

i've been playing a lot of the new clash royale mode. for the unfamiliar: it is called merge tactics, and you are placed in something similar to a round robin with three other players. i have been plateauing in my trophy count for a few months, and i honestly enjoy it. i regularly place last, and i regularly place first, and i am the same person every time—i employ exactly the same strategy every time, play the same cards. my placement feels random, like i am tapping furiously for minutes to play a battle royale style slot machine. i love merge tactics because the results of my “labor” are so clearly detached from the quality of my “labor” that a loss doesn’t wound my pride at all, and losses in anything always wound my pride.

today, i woke up at 3 pm and laid down on the fire escape and played several rounds of merge tactics. i saw the wins and losses come and go, and i felt little more than pure, childish, undiluted delight at the process, watching my troops rise and fall in waves of the brightest colors current technology can produce. i never feel this way about things; every loss is a soul crushing indictment of my capabilities, and every win is a hard earned, direct reflection of my will. i care so deeply about all the things i create, because they are little vessels of myself, pockets of my will forced into reality. my troops are little bits of me, carefully selected to please me. i hold particular affection for the huntress card, because her hair is purple. i've always wanted purple hair. i am the leader, the captain, the general of my troops, but it doesn't matter much to me whether i win or lose. i like to play, and there is not much more to it than that. i feel light when i play, a sunny, sweet sort of happy that comes from something purer than the ego. i like placing my cards, and i like watching my trophy count go up and down like waves. i like the waves.

