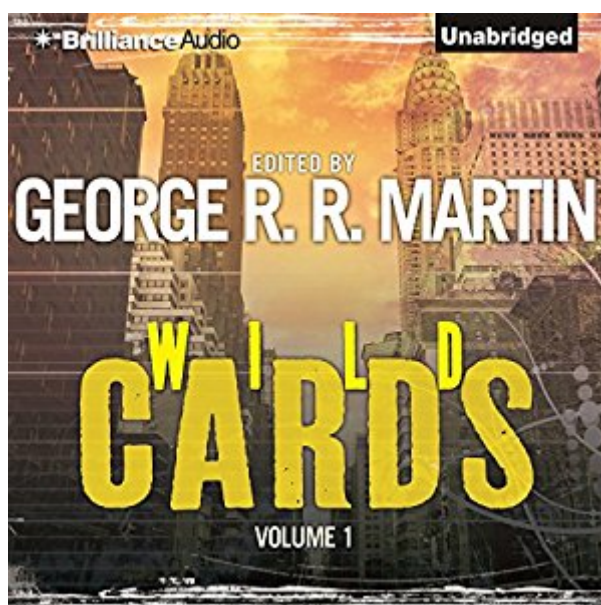


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# Wild Cards I



## Synopsis

In the aftermath of WWII, an alien virus struck the Earth, endowing a handful of survivors with extraordinary powers. Originally published in 1987, the newly expanded saga contains additional original stories by eminent writers.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hours and 59 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Brilliance Audio

Audible.com Release Date: November 8, 2011

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B0064I1AAQ

Best Sellers Rank: #6 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science Fiction > Anthologies & Short Stories #22 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Anthologies #28 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Anthologies

## Customer Reviews

I read this series when it was originally released. I wasn't happy with where the series eventually ended up late in the series, but the earlier works are fond favorites. People buying this book (or others in the series) because they are fans of GRRM's Song of Ice and Fire series are likely to be disappointed due to misaligned expectations. The only thing this series has in common with the Song of Ice and Fire is a gritty certainty that favorite characters will get killed....or worse, and the use of widely scattered often disconnected characters and plotlines that sometimes may cross but also might never. Further, as this is a 'mosaic' novel, GRRM isn't the sole proprietor of the stories. Treated as a separate entity from GRRM's more recent series, the Wild Cards series is a fairly unique and often brilliant body of work. Due to its nature, not all of the short stories will appeal to everyone; to be sure there are stories and story arcs that don't appeal to me either. Regardless, taken as a whole the series is really something special. It's similar to a massive wall mural which can't be appreciated from up close; you have to pull back a bit and look at it in its entirety to fully appreciate the overall effect. The strength of the series lays in its deft characterizations. Some of my favorite fictional characters are from this series; the Turtle, Croyd

Crenson (the Sleeper), Golden Boy, Mackie Messer, Carnifex, Mr Nobody, Jumpin Jack Flash (et al), Kid Dinosaur.....the list goes on and on. The series really picks up in the second book, but the 1st is where all of the necessary background resides. Unfortunately, the books are being released in a grossly overpriced large softbound edition; my advice is to find the original paperbacks in a used book store.

There are a \*lot\* of non-comic character based super-hero books, but the Wildcards series has an impressive list of authors and editors (its edited by George R.R. Martin, author of the current best selling A Song of Fire and Ice series) and spans around 20 volumes. Please note that Wildcards is NOT similar to A Song of Ice and Fire, and the people trashing this book because they bought it because of Martin's involvement just didn't do their homework before buying the book. More on that later. These are full length books, and take themselves fairly seriously -- they are not necessarily rigidly realistic, but are not "pulpy" in comparison with most super-hero books. The format of book 1 is that most of the chapters tell mostly self-contained stories, with the chapters written by different authors. A few chapters provide backstory on the origins of the wildcard virus (which gives the super powers, mutations and afflictions), but most are generally centered around the origin and story of a particular person affected by the wildcard virus, whether as an "ace" or "joker" (super-powered character or individual afflicted with random disfigurement or other problems.) Certain individuals appear in more than one chapter, and some of them have continuing relevance throughout the series, while others are one chapter characters that either die or return to obscurity. There is fairly little over-arching story in this introductory volume -- rather, you get a slice of time in the alternate history of the world where the wildcards virus causes the emergence of super-heroes and jokers (i.e. mutants) in the 40s. In addition to a bit of the history and backstory, you get a bunch of origin/introduction type stories. As a result of this format, you don't get deep plot or character development, but at its best, Wildcards I introduces some of the most creative and memorable super-heroes you'll ever read about. The first non-backstory chapter, for example, tells the origin story of "The Sleeper" whose highly memorable and imaginative origin story ends in amazing chaos that just completely and naturally flows out of his story. It feels real(ish), and not "comic booky" the way that many super-hero books (even those not based on comic books) do. At its worst, there are certain chapters that may not click for you at all, aren't overly imaginative and/or and do little to advance the overall history of the Wildcards world. For example, "Ghost Girl" is about a college student with a very familiar power that has a one night misadventure. I don't recall if she appears in subsequent books, but her little misadventure -- while perfectly pleasant to read -- won't stay with

you long. Verdict: People looking for a traditionally coherent fantasy with deep plot and character development should avoid this book. You do get more of an overarching plot in some of the subsequent books, but these books are by no means similar to A Song of Ice and Fire in that they lack that kind of depth of plot, character development and flow. Buying Wildcards just because you liked A Song of Ice and Fire is a bad idea. What they are is tremendous fun, highly imaginative super-hero based fantasy. Folks that to any extent, even in some buried part of themselves not seen since childhood, are superhero fans owe it to themselves to read the book, because of the sheer depth of imagination and creativity of the universe and characters (some of them anyway). I still remember The Sleeper, The Turtle and many others (not all of whom appear in this first book) 20 years after reading many of the Wildcards books.\*Superhero fans should be sure to check out my other reviews, as I've reviewed 5 or so non-comic based super-hero stories. Also, there is \*very\* highly rated (4.7 out of 5 on Goodreads, 800 votes), huge, completed web serial that reminded me of Wild Cards in terms of the imagination and realism of the heroes and villains called Worms, written by Wildbow. It has to be read on the web, but the site is formatted nicely for it.

I read Wild Cards the week it was released in paperback. I probably read it five more times until the paperback fell apart - or more likely my son absconded with it when he went to college. And it had been out of print for a long time. I requested that the publisher put out a Kindle edition and was thrilled when it showed up. Better than showed up as, apparently, the original work had some revision done before the release. Not having read it for more than a decade, I can't really spot what was added, deleted, modified. But I enjoyed it as much as I ever did on any previous read. And, the subsequent Wild Card novels are starting to appear for Kindle too. I have my work cut out for me! If you are new to the Wild Cards saga - this is the place to start. The later books in the series read like novels rather than a collection of short stories. But this is the place to learn the history of the WC universe and meet the characters that shaped it.

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