

# Flaschenteufel

## - The Bottle Imp

for 3-4 players aged 10 and up

card game by Günter Cornett  
translation by Rick Heli



Graphics: Günter Cornett  
Duration: 30-45 minutes

<b>Content</b>	<b>(the story)</b>
Components	(quotation 1)
Playing the Game Preparation	
Beginning the Game The Bottle Imp	(quotation 2)
End of Game Strategy	(quotation 3)

## Components:

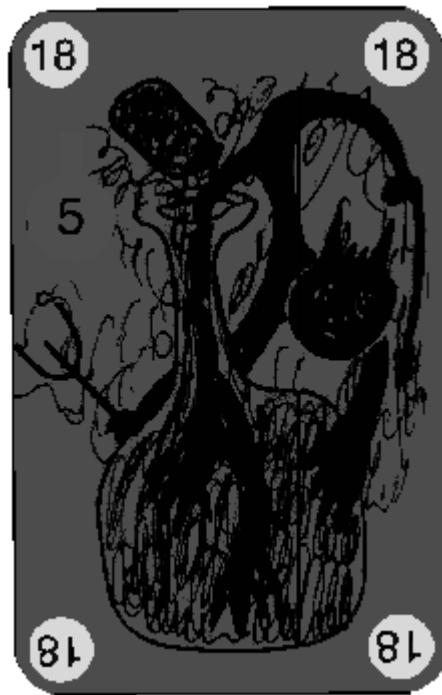
- **36 playing cards** in three suits (12 each rendered as dollars, cents and centimes):

The corners of the cards, except for the 19 card, show all of the numerical values from 1 to 37.

The color of the card shows whether it is a dollar (red), cent (blue) or centime (yellow).

A second number (drawn in the bottle) shows the point value of the card for scoring at the end of the game (the 1, 2 and 3 cards have no point value).

- **1 start value card (19)** (= 19)
- **4 card distribution tables**
- **2 cards** as used to **construct** the bottle imp
- **1 trademark card**



To be needed:

- **paper** and **pencil** (to keep score) and
- before the first game, **glue** and **scissors**

If you are playing for the first time, see this Construction Guide on the FAQ page.

Before we continue, just a few words on ...

### **... the Ownership of the Bottle**

"Of glass it is but the glass of it was tempered in the flames of hell. An imp lives in it, and that is the shadow we behold there moving: or so I suppose. If any man buy this bottle the imp is at his command; all that he desires - love, fame, money, houses ... - all are his at the word uttered ...

There is one thing the imp cannot do - he cannot prolong life; and, it would not be fair to conceal from you, there is a drawback to the bottle; for if a man die before he sells it, he must burn in hell forever ...

it cannot be sold at all, unless sold at a loss. If you sell it for as much as you paid for it, back it comes to you again like a homing pigeon ...

Only remember it must be coined money that you sell it for ..."  
(from "The Bottle Imp" by Robert Louis Stevenson)

## **Playing the Game**

As with many other trick-taking card games, the idea of *Flaschenteufel* is to acquire the most points. The Bottle Imp works by ensuring that the highest card does not always take the trick.

The player with the highest valued card that still fits under the price of the Bottle Imp receives the trick and also the Bottle Imp. The value of the Bottle Imp falls to the value of the winning card.

The owner of the Bottle Imp changes until its value can no longer be undercut. Whoever owns the Bottle Imp at the end of the game receives minus points instead of positive points.

## **Preparation**

- The start value card is placed face up on the table.
- The Bottle Imp is placed on the start value card so that its start value (19) can be seen by all the players.
- Each player takes a card distribution table.
- The 36 colored cards are dealt equally to the players.
- It is recommended that the players sort the cards according to number, rather than color.

## Beginning the Game

Each player discards a card. The discarded card is placed on a Imp's Trick under the start value card. No one may look at this trick.

Each player now exchanges one card with his left- and right-hand neighbors. First he places a card from his hand face down to his left and another to his right. Finally he takes the two cards which are lying before him into his hand.

## Trick-Taking

Play proceeds clockwise. The player to the left of the dealer begins and plays a card. Whatever type of coin has been played (dollars are red, cents are blue, centimes are yellow), the other players must follow suit.

If a player cannot follow suit he may play any card.

If all of the played cards are higher than the current value of the Bottle Imp, the player who has played the highest numbered card, **regardless of whether he has followed suit**, wins the trick.

## The Bottle Imp

The Bottle Imp can always be re-sold as long as the price is lower than the last buying price.

If somebody plays a card whose number is lower than the current value of the Bottle Imp, then the Bottle Imp automatically transfers to its new owner at the end of the trick.

If only one player has played a card lower than the Bottle Imp value, then this player gets the Bottle Imp and the trick.

If more than one player has played a card whose values are lower than the Bottle Imp, then the player who played the highest such card receives the Bottle Imp and the trick.

The card which won the player both the Bottle Imp and the trick is placed face up under the Bottle Imp. This is the new value of the Bottle Imp. The card which denoted the previous value of the Bottle Imp is added to the taken trick pile of the former owner of the Bottle Imp. (It is possible that this person is the same as the current owner.)

At the start of the game no one owns the Bottle Imp and its price is 19.

### An Example

The value of the Bottle Imp is 19.

The following cards are played:

Player A: 24

Player B: 15  
Player C: 17  
Player D: 32.

Players A and D therefore have higher values than 19 while players B and C have played lower than 19.

Of B and C, C gets the trick and also the Bottle Imp, because 17 is closer to 19 than the 15 of Player B is.

The new price of the Bottle Imp is now 17. The 17 card is placed under the Bottle Imp.

The next trick is always led by the player who took the last trick (in this case player C).

[menue - content](#)

"Is there anything wrong about the price?"

"It has dropped a great deal in value since your time, Mr. Keawe," said the young man stammering.

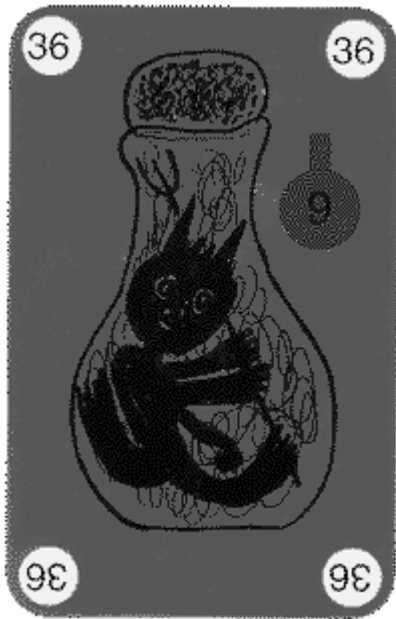
"Well, well, I shall have the less to pay for it," says Keawe. "How much did it cost you?"

The young man was as white as a sheet. "Two cents," said he.

"What?" cried Keawe, "two cents? Why, then, you can only sell it for one. And he who buys it - " The words died upon Keawe's tongue; he who bought it could never sell it again, the bottle and the bottle imp must abide with him until he died, and when he died must carry him to the red end of hell.

The young man of Beritania Street fell upon his knees. "For God's sake buy it!"

(from "The Bottle Imp" by Robert Louis Stevenson)



## End of Game

When all the cards have been played each player receives the point value of the cards in his taken tricks.

Exception: the player who owns the Bottle Imp, **instead of scoring positive points**, receives the total of the Imp's Trick as penalty (negative) points.

After a pre-arranged number of games or point total, the player with the highest point total wins.

"All you have to do is to use the power of the imp in moderation, and then sell it to someone else, as I do to you, and finish your life in comfort."  
(from "The Bottle Imp" by Robert Louis Stevenson)

## Strategy

**Discarding and Passing:** In general it is a good idea to pass one's lowest cards to one's neighbors. Vital game information is also passed with every exchanged card. For example, if one gives his neighbor the Two and receives from him the One, the game is lost if the neighbor succeeds in taking the Bottle Imp with the Two unless the one manages to play the One in the same trick.

It is also a good to void oneself of one suit because then one has more choices of play. Therefore one should count on the fact that one's neighbors frequently pass cent (yellow) cards.

In any case one should note well which cards were passed and delivered, and to/from which fellow players.

**Cardplay:** One should promptly play the cards whose values are scarcely under the starting price, in order to win cards with high value. If the price of the bottle devil sinks immediately, it is no longer possible to do this.

In order not to receive and keep the Bottle Imp at the end of the game, one tries to play the quite small values as favorably as possible. That can be done most securely, if in the same trick cards of higher rank but below the Bottle Imp price have already been played.

It is enticing, but also risky, to put many points into an (apparently) "normal" trick. For example if one takes the 31 with the 37, the next player could take it by play of a very low card (together with the Bottle Imp).

It is very important to note which cards have already been played.

### Translator's Notes:

You may enjoy the entire story of "The Bottle Imp" on-line (courtesy of Island Nights' Entertainments).

Rules translated by Rick Heli on 19-Mar-2000.