

SUSPENSE

January **ISSUE 3** 2014

**THE
RETURN
OF THE
TURN-BASED
BEAST!**

& DECISION

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GAMING
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ISSUE # 3
January 2014

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2** The Changing Face of PBM - A Decade On
- 7** Regime Change
- 8** Review of Alamaze
- 12** How I Found Myself In Hyboria
- 18** Bledian Diary
- 21** Five Tips To Make Your Play-By-Post D&D Game A Long-Lived Success
- 25** Games You Should Be Playing!
- 29** You Go, Gamer Girl!
- 32** A Red Sea
- 35** Wardens of the Golden Wood
- 42** Lunar Landing: Exploring the Moon Colonies of Play-By-Mail
- 43** Hyborian War Kingdom Spotlight
- 48** Everything you need to know about Damage (but didn't know what to ask)
- 59** An Origin Story
- 61** A Very Special Action - Phoenix: BSE Style
- 74** Where We're Heading
- 77** Dante's Inferno: The Trials and Tribulations of Publishing a PBM Magazine

SUSPENSE & DECISION



Issue # 3

It's the dawn of a new year, and Suspense & Decision is ringing the new year in with issue # 3.

And who better to grace the front cover of the first issue of the new year than Bigfoot?

Getting more women to try their hand at playing PBM games was always a challenge for the genre, and for many women, PBM games had about as much appeal as getting abducted by a Bigfoot.

Yet, women are no strangers to many other forms of turn-based gaming. Why, then, was Play By Mail largely a cryptid form of gaming for the fairer sex?

Or was PBM more popular with women gamers than we give it credit for?

The Changing Face of PBM - A Decade On

By: Mica Goldstone

In response to Charles's comments on an old Flagship article, I have a few comments of my own.

First, it was about decade ago, so some of what was relevant then is no longer the case. I was somewhat frustrated back then, as like the companies around us, we were watching a decline of player-base with customers that were prepared to comment about the reasons - often quoting costs of playing our games against the alternatives. I suppose if we didn't see ourselves as very different from other gaming industries, why would our customers?

It has taken some years to come to terms with exactly what we are as an industry. I now see us as the personal service of the game industry. We offer a premium product with a lot of hands-on care. As the Savile Row tailor is to Primark, we are to the gaming industry. Yup, we are so niche we occupy the equivalent to a single postcode, compared with the rest of the world. The analogy also goes further, in terms of the product, itself - a suit from Savile Row is an item of longevity that will be with the customer for years, possibly decades, much like their positions in our games.

For a long time, we attempted to compete with other gaming markets, by decreasing our turn fees to the point of being in danger of actually pricing our self out of business. Since then, we have wised up. Our customers will not thank us for going bust. Rather, they would see the games they enjoy playing continue, and understand that we, also, need to be

paid to deliver them at a professional level.

My hobby outside the gaming industry is beekeeping, and I can see parallels between the two. I sell a handful of jars of local honey for £6/lb, compared with £2.50 from Tesco. When asked what the difference is - I explain that, for starters, you cannot buy my honey from Tesco. Our products are unique to us, and we are proud of them for being superior in many ways, and charge appropriately for our time and the product. We are neither greedy, nor seeking to become millionaires, but have to cover overheads - and as we are not shifting hundreds of thousands of units, the mark-up per unit has to be higher, as a consequence (also honey, like PBM, is not to everybody's taste).

As to Charles' charges of not acting as a group or even talking to others - I concede the point, to some degree. We attempted a few joint operations, though they simply failed, for various reasons; failure of the magazine we were working with; lack of understanding of what our games were at the shows we attended, and ever more frustrated by the lack of appropriate places to advertise. In the end, the climate was not right, and it was becoming foolhardy to keep chucking money at it.

I also think that quite a few people back then thought creating and running a PBM was simple. Somebody once described Phoenix as 'just a text editor.' This staggering level of naivety will likely remain a stumbling block to new



customers for any PBM game without a fully interactive online user interface like Nexus*. Often, PBM is a fine port in a old musty bottle!

So, here we are eight years later, and the industry appears to be going through a change for the first time in at least fifteen years. Personally, I think it is in our favour.

It looks like the MMO industry has got itself stuck in a rut, with new games attempting to mimic the success of WoW or seeking merely to generate short term revenue on initial subscriptions and sales of the game pack. Even console games that seem to explode onto the market last, at best, a couple of months, then disappear into the background – take Skyrim, for example. Some of our players were raving about it on our forums, but they never considered leaving Phoenix.

This is being reflected in the rise of board and role playing games industry, proving that contrary to popular belief at the time, the computer games industry has not killed off traditional games. Rather, they have made gaming mainstream, while at the same time, not being capable of fulfilling all aspects of gaming needs. You could say that they have actually spawned addicts looking for a different fix.

I have noticed that there are a growing number of board games, where the options available in a turn are so numerous and with such big ramifications that games can stall, as analysis paralysis sets in. Board games, therefore, have a glass ceiling set by the time to take a turn. Step up and take a bow, PBM – where there are no

drawbacks of over-thinking a turn (unless you miss a deadline). Combined with its ability to play at convenient times, like online and console games, this makes PBM the perfect procrastinator's board game.

For many years, I have been looking for a term to describe our industry, because PBM no longer fits the bill, especially for games such as Phoenix where people often do not even use email, having become reliant on the Nexus* for all aspects of gaming. I think, though, that I may be missing a trick. Take American football, for instance – despite its misleading name, it is accepted for what it is, as it has evolved over time. To suddenly rename it, now, would be to cause confusion. The term PBM is synonymous with remote playing, turn-based, low graphic use, strategic, and more often than not, simultaneous control of many units that distinguishes it from other genres. That PBM has evolved, is probably not a reason to seek out a new term. Rather, use this as the springboard to explain the evolution of the hobby in the post-PBM universe.

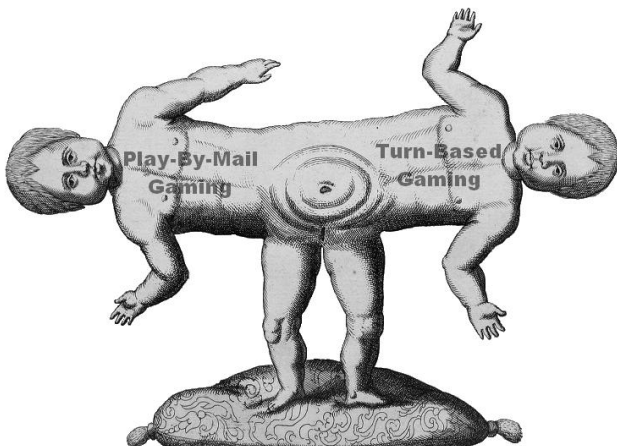
So, all in all:

- **Console and online gaming have become mainstream.**
- **Board gaming is on the rise, fed by the console and online markets, together with the children of pre-console gamers becoming gaming adults.**
- **Board games have a glass ceiling turn length, due to analysis paralysis (and a small player limit per game).**

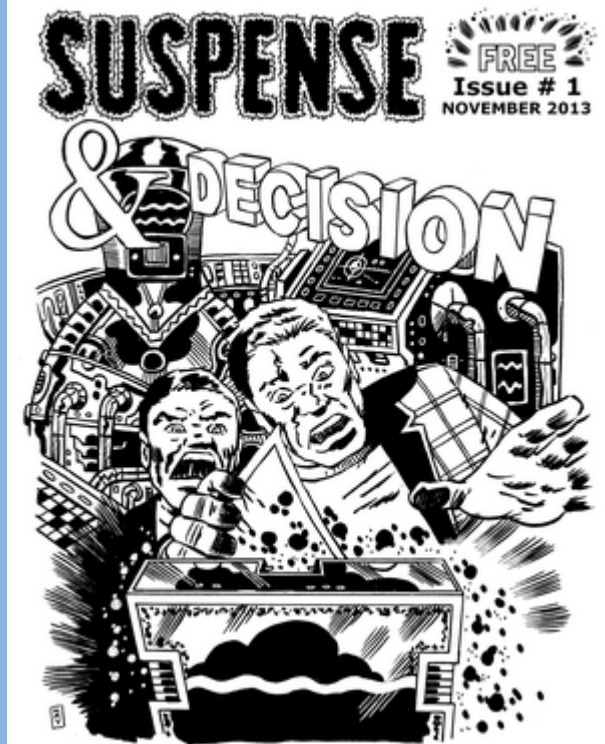
• **PBM targets those wanting something more from a board game with the convenience of an online game, and often, the overtones of a role playing game complete with moderator.**

Now, it is just a case of bringing the knowledge of the PBM industry in all its forms to the prospective customer – not an easy challenge, but probably easier than it was a decade ago.

*Nexus – the name of the online interface for Phoenix has been an ongoing development for five years, and has everything from a custom built wiki, forum, turn editor, position editor, data mapping resource, and so much more. These aren't an off-the-peg wiki or forum linked to a bunch of static pages, these are fully integrated. This said, this is nothing compared with the depth that there is in the game. I'm not just saying that – read the article I submitted for this issue on handling damage in Phoenix. We may come across as a bit arrogant, but we have worked bloody hard for many years to ensure that Phoenix is cutting edge Post-PBM without pretensions that it is any other genre of gaming.



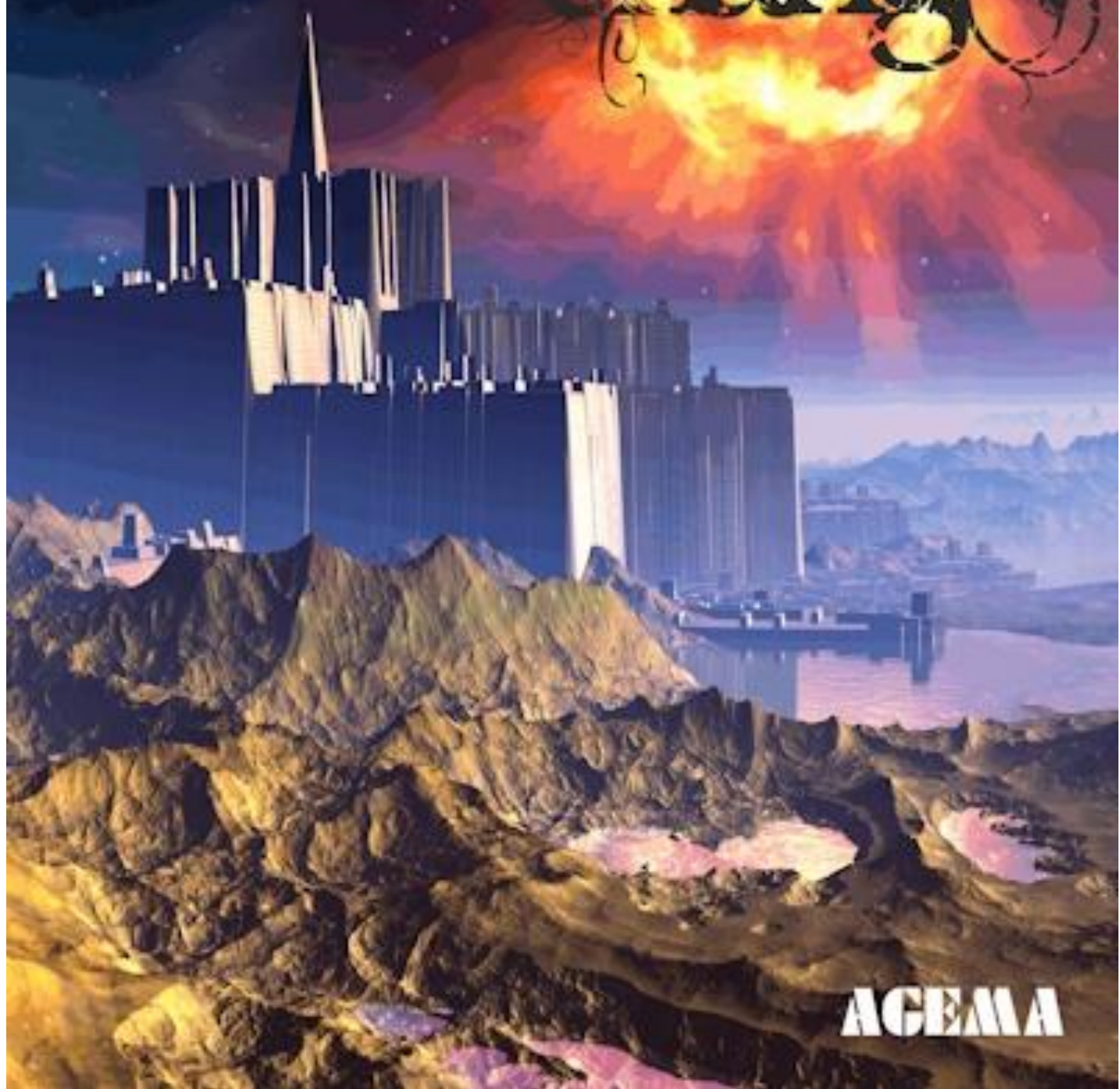
Missed an issue??



Click on the images, above, to download and read!

REGIME

change!



ACEMA

Regime Change

By: Richard Watts

We are planning a new play by mail / play by email game called REGIME CHANGE. It is going to be quite different! Players will command a spaceship, and are on the run from the Terran Solar Federation. As such, you are heading through uncharted space, facing unknown perils in your bid to survive, while dreaming of regime change to overthrow the hated evil empire of the TSF!

There will be star maps, environmental reports, and news of latest technological developments (changes are so fast your upgraded spaceship will soon be obsolete, again!). You'll give orders and perform actions as you battle against the conditions and a host of hostile elements! This is a space opera, and you're the actors!

The really big difference is the inclusion of the Terran Solar Federation's (TSF) News Mediacast. Each game turn, on top of your own information, you'll get the 'official' view via an audio mediacast (in mp3 format)! This will be censored by your enemies in the TSF, but give hints of what may be going on (or it could just be misleading propaganda!).

So, each turn you'll have pdfs containing your own information, and an mp3 audio file of the radio broadcast from the TSF, all delivered via email! Alternatively, you'll be able to play by mail through the post, and get printed turns - plus a CD copy of the audio file! AGEMA is entering the future with this new concept in gaming!

Regards,

Richard

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REVIEW OF ALAMAZE

By: HeadHoncho

I grew up in the 80's, when Play-By-Mail games were quite big. Duelmasters, Hyborian War, Legends, and a number of others, but for me, the best of them all was Alamaze, winner of a number of "best" awards at Origins and elsewhere.

After the Internet became big, I occasionally conducted a Google search for Alamaze, so fond were my memories of the game. In the 90's or early 2000's, I found the former proprietor, who was still running the occasional game. Unfortunately, due to a lack of players at the time, I waited for over a month for a game queue to fill (you need 15 players to start a game), and with no end in sight, I reluctantly withdrew and forgot about it.

Fast forward to earlier this year. I conducted one of my occasional Google searches, and voila! What did I find this time? A new webpage at <http://www.alamaze.co> (that's right, .co and not .com), and more importantly, a player community at <http://kingdomsofarcana.net/forum> which was vibrant and fun!

This time, I got into a game within a week or two, and embarked upon a fantasy quest to attempt to lead the Black Dragon kingdom to victory over the rest of the world! I came up against Gnomes, Giants, Warlocks, even the shadowy Underworld. At the end of the game, I came up a bit short, but it was fun seeing my Sorcerer and Ranger allies coming up on top.

The game itself is played on a square map, 26 x 26 in size, divided up into ten regions with six terrain types (plains, sea, forest, mountains, marsh, desert). The map has 12 cities marked on it, as well as dozens and dozens of unmarked towns and villages.

The game plays like a classic 4X computer game (explore, expand, exploit, and exterminate), in the classic turn-based format. If you've ever enjoyed games like Civilization, Warlords, Heroes of Might and Magic, or many others, you'll probably enjoy Alamaze. Turns run three times every two weeks, for approximately seven turns per month. Most games take anywhere from 15-30 turns to complete, which is about two to four months.

If that sounds too slow to you, fear not, there's plenty to take up your time. Negotiations with the other 14 players in the game can take as short or as long as you want, and although you're not required to negotiate, you will tend to do better (or even much better) if you do.

In this regard, the game is like the classic board game, Diplomacy, with simultaneous turn submissions resulting in a surprisingly large amount of tension and excitement as you await your turn results, to see if people did what they said they would do!

The game play itself has all of the elements of a classic fantasy world. You have Kings and political emissaries, whose jobs are to run the empire and convince cities, towns,

and villages to join your Kingdom. You also have covert emissaries, known as agents and fanatics, of varying levels of skill, which carry out missions for your kingdom such as assassinations, kidnappings, thefts, bribery, and others.

Of course, you also have armies, with many different troop types, from light infantry to elite guards, to various cavalry types, to skirmishers and horse archers, to dragons, giants, trolls, ogres, orcs, wyverns, to special magical troops such as skeletons and wights. These armies are led by basic captains, all the way up to powerful warlords, which can multiply your army's effectiveness by close to double. Armies go into the field to fight each other, or to attack or siege cities, towns, and villages.

Finally, last but not least, you have wizards, which are my favorite part of the game. Ranging in power from the lowly adept, who can only cast a self-invisible spell for protection against harm, to the mighty Power-9 and even Power-10 wizards, who have dozens of spells at their disposal which can affect entire armies or regions.

In order to use or develop all of these resources, you have finite gold and food and "orders" used to execute your kingdom's plans. Gold and food are produced by your cities, towns, and villages, while orders are a function of your King's influence, which can increase or decrease based on certain occurrences in the game, but most commonly based on gold spent to increase influence.

All of this requires a careful attention to your balance sheet, and a prioritization of absolutely critical needs compared to merely strong wants. In order to become good at the game, figuring out which orders to

execute, and which to set aside, is absolutely essential on any given turn.

Please note, the game itself is relatively complex, with proficiency coming after a couple of games, perhaps, but true mastery continues to elude me even after over a dozen games both pre- and post- relaunch. And the replayability of the game is immense, every game is different, and you can try any of 15 different kingdoms, nearly all of which are vastly different.

If you decide to give it a shot, don't get discouraged by initial failures and errors, they happen to everyone, and even veterans like me still make the occasional order mistake. The player community is fantastic, and you'll find no shortage of players who are willing to lend a hand in terms of strategic and tactical advice, and answering rules questions.

Finally, a special shout-out to the game's programmer and main gamemaster, Cipher, who is pretty much one of the friendliest, most responsive, timeliest, and most competent people I've ever met in gaming. He keeps things running and on time, with an attention to detail that is simply immense. The head of the company, Ry Vor, is also incredibly knowledgeable about the game, its history, and is constantly participating on the forums and taking feedback into account. The game has already changed and in my opinion improved since the old days, and it is still evolving and getting even better.

I hope this review is helpful to you, and that you'll give Alamaze a shot!

What did they say about issue #2?

"This is fascinating reading."

"It has a ton of articles, reminisces,
and even ads for still-running PBM games!"

"That's fantastic that somebody is putting this out!"

"This new work...is a bold stroke to return
an independent media source to PBEM."



"I am really
enjoying the mag."

"It may take a couple of days
to read through this one."

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How I Found Myself In Hyboria

By: J.D.

As a boy growing up, I used to shoot bows a lot and even did well enough to win some competitions at the area conservation clubs. I was decent enough at archery, in my step-dad's eyes, to hunt my first deer at the age of 14. We planned a trip to West Virginia, my step-dad, a friend of his and myself, to hopefully thin the herd a little bit.

It was beautiful there, with the colors of fall and the creeks, cliffs, hills and hollows. A hint of winter in the air and the smell of oak burning. Our first day there we found a campsite to put the camper on, built our fire pit, then decided to explore a bit. We drove the truck down some roads that were basically just two ruts in the mud - you know, the kind of road you couldn't take some yuppie car down.

We ended up driving for hours and hours, enjoying the land of 'ol Devil Anse himself. Eventually we stumbled upon a small, beat up, aged, all wood shack with a sign that read "General Store". We voted on whether we should stop and grab something to eat, like some chips and a candy bar, and the vote turned out to be 3-0 in favor of the snacks. As I browsed the 3 wood plank, dusty isles in the store, a comic book rack caught my eye.

My memory may be rusty, but they had some pretty old stuff on those comic book racks, and among them was an issue of SSOC (Savage Sword of Conan.) It looked pretty cool, so I picked it up and flipped through it. Lots of heads being chopped off

by a massive man with an axe and sword, half naked women... Score! I bought it. Well, my step-dad did, but it was mine. So were the orange Hostess cupcakes, the Snickers bar, Slim Jim and the Mountain Dew... So we get back to camp later that night after eating some fish, hushpuppies and pumpkin pie at a nearby Long John Silvers. With my belly full, I climbed into my sleeping bag with my issue of SSOC in hand. I had been waiting for that moment all day, and now it was upon me. I stared at the cover for a minute, soaking in all the great artwork, then opened the pages and began to read them. Wow! What a story! As I finished the issue and closed it up, I noticed a game being advertised on the back of it called Hyborian War, by Reality Simulations Inc. As I read through the kingdom descriptions, at that very moment, I knew I had to play it.

Soon after we got home from the hunting, I walked uptown to the local pharmacy and checked their book section. Sure enough they had SSOC and the Conan Saga comics. Intrigued further about Hyborian War, I decided that I'd play a game. I haven't stopped since.

My first kingdom choice was Cimmeria, of course. I did well, sacking my Imperial Goals and becoming an Empire. Little did I know, though, that Aquilonia was a powerhouse. He (Jeff) wiped me out with mercenaries soon after I took Gunderland. And he wrote me a letter via snail mail that said he would... eh, probably better to not reprint that text. As fate would have it, I wrote back

with some mean stuff too and my mom found it, read it, and freaked out.

I understood. It isn't every day that you write a letter like that. My next game, I selected Shem. Home of the elite archers, which I soon found out were nothing but cannon fodder most of the time. Regardless, I stayed up until my parents went to bed and then got up and filled out my turn sheet and drew pictures of who I was sending into battle. It made the game all that much more fun. I still play. Between then and now? Hyborian War is more a game of your own imagination working with some simple words and icons. There is nothing fancy or pretty about RSI's Hyborian War.

If you have no imagination, the game might not be for you. At least in my opinion. My favorite part of this game is using my imagination with what the words and battle icons are telling me, as well as the camaraderie with others of like mind. Matching wits with your fellow gamer is always exciting.

The bread and butter of this game falls into three categories: Battle, Diplomacy and Intrigue. It's a lot like rock-paper-scissors, to be honest. Each has their place in the game and as such can counter the other. The only problem is that not every kingdom (very few, actually) can excel or even succeed at all three. So, you need friends. And needing friends leads to what? War. I suppose that may have been intended in the making of the game, or perhaps it's just human nature. Either way, it works out. You'll get your wars.

Battle, of course, is army vs army, or navy vs navy in an all out brawl to the finish. Your Generals, Heroes and Wizards all play a large role, as do your kingdom's troop types.

Most of the game is centered and dependent on this. Diplomacy is the act of your diplomats whipping your people into a frenzy to go to war, or convincing another kingdom that peace is the best option for the moment, thus leaving them helpless to invade. Not to mention breaking foreign alliances and gloating at the fallout. Intrigue is the cloak and dagger stuff. Assassinating a diplomat to shut him up? Check. Spying on your friends and enemies to see what they are really planning? Check. Maybe the most dangerous and risky part of the game, but at the same time the most rewarding to you and damaging to your enemies.

The good about the game? Well, they do take into consideration many factors of actual warfare. Terrain, troop types, numbers of troops, technology (magic) all weigh heavily in battle, so there is indeed some thinking that you have to put into it and tinker with at first. Once you figure it out, though, it can be quite rewarding and quite a challenge to lock horns with an experienced foe. I like that. Imagination, but I think I covered that. The diplomacy and the intrigue can and sometimes do balance out, but as in life... win some lose some. Nothing is guaranteed.

The bad? Hahahaha. There is so much wrong, yet right, that it keeps people coming back. My personal gripes are forced peace treaties, troop type disparity, lack of character types per kingdom (Generals, Diplomats, Assassins, Heroes, Nobles and Priests). Yet maybe that is the balancing factor.

As Khal Drogo once said, "These are questions for wise men with skinny arms. I do not know." I will leave it at that. My rating would be a 7/10.

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PBM

You still think that PBM is dead??

Wiki

Suspense & Decision

OLYMPIA

G4

What is Olympia exactly?

- a pbem (Play By EMail), so you only need email
- a highly addictive social game
- a turn based strategy game set in a fantasy magical world
- a multiplayer game (50 - 200+ players)

How does it compare other similar games?

- it's open ended with no real victory conditions beyond what you set yourself.
- no solo win, game long alliances are the norm
- no hex map
- complex but therefore interesting timing system (movement and battles)
- the diplomacy is usually at alliance level
- 30 days of possibilities, no long or short turn orders, making outcome of the orders less predictable
- you have less units. 10-18 nobles with 1 key noble
- no races but lots of beasts
- the resource harvesting is pretty basic (nothing dynamic) - you can choose what you do: explore, produce, manage your holdings, build your empire, diplomacy, coordinate with allies, trade, mercenary, mage for hire, thief or just conquer.

What's so special about Olympia then?

- as you have less units and you invest more in them on a long term
- one person's units can be very effective.
- you get attached to your nobles because they are characters!
- it permits more flavour and role-play
- less micromanagement because you don't have to manage 100-1000 units
- the timing is complex but it adds more tactical decisions in 1 turn, and that's what strategy games are about
- you have a lot of variety in magic, you are free to choose your schools which can stack
- the same applies to skills, a lot of variety and it all can stack
- this means you don't have to specialize your faction
- the map is very interesting, you have the surface world with locations and (hidden) sub locations as well as Hades, faery, the tunnels and the cloudlands

*** It's open ended after all, so everyone will find their fun in this game.**

*** If you want to join, send an email to tom.droeshout@gmail.com, so we can add you to the game.**

*** The turns run once a week.**

*** The game is open source and free**

*** A fresh game has started (turn 4) and has grown to 125 players, already.**

<http://www.shadowlandgames.com/olympia/>

Bledian Diary

By: Jim "Scribe of the Ages" Kemmeny

When Chris Dempsey decided to replace Keys of Bled with Bledian Diary I still had my three clan positions, all active positions. They were transferred to the new game together with my account. This in itself was not problematic, at least while I explored the new world, the mapping, interacting with NPCs and the building of communities. Chris himself became more visible and we used an internet type forum for asking the GM questions and discussing the new ideas.

Spellbinder Cost - - set up is £6 with you first two turns free prices then range from £1.95-2.95 dependant on orders This is a tribal game in which you take on the role of a tribal leader in which you lead your band of merry men & women to your own chosen goals. You may decide to be a Trader, Warrior Lord, Explorer, Political giant or just to take things as they come and go - the options are endless and completely of your own choosing.

The game itself has evolved from a previous long running game called Keys of Bled now more expansive more options and generally a better game. A vast ray of non playing characters are always in abundance and meetings tasks and adventures are always at hand. There are no deadline dates in this game and you can play at you own pace. You make you more complicated actions like trading item buying and selling - ordering your people to make certain items and investigations and spying through a separate action called 'special orders' these are more GM interactive rather than computer

randomised in other words these actions are not just put into a computer and see what comes out the other end, but is more complex with the GM working out all the different scenarios. As these actions give you the biggest scope in advancing in your own goal time and thought should be taken into issuing these orders get it wrong and it could put you back months.

Maps are impressive in this game with detail down to the minutest detail available for instance you can have a map of the land of bled down to a map of the settlement that you are just about to enter. Maps can also change as tribes can alter the lay out by putting your clan to work on the landscape For a more detailed look at this game visit Spellbinder Games' website and down load a copy of the rules for free.

<http://www.pbm.ndo.co.uk/gamepages/bled.html>

The website is unusual. This is the index page:

<http://www.pbm.ndo.co.uk/pbmgamesindex.html>

But the game never really took off. This advert appeared in Flagship Issue 113 (April/May 2005) p. 5.

TURN-BASED GAME FOR SALE

Chris Dempsey of Spellbinder Games reports that he's decided to concentrate on running the football game Kickabout, and so is offering the software to run Bledian Diary for

sale. Bledian Diary has been running for some years now, as an updated successor to Spellbinder's Key's of Bled, which was one of the earliest of all UK PBM games. In Bledian

Diary, players lead their tribes of people across the fantastic landscape of a mysterious planet, Bled. If you're seriously interested, contact Chris.

All this was manageable but from around 2005 I was getting interested in Ultima Online and the Age of Shadows (see Wikipedia article on this). with house-

building and crafting much emphasised. At first it seemed quite off-putting, too much about warfare, conflict and magic. A sort of precursor to World of Warfare, I suppose. But after lurking on the UO forums for a while I began to see the potential for peaceful crafting, and there was an entire community of role-players to interact with in-game. UO was to be my last game, and I spent a lot of effort in writing the background. A task of sub-creating that gave me a unique and rewarding last fling in gaming as failing health forced me to retire.

OlyWiki

Containing information about

Olympia Game 4

Olympia: The Age of Gods

**and future revisions and games
run with the Olympia codebase.**

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Five Tips To Make Your Play-By-Post D&D Game A Long-Lived Success

By: Cayzle Alterio

Turn 90 degrees from reality into the Realm of Shadows. There, the world is grey except for rivulets of glowing red blood that criss-cross the landscape. This is where the dead and the unborn move from the afterlife to the prime material plane, guided by the pull of the glowing blood. Take another 90 degree turn into the Wold, a place of magic and gods, where Witches tap ley lines that follow the paths of the blood, and where Fixers pull drops of the holy liquid into the living Wold, using it to repair the damage caused by the wars of the gods.

This is the setting for WoldianGames.com, an online D&D world founded for a tabletop game in 1985 and played continuously online since January 1998. And the feature that makes it a good fit for the rhythms of a PBM audience? The Wold is a play-by-post game, with players checking in once a day, reading the posts from the game master and the other players, and then making their own daily post.

Of course, people love D&D. And they love playing games online. There are [forums](#) upon [forums](#) filled with players seeking DMs and DMs starting games. But there are a few things that most of these games lack ... things that make the Wold stand out. Based on my own 15 years of experience in these games, here are five tips to make your play-by-post D&D game a long-lived success:

1) Set Regular, Frequent Deadlines

Some PbP games have an irregular schedule, with turns advancing when all the players

have posted, or just whenever the game master has a chance to get online. At first, turns are processed daily, then a couple times a week, then a couple times a month. Player interest lags, and the game dwindles and dies.

In the Wold, players must post every weekday. Sixty-odd players make about eight games, each with eight player characters and a GM – that makes a required nine posters, five posts a week, in eight games, for an ideal 360 posts a week total. The Wold has a Sherriff who tracks posting, and he reports that the Wold falls short of that ideal by about 20 to 30 posts a week. His weekly reports are widely distributed, highlighting games with good records, and noting those that need improvement. Players who miss too many posts are encouraged to step up, or get a substitute to take over their character, or maybe take a short break. This expectation for consistent posting, fostered by a community standard and active empathic engagement, keeps players invested in a game they know will not falter.

2) Develop A Reserve Bench

The real world always throws a spanner into your plans for a smooth-running game. People move or change jobs or get married. Computers and cars and enthusiasm dies. People get burned out. There WILL be turnover in every online game. For the vast majority of PbP D&D campaigns, that means the players fall below a critical mass, or the game master falls off the map. The game

ends with a whimper. But there are ways around that. Run the game with a co-GM, which not only helps prevent burnout but keeps the game running if one game master quits. Decide on an ideal number of players, and aggressively recruit new ones as soon as there is a vacancy. Keep a reserve waiting list of people who might be interested in the game.

In the Wold, playing eight to ten campaigns in the same game world means that there is always an extra GM to step in. That's especially true since co-GMs are the rule. Each game also has an "Assistant DM" a player in the game who steps in when a game master is on vacation or falls sick, and who is often a game master in training. With a deep bench of active members, a player in the Wold can usually find a substitute to take over in emergencies.

3) Foster A Sense Of Community

The lesson we learn from Facebook and social media is that people like to connect with each other. For a long-lived game, provide ways for your players to become friends rather than just gaming acquaintances. Encourage out of character chat, jokes, and stories. And in game, look for ways to foster in-character friendship as well.

In the Wold, there are out-of-character boards for real life chit-chat, as well as a weekly lottery to encourage posting. There is a board to discuss rules, and another to debate politics and other controversial topics. There is an in-character board where characters from different games can meet, get to know each other, and even play games and mini-adventures. Whenever a new person joins, every member is encouraged to send the newbie a welcome letter with some personal details about themselves. Also, GMs are rotated every so often from game to game, so that players get to experience different GM styles and so

that our GMs get to know more people on the site. The fact that the Wold is entirely free (zero cost) also makes the members "friends" and "volunteers" rather than "customers" and "staff."

4) Offer Rich Content To Keep Players Interested

For a short game, a prepackaged module set in a bland generic world is fine. But if you do not offer your players a rich gaming environment, with a detailed setting and interesting rules options to explore, they will get bored.

The Wold has a decades-long history of creative development, with a unique cosmology, 20 gods and demigods, two new base classes, four unique races, 28 Woldian prestige classes, 14 campaign feats, new spells, magic items, monsters, and more. The vast majority of that content is found in [a 930-page wiki](#). The Wold has also evolved with the game, from D&D 2.0 to D&D 3.5 to the Core Pathfinder flavor of D&D. This richness gives players a feeling that the Wold is a special place, not just a bland clone of a packaged setting – and that keeps them coming back.

5) Embrace Churn

It is inevitable that players (and game masters) will come and go. Some game organizers try to ensure stability by setting a high barrier to entry. If a player has to submit an application, or pass a test, or submit references, then the players who jump through the hoops will prove that they are devoted. However, my experience is that even devoted players may come and go.

There is another philosophy. People will rotate in and out of your games – that's a feature, not a bug, because with time you select for players who do well in your setting. Let players enter your game freely, and leave freely, and eventually the ones

who like the game and do well in it will stick around. The Wold, for example, features a "no application or tryout policy." It is easy to join, and easy to leave. Those who end up staying prove themselves just by staying. In time, your stable of stable players grows.

For more information on play-by-post games or the Wold, contact Cayzle at cayzle@cayzle.com. If you are interested in joining the Wold as a player, contact site owner and Campaign DM Jerry at gericko@gmail.com.

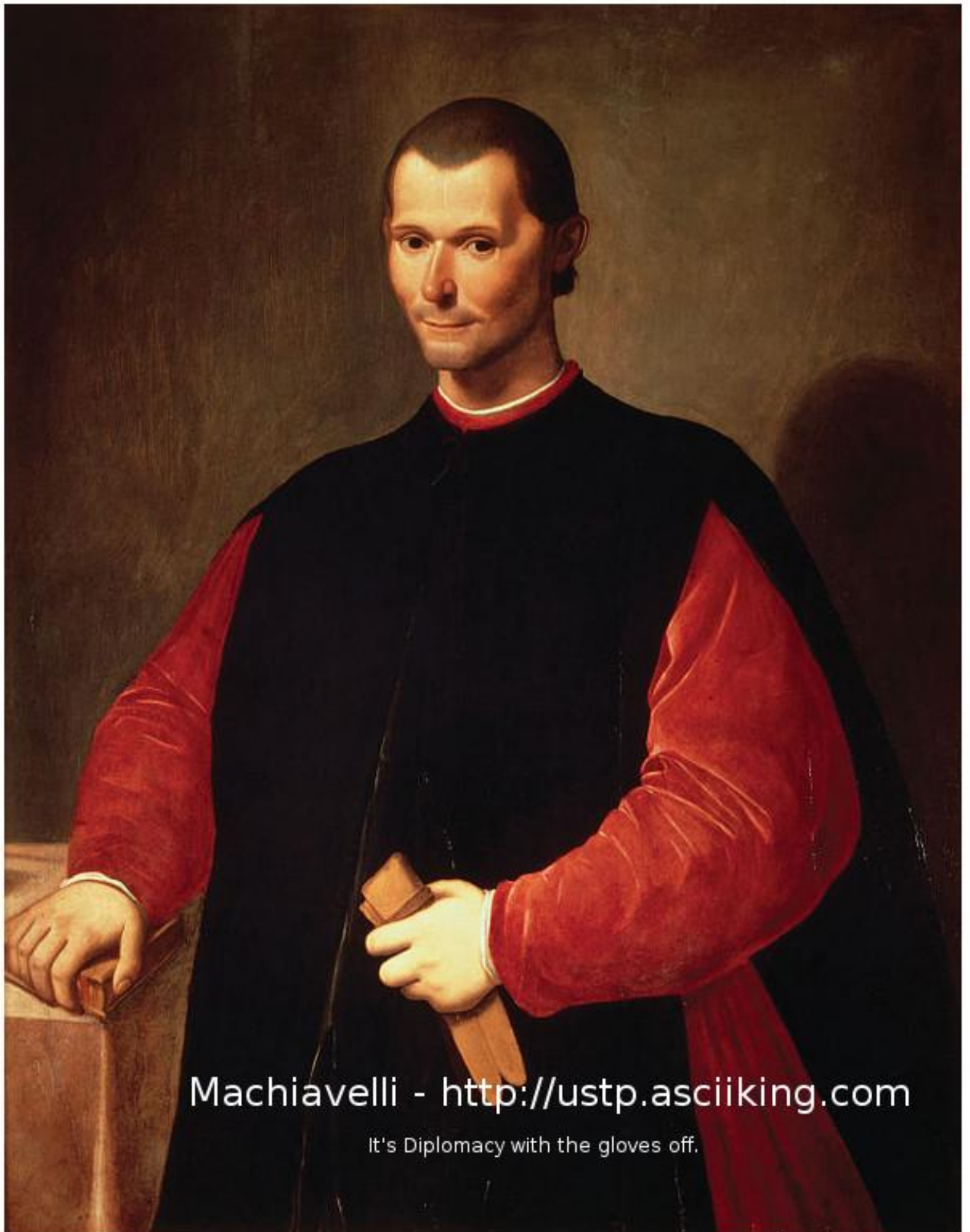
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Games You Should Be Playing!

By: James Patterson

After 30 years of gaming, one consistent problem has always been finding the great games quickly enough to give them a chance to survive, followed swiftly by GM burn out/lack of profit. The one thing i'd appreciate more than anything out of this magazine is a player sticking his hand up and saying in as few words as he fancies - 'this game is great and here's why'. So... That's what I'm going to do. These are the games I balance between wife, kids, work, football coaching and everything else and they are all damn good!

Xott (xott@sarknet):

Frankly, if you enjoy hand moderated, traditional roleplay games then you should be playing this game. Its been running for as long as I've been around, costs circa £2.50 a turn and you get up to 15 pages of text back with maps and various. I play two positions, both parties.

The Blades of Mekan, a large party of Mekan (war) worshipping orcs have spent their entire history exploring for treasure and fighting within Khan Dur, a massive, ancient dwarven city that was conquered by us orcs. Its full of competing and powerful orc clans, tricky trapped and secret areas and I've just started a major war down there between the major orc clans so its a great place to get experience! So far I've expanded my party to more like 20 individuals all detailed with histories, personalities and otherwise (Antony has amazing feeling for his game and can change your 2 paragraph turn response into pages of dialogue, thought and action), set up a temple to Mekan in the city

above ground, successfully found several secret dwarven lairs where i gained plenty of loot but failed each time to breach their secrets - last time i failed some kind of pattern trap and the whole place got flooded - saved a halfling barbarian from slavery and started a major war that i'm hoping to whip up a bit more when i get my turn in later this week. This position worked so well because i wanted almost continuous action and opportunities hence sticking my party next to such an exciting place... they may never leave!

The Misfits, an unruly band of mercenaries led by a troll shaman and her unruly ogre barbarian step daughters, was a very different position with different goals. They were mercenaries who wanted to help out others (suckers) in tricky positions. That makes my life harder as I only accept misfit types into the group rather than the 'good' adventurers... so far that basically means an ogre who had been turned into an elf, a creature with a disease known as Bane who now looks like a minotaur, a whore who wants to be a barbarian and a tiny rabbit like creature, a ghost (real useful). We're stuck in the middle of nowhere so we do travel quite a bit and have just finished our first run of weird quests just beating winter back to the town where we started. We'll so make our way down south to fight in the hobgoblin wars just as soon as I figure out how to travel through winter without freezing to death!

The point I'm trying to make is that the game is cheap, full of information, large turns and exciting plot lines as you can quite

literally do whatever you like and Antony will turn it into something good however little you write.

Legends (pbm@harlequingames.com):

Another extremely long running game, this is almost entirely computer moderated which would normally mean it would be no good for me... but, with the rising of a new magazine like a Phoenix it jogged a few memories (I'd forgotten about Legends!) so i decided to give it a whirl having not played for 15 years or so. Having started I'm not entirely sure I'll ever stop! There is simply something addictive about the game that shouldn't happen with something where a computer does most of the work. To the basics... it has an extremely good program that acts as map, order system, information database etc. all integrated and easily usable - you can even import your allies positions (if you have any). That makes a big difference for me as it basically stops any mistakes and means i can do a turn in minutes once I've decided what I'm doing. You can take various positions ranging from things like Dukes who have cities and towns and armies as well as characters right through to the good old lair basher who starts with 3 powerful characters... needless to say i started as a lair basher to learn the game and within this particular module (thrones of chaos) I'm automatically part of an alliance who know what they are doing - handy. The idea being for your team to fulfill certain criteria and win the game... being such a big game there are also mountains of individual things to aim for to help fill the gaps. Once I've got the basics, I'll have my lair bashers conquer or influence (i.e. convert) some towns etc over to give me the chance to play a more expansive role.

A very clever aspect to the game is the massive element of the unknown... by which i mean that when I've (for example) conquered a lair through magic and combat i

gain a load of items, weapons and bits... hurray... except I've no idea what they do. Spells can help there or trial and error but there's a certain level of excitement to wondering if in your next turn that item you are identifying might just teach you a new skill, improve your combat abilities, change your race, sex or religion or be something really special! Equally your character can gain statuses like vampire, werewolf, blessed or a religion, crusader, netherworld... the list goes on which all give powers and can morph either through combat or 'production' which happens once a month. Same goes for your familiar - he can morph too and gives you spells and extra powers (if you have a mage skill that is). I'm sat writing this wondering if any of my characters are going to have anything morph this production - I'll find out Monday!

I'm not going to go into huge detail here - there is loads of information on the website, helpful players and GM's who know far more than I do. The bottom line is that I didn't think I'd ever find a computer moderated game that I wanted to play - in fact, if the last issue hadn't come out and stimulated some movement on my part i probably wouldn't have bothered even now and I would certainly be missing out on the anticipation and in my view it's the amount of time i spend thinking about a game between turns that really matters.

Fallen Empires (fallenemp@gmail.com):

A relative newcomer only 18 months or so in but a game i am thoroughly enjoying. The way that it is run and the model used reminds me of things like Midgard, Crane, Clansmen... games where you have a few actions (2-8 depending on position) and a spreadsheet position where you can research, build, buy and make things. Issue 1 covered Fallen Empires to a large degree (page 25 issue 1) so I'm not going to cover old ground but I think they have the balance

right between how much work they are doing for money they are getting which should see this game last and run for a long time. You can develop your position however you like, doing and researching into whatever interests you. There are currently some nasty NPC's out there and the players are starting to form blocks and alliances which is starting to bring more diplomacy into the game via the in game newsletter. If you enjoy a position building, flexible open ended human moderated game with longevity then get a position now and get involved at the early stage where you can make a difference.

Empire Diplomacy

(<http://www.dragonfallgames.com/ED/index.php>) :

This is another great, long running game, all web based paid for by donation only. The basic premise being that you are in control of a nation with resource management, armies, covert agents, magic, magical items, R&D etc., etc.. You can then do what you want whether its invade a neighbour someone on another world or simply build up

your nation exploring ruins and rattling your sabres!

The game is constantly evolving as the programmers look at additional code - they are currently revamping the battle model (hurray) and it is managed by human gm's in Becky and Dan who are outstanding in both their dedication and knowledge. The depth of the game is excellent and it can be consuming taking a few hours to get a turn finished once you've got the hang of things. You can design your own units, build new cities, invest in new resources, trade on the market, cast a wide variety of spells, research technology, put your gladiator into games, use spies, assassins etc. - the personalisation is excellent.

From my understanding, once the new battle model is ready they will be launching a new game (i.e. stop this one for the new) which is why now is a good time to get involved to learn the game prior to relaunch! It is certainly worth a look and there is an active player base who can help you out in either the forum or chat room!





You Go, Gamer Girl!

By: Amber

To start with, I'm not a girl, I knew I had stopped being a girl when I walked into a shop and the assistant said "Can I help you Madam?"

My girl days are long over, and another thing, I don't really think of myself as a gamer.

In a morning I do the same as most other people, get the kids up, turn the computers on, put the lunch boxes together, make a cup of tea and sit down to put on the first invention run of the day on Eve.

When I get back from the school run its another cup of tea while I do my x2 matches on World of Planes before I start work. That's what everyone does, right?

I don't really see that as playing games, it's just an entertaining sideline.

If I was playing a game I would be planning and plotting, thinking of my next turn scheming, fiddling with spreadsheets and maps. As it is there are no games that I want to play at the moment. I just can't find anything that looks interesting.

There is always a lot of talk about getting more girls into gaming, but what is it that they want?

Along the way, I have come across several types of girl gamers:

The Flirt: Sends naked pictures to the guild leaders and flirts with every man in the guild, Not really there to play the game but to play the men.

The Man Hater: Goes onto the game to escape from their terrible

husband/boyfriend. They treat every man like a surrogate husband, as if they are the scum of the earth. Plays the game but makes everyone miserable.

The Doting Wife: Joins in to see why their significant other spends so much time at the computer, well intentioned but not a gamer, she doesn't see what all the fuss is about.

The Gamer: Just gets on and plays the game with no fuss.

How do you spot the woman gamer amongst the men? You don't. They play just the same as men. It's only when you see their real name or hear them on coms that you realise.

So do I want a game about ironing or shopping for shoes? A game that appeals to my feminine side, pink fluffy unicorns dancing on rainbows? If they have WoMD then maybe, but I mostly just want a good game to play.

Plotting, scheming, and world domination, is that so much to ask? What I want is not so much a game for girls, just a good game will do me.



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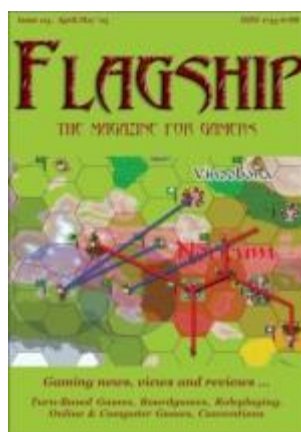
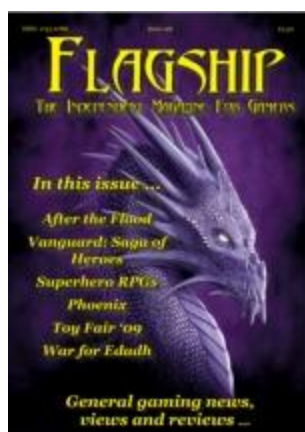
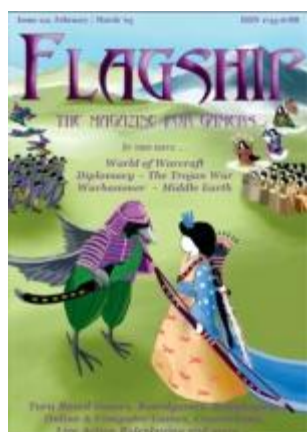
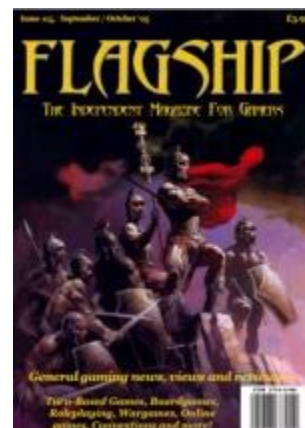
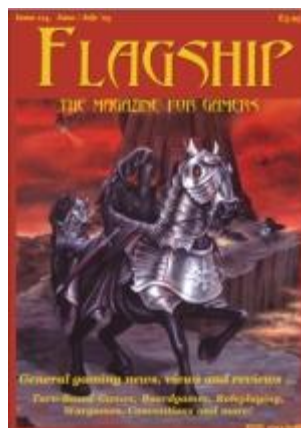
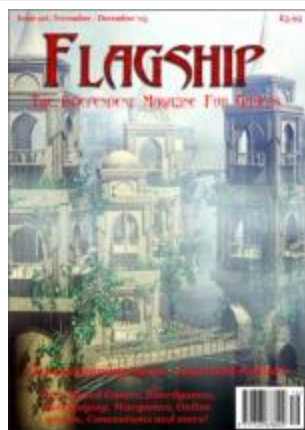
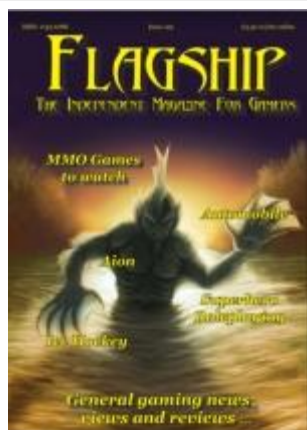


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A Red Sea

BR21 - January 684

By: Peter Perrin

Egill the Red smiled as he and his men feasted in the great hall of Castile Klasring. King Elgfrothi had spared no expense in the celebrations, and his men cheered and laughed as the saga was sung in front of the great fire. Egill's fleet had still not left Varyag home waters, and was instead held back clearing pirates from the nearby waters. Though this angered Egill he knew it was no wrong to be doing so, still he wished he was raiding the soft men to the west like his cousin Bagsecg.

There should not have been pirates in Varyag waters at all, but Elgfrothi's father had become weak in his dotage, and had allowed much to slip in his last years. The new king Elgfrothi was determined to reclaim the seas and strengthen the city, as well as raising more raiding fleets and armies to harass the cities to the west. Egill admired Elgfrothi; though he had not earned his saga name yet he was still a great leader of men, and no doubt would have one before the next winter came.

The room went silent as the tale of Egill's battle was told. Egill knew that this was just a minor skirmish, but allowed the men their fun. They would be pushed hard over the next year and likely many would die. Those would be the sagas truly worth hearing. The song told of Egill's cunning and guile. He had lured the pirates into attacking a couple of merchant ships, heavy with stone as if to look a worthy prize. The few pirate ships had

taken the bait, and from hidden inlets his fleet of Dragonships and the fleet from Castile Klasring had lunched their attack.

The battle had been over before it started. Those that did not surrender immediately were taken or sunk, their crews brought back to the city for Elgfrothi's judgement. The King raised his arm to this, and brought it down in a swift cutting motion. The men cheered as the saga told of the execution of the pirates, their corpses hung above the harbour mouth to warn others of their folly. The room burst into cheers once the saga was finished, and Thorik Raven-Hair took the floor to preach the words of Oden, with many a man swearing a blood oath to follow the warrior god's ways.

Elgfrothi smiled at Egill and they quietly discussed the readiness of the fleet building ports hidden to the north. Egill's uncle Jarl Ketill was known in the city for his work in raiding the southern isles, and now was one of the men responsible for raising fleets. Jarl Wulfrik, a cousin to Elgfrothi, was another fleet builder. There were others that Egill did not know, hidden just as his uncle's settlement was. Elgfrothi went on to talk of the armies he was building, and of the importance of knowledge of those he would conquer in the name of the Varyag.

Finally Thorik's preaching finished, and the celebrations began to calm down. Many of Egill's crews carried on their feasting until

the next day, whilst his captains made their way to the King's table where they discussed Elgfrothi's plans for the Varyag's waves of

raiding fleets. Egill stayed for a few more hours before heading to the dock berths to begin the refit of his newly acquired ships.

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ALAMAZE

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April, 2013 kicked off the return of Alamaze and our players are having a blast. Dozens of new Alamaze games have started in the past few months in our five active formats in what we collectively call Alamaze Classic. They have made more than 9000 posts in over 600 threads in that time on our [Players' Forum](#). Visit it to see the action and the many topics.

Players receive attractively formatted results (including graphics) in PDF files and players are enjoying getting their results within a few hours after the turn deadline, consistently. Turns currently are on a twice-a-week cycle which players love and fees are kept low by our new monthly subscription plans that can equate to less than \$2.00 a turn (our Warrior Level Service is \$26.95 for about 14 turns a month in two games) instead of the old \$7.50: quite a difference! See a sample turn result and kingdom dossier on our website: [What is Alamaze?](#)

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Wardens of the Golden Wood

By: Hawk

It was late summer in the Golden Woods of Oakendell and the trees had already turned to the gleaming shades that gave the Acadian forest its name. The leaves would not drop soon as they do in other forests but would remain until spring when the new buds gently pushed them from the branches and the High Elves celebrated the day of Qui'nesta, new birth.

The branches of trees of the Golden Wood concealed the scattered settlements of the High Elves. The largest town of Kaila was built in the trees surrounding the Argenost, the Heart Tree of the Golden Wood. On the highest platform of the heart tree, Findalien, Lord of the Golden Woods, had assembled his royal council for a meeting that would shape the future of his people.

"Evil does not come to the Golden Woodland" Marshal Glorin calmly stated. "Outsiders fear the wardens of the forest and turn back at upon reaching our borders".

Lord Findalien, the King of the High Elves regarded him sternly. "Marshal, we must not become overconfident in the security of our homeland. Centuries of peace and isolation within our forest may have led us to ignore a growing darkness beyond the edge of the trees."

Findalien, studied the members of his court and considered how best to proceed. "Every season we have withdrawn bit by bit within our own world. Long ago our capitol was Lorethane. Now the city our ancestors built is home to man. We have lost touch with

the outside world and the dangers that are growing there."

"Perhaps we should let the humans concern themselves with these dangers, my Lord." Suggested Duke Celeborn the King's younger cousin. Like many Elves, Celeborn did not wish to be troubled by the outside world.

Findalien said nothing but looked quietly towards the ancient wizard Soarin standing at the far edge of the platform where he leaned on his white runestaff. Soarin moved forward to address the nobles and generals. He spoke with hyponic tone that all the Elven mages seemed to possess.

"The humans lack leadership and are a disorganized people. They are prone to falling under grasp of powers that motivate them with fear or greed. Centuries ago Alamaze was almost completely conquered by the Great Evil of the Eternal Eye and his hordes of walking dead and Urik orcs. The humans did not resist them but instead fell under their control. We must not allow this to happen again."

The Elven Mage touched his runestaff to the long table that the council had gathered around and images of the great wars of the past came to life before them. Armies clashed and cities burned. Tens of thousands perished in the great plague that struck the west. Enormous Dragons swept across the plains of Amberland leaving a path of charred ruins behind them. The Red Wizard Manderias battled the Evil Witch Mage Ry-Vor before the gates of Viperhead

and then both were consumed in a massive blast of red fire. Then there was nothing.

Soarin paused for a moment allowing the council to consider what they had seen. "I am certain the dark magic of Ry-Vor has returned to Alamaze my brothers. At night it haunts my dreams with horrible demonic visions." A flicker of red light returned above the table. At first it held no shape. Then it gradually took on the outline of an eye. It was the hideous unblinking eye that was the harbinger of evil things.

Findalien stood and intensely addressed the council "The wardens of the Golden Wood will not sit idly by and wait for Evil to breach our borders. We must unite all the people of Oakendell and go forth and destroy the growing forces of Evil before it too late. Now is the time for courage and action to protect the future of all the people of Alamaze."

Alamaze is an exciting strategy war game where up to fifteen players compete for control of the fantastic realm of Alamaze. You take on the role of Elven King Findalien or one of the fourteen other nations in their bid to control the entire realm.

It is a turn based game with turns played every four to seven days depending on the variant. One of the most interesting parts the game is that all fifteen positions have different strengths and weaknesses. The game involves military, political, magical, and diplomatic avenues of attack. This leads to every game you play in being unique and engaging.

Kingdoms available to players include traditional fantasy powers such as the Elves, Dark Elves, Dwarves, and also the Warlock, Sorcerer and Witch King, along with several

unique kingdoms such as the Ancient Ones, the Demon Princes, the Red and Black Dragons and the Underworld. The starting setups of these kingdoms are quite different and secret objectives for all kingdoms change game to game

The purpose of this article is to introduce a new player to the game of Alamaze from the viewpoint of the Elven Kingdom. It looks at how to get started on the right foot and plan out the first few turns. Every game will be different but it is good to have an opening game plan if things work out the way you hope they will.

The high Elves are what an Alamaze player would call a balanced position. They have decent strength in Magic, Military, Political Power and Agents. They have a racial special racial bonus with their emissaries making them particularly strong in that aspect of the game. Blending all four of these elements into an ongoing strategy is crucial for the Elven player's success.

Alamaze games start with 75% of the map in non-player controlled status. By turn 5 that will likely have changed to 0%. The first few turns are a wild scramble with each kingdom trying to get their piece of the map. Every player wants to put themselves in the best position for success when all of the population centers are player controlled.

The traditional opening for the EL position is to try to get control of their starting area of Oakendell (Region 1) as quickly as possible. If all goes perfect this can be accomplished by turn 3. Regional control is critical for a number of reasons. When you control over half of the population of a region the remaining neutral population centers automatically join your kingdom. Your king's influence increases when you gain

regional control and one of your emissaries gains a rank. Finally, your controlled population centers become harder for other players to take.

It is important to capture the region as fast as possible for two main reasons. First, winter is coming on turn 5 and for 3 turns you will suffer through food production being reduced by 75% and gold being reduced by 50%. You want to maximize your economy before this reduction comes into play and save up some food from a fully controlled region on turn 4. Second, having an uncontrolled region makes you more of a target. The longer Oakendell remains uncontrolled, the more of an attractive target you might become to your neighbors the Witchlord, Giant, Trolls, or Ancient Ones.

The quickest way to gain control of Oakendell starts with hiring a high priestess and divining Oakendell towns on turn 1. Towns are preferable over villages because their larger size allow you to reach the 50% population mark easier. Getting all of the town locations will allow you to move out your emissaries on turn 2 to capture the towns on turn 3. You could try to save gold and use your groups to find the region's towns but that is a slow strategy and will likely result in winter catching you before you gain the region.

The second key to capturing Oakendell is to gain control of the region's only city, Lorethane. You will want to send two of your top political emissaries to Lorethane to rebel and usurp the city on turn 2. Some players prefer to send only a Prince in to Lorethane and simply take an extra turn to first rebel it and then usurp it on turn 3. Both are viable strategies although it is nice to capture Lorethane quickly to take advantage of the extra gold production. Your

King will also need to enamor the region to friendly to make Oakendell's population centers easier to take.

While raising gold for your expansion you will want to make a projection on expenses for the first three turns. Many players have depleted their resources on their first 2 two turns and found their treasuries empty on their critical third turn when they need to keep several emissaries active to gain control of the region. One way to raise gold is to sell all the extra food the Elven kingdom has and scrap all seapower on turn 1. The ships can be rebuilt when you want to use them and the food needs of the Elven army are not pressing at the beginning of the game.

The next resource to address is your military. Alamaze kingdoms each have four military groups names the 1st Elven, 2nd Elven, 3rd Elven, etc.. These are abbreviated as 1EL, 2EL, 3EL. You will want to use the 1EL to search for population centers (order 725). If you are lucky enough to land on a village you can parley with the population to gain control of it next turn (order 170). If you land on a town you'll need to cast diplomacy. Diplomacy (spell/order 171) is a very effective magic assisted parley spell that will allow your 1EL Division to capture neutral towns. The Elven kingdom gains this spell at level 1 but most other kingdoms do not.

Your 2EL starts in the Northern Mists. Crossing the sea of terror by ship risks your troops getting caught by an enemy sea patrol. A safer plan is to raise your power 1 wizard in the 2EL to a power 2 and then use the spell Ships of Mist to cross the Sea of Terror and return to region 1.

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| Turn 1 | | | Turn 2 | | | Turn 3 | | |
|--------|-----------------------|-------|--------|------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------------------------|-------|
| 200 | Sell food | - | 200 | sell food | -4667 | 171 | 1EL diplomacy | |
| 245 | Scrap fleets | - | 306 | 1EL cast WARD | | 200 | sell food | -4667 |
| 245 | Scrap fleets prince | - | 320 | duke | 5000 | 209 | create gold | -4000 |
| 350 | Lorethane duke | 6000 | 330 | prince | 6000 | 210 | HC BID | 40201 |
| 350 | Lorethane enamour | 5000 | 350 | governor | 2000 | 330 | baron | 3000 |
| 470 | R1 | 16000 | 350 | count | 4000 | 330 | baroness | 3000 |
| 500 | train agent | 4000 | 350 | baron | 3000 | 330 | governor | 2000 |
| 500 | train agent | 4000 | 350 | baroness train agent ships of mist | 3000 | 350 | count | 4000 |
| 510 | Hire HP | 18000 | 500 | | 4000 | 720 | move 1EL | |
| 725 | move 1EL divine towns | | 708 | | | 720 | move 2EL | |
| 750 | 2EL power | 7000 | 720 | move 1EL | | 720 | move 3EL search artifact | 2000 |
| 799 | 2 raven | 17000 | 720 | Move 3EL search artifact | | 978 | | |
| 888 | Lorethane | | 978 | | 2000 | 978 | | 2000 |

Ending Treasury est.

19942

Ending Treasury est.

11550

Ending Treasury est.

1958**Regional Control Achieved**

You are now almost ready to fill out the first Elven turn. However, there is still an aspect of the game that needs to be covered. Alamaze is a game that involves a large amount of player communication. Your turn 0 set up includes the email addresses of all of the other players. There will also be a thread on the Alamaze specific to your game where players will make contact with one another. It is in your best interest to talk to as many of your neighbors as possible. Special attention should be placed on your neighbors the Witchlord, Giant, Trolls, and Ancient Ones.

Even as the game is starting players will be thinking about where they want to expand to and forming alliances. You might want to offer your Torvale village to the Troll or Ancient to encourage them not to head to the North. The Troll has a village in Oakendell that could be traded to you for your Torvale village. The Witchlord and Giant both start with towns in Oakendell. Choosing sides between these natural enemies could shape your direction for a large part of the game.

The Red Dragon and Underworld may also start with population centers in Oakendell. You might offer protection to these PC's as

an act of goodwill with those players. In return for this you will not waste moving the 1EL through those locations on turn 1. Additionally, your high priestess divination will not reveal the control of the towns you are interested in. By learning where the Giant or Witchlord towns are you can avoid sending an emissary to them on turn 2.

This is a rough outline to get a new player started on the right foot. Every game of Alamaze is hugely impacted by the actions and alliances that the other players take. Communication with as many other players as possible and adapting plans as things

change will be essential to your success in the game. Veteran Alamaze players are typically helpful to new players as they recognize the importance of maintaining the player base for the game to continue. You can also post questions on the Alamaze General Discussion forum to get answers on rules and ideas for strategies.

So if you want to experience a unique and engaging turn based strategy game you need to give this game a try. Take up the crown of one of the fifteen kingdoms and see if you have what it takes to find victory and rule the lands of Alamaze.

Dragon Magazine - Issue #131

"Alamaze is a treat. Speaking as a game designer, it's one of the finest designs I've seen. I like it and recommend it to experienced gamers."

White Wolf Magazine - Issue #11

"Alamaze is possibly the finest play by mail game in existence. It is certainly the most innovative design since the first PBM game emerged... It should be tried by anyone who considers himself a real gamer."

Paper Mayhem Magazine - Issue #19

"Alamaze has all the strategy, intrigue, fear and paranoia that makes a great game. It's a great value."

Flagship Magazine - Issue #11

"Alamaze is one of the finest PBM games on the market, today. It is fast paced and exciting. It is full of all the action, intrigue and role-playing any player could ask for."

Paper Mayhem Magazine - Issue #28

"Among the many innovations in Alamaze is the truly fantastic magic system, unequaled anywhere in PBM. Not only does the magic system fit in with the entire game system hand-in-hand, it also shows the depth and massive amounts of designing and programming time spent lavishly in this game."

USAK Diplomacy

"Because you know that's not the whole picture."

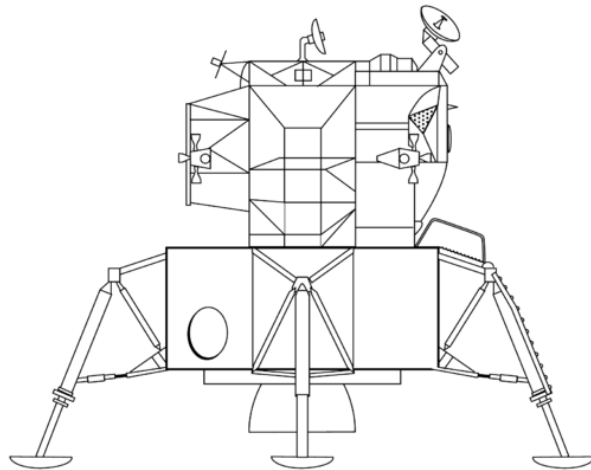
USAK is a Diplomacy Judge, a play by email Diplomacy game server run by ASCII King Games. This is the site where you can get maps, enter orders and learn more about using the server.

The website is an additional front end for a play by email game server - the USAK Diplomacy Judge. USAK runs the latest stable version of the Judge, a PBEM server application with over 20 years of history.

The judge keeper, Chris Babcock, writes the scripts that power this site. He uses the [CRM114 scripting language](#) because it is cool enough to make Internet standards and best practices almost fun.

<http://usak.asciiking.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Diplomacy-on-USAK/328122573511>



Lunar Landing: Exploring the Moon Colonies of Play-By-Mail

As we continue our exploration in search of life that remains in the aftermath of the collision of the Internet comet with PBM, as we once knew it, this issue our target is:

The Alamaze Forum

<http://kingdomsofarcania.net/forum/index.php>

Signs of life are everywhere! Rather than a barren moon, this forum site is teeming with life. Our instruments are off the chart!

Although pure postal gaming is no longer utilized to deliver the Alamaze gaming experience to the gaming community, this ancestral descendant of its PBM predecessor enjoys a thriving, vibrant community of players.

During our landing on January 31st, 2014, no less than forty-three registered forum users had visited the Alamaze forum in the previous twenty-four hour time span. As of this landing, the Alamaze forum listed 9,493 posts in 674 threads. This covers a

span of time that stretches from January 29th, 2012 through January 31st, 2014 - just a hair over two years. This time frame encompassed both Fall of Rome and Alamaze postings, but the Alamaze postings, which are the more recent postings on the site, wholly dominate the far fewer number of postings that pertain to Fall of Rome.

The ill-fated Kingdoms of Arcania portion of the forum is overshadowed, entirely, with that section of the forum garnering a mere twenty-one postings, with none being newer than April 13th, 2013.

Even still, far from being a sparsely populated PBM moon, this forum site genuinely qualifies as PBM colony world of the first order.

A second landing at the [Alamaze Facebook page](#) revealed no life present in quite some time, not since September 14th, 1203. Thus, the forum, itself, is the nexus of Alamaze's new lease on life, in post-PBM form.

CONCLUSION: A rising star of the industry, and an example worthy of study and emulation by other PBM companies.

Hyborian War Kingdom Spotlight

Kingdom of Nemedias

By: J.D.

Nemedias, the central pillar of Hyborian culture and civilization stands ever in defiance to their habitual foes, mighty Aquilonia. The gleaming Nemedian knights are rightly proud for their army which is as diverse as it is deadly. Nemedias may well extend an empire without limit ... IF they can stop the hosts of Aquilonia.

From the court to the military to the treasury, Nemedias has it all.

In this spotlight, I'll go over, in detail, each character in the starting court, each troop type and a few of Nemedias's unique strengths, as well as a synopsis of the surrounding kingdoms and how they will likely stack up to Nemedias, and many other things. Future Nemedians, I hope, will find this spotlight very helpful and informative... and with a little luck, perhaps even lead her to glory in the form of a #1 ranking at end game.

Lets start with the court...

NEME-CHA: Arianus Tarascus I've found Arianus to be a dependable court spy, as well as a decent diplomat. He can secure a treaty (so long as the other kingdom's avoidance isn't high), he is surprisingly good at avoiding influence and he also isn't half bad at breaking alliances; His combination of good diplomacy and excellent intrigue makes for the right stuff on either mission. He has a diplomacy spell that is said to be of benefit, though with his poor magic rating I'm not

sure of just how much benefit it can really be. Overall, I think he is a good starting Chancellor, and adventure on the opening turn should be out of the question, as he is a guy you'll come to value for his utility.

NEME-ADJ: Altairius Numa What can I really say about this guy? His superior military command makes him a keeper, but he lacks in everything else. No utility with this guy. It would be a gamble, but you could always roll the dice and send him out adventuring on turn 1 and hope he dies and is replaced by someone with some heroism or other skill that can be used outside of the battlefield, like maybe some sort of magic or some intrigue. He is one dimensional, but also a very good general. I've always kept him around.

NEME-1: Count Enaris Bragorus The King. Enaris is a great ruler. He never fails to keep the loyalties up and the kingdom running smoothly. Actively rule with him on peace years and anywhere in between that his services aren't needed elsewhere. Conscription is a breeze with this guy ruling, and believe me, you WILL be conscripting. His good intrigue and adequate diplomacy makes him a nice fit for avoiding influence when he isn't ruling. You could even get crazy and send him out spying, but you have other, more suitable candidates for that so the thought shouldn't cross your mind. Worth a long life spell, if you ask me. I kept him around the entire game once.

NEME-2: Istarius Aphenakos Istarius has some utility. I like that in a character. His excellent diplomacy makes him a go to guy for peace treaties and avoidance missions. His good military command and adequate heroism makes him a nice character to have around on the battlefield, too. He has good rulership as well, should the need ever arise to put him in the role of a provincial ruler.

NEME-3: Isolius Nimed Another of those utility guys. He is a super duper provincial ruler. Being the ruler of Hanumar makes it a double bonus, as Hanumar tends to levy a lot of troops, probably in no small part thanks to Isolius's rulership ability. Also makes for handy conscription with 90%+ success rates. He has poor diplomacy and adequate intrigue, but don't let that fool you; he is good at avoiding influence. Good military command, adequate heroism and a strength spell also makes him valuable on the battlefield, or even a raid for the more daring ruler.

NEME-4: Lord Ostorio Bragorus Another superior ruler that'll git-r-done. Numalia, like Hanumar, levies a lot of troops thanks to this guy. He also enjoys the same success rates as Isolius when it comes to conscription. Hmmm... what else? Oh, yeah! The man can scrap! Superior personal combat and good heroism makes for a formidable opponent, and believe me, Ostorio is just that. Throw in some adequate intrigue and you have yourself a good bodyguard or potential assassin, should the mood strike you. Did I mention that he killed Conan while on protection duty for me in one game? You betcha. Even strung his remains up on the city walls for the world to see. He's a baaaaad man, I tell you. He has poor military command, but add in the good heroism and superior personal combat and he is also useful in battle. He never did much

in the way of diplomacy, though. Didn't matter. I almost always used him for court protection and he almost never failed me.

NEME-5: Fondicus Aphenakos Your star diplomat. Fondy is "da man" when it comes to that clutch treaty or a big kick in the avoidance department. He's taken the avoidance level of a kingdom from none to superior in one turn for me on more than one occasion, no lie. He always seems to come through on that must have treaty after a peace years, too. Throw in some tribute with a negotiate peace command and I'd go out on a limb and say he is a 100% success story. His excellent heroism helps keep the assassins at bay on occasion, which is nice because he is usually the first target when the assassins come to work over your court. It's also useful on the battlefield, but he is much too important to be using him for that. If you're not using him for diplomatic purposes, keep him moving around by having him protect a different province each turn. You'll be glad you did.

NEME-6: Lord Tirus Bragorus I love this guy. Probably my favorite character, if I had to pick just one. His excellent diplomacy makes him a reliable diplomat, but being a general it doesn't stack up to that of a noble with the same rating. Though, combine that with his superior intrigue and he makes for a nice avoidance guy and can also break that pesky alliance if need be. His adequate military command doesn't exactly do him justice. I've found him to be a competent general. He has good heroism to add to the flavor. However, what I almost exclusively use him for is spying military missions and assassinations. He has always come through on the spying, and more often than not on the assassination. Just be sure to consider his poor personal combat when picking your targets and you should be pleasantly

surprised with his performance. Don't forget about the excellent rulership, also. He's candidate #1 if Enaris vacates the throne. Another character with a lot of utility.

NEME-7: Lurgon Iristides Meh... pretty much a bum, this guy is. He has poor military command, yet good heroism. I like to use him on the occasional raid and as an additional commander on the battlefield. I'll use him as the main commander if he is all I have left in the case of multiple invasions.

NEME-8: Ajacios Thespius This guy, I like. His lack of military command, adequate, is made up for in his superior heroism. I'm not afraid to let him lead an army or a raid. He also makes for a decent bodyguard on protection duty. Other than that, well, he isn't good for much. But, what else can you ask for from a general? Only problem I have with this character is that he always seems to die early for some reason. I could never figure that out.

NEME-9: Astius Nimed Your second best general, behind Altarius Numa. His excellent military command makes him the likely choice to lead that second army into battle. The only thing that hurts him is his lack of heroism, lack meaning none. With his good intrigue, I'll use him to spy a kingdoms military every now and then, but only a kingdom like Asgard or Pictland that doesn't have much in the way of intrigue to counterspy with.

NEME-10: Tarrano Thespius Terrano may not be one of your more polished and respected court members, but he has his use. Keep him in an army at all times or use him for protection. He tends to wander off every peace years and usually winds up dead, though, so don't get your hopes up.

NEME-11: Slyne Noirelle You second best diplomat. Slyne is very reliable, much like Fondy, but not quite the same caliber as Fondy. His superior diplomacy also makes him a common target for assassins, so keep him moving around when you aren't using him. I'll use him in battle every now and again, too. He has adequate military command and a fanaticism spell, which makes him suitable for that big battle that you'll risk your characters for. I wouldn't use him in every battle, just the most important of them.

NEME-12: Volosino Aphenakos Pretty much the same as Slyne, really. I'll use him for breaking alliance and avoidance more often, though, with his good rating in intrigue. He has a far sight spell, which is nice I guess.

NEME-13: Lady Zenobia Numa The Lady. A good provincial ruler with a fear spell is about all she really amounts to. One of those characters that you don't really notice or cherish. She has a poor rating in diplomacy and intrigue, yet she can't avoid or negotiate or spy worth a hoot. You won't miss her when she's gone.

NEME-14: Orvietus Zorbeq Orvy. Good 'ol Orvy Z. Your only wizard. He has two useful spells, those being long life and far sight. He also has adequate military command and adequate heroism, making him a no brainer to keep in your invading armies. A nice character to have around.

NEME-15: Nivaro Thespius I know, I said that Orvy Z was your only wizard, which wasn't altogether true when you consider that Nivaro is also a wizard. But, the thing about being a wizard is that you also need some magic ability. This loser has a phantom warriors spell that he can cast a whopping

one whole time. He has adequate military command, though. I always kept him in an army somewhere, if nothing else. Another one of those guys you won't miss when he's gone.

NEME-16: Bastius Tarascus Your one true agent, Bastius almost always comes through on assassinations. He is a competent spy, but just don't expect too much information from him. He might tell you the capital of Aquilonia is in Tarantia or something. Another nice thing about him is his good magic ability. His diplomacy is handy, as is his force march for that army on the move trying to get that perfect terrain and desired battle type. His magic armor comes in handy if his cover is blown on assassination attempts. Definately the go to guy for all things murder, though, first and foremost.

COURT CONCLUSION Nemedica has a very able and diverse court, as you can see. She has enough military assets in the line-up that, when used together, make an otherwise formidable army twice as good.

You'll have all the intrigue you need with Arianus Tarascus, Tirus Bragorus and Bastius Tarascus. Diplomacy, of course, is your strongest and farthest reaching ability in the beginning. You have the unique ability to both peace off multiple kingdoms and avoid the influence of a few so you can begin an offensive campaign right out of the gate without having to worry about defending. Your only weakness is obvious, which is the lack of magic.

Still, it isn't that much of a weakness. You have enough magic in the right places (strategic movement magic and a long life spell) to get by. As the game wears on, in my experience, you'll find yourself wondering where the diplomacy went. I never got many

characters with much in the way of diplomacy as court replacements over the peace years. However, I did get my fair share of military command and intrigue, with the occasional wizard with black death. Each game is different, though, so keep your fingers crossed.

NOTE: This concludes Part 1 of the Kingdom Spotlight on Nemedica authored by J.D., a long-time veteran of Hyborian War.

[Hyborian War](#) is a game of imperial conquest in the age of Conan. It is a play-by-mail game that is run by Reality Simulations, Inc. out of Tempe, Arizona.

Reality Simulations, Inc.

P.O. Box 22400 Tempe, AZ 85285
(480) 967-7979 fax (480) 894-2028

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--William Jennings Bryan

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IND SHIP Happy Hamster (98472)

Printed on 2nd October 2006, Star Date 235.35.5

TURN REPORT

Starting Location:

Docked at 25H STARBASE Balmoral (A100) - Yark System (148)

>TU 300: Take Off

Entered orbit of Shish (945)

Scanned:

81P SHIP DRAMATIC OVERSTARCH (3138) - (50 Light Hulls)
 Barge Class Freighter (No Armour)
 CNF STARBASE SARAJEVO (3874) - (13-5) 6543 Mhu - Report
 Controlled by
 86H STARBASE BALMORAL (A100) - (P-0) 5222 Mhu - Report
 APT STARBASE PORALIZ (4546) - (25-4) 336 Mhu - Report
 FOR SHIP IF HOLD THE PLATE (3484) - (50 Light Hulls)
 Barge Class Freighter (No Armour)
 CNF SHIP DARTMOUTH HUNTER 2 (15515) - (10 Normal Hulls)
 Hunter Class Patrol Cruiser (Medium-Station Service)
 CNF SHIP KAT TROP (14224) - (50 Light Hulls)
 Barge Class Freighter (No Armour)
 IND SHIP SHISH (945) - (25-4) 336 Mhu - Report
 Barge Class Freighter (No Armour)

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| General | 21P what's there that should't be... | Hyper-Development | Star |
| Rules | Feeling frustrated about | Open Development | Star 8 |
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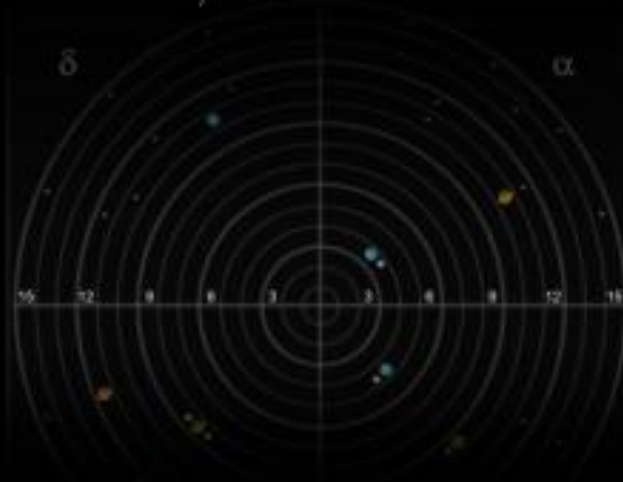
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Everything you need to know about Damage (*but didn't know what to ask*)

By: Mica Goldstone

Combat plays a large role in the game and as such having a good understanding of how damage is dealt with in the game can prove the difference between victory and defeat. This article deals with all aspects of damage; inflicting potential damage, defence layers, damage assignment and repairing it.

Avoiding being hit

Before looking at how damage is dealt with, first and foremost, it is better not to be hit. There are a few methods of avoiding being hit. Some of the list below may be appropriate for one or both sides:

- Missiles, torpedoes and space bombers can be countered before the hit. Point defence is useful against all three, while interceptors can only deal with bombers though they are much more effective at this than point defence. There are however many weapons that cannot be countered.
- The dodge of a position will also count against the accuracy of the attacks against it. Certain weapons are highly accurate but deliver low damage while others are the opposite.
- Certain weapons can only fire along a line of sight. Ground based systems using these weapons can only fire back against targets that are engaging them with line of sight weapons. An outpost for example cannot fire its photon guns against a ship that is firing missiles at it from orbit.

- Active platforms attack a round before ships enter combat and if capable to destroying the incoming position, they will avoid being attacked.
- Bases with starbase shielding cannot activate their weapons so cannot return fire even with space fighters. Their point weapons are however active.
- Pre-combat ISR stresses can destroy very weak ships such as XL freighters.
- Fleeing combat before it even starts (dropping cargo gives a speed bonus).

Inflicting Damage

Presuming that the attack was not avoided, the incoming hit will cause potential damage. Damage is delivered either from the weapon system or the ammo that it uses. The simplest case is the Photon Beam (in its various forms). The damage is indicated for the specific weapon. The Photon Gun (50mu) for example delivers a potential of 60 damage every time it hits a target. There are no random ranges involved in determining this potential damage. If 10 photon guns hit, 600 damage will be used as the starting damage before modifications.

Weapon systems that use ammo fall into a few categories:

- Rail weapons deliver an amount of damage equal to the specific ammo damage multiplied by the specific rail weapon.

For example, a Rail Gun (50mu) has an ammo damage multiplier of 4. When launching HE (high explosive) ammo with a damage of 30, each rail gun inflicts 120 damage. 10 rail guns will therefore potentially inflict 1200 damage.

- Launchers only improve the accuracy of the missiles and torpedoes they launch. In these cases all damage is based entirely on the damage of the specific missile or torpedo.

- Fighter bays launch space bombers. As with launchers, the damage inflicted is for the bomber.

Ground ordnance is the same as energy weapons in so far as the damage is based specifically on the item.

While there are no random factors involved in determining the amount of damage inflicted, this is however the potential damage and will be modified down through various mechanics.

Damage

Presuming the weapon hits, the damage has to pass through the defences of the target before it can inflict physical damage.

First of all, all hits are dealt with individually. This is important because each line of defence has a damage threshold and only damage that surpasses the threshold passes on to deal with the next line of defence. Further each hit has other information with it that determines how effective the hit is going to be against different layers defence and finally how the damage is assigned.

Each successful hit carries with it the following information:

- Damage – this is the initial amount of damage.

- Type – based on the weapon system. Photon beams are energy.

- Armour Factor – is the multiplier to the thresholds of defences

- Blast Radius – determines localisation of the damage

- Ground Splash – how damage behaves against multiple items

- Area Targeting – determines which items will be damaged first

Determining Potentials

Phoenix uses the 3d6 bell curve mechanic for determining averages (familiar to anybody rolling stats for AD&D and a bucket load of other roleplaying games). This is effectively three random numbers generated between 0 and 5 and added together. A total of 15 represents 100% while a total of 0 equates to 0%. Most numbers generated are around the 7-8 value, representing 50%. This is applied to every layer of defence against all individual hits.

Applying Armour Factors

Armour factor is the ability of the damage to penetrate the various defence layers. The threshold of each line of defence is modified by the armour factor associated with the hit. An armour factor of 0.8 for example means that a defensive threshold of 100 is treated as 80. A threshold of 100 being hit by an armour factor of 5 is treated as 500. Explosive weapons such as missiles (D200, AF 8) and HE (D30xrail weapon, AF 5) are highly damaging but also have high armour factors.

Layers of Defence

Optical Depth

This only applies when using energy weapons to fire through the atmosphere of a celestial body. This applies in both directions. Firing on a surface target from orbit and vice versa will have their damage reduced by the modified optical depth. A gas giant for example with an optical depth of 40 will reduce damage from photon weapons on average by 20.

Scintillators

Scintillators only work against energy weapons. They work by scattering the incoming energy. They are effective against all energy weapons to the same degree. The thickness of the scintillator field is the potential reduction to each and every energy type hit.

A scintillator field of 20 for example has the potential to reduce every incoming energy type hit by 20, though typically it will be around 10 (see Determining Potentials above). Having a scintillator field depth of 50 will on average counter half of all light photon guns (damage 25) hits penetrating this defensive layer will have on average been severely reduced. Some energy weapons have AF factors less than 1, giving them an advantage against targets with scintillator fields.

Shields

Shields work in a similar basis to scintillators though with two distinct differences. They can achieve much thicker depths (higher thresholds) and they apply to all incoming hits. Energy weapons that have already been reduced by scintillators for example will be further reduced by shields.

The thickness of a shield(its damage threshold) is based on the quantity of shield factors it has (modified by area of the target and starbase shielding). The greater the quantity of shield factors, the greater the shield depth. As with all layers of defence, the actual depth for each hit will be between zero and the thickness.

While the maximum number of factors is based on the quantity of shields, the generation of factors themselves is due to shield generators. These produce factors either every day or every round of combat, attempting to charge the shields up to a maximum. The drawback with shields is that their factors are depleted by the damage they absorb.

Example:

A shield surrounding an outpost has a depth of 80. This means it has potential damage threshold of 80. Presuming it is hit by a typical photon weapon that delivers 90 damage, at least 10 damage will pass through. On average however the depth will be 40 so typically 50 damage will penetrate. On average therefore 40 damage will be used to reduce the shield factors. As the depth of the shield is based on its factors, the shield is depleted.

The above example however does not give the full picture. There are exceptions and special cases:

- Platforms and bases have better shield systems and are able to absorb minor damage. Only damage that actually penetrates the shield has the damage absorbed by the shields reduce its factors. For example, if the damage is 50 and all 50 is absorbed, then the shield factors are not reduced. If however the incoming damage was 60 and only 50 was absorbed, 10 would

pass on and the shield factors would be depleted by 50.

- Armour factor modifies down the amount of damage used to deplete the shields where armour factors are greater than 1. Example – Missile (D200, AF8) hits a shield with depth of 20. The shield is modified up to 160 due to the AF of the missile. It is then subjected to random modification (see Determining Potentials above) and in this case comes down to 105. 95 damage therefore penetrates. Of the 105 that is stopped by the shields, 13 (105/8) counts towards depleting the shield factors.

- Starbase Shields increase depth based on the quantity of shielding complexes present in the base compared to other complexes and how long they have been charging for. This depth has a potential of 200 in addition to the thickness attributed to the shield factors.

Armour

Platforms and ships can also be covered in armour. The quantity of amount plates is dependent on the type of hulls used in the construction of the hulls and the size of the vessel. The overall thickness of the armour is determined by the quantity of plates (in proportion to the maximum) and the type of armour.

Armour behaves like shields in that as it absorbs damage. The primary differences are that while damage absorbed by shields depletes its factors, in the case of armour, the armour is burnt off. As it burns off it is no longer effective at absorbing (stopping) damage. The armour thickness therefore decreases. Unlike shields, armour is not restored through generators. Lost armour needs to be repaired, requiring sending the ship to the docks. Heavier armours

(producing greater depths) such as ablative are more easily damaged.

A ship with Ablative Armour will have an armour thickness of 120 compared to 80 for a ship Armour Plates and is on the face of it the clear winner. An armour plate however will typically absorb 1,000 damage before it is burnt off while an ablative armour plate will only absorb 150 damage. In other words ships with Ablative Armour will be undergoing near seven times the repairs (and costs) of Armour Plated ships. This said, the extra armour in a short combat can be the difference between winning and losing.

Damage Assignment

Damage assignment is dealt with differently for enclosed structures (ships and platforms) than for positions consisting of standalone objects (ground parties and bases). In the case of enclosed structures, the damage is split into two sets of damage based on the ratio of internal volume to overall area based on the hulls used. In other words, hits are attenuated by the hulls of the ships and platforms. For heavy hulls 23% (30/130) of the damage of each hit is pushed into the interior of the ship, the other 77% is channelled into the hulls.

Damage is now assigned to items. This is based on Targeting assigned to the damage though with a special exception. If no targeting was opted for, damage assignment is random. Where random assignment occurs in the case of ground parties and bases, there is an initial spread check to determine if ground zero is empty space (indirect hits).

If an attack had targeting assigned (Structure, Weapons, Lifeform Disable), the chance to hit has been modified. If the attack succeeded in hitting, the damage

Scramble for Empire

Scramble for Empire is a new game of Victorian Imperialism in the colonies across the world.

Capturing the atmosphere of the time, and owing just as much to popular literature and films covering the same period, Scramble for Empire puts you in charge of an 'advanced' nation setting out to 'civilise' the world beyond the cosy armchairs and smoking rooms of the home country. Players can also run trading companies, running opium for example, or lead missionary societies to convert the heathen.

This game is designed to be fairly simple to play and a great deal of fun!

Game turns are three weeks apart, costing £7 each (the game can be played via the post or by e-mail)



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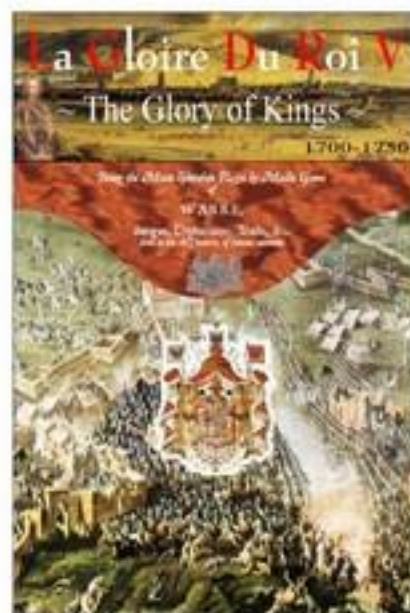
Scramble for Empire
A COLONIAL AND IMPERIAL GAME

The Glory of Kings

The Glory of Kings now enters its 20th year of being played, and is a multi-award winning play by mail (and by e-mail) game of the real world of the 18th century. Highly developed over the years, the game puts you in charge of a nation as diverse as the Kingdom of Sweden or Moghul India. It is even possible to run a pirate brotherhood! Deeply entrenched in the history of the time, The Glory of Kings has an enthusiastic existing set of dedicated players who are usually happy to help new players who get involved, and there are numerous game supplements available.

If you like history, you'll love this! You can play it by post or by e-mail, as you choose!

Game turns are three weeks apart, costing £8 each
(This game was previously called *La Gloire du Roi*).



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The Glory of Kings
A EUROPEAN GAME

passed on for assignment will have the appropriate target tag. If the attack failed to hit, a second check was made without the targeting penalty. If this attack succeeded, the damage passed on does not have the target tag. Some weapons (tractor beams, proximity torpedoes) have highly accurate but are flagged as unfocused. They ignore targeting.

A position is a collection of items each with a location. This can be structure such as in the case of hulls that form a ship or complexes that form a base. There are other areas such as cargo, installed etc. Further items can be assigned to groupings, such as lifeforms and weapon systems.

When assigning damage to a discrete type for example structure, all the items are sorted, pulling out the appropriate ones. The chance of the damage being assigned to a specific item is based on the relative size of the area compared to the overall area of all the appropriate items.

A Dome complex for example has a size of 20,000, compared with 1,000 of a mine. Damage is 20 times more likely to be assigned to a dome than a mine. Armour has a very low area. This means that any damage that penetrates a ship's defences has a small chance of being assigned to the ship's armour through random assignment.

Installed Area Modifiers

Installing items can necessitate putting them on the outside of a ship or deep within it. This equates to a modifier to its area when installed. For most items this is 1 but a few have higher values. This makes them more vulnerable.

Special Exceptions

Bases that have actively participated in naval combat will have all incoming damage assigned to their weapons irrespective of targeting. Once these have been eliminated, all damage is assigned normally.

Items with Defence

Before damage is actually assigned there is a check to determine if the item is specifically defended. Bunkers for example have the ability to defend lifeforms while magazines defend ammo. This means that any damage that would normally be assigned to the defended item is instead assigned to the defending item. In the case of damage that would be assigned to a missiles in the cargo section of a ship, the incoming damage is instead assigned to the magazine. This will only be the case where the total cargo space of the defending items is greater than the mass of defended items. Where there is insufficient cargo space, the % coverage determines whether it will be defended or not. For example, having 100mu ammo cargo space and 200mu missiles means that the first hit has a 50% chance of being assigned to the magazine.

Destroying Items

At this point there should be a specific item, e.g. Metals(1) and a remaining amount of damage to assign to it. If the item has Damage Reduction, the damage is reduced by the modified (see Determining Potentials above) Damage Reduction. In this case the bell curve is centred on the damage reduction value, i.e. if an item has a Damage Reduction of 2, it will on average stop 2 damage. This equates to the items ability to simply absorb small amounts of damage. If this has not reduced the damage to zero there is now a check against the defense of the item.

If damage is greater than item defence, the item is destroyed, the quantity is reduced by 1. Excess damage is carried over.

If damage is less than item defence, there is a % chance that the item will be destroyed based on damage: item defence, e.g. 50 damage against 200 defence equates to 25% chance of destruction. If the item is destroyed, the quantity of the specific item is reduced by 1. Due to the mechanics of averages, the overall damage soaked by items will be equal to their defences.

Heavy hulls and platform hulls also provide internal protection for items due to the increased use of internal bulkheads as part of their design (items get x3 defence which can be increased up to x4 through officer damage control training). This can mean that even penetrating damage may appear to be less effective against warships.

Damage Carry Over

Excess damage after an item is destroyed is randomly assigned based on the weighted areas of the position. For example, targeting a few humans in a base that is little more than a massive ore stockpile means that excess damage after a human is killed is very likely to be assigned to ore.

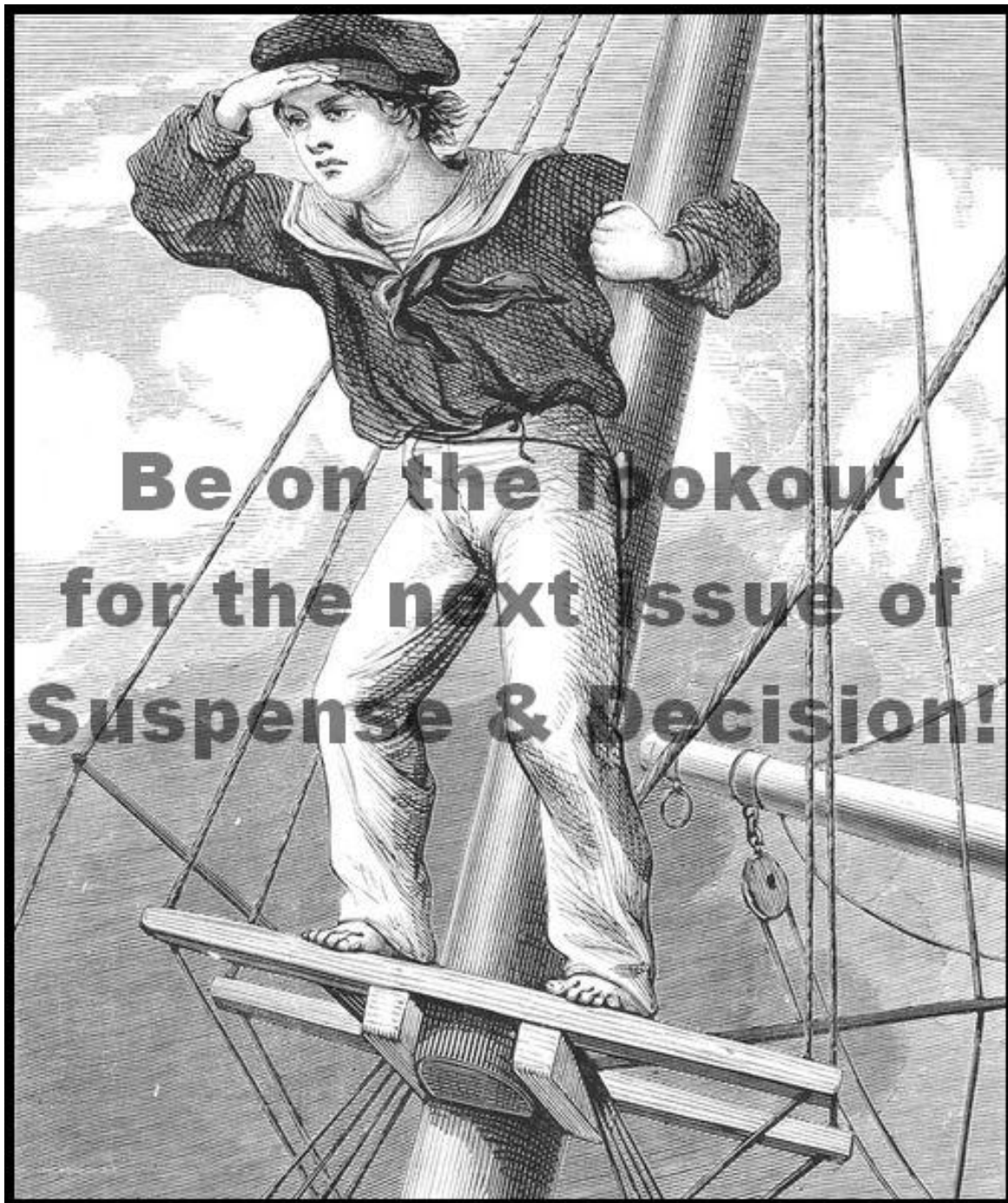
The excess damage is modified by the blast radius of the hit. For most naval weapons this is 1 though for some it is much less. A weapon with a blast radius of 0.7 for example with 50 damage remaining after destroying an item will have 35 damage to assign to another item.

Before this damage is assigned however the spread of the target needs to be taken into consideration. A target with a packed spread has this damage assigned to the next item, though with increasing spread there is a

chance that the damage will be assigned to empty space. There is only a 20% chance that damage will hit another item in a dispersed ground party for example. In other words, 80% of all excess damage is effectively lost. The chance of hitting another item is: Packed 100% (5/5), Close 80% (4/5), Normal 60% (3/5), Open 40% (2/5), Disperse 20% (1/5)

In the case of a ground party being the target, if it is in space it will be considered disperse, which means 80% of all excess damage has hit empty space instead of being assigned to another item even when the damage has a blast radius of 1. There is a chance that something else could be nearby. The damage is attenuated to the spread, i.e. reduced by 80% in the case of being dispersed and a new hit check is made. This continues through iterations until all the damage has been attenuated for all hits. When attacking however the ground party has a spread equal to the position it is engaging. This makes ground parties attacking a packed base vulnerable to damage. While the packed base is equally vulnerable to damage, excess damage is more likely to be assigned to structures and other non-combat items simply due to its relative mass compared with the defending force. A packed base does however make it more vulnerable to orbital bombardments.

One further modifier made to excess damage is Ground Splash. This increases chance of excess damage being assigned to another item by the ground splash %. Missiles for example have a ground splash of 20%. This means if the target has a spread of Normal, there is 80% chance of excess damage being assigned to another item. In the case of disperse, this increases from 20% to 40%. Further, as all damage that fails to be assigned is attenuated to 40% of its damage



and tested again, there can be significant quantity of casualties even in disperse targets.

Example:

Two attacks against a disperse ground party consisting of mercenaries; 100 kinetic missile(D60) and 100 missiles (D200, GS25%). Presuming averages. While in both cases 100 strikes hit the ground party, the quantity of direct hits on items is based on the spread plus ground splash.

Kinetic –20 direct hits (80 indirect) 60 damage kills 20 mercenaries. 20 direct hits of 59 damage and 80 indirect hits of 12 damage carryover. 20% chance of it hitting another, 20 more die. 4 hits of 58 damage, 16 hits of 11 damage, 16 indirect hits of 58 damage, 54 indirect hits of 2.4 damage carryover of 58 damage. 16 more die. The iterations continue and maybe another one or two die.

Total kills: 60 on average.

Missile - 40 direct hits (60 indirect) 200 damage kills 40 mercenaries. 40 direct hits of 199 damage and 60 indirect hits of 80 damage carryover. 40% chance of it hitting another, 40 more die. 16 hits of 198 damage, 24 hits of 79 damage, 24 indirect hits of 74 damage and 56 indirect hits of 32 damage. Basically, each pass up to 200 hits (direct and indirect) and passed on until each chain has less than 1 damage.

Total kills: 260 on average.

Against vehicles

Two attacks against a disperse ground party consisting of light tanks (defense40); 100 kinetic missile(D60) and 100 missiles (D200, GS25%). Presuming averages

Kinetic – 20 direct hits (80 indirect) 60 damage destroys 20 tanks. 20 direct hits of 20 damage and 80 indirect hits of 12 damage carryover. 20% chance of it hitting another, 2 more destroyed from 20 damage and 5 from 12 damage (=20% \times 12/40) due to having 40 defence. No more kills.

Total kills: 27 on average.

Missile - 40 direct hits (60 indirect) 200 damage destroys 40 tanks. 40 direct hits of 160 damage and 60 indirect hits of 80 damage carryover. 40% chance of it hitting another, 40 more destroyed. 16 hits of 120 damage, 24 hits of 20 damage, 24 indirect hits of 64 damage and 56 indirect hits of 32 damage. Basically, each pass up to 200 hits (direct and indirect) and passed on until each chain has less th damage.

Total kills: 115 on average.

Empty Space

Platforms retain something of their structure during a combat which means that as they are damaged, there is an increasing chance that items targeted are already destroyed and as such the damage is ignored. Once combat is over, the platform is updated to its new size and empty space is ignored.

Damage Report

The report for each type of weapon comprises a few lines. The important line is the second in the below examples, indicates the quantity of the weapons that hit, the actual damage that penetrates all layers of defence and the potential damage in [].

Example:

Code:

Round 3: 3 Photon Cannon mkIVs

- 3 hits - 360 [360] damage - 95%

5 Photon Gun mkIVs

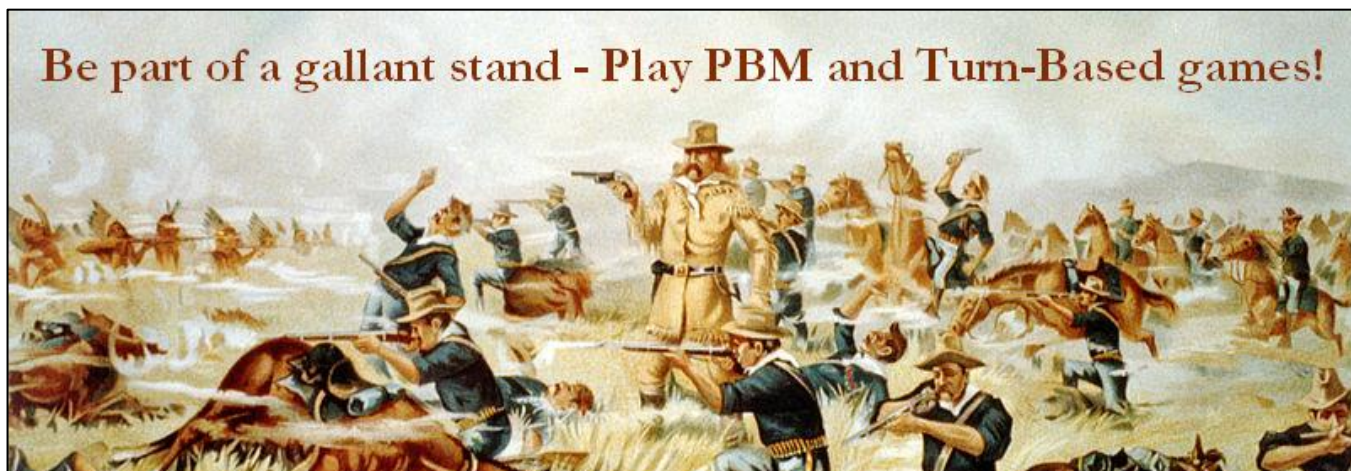
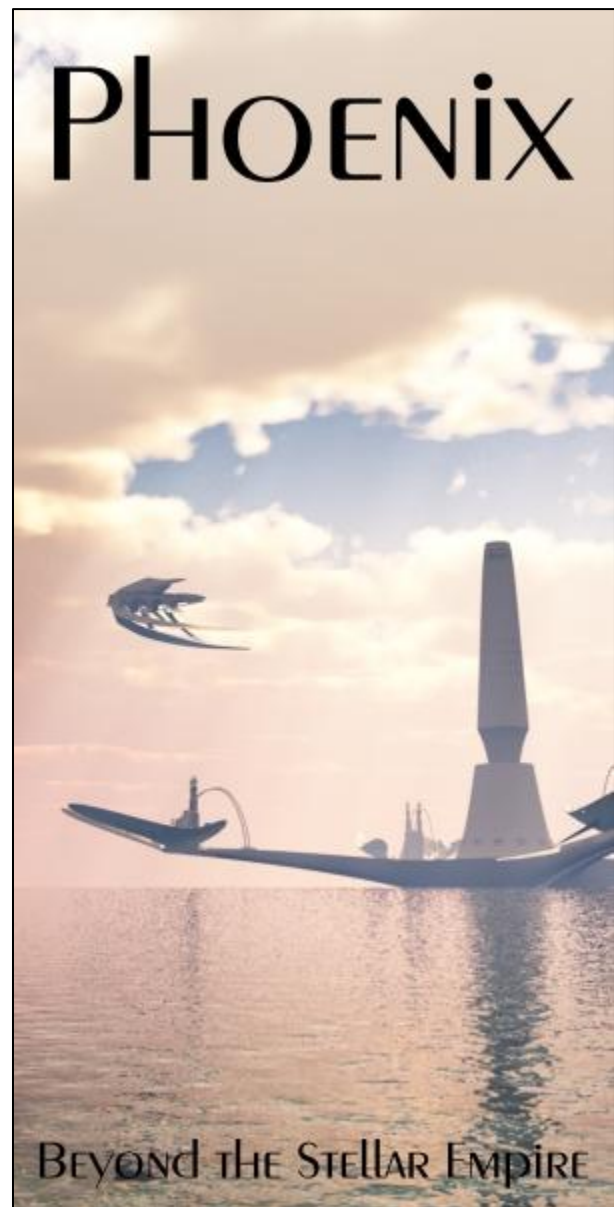
- 5 hits - 1091 [450] damage - 95%

The damage from the photon guns is interesting as it suggests that the damage inflicted was superior to potential damage of the photon guns. This occurs when items targeted explode or in some way causes more damage by its destruction. Examples including exploding ammo (unprotected by magazines) and collapsing caves. In these cases the damage from the exploding items is added. On the damage report for the position suffering the damage there is an entry such as this:

Civilian Damage: 1 Cave (1021) [+500 Internal Damage]

Explosion Damage

Exploding damage is added to existing damage still to assign and takes on all the qualities of the damage such as blast radius and ground splash. HE's hitting a base with a large stockpile of ammo without sufficient magazine coverage can prove pretty devastating.



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Can you afford not to??

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that the ad space is free??**

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Did you advertise?

**Nobody reads ads,
any more. Do they??**

I can't afford to advertise.

Free isn't affordable??

Isn't advertising a waste of time??

An Origin Story

By: Mark "The Mad Scientist of PBM" Wardell

I was recently exchanging some email from our glorious editor, and he pointed out that my PBM experiences were different than his. While true, it got me thinking about where this all began, for me.

I think it was May, but it may have been June, but we'll call it May for the time being. And it was 1982, although it may have been '81, but I'm pretty sure it was '82. Well this is my story, and I'm going to call it May 1982, but just remember, it may have been June or even July of '81, not that it matters.

You see, during that time, I was either the President or Vice President of a local board game club. It's hard to say which position I held at any given time, because while I had formed one club, another local gamer, F. Scott Payne, had formed a club before me, and when we merged our two groups into the single largest game club in Portland, we had a tendency to swap leadership positions back and forth, for a while.

At the club, we played most war games. Squad Leader was popular, and Diplomacy. That was one of the only times I've ever played Diplomacy face-to-face with 7 players and a GM. We played other things, too, especially big monster games. That was part of the point of the club, to play the games we wouldn't play at home, because we didn't have the space to set the thing up at all, and certainly couldn't leave it up long enough to play. Although, I did try to mount Highway to the Reich on my bedroom wall and play it solitaire once - but, that's another story.

In an effort to gain new members for our growing club, we advertised at the local game stores, and in gaming magazines. Avalon Hill's magazine, **The General**, offered a free "opponents wanted" section, where we would often list information about our club and invite local players to come join us. This was both simple and effective at gaining several of our more dedicated members.

These ads also brought with them some other, shall we say, "interesting" feedback. Like the one night, really a very early 3:00 AM, that a gamer from Alaska phoned to tell me all about the game he designed, and ask if he could send me a copy for my club to playtest.

More interesting to our discussion today, is the flyer I got in the mail, one day, from Daniel Pierce about his PBM game, Galactic Empires. While I was fully aware that you could, with some degree of success, play a war game by mail, I had never heard of a game designed specifically to be played only by mail. And not only was the concept of a PBM game foreign to me, it was a sci-fi game, which to that point, hadn't really interested me - and you had to pay for each turn, which was a real turn-off to a college student with little income. Not to mention that my extra income was going to support my war game habit.

The flyer, itself, was somewhat unremarkable, it simply described the game in some general terms, and Dan had written

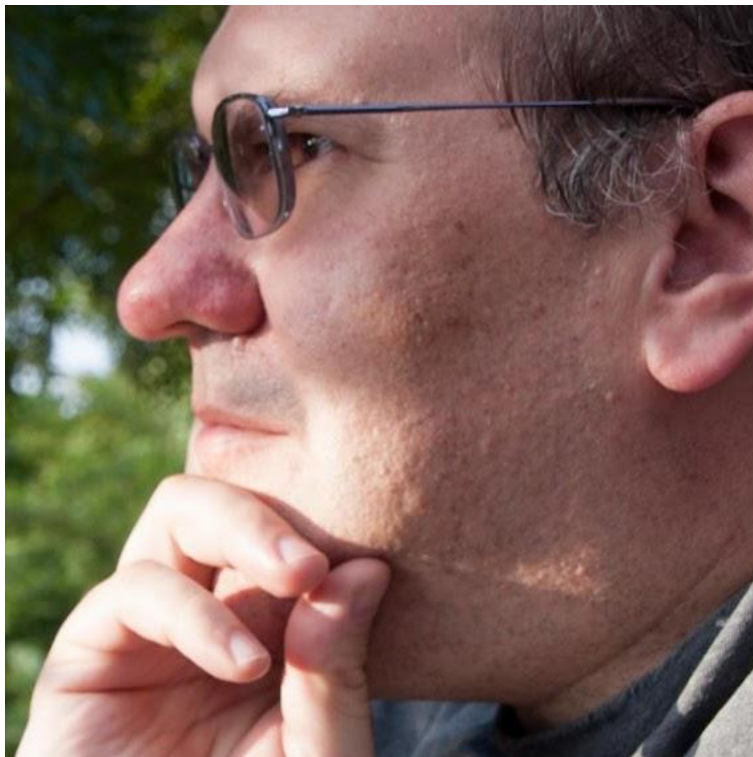
a short note on the flyer asking me to pass it around at my club. But, he offered three free turns, so I thought, what the heck. Three turns turned into six, and then nine, because he also offered free turns for recruiting new players to the game. I not only showed the flyer, I talked up the game, described how much fun it was sending those scouts into the unknown, contacting new players and making new friends.

The game was based in Dayton, Ohio, where the GM, Dan, was part of a local club, so there was a heavy group of players there. And there were other groups of players in different areas. Before long, the Portland Group was known (but not feared at all), throughout the galaxy. Dan's one simple flyer had resulted in him gaining twelve new players, who stayed with him for years. Someone in our group, Bruce, I think, discovered Paper Mayhem, and shared each

issue with our group, helping us learn about even more games. Games like Robalgon(sp?), Galactic Prisoners, Terra II, and more.

Well, to cut a long story short, this is mainly about my origin to PBM gaming, one thing led to another, and Dan started to lose interest in his game, which led to my buying the game and running it for a time (it's on hiatus, right now).

If there is a point to these, which could be doubted, it would be these. First, it's easy to get people into a PBM game - just make a good game and invite them. Don't just keep inviting the same people, invite someone new. Second, if you know who I can contact for information about Robalgon(sp?), Galactic Prisoners, Terra II and Death by Starlight, I would be interested in contacting those GMs. And three, it really was May 1982.



The Mad Scientist of PBM in "deep thought" mode.

A Very Special Action - Phoenix: BSE Style

By: Steve Jobin aka Zigic

I've played Phoenix:BSE on and off for approximately 10 years, over a 20 year spell. After some interesting debate on the in- game forum, I did wonder what, exactly, has kept drawing me back to the game, when for so many others, I've generally lost interest, after a few months.

Ultimately, I think it is a combination of automation (that allows the game to handle thousands of positions to interact on a daily basis) coupled with Special Actions (that allow the story arc to develop in a way that could not be catered for by a set of pre-defined list of available orders).

As such, to show the development of how special actions can push a story arc, the following details a series of special actions over a period of just over a year, in an attempt to assassinate another player's political character, Michelle Diaz.

For way of background, when the sequence started, Diaz was the Speaker of the House – and the most influential political position in the Detinus Republic (DTR). My own character, Bratislav Zigic, is a political within the service of the Imperial Services (IMP). War between the two factions had just been re-ignited, and as such, I wanted to find a way to strike a demoralising blow.

Michelle Diaz had been role-played as having an eye for fashion, which I felt left room for what I thought was a bit of humour. Boomerang is a planet in the Straddle system – formerly, an Imperial system that the DTR captured. An Empire military

operation had failed to restore IMP sovereignty.

The Actions are formatted as follows:

Bold the character or position the special action was processed through.

Italic text is the special action text sent to the GM

Standard text is the Result from the GM.

Political position: Bratislav Zigic, office in Imperial Starbase Tuzanor

212.11.4 Action: Bratislav Zigic approaches staff at Tuzanor, as well as Operative (and cousin) Niko Zigic to propose 'Operation Killer Heels.'

The Outline of the plan is for some 'grateful inhabitants' of Boomerang to present the DTR authorities with a pair of shoes, as a personal tribute to Michelle Diaz.

The shoes would include an explosive device, rigged to explode when pressure roughly equivalent to the weight of Diaz was standing upright in them. Even if the explosion doesn't kill her outright, it may, at least, mean she doesn't get to put a new pair of shoes on, again (at least, not with the feet she was born with...).

Bratislav feels the route to take would be to source an animal from Boomerang, that could be used for the leather. Then, find a talented cobbler (though, not be so talented that Diaz may recognise the needlework) and design the heels that would carry the explosive device (or, perhaps less

dramatically, a poisoned needle). In the meantime, an Operative would need to be put in place on Boomerang, to establish contact with some local dignitaries, with the aim of then presenting the shoes to the DTR 'saviours.'

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Dangerous Heels**

IMP Political Bratislav Zigic proposes making some killer heels from a native creature on Boomerang, as a gift for Micheal Diaz. It is thought that fast-acting poison on an organic splinter is least likely to be detected by security. As such, the operation is to run something like this:

Find a very experienced officer (lvl 4 exploration), and preferably, Naplian. Form him into a GP, and get him into the jungles or Boomerang. With his skill, he should be able to track down an appropriate animal and source of poison, through interacting with the natives. He should then be able to make a pair of shoes (lets presume this unusual skill is why he needs lvl 4 exploration).

Once made, he has to persuade natives to hand them over in gratitude, and hope that they are not tried on, first, and that the poison is not detected.

There is, however, one drawback - getting the size right - maybe an operative in the same base as Diaz could find out? This would be fairly low risk. Otherwise, it is guesswork from media footage.

Zigic

212.11.5 Action: Taking the feedback of Special Action/Boomerang/Dangerous Heels on board, Bratislav asks his staff to make a

search on the Tinterweb (or, whatever the subspace equivalent of it is) to see if there are any establishments in Detinus space that happen to advertise themselves, or are heavily linked through trashy OK-esque magazines, as being a particular favourite of Michelle Diaz, as shoe supplier. Bratislav reasons that finding Diaz, herself, may not be needed, to get her shoe size, if instead, an agent could be placed in a location she is known to frequent.

Result: You will either need a mu of Detinus Media (30336), or get somebody into Venice [the main Detinus Republic System], in order to investigate civilian communications. Subspace is inappropriate.

212.11.5 Action: Bratislav runs a background check on the 4 Naplian Star Troopers, and 510 Naplian Employees at Tuzanor to check whether any of them happen to have a history of Cobbling. Should any happen to have this experience, then Zigic aims to offer them a commission to Officer (note, the aim, here, is to perhaps get a Naplian Officer with +1/+2 in exploration, already). Zigic sets aside 10 Alien Livestock to be used for practice leather.

Result: **Special Action / Naplian with Knowledge of Cobbling**

During an interview with the Naplians within the base, it is discovered that, while none actually have any skills in cobbling, one has relatives on Utopia that were traditional cobblers, and that if he is promoted, taken back there, he could quickly pick up the skills. This is the best that is on offer.

If DaV the Cobbler is taken to an urban sector on Utopia, he will increase his exploration by 2, at no extra cost as a free action.

Castle of the Mad Archmage™



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Date 11.5: Create Officer {1397} {DaV the Cobbler} {549} {Naval Officer - No} {Random Name - No}

A Naplian Employee (549) has been promoted to officer.

DaV the Cobbler is currently stationed at IMP Tuzanor (1397).

This action costs you 1000 stellars.

Zigic

212.11.5: Action: Zigic arranges for employees/troops to be interviewed, to establish whether any have useful diplomacy skills. Whether or not operation Killer Heel can be put into place, he thinks that it would be useful to put an officer on Boomerang, who could perhaps infiltrate and schmooze with local dignitaries.

Result: **Special Action / Naplian with Natural Diplomacy**

The Naplians of the base are interviewed, testing for their innate diplomatic skills. Their stereotypical interest in all things cheap and tacky, not to mention their capacity for being ensnared in wheeling and dealing, to the point where they may well betray their assignment, is cause for a face-palm moment.

They team suspects that, in order to get a Naplian diplomat that is both pro-empire and good at manipulating locals, they are going to either have to find a good officer who is already trained, or train one themselves through the exhaustive use of Education - Imperial Services (6404).

Esme Le Pen – operative, operating from a stealth ship in the Venice system - Detinus space.

212.12.4 Action: Attempt to monitor communications within the system to attempt to pick-up details of any starbases on any of the following planets:

Dalmatia (875)tPlanettAlphat13, Cattaro (231)tMoontAlphat13, Zaro (566)tMoontAlphat13

OOO attempting to get one or two starbase locations for outer ring planets in the system, to insert operatives.

Result: **Special Action / Venice / Scanning for High Profile Bases**

A scan of Dalmatia, Cattero and Zaro reveals only one starbase with a high enough profile to be detected from the edge of the system. This is New Haeremai (8518) on Zaro. Knowledge of the base has been added to the information archive.

Esme le Pen

Docked at DTR STARBASE New Haeremai (8518) - Venice System (124)

212.12.5 Action: Attempt to study communications within the system as part of Special Action / Boomerang / Dangerous Heels to search local media sources, to find out the favourite shoe store establishments of Michelle Diaz. If the local media just happen to mention the shoe size, itself, better, still.

Result: **Special Agent Action / Knowledge of Diaz's Shoe Size / 212.12**

The operative is able to get access to some impressive media shorts, that enable him to

use software to accurately predict the shape of the lady's feet. It should now be possible to create some perfectly fitting shoes - shoes she will die for.

Special Agent DaV – freshly promoted Naplian Officer, part-time cobbler, trainee assassin. Somewhere on his home planet of Utopia.

212.13.3 Action: re-introduce DaV to his cobbling ancestry, as per Special Action / Naplian with Knowledge of Cobbling for +2 in Exploration.

Update

After a family reunion and the handing out of some very fine digital watches, it is down to business - cobbling.

Zigic

212.13.4: Action: With progress being made with Operation Killer Heel, Bratislav turns his attention as to how best to get DaV the Cobbler on the surface of Boomerang. He consults with Operative Niko Zigic, whether the techniques Operatives use to drop into a starbase could be applied to an Officer (with a bit of training). Alternatively, Zigic wonders whether venting Korondox Gas from a shuttle would further lower its sensor profile, to help it enter orbit. The final suggestion is whether there would be any civilian traffic, that which DaV could hitch a lift with - perhaps, after the exchange of some Guilders?

Result: Special Action / Boomerang / Dangerous Heels / Getting Dav onto Boomerang

There is no need to get Dav into a base, just into the jungles of Boomerang should suffice. If the officer (or accompanying officer) has a good stealth or navigation skill, he should be able to use a special action to sneak from the orbital quad down to the surface jungles, using background civilian traffic to hide the shuttle's signature.

Zigic

*Date 212.14.2 Action: Taking on board the view that it may be possible to have a shuttle captained by an officer with good navigation/stealth skill [Special Action/Boomerang/Dangerous Heels/Getting Dav onto Boomerang], Bratislav consults with the Naplian troops / employees at the base, and suggests that they 'Pimp My Ride' - Naplian Shuttle-style to convert a shuttle from something daubed in standard Imperial livery to something you would expect an average Naplian merchant to fly around in. He stresses that the aim is not to stand out from the crowd - so the precious gem encrusted platinum landing gear is out - but, to have just enough bling for a self-respecting Naplian merchant to get around in (and thus, not draw attention for *not* trying enough).*

Result: Special Action / Boomerang / Dangerous Heels / Getting Dav onto Boomerang / Naplian Shuttle

The team get to work pimping out a standard shuttle to something a Naplian would cruise around in. They do this, by first using flamers and hammers to ruin the exterior of it, then spray paint it badly with some gaudy colours. Now, it looks ex-affiliation use that is still impressive to natives. Just what a civilian Naplian trader might be able to afford.

Next, it is a case of defining a surface sector to land on and blend in. A free special action can be used, once this has been decided on, to grant a localised sensor profile to the shuttle GP based on this action.

DaV

212.14.4: Action: As per the SA Special Action/Naplian with Natural Diplomacy, burn the copy of Education - Imperial Services (6404) at the starbase, in order to give DaV the gift of the gab, as well as a dose of pro-Empire orientation.

Result: **Special Action / Naplian with Natural Diplomacy Update**

Blueprint exhausted, DaV now has diplomacy level 2.

Terry De Winter, Operative based at Primus Inter Pares on target planet, Boomerang, in the Straddle System.

212.15 Action: Without attempting to take anything high risk and totally re-write history, Terry is tasked with creating some references to DaV the cobbler, so that he would appear in a cursory background check.

Result: **Special Agent Action / Boomerang / Back Story for DaV / 212.15**

A few comments here, some references there, and a rename of a person that left a village some years ago and moved around a bit, are pretty much all that can be done to give DaV a back story. Fortunately, information technology is often shunned by the civilians, making any realist background checks by the DTR impossible.

Terry De Winter

212.16.1 Action: In preparation of the landing of the cobbling team, Agent De Winter makes a study of local media/library sources, to get a run down on beasts native to the forests of Boomerang that could potentially be used as a leather source. This data to be transferred to the team upon landfall, rather than attempt to send a submission across subspace.

Result: **Investigation / Boomerang / Shoemaking Material**

Commonly used leather products are produced from the plains herbivores. These account for 99% of all leather consumer goods on the world. The swampcow is sometimes used, but rarely on account of it not accepting dyes very easily. Finally the desert fox analogue is often used for furs. While useful as shoe leather, it is not used, as such, as it is worth more as a fur.

Terry De Winter

212.16.3 Docked at DTR STARBASE Primus Inter Pares (2953) - Straddle System (177)

Action: Study local media sources for details of local Naplian dignitaries known for their pro-DTR stance. Ideally, De Winter is looking for someone who will perhaps try to take all credit for a gift from the people, him/herself. The aim is to find a person known to the DTR, with the hope that:

1) It makes the presentation of the shoes appear a little more 'legit'

2) The dignitary effectively becomes a fall guy for DaV

3) If the dignitary should take the rap, then it may partly undermine DTR relations with the local populace.

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Naplian Dignitary**

After looking through historical records of who the governor of the DTR base have consulted with amongst the civilian populace, the operative is able to quickly narrow down an appropriate ambassador, who would fall over himself in order to hand over a token of appreciation to the DTR on behalf of the people of this world. The ambassador has the name Gink IV.

Ground Party (GP), code name "Nothing to See Here" – comprising a pilot officer, Megan Currie, DaV and a couple of Naplian troopers to provide additional manpower, where needed. The shuttle is also loaded with some Mohache Carved Gems (a trade good prized by Naplians), some chic clothing (representing a stock of shoes) and the crew have a stash of Guilders – a hard currency that can be used to grease palms.

212.15 Action: As per Special Action/Boomerang/Dangerous Heels/Getting Dav onto Boomerang/Naplian Shuttle Megan Currie carefully disembarks the shuttle from its cloaked host ship (IMP Titan Sentinel (83741)). Using her navigation skills, she attempts to merge with civilian traffic in order to land the team at the Forest Sector 12,11 - exuding confidence to the team, but actually hoping that a combination of her Navigation skill and the Naplianisation Pimping of the shuttle itself will get the team on deck undetected by Detinus forces...

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Dangerous Heels / Getting Dav onto Boomerang / Naplian Shuttle**

Update [212.16.3]

The shuttle is put down in {12,11} and blends into the background civilian activities.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.16.4 Action: Dav and the team get the show on the road and go on a reconnaissance trip for beasts that could be used as a leather source for shoes.

Result: **Investigation / Boomerang / Shoemaking Material**

Update

Now DaV is on the world it proves a simple matter to barter with some locals for various materials of high quality from which a pair of shoes are to be made.

DaV settles down to work. As these are to be the very finest, it will take him 4 weeks to have the finished product ready for the concealed assassination device.

A free action can be run in 212.20. to create the item ready for the presentation.

Zigic

212.17.2: Action: Bratislav talks over Operation Killer Heels with his staff. He suspects that the DTR political body will be suspicious if Gink IV approaches them with the shoes without some prior interaction.

As such he talks through a couple of options to see if they may be feasible;

1) Setting some forest fires to get some locals to run to Inter Pares. The shoes effectively become a 'reward' for re-housing civilians

2) One of the Veteran Star Troopers in the team be promoted to Operative, and then stage a botched assassination attempt so that the shoes become a reward for providing him protection

(OOC So essentially looking to create a reason for the DTR to interact with Gink and for the shoes to come out as a result of that - but then not sure whether you would be happy with the result of a DTR instigated SA looking like a reward?).

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang/Killer Heels / Forest Fires**

As a pretence for getting DTR intervention, fires could be started somewhere on Boomerang - preferably in the jungles. These will eventually burn themselves out without intervention but may lead to an investigation by the DTR. Should this occur, the stage is set for the presentation of the shoes.

Fires can be started as a free action by a position on Boomerang.

GM Note - the action will generate an orbital message. Should the DTR get involved, then they have done so of their own volition.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.20.2 Action: As per Investigation/Boomerang/Shoemaking Material the team assemble to review DaV's work, in preparation for presenting (which will be a follow up investigation).

Result: **Investigation / Boomerang / Shoemaking Material**

Update

A very fine and spiffy pair of shoes have been created.

Inventory

1 Finest Shoes in the Peripheries (32672) - 1 mus

Tech Manual

Finest Shoes in the Peripheries (32672)

Name Finest Shoes in the Peripheries

Tech Manual A finer pair of shoes have never existed. They have been crafted using ancient techniques from exotic creatures of the jungles and forests of Boomerang specifically for Ms Dias of the Detinus Republic in thanks by the civilian population for all their efforts. The size looks about right.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.20.2 Action: DaV and the team use the 5 Chic Clothing (30158) (which are a stock of shoes as part of the cobbler backstory), 400 Guilders (30000) and the 5 Mohache Carved Gems (30830) in order to oil hands in order to establish a meeting with Gink IV. The plan is to have a meeting scheduled with Gink IV which will be preceded by an SA where some charges to cause a forest a fire can be set. The charges will be set to fire off during the meeting, with the confusion it causes giving reason for Gink IV to be left with the shoes allowing him to take the credit for them assuming the DTR investigate.

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Naplian Dignitary**

Update

Palms are greased using 5 mohache carved gems and 400 guilders and a meeting is set for 212.26.

Shoes (chic clothing) are sent ahead as samples of the expertise of Dab the cobbler.

This gives sufficient time for the orchestration of the forest fires.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.21.5 Action: Whilst waiting the meeting with Gink IV, begin to map out sites to plant explosions to create a forest fire. Look into whether the shuttle itself could perhaps be rigged to crash land (perhaps remotely flow using the warbots). Note: extraction of the team would then be via teleport.

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Killer Heels / Forest Fires / Locations**

A number of suitable locations are determined for the purpose of starting forest fires. There is no need to do anything suspicious such as sending in shuttles. Easily available incendiaries are placed at the various locations to be triggered remotely. Essentially, everything is good to go.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.28.5 Action: As per Special Action/Boomerang/Naplian Dignitary DaV meets with Gink IV wishing to express his thanks to the Detinus Republic for liberating Boomerang from the tyrannical Empire. He shows Gink IV with the 'Finest Shoes in the

Peripheries (32672)' and asks whether Gink can help him gain access to the DTR command [NB this is all a front]. Meanwhile as Dav meets Gink, the rest of the crew organise the detonation of charges to set of forest fires [Special Action/Boomerang/Killer Heels/Forest Fires & Special Action/Boomerang/Killer Heels/Forest Fires/Locations] - though taking care to move to Sector 12,10 in the pimped up shuttle [Special Action / Boomerang / Dangerous Heels / Getting Dav onto Boomerang / Naplian Shuttle] to avoid getting caught up in them themselves. The intention then is for DaV to receive a call where he will be told of the fire, will use that as an opportunity to 'panic' and leave the meeting abruptly - 'forgetting' the shoes - to leave them in safely in the ownership of Gink to act as fall guy and so that the shoes appear to come as a reward for DTR interaction rather than the more suspicions present from nowhere scenario!

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Killer Heels / Gink IV {12,11}/212.27**

During the meeting in which DaV is showing ambassador Gink IV the finest shoes in the Peripheries - which will be used to express thanks to the DTR for saving the planet from the Empire, there is a sudden commotion.

Fires are seen and soon people are panicking, thinking back to the old days. DaV sprints to the shuttle forgetting the shoes in his panic...

Soon the pimped up shuttle is off to an adjacent sector.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.29.2 Action: Attempt to monitor activity at the base in the wake of forest fires. Is there any indication that the Detinus authorities are taking any action about them?

Result: Nothing yet...

GP Nothing to See Here

212.30.1 Action: Attempt to assess whether the DTR authorities have reacted to the forest fires at all...

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Killer Heels / Forest Fires / DTR Reaction**

The Republic have dealt with the fires, used medical supplies on the civilians caught in the blaze and have met with the ambassador following the event. They have not however followed up on the ambassador or investigated the root cause of the fires and as such Gink has not had the opportunity to hand over some rather nice shoes. With all the other events occurring within the Peripheries at the moment, this is hardly surprising and they may yet come back to it.

A free action can be used in 2 weeks to determine if there has been any further development.

Subspace Static 212.30.5

Massive forest fires have finally been brought under control by DTR emergency services on the surface of Boomerang in the Straddle system following a large scale loss of life.

The fires caused panic amongst the civilians on Boomerang who used to suffer massive

casualties during regular forest fires – planet wide emergencies that were finally brought to an end several years ago by the large-scale intervention of DTR planetary engineers.

However, the shocking truth has been uncovered that these fires, that broke out very close to the major DTR Starbase on the planet, may well have been deliberately started:

Special Action/Boomerang/Forest/Fires {12,11}/212.29

The fires are brought under control with help from the civilian sector - though their predisposition to flee does not help the operation at all.

Medical supplies are used to patch up some on the scene and the rest are handed over the hospital facilities.

The team meet a civilian ambassador from the area. Gink IV states that he believes this may have been caused by the saboteurs and thanks the team for their intervention.

Further investigations are ongoing as to who may have started the fires and the identity of these 'saboteurs', with the obvious finger of suspicion being pointed towards Empire forces as a spate of agent activity at the DTR Starbase of Primus Inter Pares on the surface of Boomerang coincided with the outbreak of the forest fires.

The DTR Foreign Ministry has named the now defunct CIA as the most likely culprits.

GP Nothing to See Here

212.33.4 Action: The team attempt to set another batch of forest fires in the hope that

it will encourage the DTR to interact with Gink.

Once charges have been set, Megan Currie should move the shuttle back to sector 12,10 where the charges should be remotely activated for a new round of forest fires.

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Forest / Fires {12,11}/212.29**

Update

Further explosions set large chunks of the forest ablaze. This will definitely be noticed by the base and it is believed that Gink IV has personally reported the event.

Agent Dewbi S Naecha – after the demise of Terry De Winter, a new operative was inserted at the DTR starbase Primus Inter Pares.

212.35.2 Action: Dewbi is requested to report back on any further DTR activity in relation to the latest round of fires and whether they would have approached Gink IV.

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Killer Heels / Forest Fires / DTR Reaction**

Update 212.35

Seems that the DTR have again dealt with the fires and this time they have acknowledged the grovelling of Gink IV. They are expected to send somebody important (at least that is what Gink IV is saying) in a few weeks time in order to receive the very nice present he has specifically had made (presumably the killer heels).

Update 212.37

A ceremony has been held with quite a few dignitaries from the DTR including Lorna Archer. The shoes have been presented though Gink IV almost blundered by attempting to put them on Lorna, mistaking her for Diaz. He was stopped before he reached her. The shoes have been transferred to the DTR and may have been taken off-world. There have been no reports of assassinations at this time.

Subspace Static 212.41.1

*** Ceremonial Greetings ***

News teams from the Detinus Republic have been covering a colourful exchange between the DTR and the civilian population of Boomerang, where lavish gifts have been given cementing the strong bonds between the people and the Republic.

Personally attending the ceremony was Defence Minister Lorna Archer, standing in for the recently retired Michelle Diaz. Ms Archer appeared delighted to accept the gift of the Finest Shoes In The Peripheries (32672), and a small diplomatic incident was avoided when the representative of the planetary population momentarily mistook Ms Archer for Ms Diaz.

Ms Archer was however delighted with the new shoes, and it is believed a representative sample have already been dispatched to wherever it is Michelle Diaz has mysteriously disappeared to.

Dewbi S Naecha

12.43 Action: Dewbi is asked to report on any significant news coming from the Detinus relating to Operation Killer Heels

Result: Nothing I am afraid.

GP Nothing to See Here

213.8.1 Action: Frustrated at the DTR's failure to fulfill the destiny of Operation Killer Heels....DaV wonders whether it would be possible to instigate a mild vandalism campaign 'What happened to the shoes?'....the phrase would be something to scrawl on walls and there would be a leaflet campaign demanding evidence that proof be given that the gift of Boomerang has not been ferreted away by some low profile flunkey and that Diaz did indeed receive them....

Result: **Special Action / Boomerang / Killer Heels / Media Reaction to DTR Snubbing/213.8**

Gink IV is prodded into taking umbrage at the apparent snubbing of the population by the Republic. This goes viral to some degree in the civilian media and results in the closure of a few merchandising complexes. This should get them to notice.

Dewbi S Naecha

213.9.3 Action: Dewbi is tasked with checking whether there has been any news on a Detinus response to the viral campaign for news on the killer heels Special Action/Boomerang/Killer Heels/Media Reaction to DTR Snubbing/213.8.

Result: Special Action/Boomerang/Killer Heels/Media Reaction to DTR Snubbing//DTR Response/213.9

Dewbi is pleased to report that an official address has been screened across the

various newsfeeds of the world reporting that the Republic-Boomerang relationship has never been as close as it is at this time. There are even a few clips of Diaz sporting her new shoes. This appears genuine footage which means that either the toxin has been discovered or even now it is working its way through Diaz's lymphatic system. Its been a while, but it finally looks like the plan has reach endgame. Now time to listen to an official announcement on the fate of Diaz.

Subspace Static 213.20.5

*** Diaz ***

Reports have surfaced that the retired Speaker of the DTR, Michelle Diaz, may be very ill.

Further details are as of yet unknown.

SSS Star Date 213.23.5

*** One Meatbag Dead – Good Start ***

Kang has learnt that the meatbag known as 'Diaz', one time leader of puny earth-thing affiliation the so-called 'Detinus Republic', has perished. Kang hopes she died in agony. Kang understands this may well have been the case, as a leaked report seems to indicate she was poisoned.

Kang has dug deeper, it seems the meatbag Diaz was poisoned by a rare and virulent and virtually undetectable poison originating from Straddle, that was administered by a pair of shoes.

Kang applauds the ingenuity, but Kang is left to wonder what else is going on with this. Kang is pleased however, it brings a tear to Kang's multi-lobed eyes that he lives

in an era when even the humble shoe has been weaponised.

So it was, that Diaz met her untimely death. Unfortunately, by that point, she had already retired her position as Speaker, so her death did not have a major impact on the Detinus Republic (...or if it did, the DTR players have

remained remarkably well close-lipped about it!)....but, I enjoyed it, and like to think that it will have brought a little smile to the GM's face, as he processed the orders, and perhaps even an appreciative smile for the player who ran Diaz that the character met her fate looking good in a killer pair of heels.

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Where We're Heading...

Status is T plus three, and we remain on course and continuing to accelerate forward. Roger, Houston, we remain a go.

At the moment that I type the beginning of this sentence, issue # 3's publication deadline stands exactly three short hours away. We're pushing it really close, on this one, but I'm still hoping that it makes it to electronic print before the witching hour sounds.

This month's front cover features, but what else, Bigfoot! The PBM industry needs new players. It yearns for them. In order to achieve sizable success in achieving this, perhaps the industry and the hobby that surrounds it would be well-served to learn from Bigfoot's example.

Is Bigfoot real? Maybe. Maybe not. Yet, those two young ladies adorning this month's front cover sure seem to have become believers - the hard way!

Bigfoot has their attention, and he's not letting go.

If you're a PBM company or a game moderator, or one of the ancestral descendants thereof, what are you doing to grab people's attention? Are you dragging them wide-eyed back into the hobby? Or are they still getting away from you?

Suspense & Decision may not be leaving big footprints, but we are trying to take some big, bold steps to try and win the PBM industry back some gaming enthusiasts.

And, like Bigfoot, we're a little crude looking. Honestly, though, we're not trying to scare anybody away. The gaming wilderness is big enough for all of us. If you're a first-time reader wondering just what we're all about, then I invite you to join us on our hunt for the turn-based beast that dwells down deep inside of so many gamers that simply aren't satisfied with all of the glitz

and the glamour of many of the games that are hitting the market, these days.

I would ask you, each and every last one of you reading this electronic rag, how big is YOUR gaming footprint? Are you too civilized to handle a trek back to multi-player gaming from a bygone era?

Some of the ancestral descendants of these ancient PBM beasts may be attractive to the eye, but how well are they positioned to face - and withstand - competition from 21st Century competitors?

Kickstarter is a big rage, these days, in the online world. Not everyone is enjoying instantaneous success using Kickstarter (or other similar funding sites), though.

The clock is gobbling all my time, and the looming deadline hangs over my head like the proverbial Sword of Damocles. Yet, here I sit in the waning

hours of this deadline day, with the dark of night knocking loudly upon my door.

Honest to God, I'm trying to hurry. I'm trying to get this issue done and out the door. If I don't, then the Mad Scientist of PBM may well send a few of his henchmen to drag me away.

Hopefully, you - our readers - will enjoy this issue. If not, then be sure to voice your dissatisfaction and your outrage. We might even print it - particularly if it is colorful and makes for interesting food for thought.

As I continue to hunt for the turn-based beasts that are out there, not to mention the one that dwells within my own gamer self, I am trying to scatter lots of food for thought. Maybe if we scatter enough of it, these beasts will start coming down from the hills and from out of the woodwork of forests to and fro.

This issue, we returned to a two-column format - save for this column, here. Personally, I prefer the three-column format, but I am trying to be responsive to the feedback that I am

receiving on the magazine. This article section, however, will continue to remain a three-column lair, the endless howls from the chorus of disapproval, notwithstanding.

What happened to the article that I authored for this issue, the one that pertained to my space-faring cabal of critics, I will try to include in a future issue, if I can track it down.

Maybe if I hit that clock with a hammer, I will have more time to get this issue out.

I did come up with a number of what I thought were very good ideas, worthy of incorporating into this magazine. But, alas, not enough sand remains in the hourglass, and the witch standing guard over it doesn't appear to be in too patient a mood. Where in the Hell did she come from, anyway? Anybody out there missing a witch?

If I had to venture a guess, I would say that the most likely origin of this witch with the dated time piece is the recesses of my own imagination. Yet, she looks so damned real!

The human imagination can be our greatest ally, or our worse enemy. It can stoke

our fears, or it can bestow a wealth of fun upon us.

Imagination is the natural province of PBM gaming. Play by mail games played during PBM's golden era mined deep into the imagination, and this is a facet of the industry that is worth stressing, endlessly, I think.

Battles amongst the stars. Feuds between warring fantasy races. Mafioso running rampant through the streets of our minds. And these are just a few examples of the fun times that countless legions of us experienced - and enjoyed.

In separate news, our resident Mad Scientist of PBM continues to get his wires crossed. His experiments suffer, as a result. He needs the lightning of your feedback to power his insidious experiments into the finer points of PBM games of both the future and the past.

I hear his henchmen coming now, to haul me away. So, until next issue, I leave you with these closing words:

I'm heading deeper into the lair of the beast. Join me, there - if you dare!

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Dante's Inferno

The Trials and Tribulations of Publishing a PBM Magazine

Oh, my God!! Is it that time, again?

I suffer less from what you might call "writer's block," as I suffer from what I shall call "I'm running the Hell out of time!"

So, what better time to take some time to cut things even closer than they have to be? There's no time like the present, they say.

It will come as a comfort to all of our readers, I'm sure, to learn that I have concluded that I really have no idea, at all, what I am doing, where this whole magazine thing is concerned.

But, alas and alack, ignorance is no excuse, and especially within the blazing inferno of meeting deadlines. Are they really that important?

Positively, they most undeniably are. After all, one of the things that I am trying to change perceptions about, where the PBM industry is concerned, is the seeming inability of PBM magazines to meet their own self-inflicted publication deadlines. So, how are we doing, anyway?

As if an ever-ticking clock ogre isn't enough to contend with in the waning hours of this issue's efforts, the four-page increment rule banters ceaselessly at me, like a harpy straight from the depths of Hell.

Ah, the joys of being managing editor are many. There's no end to them, it seems. How did David Webber manage to do it for all those years, anyway? How many issues did Flagship put out, again? That many, huh?

Of course, it doesn't help any that I am apparently a glutton for punishment, particularly if it is of the self-inflicted variety.

More pages! More pages, I say, as I thrash about with reckless abandon, trying to fit this disjointed beast of an issue together into a singular whole. Where the Hell is my assistant editor, anyway?

Beach?? What beach?!

Damn his hide!

Surely, somewhere out there, there's somebody better suited to this God-awful task than I. If there is, then they sure are doing a good job of keeping quiet. Do me a favor, won't ya? Beat the bushes with a big stick. See if you can get them to make some noise, and to come out of hiding.

In the meantime, you lovely readers of ours, I will have to do, it seems.

Fortunately, I do have a corner office - but, a corner office in the never-ending Cubicle-of-One that all but ensures that this trek through publication Hell will be a long, lonely, and thankless journey.

Word has arrived here, just the same, that more than just a few of you are holding back - holding back on articles and reviews. It is further my understanding that these very same articles and reviews have been trying to crawl out from inside you for quite some time, now.

So, what say we help one another out? You send those articles and reviews to me, and I'll put your names up in lights.

Imagine that - your name carved into digital granite, in a magazine that only a select few are privileged enough to be burdened with the ignominious honor of having stumbled across. Trust me - it's one Hell of an honor!

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