Binary Bisexual



*Depression + Other
Pending Diagnoses*

With the personality of a misplaced mullet, Nana is all business in the front and party in the back (it's always fun when the chiropractor makes a big snap! sound).

Poetry

'Damn Right I'm Going to Glorify Fatness'

'Rest your Rage'

'Two Brown Queers at a Bar'

Most of the time I write with myself as the main audience: to soothe my worries about being undesirably fat, to validate the bouts of tantrum bubbling to the surface and to record the small moments of mundane joy of having a queer friend with shared interests.

Rest your Rage

Let me hug your hot air
your tight skin-bursting
rage, your stretched smile
your "okay, I'm okay" I'm
holding your heavy
head, rest love, upon me
trust this thread between
my fist and your gaseous body
until your pores passage
the pain out, until you baby
yourself in my palms once more.

Damn Right, I'm Going to Glorify Fatness

too few can stand
to find words to describe
the allure of fatness
the ripeness of your flesh
in handfuls
dripping sticky like citrus
in white pulut and santan
your banana leaf spine that
fold towards them like a good omen
saying this tastes good
this is what I came looking for
this sour rasam that wets my
throat like old wives' advice
the imprecise way it cuts
my tongue buds and burrows
lunch memories of how you taste
too few can understand
and they demand their gods and goddesses be damned
to have nothing but bones
so they can pick their teeth with
while I am in bliss with your mangoes.

Two Brown Queers at a Bar

She, half-Ceylonese woman, a writer
spilling over margaritas and conversations
on how Scarlett was robbed.

She was in Singapore for Bianca
I said, "I'm wary of her, can't we
be funny without being mean?"

Stabbing into bacon and taters
I only learned of Mahsuri past the spear
and white blood when I became a poet.

I've always thought the spearfish
story was Malaysian, we were
smarter than most when it comes to claiming.

Macam Belanda tamakkan tanah
we trade borders and water
for feet that climb over distanced lovers.

Collaborator Spotlight



Allyson Tan
[@smhallyson](#)

She/they/he/eir
19

Bisexual

Disabled

Like most university students, Allyson is just trying to make something of herself as they venture out into the world, trying to make it as a writer and discover who they are as a person. They like a mismatch of things: adult animation, puzzles, lego figures that'll collect dust on their desk. They didn't know Malaysia had an active queer community before this project, so they found that very cool.

Prose

'Nocturnality'

I came up with the idea for Nocturnality when I remembered the nights I spent at university, whilst staying on campus. My story explores how being part of an unspoken community and connecting with friends helped me battle my eating disorder. I found joy and hope in my day-to-day life as I found more people who were queer and had similar viewpoints on life as I did. I found happiness in this becoming the mundanity in my daily life.

NOCTURNALITY

She didn't like to start her days as the sun rises: she preferred to start them the second the clock strikes twelve.

The moon was meant to symbolise the day's end, and yet, it's highest when the day starts anew. She preferred this soft moonlight over the harsh rays of the sun: the deities spoke better underneath the night's quiet, watching over anyone who traversed underneath their gaze.

When the moon rises, so do the deities of the dusk who delicately gather every spoken secret and encase them in starlight, protecting them from prying eyes so no one else knows in that intimate way only nightwalkers should.

There's no judgement underneath the intense, irrational reality that strikes before dawn, for every creature is so bizarre, it becomes the norm. Have you ever judged anyone when the moon is high? If a group of young adults told you of the world's complexities, would you be judgemental if it happened when the sun casts shadows through your windows, or when the night comes?

A nightwalker, by Alice's definition, is someone who thrives in the darkness, whose true colours show when the rest of society sleeps, in the most uncanny of places; the quiet of a raging nightclub, the intensity of the rain, underneath the glittering sky where constellations illuminate the world.

They perceive this world as she does, existing in the same reality but experiencing things with so much more colour and brilliance, unchallenged by those who sleep with the setting of the sun.

"Have you ever kissed a girl?"

"No."

"Would you like to?"

She never thought she'd find that in others, people who experience their world with the same brilliance, their laughter sharply contrasting the silence of dusk. Maybe she sought to belong with them, too.

--

"No, I stopped you because I wanted to know why you wrote about it: Phantom of the Opera is one of my favourite plays." The girl with the blond bangs corrected Alice as she bit into their shared pizza, awaiting friends she was in no rush to meet. This was a fraction of the night, after all, seconds and minutes could be spent here and there.

For now, none held any interest in plays like Jacqueline, and she'd like to know more. The only thing that bothered Alice was the pizza before her: scents tantalising, saliva gathering in her mouth as she yearned to take a bite.

She reached for it as if a small bite was a scandalous, sinful act, punishable by death in the eyes of God (in actuality, only punishable in the eyes of her family, like every act she commits). It remained untouched by her hands, as if smacked back by a judgemental woman.

“Oh, no, I love them both, don’t get me wrong. Fell in love with musicals the second I saw it live,” Alice assured with a smile, watching as Jacqueline’s eyes swell with excitement and a dash of harmless jealousy.

“You managed to watch it live?! You’re so lucky!” she exclaimed with wonder, the scent of her bubblegum-flavoured vape billowing from her lips.

Alice found any variant of smoking as destructive as an erupting volcano, but it paired well with the girl’s striking red lipstick and her custom cargo pants; a signature of hers. That night, there were more colours than usual: yellowed light bulbs with a calming ambience, green soju bottles clinking against each other in Alice’s white tote bag.

Black tiles showed where the restaurant ended, with the colours pink, blue, and purple the lineart of the masterpiece of experiences every night orchestrated for her. Her hunger made its attempt to dull the colours and she was about to pull back when—

“You should eat something, you know. You’re beautiful, and it’s not good to drink on an empty stomach.” And the colours lit up her vision again in a mix of shock and realisation, but before she could say anything, her friends approached with a different conversation, the earlier remark seemingly forgotten.

(Alice couldn’t forget it, though: she tried to dismiss what Jacqueline said before their interruption, but her words were all she heard whenever she placed a snack to her lips.)

--

Every nightwalker has their ways of identifying their own: the nonchalance of their nature or simply, the way they dress: bold, adventurous outfits with bright colours, complete monochromes with accessories that would have made conservatives puke blood.

Alice can tell from someone’s rainbow pins on their jean jacket. Most gays she knew were nightwalkers, people who were there to make everything seem more interesting than it was before.

A nightwalker could be anyone, but she didn’t see many until she first went to campus. Before that, she was told she was an oddity all her life.



People should start their days in the morning, her mother would scowl if Alice ate lunch later than she would like. All these gays ah, they got a mental problem, her father would rant venomously at the dinner table.

You're so fat, is something growing inside your stomach? Her mother would sneer, pointing at her stomach before looking up at Alice with a contemptuous look in her eyes.

But the nightwalkers here sing different tunes through her ears. Slowly, she started to shine: fitting in with the starry sky, with people who understood her. It took her days to realise that throwing up her meals was nothing but a distant memory.

Chunks and stomach acid down the toilet were replaced with packs of chips shared with a friend as he told Alice about his crush, compliments from the open mic night she attended right after dinner, mock protests of the "No food allowed" rule, laughing with her friends before a DnD session.

She thinks of her party member, who was everything her parents hated: fat, gay, and gender nonconforming, and how he thrived with fiery confidence, unopposed by anyone else. She thinks of the stars in her partner's eyes when they kissed her tenderly while they made their cheese board.



She thinks of Jacqueline, who still greets her with a genuine smile.

The moon ordinarily signals the day's end, yet it's highest when Alice is made anew as she strolls underneath the moonlight, her secrets protected in the darkness. Her three stripes of pink, blue, and purple, a drunken, electrifying kiss with her friend against the bathroom sink, her healing scars as her weight crossed the threshold from "underweight" to "healthy".

The deities of the star-riddled skies keep these secrets safe where no one can touch them but her.

The clock struck midnight, and Alice stood up from her seat, ready to start her day all over again.





Collaborator Spotlight



Umar Sharif
[@umar_shhh](#)

He/Him
32

Cisgender Male
Homosexual

Anxiety Disorder

Slowly but surely, developing himself mainly in art, writing and acting. He looks Daddy but he's actually Baby.

Illustration

'Cat Farts out My Visage'

It is a self portrait of a normie (myself) and all the normal mundane accoutrements of my life. These are joyous mundane things that make living more bearable. Hence, my portrait is drawn across elements like my cat, meds, cup noodles, teh tarik and my car (I like going on leisurely drives). It is actually inspired by traditional still life and portrait drawings of old where a distinguished person would be drawn, posed with significant artefacts of their life. I originally proposed this same concept with a more realistic drawing style, but saw the others doing amazeballs 3d digital paintings so I decided to pivot to a flatter style to contrast that and focus on its surrealist aspect, eg; my cat literally farting out my face.

Collaborator Spotlight



Danni S.
[@dandoge](#)

They/Them
26

Non-Binary
Sapphic

"Very Normal"

Danni is currently a student at a local performing arts school and is perpetually tired all the time, and rants about video games and k-pop every other time. Sometimes there are cats.

Illustration

'Shophopping'

One of the fondest memories I have of me and a very close friend of mine, Fared, is me pushing him through the mall as we were armed to the teeth with our groceries in hand, and a mop at the ready. It was so fun and freeing, but also safe and comforting, to have someone I could be ridiculous with without the fear of judgement. In that moment, we could have truly taken on the world.

This is an image of love in found families; proof that no matter our blood, no matter the state of our bodies, we love each other and we are there for one another.



Collaborator Spotlight

Farid Nad
[@farideacs](#)



Dia/He
26

Bisexual

Agender Transmasculine



*Physically and mentally
disabled, neurodivergent*

Hailing from a sleepy coastal kampung, Farid is your local thrift store cryptid and frog enthusiast. He's usually found doing drifts in his wheelchair, trying to outwheel capitalism.

Comic

'The Magic of Gatherings'
'Epilogue'

I knew since I came up with the concept of the zine that I wanted to make a comic about the most recent community I found myself in, Magic the Gathering. My comic explores how I found a sense of belonging in a shared hobby that rallies players together from all walks of life. My disability and queerness are simply mundane in a world full of wizards, dragons and cardboard.



There's a lot you can glean from a *Magic: The Gathering* Card.

That's the name of the card, obviously.

A symbol and numbers, so some kind of cost.

'Creature': The card's type.

And all this text must be what the card does!

And I think there's a lot you can glean from an *MTG* player.

He's a little chubby, but so are most nerds.

Multiple patches on a denim vest, what a punk looking outfit.

Wow, what a hairstyle. Must be some millennial.

A wheelchair, he must need a mobility aid.



For me, it was my dear sibling, *Eden*.



I've always loved games, starting from video games.
But I discovered the feeling of not belonging much too early.

While I tried to hide my identity to not be singled out, it was much harder to hide my lack of skill in video games.

And even in role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons, people didn't take me or my creations seriously.



Ugh, turn your mic off and just go back to the kitchen. **NoOb.**



Dude, git gud. If you can't aim, just play Mercy.



He can't have high dexterity! **He's fat!**
Haha, he looks like Zuko! **His honour-!**

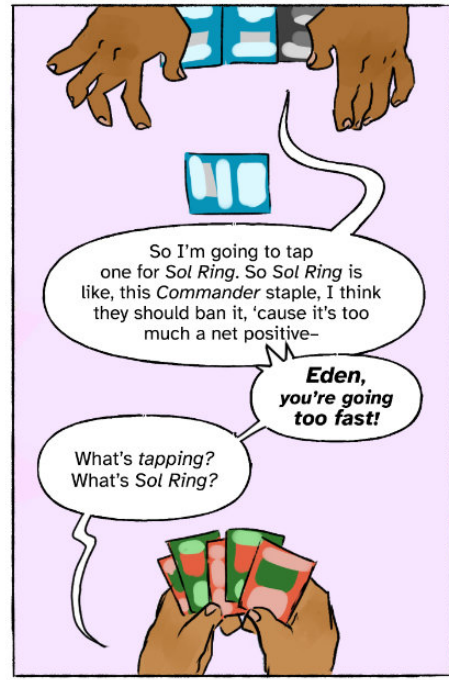


So when Edén tried to introduce me to **another** game...

Come on, Along. Just try, ok? **Just once!**

Please, I need more friends to play with!

I was a *little* hesitant. But, can't knock it till you try it, **right?**



So I'm going to tap one for Sol Ring. So Sol Ring is like, this Commander staple, I think they should ban it, 'cause it's too much of a net positive-

Edén, you're going too fast!

What's tapping? What's Sol Ring?



Ugh, this is **way** too complicated.

I don't think I can do card games, dude.



Aw, c'mon Along, it's only turn three.

You haven't even cast a spell yet!



Well, to be fair. **Commander** is a four-player format. Two-player does get pretty stale...



Well, there was that game store I played D&D at three years ago...

If I remember right, they do a bunch of MTG stuff.



What?! And you never told me? We have to go there **now!**

And embarrass myself in front of everyone?



Oh, right.

I forgot about the stairs.



Well, what are we waiting for? **Commander awaits!**



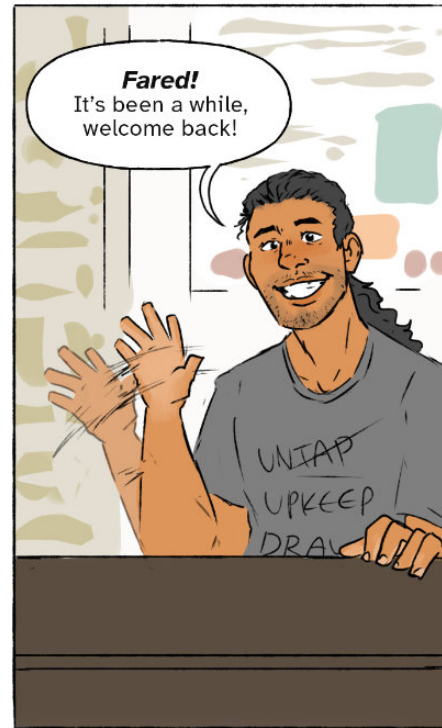
We're almost there! **C'mon** Along! Our commanders!

Hold on, okay?! I have bone hurting juice disease!



WOAH!

Welcome!
Eh, wait a second...



Fared!
It's been a while, welcome back!



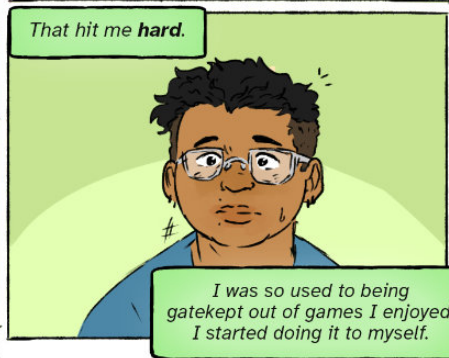
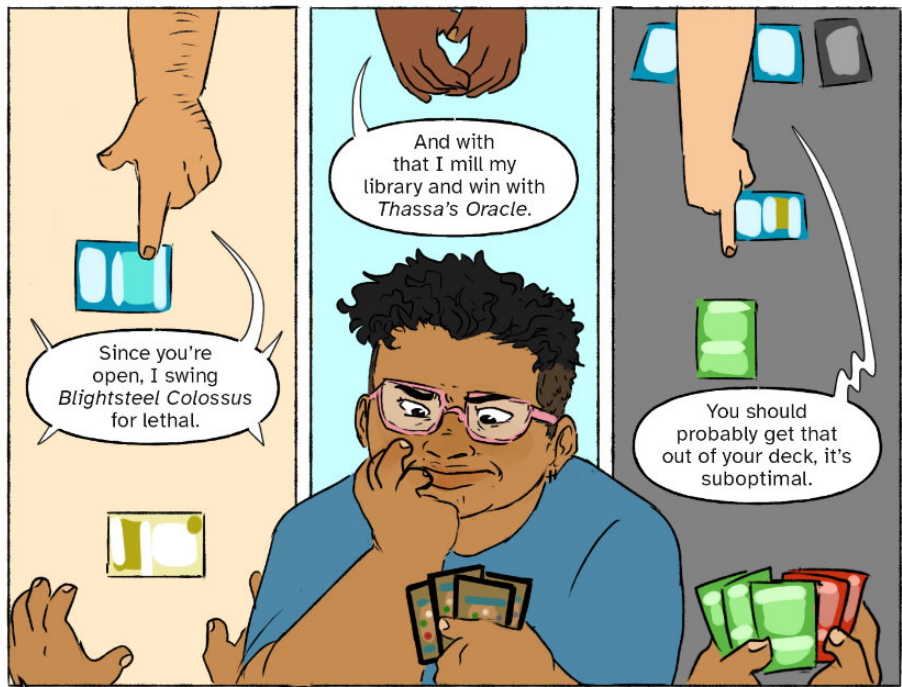
Oh wow, he still remembers me after all these years?

Oh!
Thank you. Hello.

I was pleasantly surprised that they still remembered me as part of the Alexandria community despite my long absence.



So with that, I was **hooked**. I went regularly every game night of the week.



Where my identity isn't a dealbreaker for others.

Did you see the new *Pride Secret Lair* drop? I'm **definitely** pre-ordering!

Yeah, I really like the card selection and the art. Who would've thought with Saheeli, huh?

But accepted, and mundane, even.

Sorry for bothering you to help with my card bag, Joe. You know how it is.

Hey bro, no problem. I'm always happy to help.

In this community, I don't have to walk on eggshells about who I am.



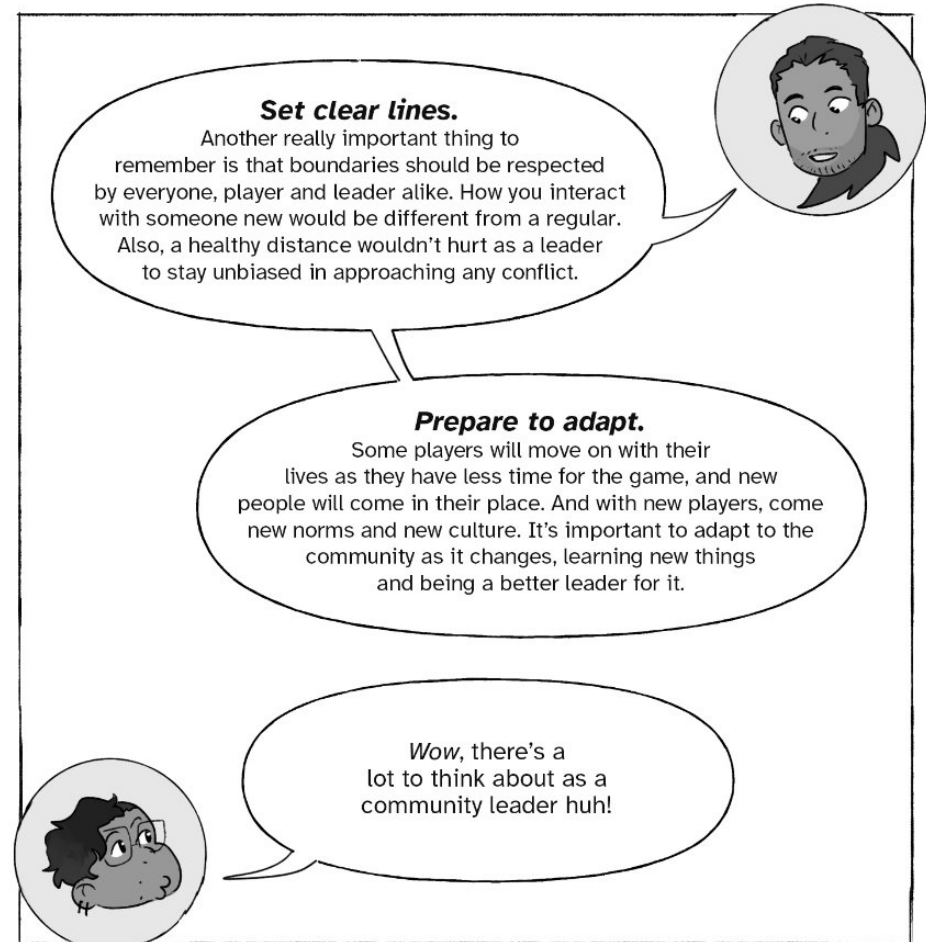
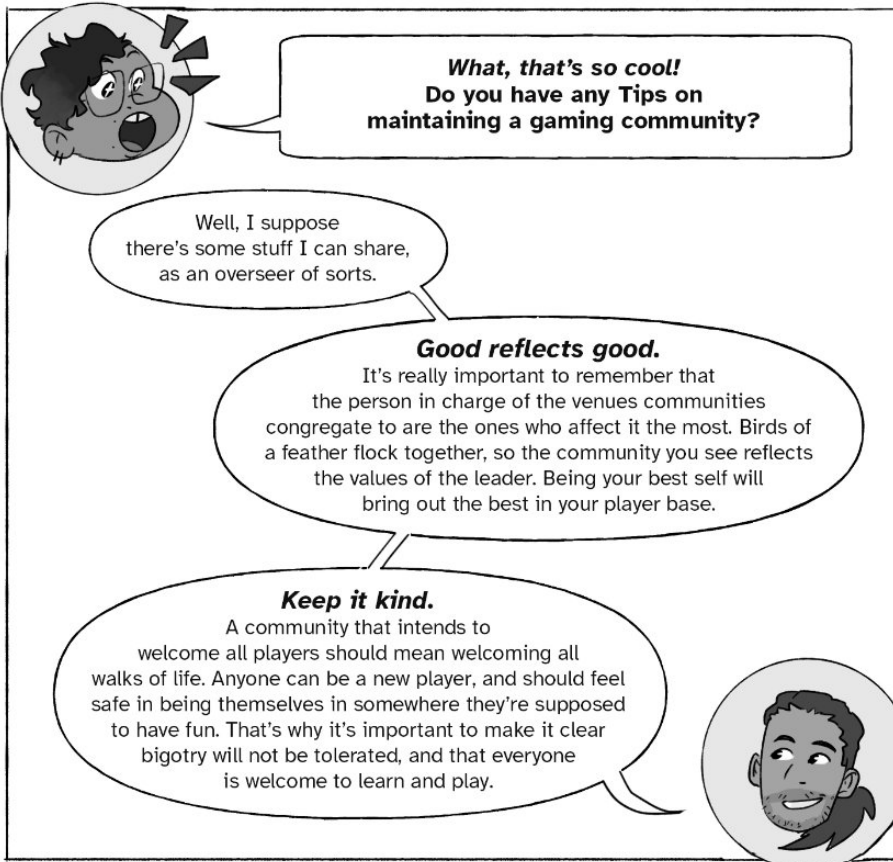
I'm accepted and appreciated. Welcomed and invited.

So yes, there's a lot you can glean from a **Magic: The Gathering Card**.



But these pieces of cardboard have more meaning than I once thought possible.

EPILOGUE



Resources

QUEER-FRIENDLY AND QUEER-AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE

PLUHO BlueBird Project

People Like Us Hang Out (PLUHO) is an NGO that aims to help queer folk get access to safe and caring healthcare and assistance.

Their BlueBird project provides recommendations of mental healthcare services tailored to one's needs, via an inquiry form online [here](#).

Directory of Queer-Friendly Clinics

Several clinics have submitted their information to a public spreadsheet database on queer-friendly and queer-affirming healthcare.

The spreadsheet includes tabs categorised for different states in Malaysia, and works on a grapevine honour system.

Find out more at bit.ly/MYQFClinics



Directory Link

SOLIDARITY SPACES

PLUHO Rumah Angkat

PLUHO's Rumah Angkat project is a transitional housing service that aims to provide temporary housing, case management, and psychosocial support for LGBTIQ persons in Malaysia who are escaping violence, discrimination, and homelessness.

Find out more at rumahangkat.org

SEED Foundation

SEED or Pertubuhan Kebajikan dan Persekitaran Positif Malaysia is the first Trans-led community-based organization in Malaysia. Officially registered in 2014, SEED was created to ensure the availability of support services for marginalised communities, especially the transgender community.

Find out more at seedfoundation.com.my

LOCAL QUEER AND/OR DISABILITY ADVOCATES

Find these accounts on **Twitter** for more resources and news relating to queer and/or disability rights.

- [@KamiSIUMAN](https://twitter.com/KamiSIUMAN)
- [@mindakami](https://twitter.com/mindakami)
- [@bolehspace](https://twitter.com/bolehspace)
- [@TabungPelangi](https://twitter.com/TabungPelangi)
- [@jejakaorg](https://twitter.com/jejakaorg)
- [@SEEDMalaysia](https://twitter.com/SEEDMalaysia)
- [@pluho_org](https://twitter.com/pluho_org)
- [@pelangicampaign](https://twitter.com/pelangicampaign)
- [@empowermalaysia](https://twitter.com/empowermalaysia)
- [@QueerLapis](https://twitter.com/QueerLapis)

Partner Spotlight



Innovation For Change - East Asia

I4C-EA is a network of groups and individuals aiming to contribute to the building of a stronger East Asian civil society and a region respectful of human rights, freedoms, and democracy.

This zine was created under the Libraries of Resistance initiative as hosted by I4C-EA. As such, this zine would not have existed if not for I4C-EA's support, from the financial grant to the careful guidance of many project team members in navigating and telling our stories to the world.



Partner Spotlight



Tabung Pelangi

Founded in 2020 as a personal initiative for local accessibility to chest binders, Tabung Pelangi is a modest volunteer-run queer collective with creative projects for better causes.

Being one of the few queer youth-led grassroots collectives in Malaysia, Tabung Pelangi is the ideal partner in reaching out to fellow local queer folk and those like-minded as well. Having spearheaded very successful and well-received charity zines such as Stories for a Cause and its sequel, they are contributing their expertise in generating publicity and awareness for this zine.

Partner Spotlight



Kami Siuman

SIUMAN are a collective of mentally ill folk and allies that champion equality and equity in socioeconomic status and politics for the mentally ill in Malaysia.

Several of the collective's members have an active history and continuing journey in championing the rights of all disabled people. With their extensive knowledge of the local disability rights scenes all over Malaysia, their aid in publicising and making the zine accessible beyond the digital space proved extremely helpful.





Slow Down and Look at the Stars

This zine aims to showcase the joys of being a part of the disabled and queer community. There are more than enough stories of suffering and hardship about marginalised communities like ours. And so we dedicate this zine as a gentle reminder that our lives aren't tragedies or charity cases, but simply other ways to experience the world. Our people deserve hope, joy, and mundanity in a world that would deny them to us.

NOT FOR SALE
COMMUNITY DISTRIBUTION ONLY

