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Every Easter, Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving I travel down to my grandparents in North Carolina to see my three crazy cousins. You know, the kind that force you to run around with them playing imaginary Minecraft. No? Well, three times a year, family obligations demand this dive into madness, and three times a year, I must restrain myself and my father from stress eating all the apple pie...again. As people adapt to survive harsh environments, we adapt to survive our cousins. During these few arduous days, we use Euchre, Oh Heck, and Uno to keep our family from the brink of insanity.

As a popular and simplistic card game, Uno has universal recognition in the United States, and one can easily identify the cards by their bright colors. However, people seldom know the more complex, classic games like Euchre and Oh Heck, which use the traditional 52 card deck. Both are considered trick taking games where all players place cards and the highest card takes them all. While players individually compete in Uno and Oh Heck, they must combine forces in Euchre with two players per team. From my experience, explaining the rules of Euchre and Oh Heck is a daunting task, but after one or two rounds of either game, people often pick it up quickly. While I play with friends on occasion, I primarily reserve my masterful card playing skills for family gatherings.

At first, my family learned Euchre as a bonding experience as a way to force me and my sister to put the books or phones down and interact with our family. However, we quickly

branched off to the two other card games: Uno and Oh Heck in order to include everyone. All three engaged the entire family in a clash of luck and skill with each creating a new battlefield ripe for conquest. However, the card games soon turned into our shield to ward off the lunacy swirling around us. For when you finally abandon all hope of convincing your cousin that she was not, in fact, born a bird, you can suggest another round of Oh Heck and rekindle your faith in humanity.

We escaped reality with these card games, and that escape soon became our addiction.

One round in and you know at least five games will follow, each one more heated than the last.

Comment [1]: this grammar is weird

Everyone puts their honor on the line, and the losers always come back for redemption.

Comment [2]: yeeee

Emotions run high as the dealer distributes our fate. Because of these three games, each holiday has late, late nights full of yelling and laughter.

During those intense card games, our minds learn to blissfully let go of life's chaos, of the homework, the bills, the senseless cousins screaming behind you and replace them with only the game. Hours pass in a blur. You look at the clock and five minutes later two hours have passed. As much as I dread the holidays with those cousins, I truly value what they spark--an appreciation for quality family experiences that I would have otherwise missed and a reprieve from life.

Both my parents work, my sister and I have a mountain of homework piled on our shoulders, and our grandparents live out of state in the middle of nowhere. Consequently, our time spent with one another is limited and often filled with awkward small talk. During each visit the air fills with anxiety as the unfamiliar families once again acquaint themselves with one another. Not only do my sister and I find these interactions uncomfortable but we also have a difficult time finishing online work as internet providers don't typically focus on those living

among cotton fields. Thus, when the awkward encounters and unproductivity combine, these “holidays” become synonymous with frustration and misery.

These card games don't just have value as basic entertainment and time passers. No, instead they make each of these family gatherings precious. When work weighs down on our shoulders, Uno lifts it. When tense silence permeates the air, Oh Heck clears it, and when I want desperately to despise my deranged cousins, Euchre makes sure I know just how invaluable our time together truly is.