

WEAVING THE MAGICAL WORLD OF

TALISMAN KINGDOM HEARTS

WITH ELISA TEAGUE



HOW SHE DESIGNED THE FIRST TABLETOP GAME TO COMBINE BOTH BELOVED FRANCHISES

DISNEY KINGDOM HEARTS TALISMAN

USO TS004635 PI | Available ????!

Whether you're one of GTM's loyal legion of readers or enchanted by this story's power combo of IPs, it's likely you're already acquainted with Elisa Teague. A prolific name in the tabletop industry with over 100+ titles under her corseted belt, the game designer's extensive work has graced many a playing space in one form or another, be it fantasy RPG adventures and puzzles, social party games, books, panels, or podcasts ("Oh My!"). Ever in high demand amidst con season and what spare time she has to collect, paint minis, or cosplay, we were able to pin down the retro-coiffed pinup for a round of our own questions about her experience designing the highly anticipated *Talisman: Disney Kingdom Hearts Edition*.



Forged of USAopoly and Games Workshop's partnership to bring two licensed versions of *Talisman* to market this year, enlisting Elisa's talent for *Talisman: Disney Kingdom Hearts Edition* was a natural choice for The Op. "When I was approached with this project, I immediately jumped at the chance to do it, as I love *Disney Kingdom Hearts* as much as any fan does." Taking the multi-faceted Square Enix franchise and translating all of its signature elements to the tabletop posed a welcome challenge, given *Talisman*'s classically competitive nature. "How would I blend *Disney Kingdom Hearts* with a game where players traditionally fight against one another? How could I ever pit Mickey against Donald? The answer was that I simply couldn't."

Employing a strategy of her own, the game designer rearranged the adventurous RPG's core mechanic for a workaround that would honor the characters and make the game feel as genuine as possible, minus the need for players to eliminate others. "Players try to gain victory points towards winning by earning them, instead of taking away others' life tokens," she explains. In line with her objective, the result was a way for the characters to all work against the Heartless and seal The Final Door (with one player character as the standout hero). "It was an incredibly difficult and unique design experiment that I'm really happy with."

With *Talisman: Disney Kingdom Hearts Edition* debuting a new mechanic for the 30+ year-old "Magical Quest Game", Elisa



© DISNEY



embraced the magnitude of updating certain aspects and kept a steadfast feel of what she knew was important to its players. “The movement, the random encounters, and the balance of needed Strength and Magic to succeed in the inner rings of the gameboard, without rushing in” comprised her primary focus on retaining the game’s unpredictability. “While much of these elements depend on luck, it is what *Talisman* fans love so much about the game.”

The tabletop veteran also enjoyed writing video game references into the game’s 100+ Adventure cards, which present encounters with Heartless, Events, Objects and more to characters on their journey (without players needing fanatical knowledge of the franchise to be immersed in the gameplay). “One of my favorites was including the Dalmatian Puppy in the form of a Follower in the game,” she says, harking back on the focal point of the “99 Puppies” side quest. “Subtle nods to the original video game and hiding ‘Easter eggs’ throughout the board game were my way of giving little gifts to fans that will recognize them.”

Talisman: Disney Kingdom Hearts Edition’s 11 custom-sculpted miniatures including Sora, Kairi, Riku, King Mickey and others all received a white-gloved bio treatment by the *Girls on Games* author, who tapped her love of *Kingdom Hearts* to develop each character’s profiles in line with what fellow players would hope for. “Sora’s mechanics certainly reflect his combat abilities in the game,” she begins. “King Mickey is also bound to be a highly desired character, and his automatic Keyblade is a great perk in addition to getting to, well, play as Mickey!”

Despite the game’s impressive roster of Disney royalty, Elisa encourages players to explore how each character can influence gameplay to help with strategies and compatibility with others’ perks. “Take in all of the unique character abilities and the combinations that can be formed with them. Each character is balanced and all of them offer fantastic advantages.” As for any ideal encounters she has in mind? “I personally cannot wait to play Mulan battling Ansem... You know she’s the hero we’ve been waiting for!”

Elisa tells us her ultimate wish for players of *Talisman: Disney Kingdom Hearts Edition* is the same for all her games—for them to have fun. “I’d want laughs and cunning moves and stories to be shared about interesting and random occurrences in the game. Every game should tell a story, and this world is a perfect setting for new stories to unfold.” Usually having to wait months to years before seeing her concepts come to life and on store shelves, Elisa admitted to being on the edge of her seat for the final outcome of a collaboration she is “so honored and happy” to have worked on. “This game is a love letter to Kingdom Hearts fans who have



wanted a game that they can sit around a table, face-to-face with friends and family, to play over and over again, each time with new and unique possibilities.”

Keep up with Elisa Teague via Twitter @geekypinup, her projects on www.elisateague.com, and watch for her latest work in *The Op’s Geek Out!* Disney available this holiday season!



Michelle Quillen is Marketing Copywriter for USAopoly and producer of *The Op LIVE* livestream on Twitch. Find her at geeky cons and expos, fundraising for Extra Life, and follow her visual storytelling on Instagram @michellequillen.