

Origins

Hooligans

In the early stages of the game, Hooligans can be incredibly powerful because randomness is limited when there are fewer items available, the effect's duration is longer, and enemy players can lose their gamble on combining items early to gain an advantage. As the game progresses, the effect has to target more items, as the value of disabling one item, especially the "optimal" one, decreases with more items in play. The effect is chaotic, providing a wide range of power, making it a challenge to balance. To somewhat aid in making the value more consistent, as it gets exponentially stronger with the number of items it disables, I scaled the duration down as the amount increases. Adding this lever for balance helps keep the identity strong but not overbearing.

Counts

Counts are the income or interest-building origin for the Hoodwinked set. They are all 4-cost units, making it very rare to activate early. However, if you do manage to field two of them, the effect can significantly ramp up. This ability only occurs when you're already at max interest, further limiting the snowballing effect from being too strong or getting out of hand in the early game. It still allows for some interesting exploration with any of the augments or game mechanics that increase gold income. The four-unit bonus is only attainable with a spatula, but a Count spatula could potentially make it easier to get the two-unit bonus started. The value of the effect would definitely need to be tuned in terms of unit opportunity cost, but ideally, players would eventually drop it after they accrued enough gold to field their optimal composition.

Pumpkins

This origin is made up entirely of legendary units. The reason for all of them being legendary is mainly thematic. I adore the simplicity of the skins and think they are iconic, fitting perfectly with the Hoodwinked thematic. I also wanted them to be versatile units, allowing any composition to make use of them. To this end, the ability to add two additional shop slots benefits almost every team composition and game strategy. Simply put, these units give you more chances to build out your strategy effectively. As for the power level of these legendary units, that would require some balancing. Personally, I don't think they should be the best statistical legendary units in the entire Hoodwinked set due to their easy integration into various compositions. However, their strong tie to the Hoodwinked theme, as well as being legendary units, should still make them respectable.

Eldritch

Abject terror, otherworldly dread, and the danger of succumbing to it. These are my immediate thoughts when I think of eldritch. With that said, there are many different directions that can be explored with this theme. I decided on the feeling of dread and slowly becoming more vulnerable to the unexplainable. To that end, Eldritch units become stronger the longer they are alive by making their enemies more susceptible to all types of damage. I imagine that the unit abilities would, in some way, help keep them alive to maximize their effect. For example, Akali could hide in her Twilight Shroud, Shaco could go invisible with Deceive, Darius could heal with Decimate, Twisted Fate could throw Red or Gold cards to slow or stun, and Zyra could disable with Grasping Roots.

Witches

This was the first origin I worked on when developing Hoodwinked, and it laid the foundation for the entire theme of the set. The “Bewitching” skinline is quite large and features a wide variety of champions, so I had to settle for nine units. I wanted them to have a significant presence on boards, so I made most of them share classes. Out of the nine Witches, only two are “independent” and do not share a class with other Witches. This means that if you want to play a specific Witch, you’ll probably also be playing another one due to the shared makeup of the units. This also means that you are likely to see more Witches on a board rather than a one-off, really emphasizing that they are the core of the Hoodwinked set. For the origin effect, I chose a pretty simple and stereotypical “magic” ability: Mana Shield. This allows these units to cast their abilities more often and gives them some staying power so they aren’t killed too quickly. The ability isn’t very strong on its own, allowing for greater design exploration for each unit’s strengths.

Imposters

This origin was designed around the whimsical and lighthearted irony of the “Definitely Not” skinline, so I tried to give it a chaotic and fun ability that personified these skins. Because of the inherent randomness, it provides a different experience between board states. To help alleviate some of the downsides of its random nature, I would allow players to see the traits that the imposters would inherit during the planning phase. This enables them to make the most of what they can before combat starts. Additionally, I feel like the units themselves have to be somewhat strong on their own to really bring out the benefit of inheriting traits. If Imposters aren’t strong, they should at least be flexible, and their design should reflect that. Allowing them to scale in multiple ways, such as armor and magic resistance ratios, or stronger base stats, could help them achieve that goal.

Roleplayers

For a lot of people, dressing up is one of the main draws of Halloween. For some, however, dressing up is far more than an occasion for a single day. The Roleplayers origin is themed around LARPer's and their ability is inspired by one of the most iconic and groundbreaking games of all time: Dungeons & Dragons. I thought it would be a great homage to the game to create an ability that uses dice rolls. If you've ever played a game of DnD, you'll understand the value of dice rolls and how variance plays a key role in deciding how something plays out. To mitigate the randomness inherent in dice rolls, I linked it to the number of units present on the board, thereby correlating it with the potential numerical outcomes of the dice. In a traditional game of DnD, the dice can roll up to 20, and I feel like the origin effect would have to be balanced around its best outcome. If you hit it in the earliest stages of the game, it's going to be very overwhelmingly powerful without much investment. That can be a problem, but I think it's fine as long as an investment is made. Therefore, it might start off weak, but having additional units will not only increase the dice roll value but also give you more attempts at hitting a big jackpot.

Puppets

Puppets felt like a spookier version of toys or dolls, and Riot did have some skins that fit that mold, so it seemed like a natural fit. Some are from different skinlines or concepts, but under this umbrella feel appropriate. Puppetry is all about control and manipulation, but taking control of an enemy unit is inherently very powerful. To somewhat limit the power, I made the ability only activate with an investment of three units. And because Puppets consist of one 3-cost unit, two 2-cost units, and one 1-cost unit, activating their ability is rarer in the early stages of the game. This helps balance the effect when having even one unit possessed and on your side of the board would be incredibly powerful. I would also focus on giving the Puppets abilities that work well with more allies, such as buffs and shields, in order to emphasize the fantasy of overcoming your opponent with their own units rather than the Puppets themselves.

Rockstars

Even though rockstars are more musical than occult in nature, there are some bands and genres that really cherish the darker and mystical elements of the day. In a way, you could say fans are like worshipers of a cult with their fandom. So, how do I tie it in with the overarching theme of the set? Well, Rockstars buff allies with a stacking attack speed and ability power bonus whenever they use their abilities. The inspiration for the origin came from the idea of each cast member doing their part in a performance. Whether it be hitting the right notes or nailing a drum solo, each element of the performance makes the whole experience. That experience can inspire and energize people, which feels synonymous with "speed" or "action." This effect is also granted at half effectiveness to their "groupies," or allies. I think this mechanic allows them to be fitted into multiple different strategies, and I wanted that to be one of the strengths for this group of units because thematically, music is ubiquitous.

Nightmares

Nightmares are similar in terms of being influenced by fear like the Eldritch group of units. The difference, however, is that Nightmare units are more selfish. Thematically, I feel like everyone has their own specific nightmare, and what's scary to somebody might not be scary to someone else. This makes it a very individual experience. Visually, I chose skins that are menacing and dark. Nightmares deal true damage innately, pushing the theme of everyone being susceptible to their fears. Whenever the bonus is activated, they are granted additional AP and AD if they land a killing blow. This gives Nightmares a scaling factor, becoming more frightening if they aren't dealt with. In terms of unit cost, there's a slew of low-cost units, but to activate the last set bonus requires a legendary unit. I did not want to see a large presence of Nightmare units on a board unless the player was committing to it as their win condition, but thought the theme was strong enough to encourage it as an avenue for early-game strategies.

Dreadful & Trick o' Treat

Not unlike some other origins that Riot has created, Dreadful and Trick o' Treat are single-unit origins. When I created Hoodwinked, Vex was just released, and I felt like her doom-and-gloom character was a perfect fit. Riot tends to include their newest characters as legendary units if it manages to line up with the release of a new set, so I made her a 5-cost unit. Her ability as a Dreadful unit would showcase her Summoner's Rift gameplay loop, which revolves around resetting her ultimate. Ekko, on the other hand, is a Trick o' Treat unit. I rarely see this skin in use but couldn't pass it up. Trick o' Treat allows him to equip up to five items, two more than the usual maximum. This personifies the "treat." On the other hand, the "trick" aspect is primarily tied to his Rogue trait and his ability to manipulate time.

Traits

I've listed all the origins I designed, as well as some of the thought process behind them. As far as traits are concerned, they are mostly the same and would still be thematically similar to their previous iterations. For example:

- Brawler could grant anything from flat bonus health or a percent increase maximum health, or even attacks dealing bonus damage based on a unit's maximum health.
- Warrior would still be combat focused, with an emphasis on improved melee.
- Arcanist would give units additional casts of their abilities or bonus AP with each spell cast.
- Protector would consist of tankier units with an emphasis on magic resistance, armor, shields, and taunt mechanics.

The reason I listed them in addition to the origins I created for this set is to give people who have actually played TFT or maybe experienced other autobattlers an idea of what to expect from each unit based on the archetype. I left each unit's unique abilities empty because the design space is easier with a holistic approach in terms of what feels good during balancing and testing. If, for example, one of the legendaries such as Trick o' Treat Ekko isn't strong enough with a rewind mechanic, maybe he would have to borrow something like the stun or jumping ability from his kit on Summoner's Rift. I definitely have ideas for what each unit would do in this set but I feel like ultimately, it would be a lot of design effort for something that I believe requires fine-tuning to really make it feel whole. With the origins and traits detailed and assigned, I think creating each unit's ability would be easier, and the theme can remain in focus throughout the entire process.

Mode Variations

Alchemy

Alchemy was a mode that I created to explore how players would react to more gold income across the board with the caveat that two and three-star units can sell for more. The increased income would encourage copies but also create a decision for the player on whether to keep the stronger two-star or three-star units, or sell them for even more gold. It also has the added benefit of giving early-game-focused boards a way to transition to the late game, which would probably be much easier to force when gold income is accelerated. This also gives players a choice to buy experience and lead to higher-cost units and a larger team.

The Witching Hour

Similar to Alchemy in design, I wanted to explore what happened if players gained double the amount of passive experience. This might seem like a straight benefit to econ-focused strategies, but the fact that you gain one class and origin trait and don't have to invest in experience allows low-income strategies to not fall too far behind, as they can focus their gold on finding their units. I wanted this to be a net-neutral mechanic, and even though I believe experience or econ-focused classes would probably be played more during this mode, it would be much more drastic if the experience that players bought also doubled.

Mimics

This one's a little bit funky. Minions are replaced by mimics in the Mimics game mode. Whenever a player would be fighting minions, they instead would be fighting mimics. This makes minion rounds more challenging and exciting. Mimics copy champions played on your board and elevate them by one star tier. So if a 2-star unit is copied, then the player will fight a 3-star copy. Some units become much stronger when 3-starred and it creates a choice when fielding your board during minion rounds. If you field your entire board of 2-stars, you may end up losing because of the base power of units that are 3-starred. Mimics do not copy items which give the player a bit more agency and power to win these rounds. The reward for winning this uniquely challenging experience is a copy of the unit slain, including its star level. This means if players really want to risk it and feel like their board could beat an identical board that is one-star higher based on positioning and item difference, then you will be rewarded by allowing your board to become stronger with more copies of your units. It creates a situation where you really want to think about which units you want 3-starred and which units you want to be weaker. The main downside to this mode would be that player frustration at the beginning would be much higher than other modes because the mechanic can be punishing and the choices might not be immediately apparent to most players. The balance of the units and their relative power levels when copied would also have to be tested to make sure that the challenge isn't way too hard but not also way too weak that it allows people to snowball without issues.

Bubbling Concoction

In this game mode you start with two brand new items which are aptly named. These concoctions are permanent and cannot be destroyed or rolled. Whenever a player applies these concoctions onto a hex on the board, those are permanently affected. Players should strategize whether to use concoctions early and benefit from the random bonuses that they grant, or hold them and finalize a strategy before committing in order to maximize the best placement of their units. The bonuses are not listed as I did not feel like listing a plethora of different possible stat choices but it could be anything from a bonus attack speed, bonus starting mana, bonus magic resistance, etc. The choices are randomized at the start of each game. You might get a bubbly concoction that gives bonus AP in one game but in another game it might give bonus attack speed.

Hide and Seek

My goal with this mode is to relive the chaos and suspense of playing a simple game of Hide-and-Seek. During carousel rounds, players are unable to see which units and/or items are being displayed, or which player gets which item. But if you manage to sneak up on them as you get closer, they become slightly more visible. Players don't have much time during the carousel round as it does have a time limit, which contributes to the panic. Strategically, this also means that carousel rounds are less deterministic in terms of building perfect items but it also makes it harder for players who are doing worse in the early stages of the game to have an inherent advantage if they were allowed to get their choice of items first. Minion rounds are also replaced by a Hide-and-Seek mechanic. The player becomes nearsighted while loot orbs spawn on the board. Players must find their loot but unlike regular modes, your Little Legend does not run faster towards a loot orb. Additionally, loot orbs move around slowly.

Trick or Treat

I wanted this mode to be the standout mode, as "Trick or Treat" is the core activity of Halloween. My goal was to introduce game-changing mechanics that would not only impact the units you use but also change your approach to victory. In this mode, you'll encounter "Tricks" and "Treats" in the shop. These Tricks and Treats come with a price tag, and players have the option to gamble on whether they'll receive a Trick or a Treat. The gold cost is directly linked to the potential benefits or drawbacks. For instance, a 10-gold Trick might bring about negative effects like damaging your Little Legend, stealing your gold, or occupying space on your bench. On the other hand, a 10-gold Treat could offer substantial benefits, such as more champions, higher star levels, or additional items. Early in the game, you may encounter smaller cost Tricks and Treats, but as the game progresses, bigger gambles become available for players to consider. Ideally, I'd want Treats to be more common, while Tricks should remain a negative but rarer experience. Tuning the exact numbers would require player feedback and testing, seeking a balance where some players might make a comeback due to a gamble, while others might take a risk that, unfortunately, seals their fate.