



Free Game # 28 from Invisible City Productions, Inc.

A real-time trading game for three or more players and an Icehouse set by Jonathan A Leistiko.

The Story:

Deep under the frigid crust of the ice-moon Europa, a new fad has emerged. All of the truly fashionable Jovain dolphins are wearing exotic crystals from the underside of the frozen crust of the outer oceans.

Equipped with the latest tips and rumors about what's cool and what's not, you've brought your refrigerated collection of ice crystals to the EIEIO (Eurpoa Ice Exchange Independent Organization). You've managed to finagle your way into a five-minute trade session with a few other hobbyist traders. Competition is fierce, and there's a lot about the market that you're not sure of, but with your bartering skills and Luck willing, you hope to come out on top.

Object:

To end the game with the most valuable collection of ice crystals.

You Need:

- A poker deck
- An Icehouse set
- Paper and pencil for each player, or an Ice Market trader's tally sheet
- A 5-minute timer

Setting Up:

- Shuffle the deck and deal it out face-down, distributing the cards evenly among all players. Excess cards are just set aside, face down and out of game.
- Look at your cards. Place two of your cards face-down in the middle of the table. Your cards plus the other players' pairs create the "Market." The cards in the Market stay face-down until the end of the game. The Market dictates how many points pieces are worth at the end of the game. (See Winning, below.) We recommend noting the cards in your hand and the cards you added to the Market on your trader's information sheet.
- Pick one piece from the Icehouse set and place it in your stash. Then let the next player pick a piece, and so on, around the circle. This continues until all pieces have been taken or all players have the same number of pieces and the remaining pieces are less than the number of players. Set any leftover pieces aside, out of game.

Strategies during stash-building are important, and observation of your opponents is important, too. Do you choose a piece that you know is good, or do you pick a piece at random to bluff your opponents? Should you mimic the selection of the preceding player, or do you go with what you know? It's your call.

- Set the timer to 5 minutes, but don't start it yet...

Play:

Players in Ice Market do not take turns. Once the 5-minute timer starts, swap and trade for all you're worth until the timer stops. You may swap anything that you possess: cards, pieces, information, etc. Your goal is to end the game with the pieces worth the most points.

Your cards tell you a bit about what things *aren't* worth. If you swap lots of information (ie: cards) with the other players, then you'll learn more about what's valuable. Use your trader's tally sheet to keep track of the information you gather. Also, you and the other players begin the game with knowledge of two of the cards in the Market. You may want to swap this information during the five-minute trading session as well.

Strategy again plays a role. You could attempt to bluff other players and horde pieces you know aren't worth anything, or only trade for the pieces that you know have value. You might trade pieces for information. How many cards is one piece worth? It's time to make some quick decisions.

Winning:

Once the timer stops, all trading comes to an immediate end, even if a trade is only partially complete. Once everyone has calmed down, flip over the cards in the Market and figure out what each piece is worth.

- Every piece is worth one at least point.
- The suits correspond to the Icehouse colors as follows:
 - ◊ Hearts=red (Because hearts are typically red),
 - ◊ Clubs=green ('Cause shamrocks are green),
 - ◊ Diamonds = blue (think of the Hope Diamond), and
 - ◊ Spades=yellow (It's what's left over).
- The Ace and 2 through 10 add 1 additional point to a piece of their color.
- Jack, Queen, and King add 3 additional points to a Small, Medium, or Large piece (respectively) of their color.

For example, a Market containing a 6 of Hearts (red), a King of clubs (green), and an Ace of Diamonds (blue) means that all red pieces are worth 1 extra point, all large green pieces are worth 3 extra points, and all blue pieces are worth 1 extra point. With this Market, all red and blue pieces are worth 2 points total (the standard 1 plus the extra 1). Large green pieces are worth 4 points, and all other yellow and green pieces are worth the normal 1 point. If the Market also contained a 3 of Clubs, then those large green pieces would be worth 5 points (1 standard plus 3 for the King plus 1 for the number card).

The player with the most points wins. If there is a tie for points, the player with the most pieces wins. Further ties are shared victories.

Variants:

Unlike the variants for most of the other Invisible City games, all of the following variants work well with each other. Feel free to play with none, one, some, or all of the following variants in effect:

Hidden Market

At the beginning of the game place a number of cards in the Market equal to twice the number of players. Then deal out the remainder of the deck normally. Players do not put cards into the Market once they get their cards.

Market Flux

If you have extra cards after dealing the deck out, do not remove them from the game. Instead, put them face-down in the center of the table to start the Market. Players still make their own contributions to the Market.

Makin' Lemonade

After each player has chosen two pieces of ice at the beginning of the game, put all remaining ice pieces in an opaque container. Proceed taking pieces as you normally would, but all remaining piece selections are done at random.

Jokers Wild

Shuffle the two Jokers in along with the other cards.

During trading, the red Joker can be given to another player to force a trade in pieces. You each swap one piece, and you each choose which of your opponent's pieces you will take.

Also during trading, you can give the black Joker to another player in return for two randomly selected cards from his or her hand.

When you get a Joker, you can not play it on the person who gave it to you.

Origin and Credits:

Back on 7/27/2001, I wrote about Ice Market on my blog.

I wrote: "Last night as I drifted to sleep, I was thinking that there's a commodity bartering game lurking in a combination of standard playing cards and Icehouse pieces. An Icehouse set is a collection of pyramid-shaped game pieces, 60 total, 15 in each of 4 colors, evenly divided among 3 different sizes. This creates a diverse commodity pool. A deck of cards has four suits with 13 'steps' in each suit. Each suit could be assigned to a color..."

I then went on to make up the game as it is now. I'm pretty happy with it. I feel it's a good addition to the family of Icehouse games that can be found lurking around on the web. Speaking of which...

I usually make games that can be played with commonly found items. This game breaks that rule, and I'm okay with that. That's because, if you're a fan of board games, then *you owe it to yourself* to get an Icehouse Set from the good people at Looney Labs. Not only are the core games great, but there are scads of good, solid games that you can play with the pieces.

Trust me on this; you'll love it.

4/2/2002:

Played Ice Market for the first time two days ago while over at Ben's house for Easter Sunday. We played it three times, and it worked out pretty well. There were significant changes to the card values. Other than that, the game is pretty much the same as my first concept.

Thanks to Sharon for editing, and to Ben, Mo, Sharon, and Tosha for playtesting.



Free games monthly from Invisible City Productions, Inc.

<http://www.invisible-city.com/games/>

Ice Market Trader's Tally Sheet

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	J	Q	K
Hearts (red)													
Clubs (green)													
Diamonds (blue)													
Spades (yellow)													

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