

PBM

Issue 21

Unearthed

The Mysterious Realm of Play-By-Mail Gaming

21st Death-Defying Issue!



December 18th, 2022

How many must die for PBM to live?

PlayByMail.Net

PBM

Unearthed ISSUE #21

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An extract from recent Rome is Burning in-game newspaper issues

Why PBM? An Answer From A Gamer's Perspective

From PBM Companies & GMs

Survey on Hyborian War

Editorial



Send Submissions To:
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Agema

agema.org.uk

ROME IS BURNING

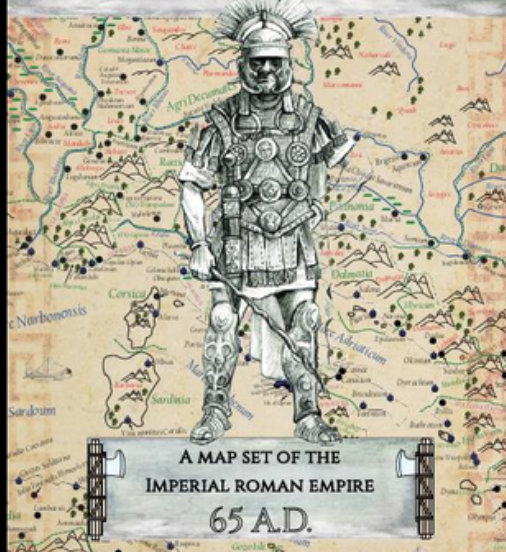
A TURN-BASED GAME SET IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE OF THE 1st CENTURY AD

ROME IS BURNING!

THE RULES



THE ROMAN EMPIRE MAPS



THE ROMAN EMPIRE LOCATIONS GUIDE



An extract from recent *Rome is Burning* in-game newspaper issues

*** Courtesy of Agema ***

Part 1: Roma

Emperor Nero opened his eyes. His eyelids flickered as he weakly murmured, "Mother?" It was several days before he could sit up, but when he did his recovery was rapid. His wife the Empress spoke to him about recent events, and he consented to the standard of Legion XXIII bearing the legend pia fidelis (pious and faithful) on it, in recognition of their defence of Roma. He also said, "I want to see Tuscus, bring Tuscus to me. He says he is my friend, if he is, he will come to mop my brow."

The Empress went away to give the necessary instructions.

A few minutes later, in her absence, a servant approached with a platter on which were select fruits, cheeses, and a knife to cut them with. Nero blinked, his eyes bleary, "Tuscus, is that you my friend, come so soon?"

No it wasn't. The servant grabbed the knife and plunged it into Nero's heart while screaming, "DIE, EVIL ONE!"



Nero started to choke, trying to draw breath but failing while clawing at the knife handle.

Speculatores guards rushed in and hacked down the assassin with their spatha long swords. He died quickly, and messily. As did Nero.

Later the servant's remains were identified as those of Caius Quinctilius Isatis, who been employed under a false name, and

was wanted by the urban cohorts. He was the son of a Praetorian, and had been responsible for the murder of Senator Creticus last month in broad daylight.

Cassius Scribonius Marsyas, the Imperial advisor, walked in on the scene. He was soon shaking, and in his distress had no idea what to do. Legate Titus Flavius Sabinus the Younger was next on the scene, and ordered two women of the lazyges to clean up the mess. These women already had the appearance of hollow-eyed ghosts, gaunt and lacking sleep, but they did as they were told.

Two scrolls were found beside Nero's body, in his own hand. One confirms Senator Publius Aelius Hadrianus Marullinus as Procurator of Lusitania. The other orders a vote in the Senate to decide whether to grant *ius latinum* Latin Rights to Baetica, Hispania, Lusitania, Tarraconensis, and Aquitania. However, since Nero is now deceased, it is arguable whether either can now be enacted since he no longer holds Imperial office?

Poppaea Augusta Sabina, who presumably is now ex-empress, has been informed. She also received a message from the Legate of Dalmatia, Aulus Ducenius Geminus which she read out through her tears: 'Ave and hail Caesar! I am distraught to hear that the Emperor was hit by lightning. Please let me know what his prognosis is. Anticipating that this news will cause general unrest within the city I shall keep my legions outside whilst I will go to the Senate and

speak to them. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance? Geminus.'

She sent word to him, asking that he please attend upon her next month at the Imperial Palace.



Hearing the news, Senator Pomponius rushed back to his villa in Roma, and at noon three days later declared himself to be Emperor Pomponius, and that his faction in the Senate was hereby to be known as 'the Emperor's Loyal Party', rather than the Egyptian Party. He has called on all prefects, governors, generals and other holders of posts to recognise his ascension, in return for which he will guarantee they hold their present offices for at least the next seven years.

Learning this, Senator Statilius and his followers pledged their support, and joined the Emperor's Loyal Party.

Observing what was happening, and sensing the growing tension in the air and crackling excitement as people decide which way to jump, knowing if they jump wrong it will be like falling off a precipice, Senator Appius Vatinius Aelius advised, "If I were Pomponius I'd guarantee the *ius latinum* Latin Rights to Baetica, Hispania, Lusitania, Tarraconensis, and Aquitania, if only in order to get these provincial powers to back him."

In the Senate, Senator Cornelius stood up and gave his considered opinion. "Since Nero is dead the Julio-Claudian family which dominated the Roman Republic and then the Empire for a hundred years has no male members, but it still has thousands if not tens of thousands of slaves, freedmen and clients who want to protect the honour, legacy, reputation and women of this family. The chief client in glory and prestige, and acting head of the house would seem to me to be Marcus Ulpus Trajan the Elder!"

Senator Brutus and Senator Plinius started jeering him from the Emperor's Loyal Party's benches. Many senators started to join in.

Once the cacophony had subsided, Senator Cornelius continued his point, waving his hand about and wagging a finger to emphasise his words. "Alright, alright, let us remain civilised! We are now in a period of formal mourning, so may I remind you all people cannot just conduct legal business such as a contract of marriage. We must do all we can to protect Empress Poppaea Augusta Sabina from evil and ambitious military commanders like Cordus! He may, if given opportunity, wish to seize her and force her into marriage so as to control the wealth and resources of the family."

These points were less contentious, and the Senate calmed down.

"I also hear it said that Marcus Otho would love to reclaim his wife," he went on, "but being a man of honour he will respect the Empress and the other Julio-Claudian clients and do things correctly. Who else, I wonder, will seek to marry the greatest and richest beauty in all Rome?"

Slowly getting up, the uncle of Marcus Aponius Saturninus, by name Senator Gaius Dillus Aponianus, took the floor. Looking with boldness at the others he juttied out his chin and read from a letter. "The Legate of Moesia, Marcus Aponius Saturninus writes to the Senate. I read. Despatched in the month of Ianuarius 820 auc, using the Cursus Publicus and military roads. Greeting noble senators. I am heartsick at the news of the Emperor's situation. It is a terrible omen and we must work together to ensure the security and welfare of the Empire. Firstly, I assure you of the loyalty and obedience of the Moesian military. We will respect and follow the Senate's decisions in the difficult months ahead. I do not know the Emperor's condition but must assume he is not currently capable of managing the Empire's affairs. As governor of Moesia, may I suggest the Senate considers a temporary triumvirate of co-



consuls? I would commend Trajan, Geminus and Tuscus as suitable candidates. This way, responsibility is shared amongst three wise and experienced nobles until the question of the Emperor is resolved.”

Senator Brutus called out, “But it is resolved!”

Senator Gaius glared at him. “I will finish reading. Cordus and the Guard remain a powerful threat, since they could opportunistically try to seize power whilst the Emperor is incapacitated. Does Cordus still have the support of the Guard after last month’s retreat? The Guard may be more divided, desperate and dispirited than ever. Perhaps they could be convinced to hand over Cordus in exchange for clemency, but if they’re still retreating and the Senate still considers them rebels, then if Geminus and Corbulo can keep them on the move they will have no chance to rest and recover. If Cordus is trying to escape Italia altogether he’ll need a port: Ancona, or (more probably) Brundisium or Tarentum. Accordingly this month the Moesian Relief Force and I will cross the Rubicon and head for Ancona, cutting off this option. I have requested supply trains from the intervening provinces of Aemillia and Unbria et Ager Gallicus to help speed our journey.”

“From Ancona I can support Roma even if Cordus returns. I leave it to the Senate, Corbulo and Geminus to move their legions into positions to deny Cordus other

options, including a return to threaten Rome again.”

“We also need to ask for the Gods’ favour and I will sacrifice a pure white lamb on the Ides, asking Jupiter Sky-Father for his forgiveness and the Emperor’s swift and full recovery. These are challenging times – I am grateful to be working with the Senate for the security of the Empire.”

“Signed by the hand of Marcus Aponius Saturnius.”

Senator Gaius sat down heavily.

Cavalry scouts from Legion XXIII left their camp north of Roma and went out into the countryside, searching to the north for Emperor Cordus’s Praetorian Guard. They hunted along the banks of the River Tiber, along the Via Flaminia and up to Augusta Perusia and the shores of the Lake of Thrasymene. They did not find the Praetorians.

To east of Roma, beyond the Porta Tiburtina gate, the Legate of Dalmatia, Aulus Ducenius Geminus faced a quandary: whether to chase the Praetorians or let nature take its course. He wanted to rest his men and discover what is happening with the Emperor. He decided to do exactly that, and passed through the gate with 200 legionaries, intending to visit the Senate and acquire a large Roman city property. The troops are those of Century I speculares of Cohort II, Legion XIII Gemina, who entered first to secure the routes Geminus took, and Century II of the same



cohort, which served as bodyguards, and cleared the way as he progressed. Geminus walked into the city heavily robed, and accompanied by the Quaestor of Viminacium, Drusus Aurius Larcius, the liaison officer between himself and the Legate of Moesia, Marcus Aponius Saturninus.

In Roma, Tribune Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo had the IX and X cohorts of Legion XXIII spread thin protecting the Arx (which contains the Imperial Treasury), the Temple of Saturn (housing the Imperial Treasury), the Imperial Palace (where resides the ex-empress), and the town walls around the Esquiline and Caelian hills).

The Praefectus urbi, Senator Titus Flavius Sabinus has taken his urban cohorts off the walls, and now has them all patrolling the streets to maintain law and order. He is concerned there may be public disturbances, given what has befallen Nero.

These urban cohorts arrested a builder's merchant, Publius Avitus Pictor, and not for the first time in his life the man was whipped for being an infamous brawler and troublemaker, and along with a dozen other men was banished to the province of Bospori. Their crimes were assaulting citizens, being involved in a drunken riot,

and being generally undesirable.

Sabinus also re-employed the 1,125 street cleaners, pointing out that if rubbish is allowed to build up in Roma's streets this is a fire hazard, and he really cannot face another great fire.

Touched by his publically-minded service, Galreia Fundana, the wife of Aulus Vitellius went to see Sabinus and asked if he would be interested in marrying their daughter Vitellia? Sabinus was distracted and quickly replied, "I have a lot to deal with at the moment, could we discuss this another time?"

As Galreia Fundana was shown the door, he called after her, "You should know I'm already married, to Arracina Clementia!"

Galreia turned her head over her shoulder and it was her turn to look surprised. She pouted, "Oh! Sorry, I had no idea, you poor man."

Senator Marcus Calpurnius Gracilis, with the backing of Senator Gaius Dillus Aponianus, ensured the Legate of Dalmatia, Aulus Ducenius Geminus was present in the Senate.

Geminus was permitted to give an address.

Senators, Romans, countrymen, you have heard the rumours of the Emperor's demise? Well I will not believe them unless I see proof and I trust that you agree? Nero is still our Emperor. It is our duty to continue to manage the Empire whilst Nero is unavailable. I am sure that as senators you see this as an opportunity to give leadership and direction in his absence."

Senator Brutus cried out, "Long live the Emperor... long live Pomponius the Great!"

Geminus pressed on, "I am here as a private citizen and the leader of the House of the Aelii. I shall stay here in Roma to hear the earliest news of Caesar. Furthermore I will ensure this news is sent to all the provinces including my particular correspondents; the commanders of Germania, Moesia, Sicilia, Aegyptus, Hispania and Macedonia."

"As Legate of Dalmatia I intend to return once this crisis has passed and my troops are rested. Meanwhile my legions outside the city are to rest and act as a bulwark against the usurper whilst providing support for Legion XXIII. Meanwhile, during my stay here I shall happily meet with senators and ambassadors to discuss the immediate needs of Rome, how we can crush the Asian rebellion and defeat the Persians whose gold is causing disquiet in the East. I look forward to meeting the arriving units from the Rhenu, Germania, and the Danuvius, Moesia, and discussing how we can bring the Praetorian rebellion to an end."

"I recommend that the Senate place a bounty of 100,000 denarii on the head of the pretender - Cordus - in the hope that the ex-Praetorians return to Roma and hand over the traitor for judgment, or 50,000 denarii for his dead body, subject to proof."

"I also ask that the Senate passes a vote of thanks to Tribune Corbulo and Legion XXIII for preventing the Praetorian Guard from attacking Roma herself! In conclusion and on behalf of the House of Aelii I send our thoughts and support to the Emperor, Empress Poppaea and her children."



These ideas no doubt had merit, but were brushed aside as the Praefectus urbi Sabinus, in his capacity as a senator, then formally and in an orderly way announced for certain the death of Emperor Nero before the Senate.

Tribune Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo of Legion XXIII took some of his soldiers off their duties for a day, and arranged for the cremation of 'our commander-in-chief.' Nero's body was given an honour guard, while mourners carried his bier and placed it on a wheeled cart draped in purple silk, although Nero's face remained uncovered. They processed through the streets of Roma to the traditional site for cremations, where before a large crowd including senators the remains were burned. The ashes were carefully gathered up and put in an urn, so they can be interned with Nero's Imperial ancestors.

Some of Corbulo's troops believe Nero performed the rite of Devoto, offering himself as a sacrifice to the Gods, along with his foe, to save Roma from being sacked and dishonoured by Cordus and his Praetorians.

Afterwards Senator Gaius Quintus, escorted by some urban cohort men, went to the Temple of Vesta and took Nero's sealed will, which he has arranged to be sent to the Proconsul of Baetica, Legate of Lusitania, Marcus Ulpus Trajan the Elder.

Gaius Quintus then went to the Senate, where he outlined the legal position now. "Since Nero has left to join the other Gods,

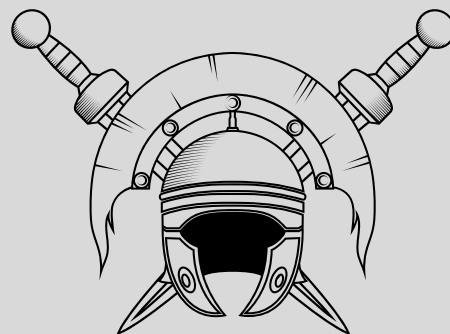
some of the most senior positions in the Empire are now vacant. If a Consul or Dictator dies in office, and Nero was both, law and tradition says the Senate must appoint a provisional chief magistrate called an Interrex to hold fresh elections and tidy up the paperwork."

Senator Claudius stood up to counter what had been said. Gaius Quintus groaned, rubbed his forehead and was heard to complain, "Here we go..."

Claudius stood up straight, rested a hand on his toga in the manner of an orator, and began. "I am sure the genius that is Senator Gaius Quintus is well aware such procedures died out with the republic, may I remind him that this is the empire... and there is no interregnum. We have our emperor..." He swung his free left arm out theatrically, "Pomponius the Great!"

The supporters of Pomponius loved this, and for the first time in what seemed like many years Claudius was applauded and cheered loudly, and for a long time. Senator Brutus couldn't stop smiling.

Gaius Quintus, as the senators later left the chamber, was heard to remark, "Call me a cynic, but I don't think this is going to end at all well."



With one last day to sit and debate before the month drew to a close, Gaius Quintus again stood to try and bring some sense, as he sees it, to proceedings. "Some of my fellow senators think they can, or have, appointed a new emperor as dictator for life. At the risk of stating the blindingly obvious, a dictator can only be appointed with agreement of both consuls, so if anyone wants to be dictator, it is necessary to appoint two consuls in the first place. I hope none of you believe as Cordus does, that the Chief Magistrate of Rome can be appointed elsewhere than in Roma, and without the authority of the Senate and people of Roma? That, fellow senators, sounds like a route to anarchy and civil war to me!"

Senator Brutus harangued him, "No one cares, we have our emperor!"

However, Pomponius - some would now say Emperor Pomponius, shushed him and got up to reply.

"I would like thank the noble Gaius Quintus for his concern for the Empire, even though he seems to think at times we are still a republic. He must be very old."
His supporters laughed.

"Now I say he is right and wrong, at the same time. It is the Senate, not any consuls, who can grant the title of Emperor, so yes I agree, it must be decided here, in Roma, not in any outlying provinces. We cannot have that tail wagging the dog, can we! So, I say this, I am emperor by popular acclamation of this Senate and of the people. I know this is a troubling, difficult time, and will forgive all that has gone before, but if anyone in this assembly doubts my status from this point on, may they be accursed and named traitor to the people of Rome, and traitor to the Empire! The Republic is dead, long live the Empire!"

With the help of Senator Marcus Calpurnius Gracilis, the Legate of Dalmatia, Aulus Ducenius Geminus has purchased a large villa in the city of Roma.



Feudal Lords

Rick Loomis PBM



Feudal Lords simulates the struggle for kingship in a mythical period of English history. In the year 801 A.D. following the death of King Arthur, Britain is left without a legitimate successor to the throne. Can YOU unite Britain and become the new King of Britain?

- Up to 17 players in each game.
- 46 fiefdoms controlled by player or non-player computer opponents.
- Each player represents the head of a noble family and controls one fiefdom.

<http://www.rickloomispbm.com/feudal.html>



North Island 76

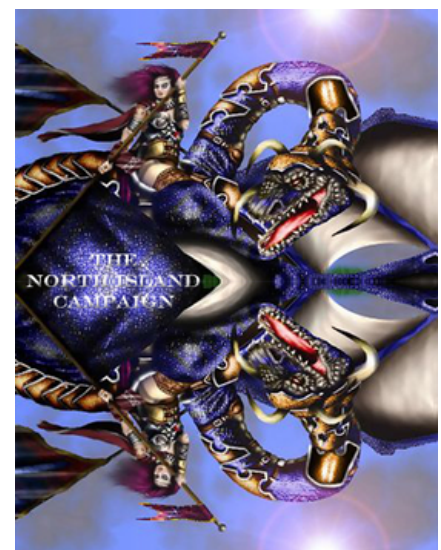


Join Game

Harlequin



Games



Why PBM? An Answer From A Gamer's Perspective



Stahir



I'm going to take a shot at explaining why I love playing games by mail (and email) with the caveat up front that I have made this attempt many times in the past with the aim of convincing non PBmers to try a PBM or a PBEM game - *and I have always failed*. So, this attempt is not so much one to convince people to try the genre as it is an effort at understanding what it is about it that I like so much.

Anticipation is a big part of it. I enjoy the wait. I like thinking about the turn in the time that passes between my turning it in and then receiving the response. I like to ruminate (maybe daydream is more accurate) about the possibilities of the turn result. Often, I find that I didn't anticipate one or more such possibilities (usually negative ones), and then anxiety arises as to whether those negative possibilities might manifest to my detriment. Oddly, I enjoy that anxiety. (Not going to explore that one here except to say that compared to anxieties about real life issues, these are more thrilling than troubling, like when you make a bad move in chess and you wonder if the opponent is going to catch it before he moves!)

Instant gratification is the most common response I receive from the (mostly young)

people who decline my invitation to play PBMs. Video games, regardless of platform, offer instant gratification and that means more turns. The play goes at a much faster rate. Whatever story is being created by the player while playing a video game gets written' or 'told' much more quickly. That means more stories can be written/told/played. It also means that skills can be honed more quickly because reps accumulate at a much faster rate.



I've played those games though, some few of them admittedly, and I don't value that instant gratification the way those folks do.

No judging here, well maybe a little bit in an old curmudgeonly sort of way. The stories of the video games ring hollow for me. They are frequently cliché ridden, formulaic and single-minded. This is what I mean by single-minded: those games seem to have either a single writer or a unified editorial board. They appear to have preconceived notions about story structure and what it takes to make for a good story. I've never seen one that was anything more than momentarily interesting, frankly. The end is almost always readily apparent, at least for the games I've played. This sounds unfair (to some, maybe). Let me explain.

more AI's! Well, Natural Intelligences might be more appropriate. The point is that the possibilities increase dramatically (exponentially?) based upon what those other 35 players might do either on their own or in conjunction with any number of additional players. The factors susceptible to analysis in this scenario seem, at least, to be so much more random and unpredictable than any video game I ever saw.

I also recently started playing online D&D, not quite PBM and not quite PBEM, but turn-based and another game that does not offer instant gratification and which is susceptible

HYBORIANTM WAR

I play Hyborian War. The game is processed by a computer using a code written in the 1980s. Randomizing functions proliferate through that code, making the AI moves often unpredictable and occasionally surprising. I never met a player who could manipulate that program and I've been playing the game for 30 years. By contrast, I know of no video games that can't be manipulated. Those games are mastered in short order by experts the world over and quite quickly after they are released.

There's another factor at work here though. Hyborian War generally starts with 36 players, each playing the position of a different kingdom. To me, that means 36

to the affects of multiple intelligences. I love it so far.

Being a curmudgeon, I'd love to pontificate about the general societal ails of instant gratification, but don't worry, I'll save that for people I meet in person. I'm sure they love it.

Here's another reason why I love the PBM games. I like to look at things, not quickly, but for a while. I like to pore over them. Maps are good for this and Hyborian War, like many PBMs, has a map every turn. Plus there is the general game map (a nice big one with pleasing colors) and there are information-based maps that players have made over the

years. Video games are ever changing images with information delivered and processed at a fast rate. Faster than movies -- and movies are already fast by my reckoning. But, I like books. They're nice and slow. As a kid, I loved comic books, reading the same one many times. I guess I read the same books over and over as well, though with years interspersed between readings.

This 'poring over things' isn't offered merely as anecdotal reference. There's something to it, like enjoying a sunset, or a walk through a forest or contemplating artwork or architecture. Time brings much to the experience. I want to say it deepens the experience, but that might just be how I feel about it. Like fast food versus a slow roast. Or, instant pasta sauce versus the kind that you let come together over the course of a morning. Or that packaged ramen soup instead of a fine, rich stew your mom makes all day long torturing you with the aroma until it's finally time to eat. Yes, that was all for Charles' benefit, but maybe you get the point. Time is an ingredient. It does something to the experience. For me, it enriches.

Company Commander by **Jason Oates' Games**



The interactive element is another thing I prefer in PBM games. I like to hold things in my hands and I like to highlight text and underline it and put my notes on it. I really enjoy getting the blue maps. I put dots on it for where my armies are located. Then I draw lines to spaces off the map where I can note things about those armies. Then I do the same thing for opponents, only I use red ink for the opponents. I make notes on the map as to who is allied. Who has obtained peace treaties against me and who I have obtained peace treaties against. I make a priority list of opponents who must be dealt with. I make a risk assessment. All of that fills the map with my contribution to it. That's a creative process as much as an aesthetic one. Like many, I respond to information differently when I can see it depicted in a schematic format instead of simply by way of prose.

Contrast all that to the video game experience. I think it is a rare day that a video game player sets forth such detailed pictorial representations, though I'm sure many of them at least take a few notes now and then. I can't begin to guess what that means cognitively and I don't mean to judge, but for many, there is a real pleasure in making diagrams, writing notes, drawing lines that connect one piece of data to another - like what happens on some detective shows (i.e. Sherlock Holmes shows especially).



Maybe I am just the product of another generation/age, but maybe there's something more to it as well, something along the lines of theories about how we learn. There's pleasure in learning and how it's done can certainly be tailored to the individual, not only to enhance the success of the learning but to increase the pleasure of it. To be fair, there's another aspect of video gaming that many players utilize and that's the lore of whatever game they are into. They read up on the background of the story. Skyrim is particularly deep in lore. Some people even write their own lore for the game. Don't underestimate the depth of that lore too. At least for Skyrim, it comprises many hundreds of pages, if not thousands. That lore also provides the basis for lots of online (and in-person) conversations, theorizing, even feedback to the game manufacturers. PBM, of course, has that naturally built in.

Here's a minor thing. I get to keep my PBM turns. I can save them to consult later. I can collect them, yes, like comic books. I can organize them in file folders and (embarrassingly) file cabinets. Why is that a benefit? Maybe it's not. Maybe it's a detriment. But I like it. I don't do well with systems that appear momentarily and then disappear.

Here's one last thing and it's about the way I feel when I play a PBM or PBEM as opposed to a video game. With PBM/PBEM, I feel like I am growing, learning, creating. With video, I feel like I am purging, like I am occupying my mind for a while because it is too tired to work or think. I put my mentation on automatic with video games. That sort of play is more reflexive for me than it is contemplative. What does all that mean? For one thing, I think it means another article is needed.

KNIGHTS GUILD



Which kingdom will you rule?



STARWEB[®]

a play-by-mail game of star-spanning empires



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RULES
for playing the
multi-player strategic space game by
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From PBM Companies & GMs



EAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS BI

»» Middle-earth PBM ««

From Middle-earth Newsletter (12/16/2022)

Featured Games: 2950 Module

At the end of the Second Age, Sauron was thrown down from power. At the beginning of the Third Age, his ring, the One Ring, vanished from all knowledge of man and dwarf, elf and Maia. But Sauron was only defeated, not destroyed. And the One Ring was only lost, and what was lost, can once again be found.

We have two 2950 games on offer. Both are three-nation games, meaning that you play three nations, one of which is free as long as all three are in play. And both have pre-aligned neutrals to ensure a balanced game.

Game 257 is a normal team game, and **Game 258** is a Gunboat game, with limited

diplomacy allowed between players.

Another New JOverseer: Available to Download

Have you downloaded it yet?
If not, what are you waiting for?!

We are pleased to announce the release of a new version of JOverseer, our gaming software.

However, once again this cannot be updated from within JOverseer. Instead, please visit our website and download and install the new version there (v 1.18.3):

<https://www.middleearthgames.com/gamingsoftware/>

We hope that future updates will be available through JOverseer, but in order to receive those, you will first have to download this version. So please do take a minute to install it.

All Games Starting Soon

The following games are currently accepting setups, and due to start soon. Click on any of the links below full details or to sign up.

Champions of Middle-earth

Try a game of our latest 2 player module, now with rebalanced NPCs.





Game 257: 2950

3 nations per player.
One nation free as long as you have three nations in play!
8/8 positions available

Game 258: 2950 Gunboat

3 nations per player.
One nation free as long as you have three nations in play!
8/8 positions available

Game 953: 1650

Pre-aligned neutrals to ensure a balanced game.
Up to 2 nations per player.
One champion character per nation.
Northmen and Quiet Avenger have a 40 em.
17/24 nations available

Game 954: 1650 Gunboat

3 nations per player.
One champion character per nation.
Northmen and Quiet Avenger have a 40 em.
6 rewards per nation.
Possibility of shared results - TBD.
8/8 positions available

Game 616: Kin-strife 3 nation Gunboat

3 nations per player.
New combos: Loyalists: 1/3/6 and 2/4/21, vs. Usurpers 11/14/15 and 12/13/22.
Boosted setups - 20% extra points for nation 1, 10% extra points for nation 2.
One nation free as long as you have three nations in play!
2/4 positions available

Game 619: Kin-strife

Up to 2 nations per player.
Pre-aligned or unaligned starting neutrals will be decided nearer game start.
14/14 nations available

Game 416: Fourth-age

Up to 2 nations per player.
21/25 nations available

Game 418: Fourth-age 3 nation Gunboat

3 nations per player.
New Mountains of Mordor region groupings.
One nation free as long as you have three nations in play!
7/8 positions available

Dropout Positions
None at present.

Grudge Games
Ulrik Bisgard, 1650 module, no other preferences.
Bryn Lloyd, 1650 module
Brad Brunet, 1650 module

Please get in touch if you and your friends fancy taking either of them on.

Or if you really want a challenge, why not play an entire side on your own – *discounts available!*

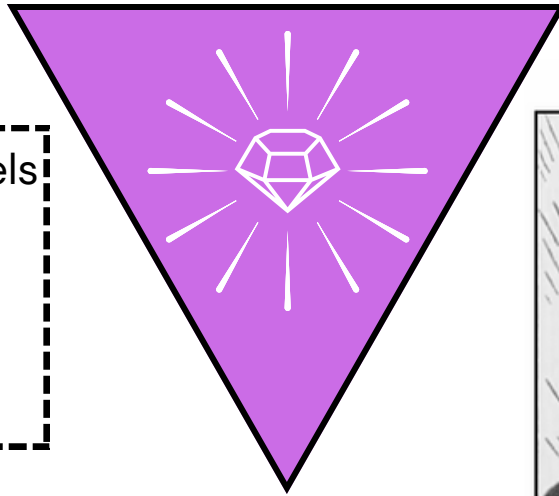
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- **You can subscribe to receive the Middle-earth Newsletter via e-mail by clicking [here](#).**

Quest of the Great Jewels

The Third War of the Great Jewels is over, having ended with the intervention of the Powers-That-Be, but not before most of Zorphlia was laid waste and the greater part of its inhabitants destroyed. The Powers-That-Be have sealed the Great Jewels (talismans of immense power) and many of the lesser talismans in the Forbidden Cities, and set enchanted armies to guard them. Only scattered remnants of the four peoples remain. Can you marshal your forces and come forth to be the sole ruler of Zorphlia?

The object of the game is to accumulate the most victory points or to acquire all three of the Great Jewels in a limited number of rounds of play. Each type of player is awarded victory points for achieving different objectives.

Quest of the Great Jewels is a multi-player, computer moderated, play-by-email fantasy wargame.



Azoni – builders of great citadels.

Quntag – emperors of vast provinces.

Rilris – hoarders of the treasures and talismans.

Slenth – destroyers and ravagers of the land.

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in Ilanthor

Old Man found wandering disappears from Cell

Mystery surrounds the whereabouts of a confused and violent old man found wandering the Merchants Quarter a few days past. Originally thought to be another victim of the malicious arson attack upon Torfan's Manse, the fellow was originally treated as an innocent victim of the attack until he was arrested by men of the Watch for violent assault against at least three of their number. The old assailant had been taken to the Keep for questioning and sentence for his disorders, but upon checking his cell was found to be empty despite there being a sturdy iron door and thick walls between himself and freedom.

ISLANDER RUMOURS



Silver is being offered for his delivery alive and in good health to the Keep Gatehouse and enquiries are ongoing with a number of folk the fellow is believed to have named during his ravings. Arrests relating to these strange events have been made at the Northgate Inn as it is believed that the raving old man revealed a number of closely held secrets that only those close to Ilanthor's regime could possibly know. A member of the watch, made indiscreet by too much Ale, revealed that the disappeared prisoner claimed to be the once famous and long-dead warrior known in many tales as *Vae Victis*.



REGIME CHANGE

A turn-based Space Opera roleplaying game, played by e-mail

Editorial



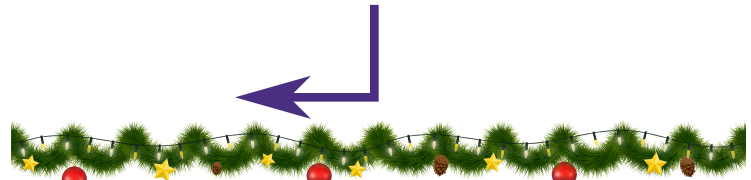
shot. It's possible that they, like Raven Zachary, have begun to pull back a bit on their PBM activities. Could it be that they might just be suffering from PBM burnout? *Say it ain't so, Sal!*

Well, regardless of why, we'll manage. This is another issue in the bag. We're still making progress. Perhaps you are of another mind on the matter, though? By all means, write in and share your own thoughts and observations, whether about PBM gaming, this play by mail newsletter, the status quo of the PBM industry and hobby, or even what you're hoping to get for Christmas, if you like. It's all good.

Just as a reminder, I don't plan to publish an issue on Christmas weekend. That's next weekend, people. Christmas is now just a mere seven days away. Before we know it, it will be upon us and then gone. Hang in there. You'll make it. I sure hope that you make it. With any luck, maybe I'll make it, also.

It's 10:00PM on a Sunday night, as I take up the gauntlet of writing this editorial. I am munching on some Buttery Rounds baked crackers and drinking some cold water while listening to Christmas music on the old YouTube jukebox. Just kind of relaxing and enjoying the peacefulness of the moment that stems partially from the comforting knowledge of knowing that my work on this issue, Issue #21, is almost at an end.

This issue is kind of a quiet issue. The PBM quotes that I am so fond of incorporating into issues of PBM Unearthed are conspicuously absent from this issue. The jibber-jabbering that takes place in the PlayByMail.Net Discord hasn't been buzzing with quite as much activity, of late. Maybe people are tired. Perhaps the holiday season has begun to overwhelm them. Perhaps their nerves are



Since there won't be a Christmas Day issue, it looks like the next issue of PBM Unearthed that gets published will be the New Year's Day issue. Hopefully, that holiday won't throw a monkey wrench into things. *Keep your fingers crossed!*

Hopefully, I haven't forgotten to include something in this issue that I was planning on including. Sometimes, I just plain forget.

I continue to ponder whether to shift publication for next year to biweekly. What that would translate into, however, would be a loss of twenty-six issues over the course of the entire year. To give you a visual idea of just how much that is, twenty-six issues is more than every issue that I've published

since PBM Unearthed began – *plus another five issues after this one!*

To me, that's a lot. An awful lot. Allocating twice as much time to create and publish each issue would probably make it easier on me. How could it not? However, I don't delude myself into thinking that each new issue would then be twice as good as the issues-to-date, simply because there's twice as much time to get each one done. More time won't guarantee that the quality of the end product improves any, much less considerably. As the one publishing it, I consider things like that.

If PBM Unearthed had been publishing at a biweekly pace ever since it first began, we'd be back around Issue #11, now, instead of Issue #21.

Granted, you may not care either way, of course. Heck, some would be perfectly fine with it publishing monthly (twelve issues per year), or even bi-monthly (six issues per year). In today's fast-paced society, though, is that still the way to go? For my own part, I am loath to go that route.

I may simply trim down the number of PBM ads that I include with each issue. That act, alone, could save numerous pages, each issue. Most PBM GMs and companies don't really read or interact with PBM Unearthed, anyway. Some do, and for those, I could continue to try and allocate more space for advertising their games, rather than less. How does that sound? The flip side of that coin is that I think that cutting ads too much might end up being counterproductive.

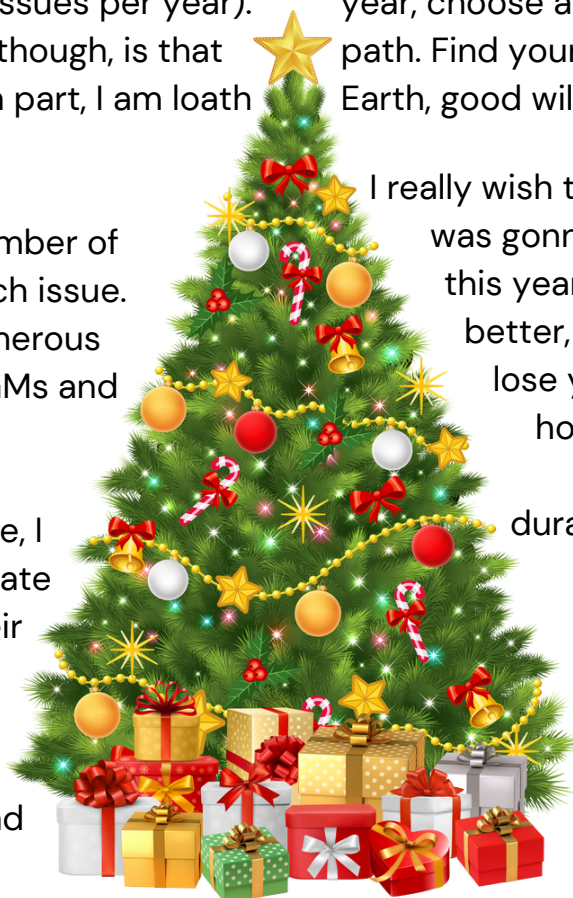
Honestly, I just don't think there's a perfect solution to be found. I'll probably just have to play it by ear.

For some of you, this will be the last time that you hear from me before Christmas arrives. I want you all to know, each and every last one of you, that I wish for you to have a very bright and peaceful and memorable Christmas Day.

Chill out. Relax. Don't overdo it. Resist the temptation to succumb to stress! Stress always dims the holiday brightness, and when all is said and done, it usually isn't worth it. What do you end up gaining, when stress takes the place of holiday cheer in your life?

Stress can – *and will* – negatively impact your immune system and the overall state of your health. No amount of shopping, or Christmas bickering, or accumulation of debt is worth having a stroke or a heart attack over. This year, choose a different and much better path. Find your own inner peace. Peace on Earth, good will toward men.

I really wish that I had known that Christmas was gonna fall on the 25th of December, this year, because I could have planned better, if I had. Whatever you do, don't lose your sense of humor this hectic holiday season. Never, never ever, lose that, because a good and durable sense of humor never goes out of style, and it is a truly priceless commodity!



**Merry Christmas,
my PBM friends!**



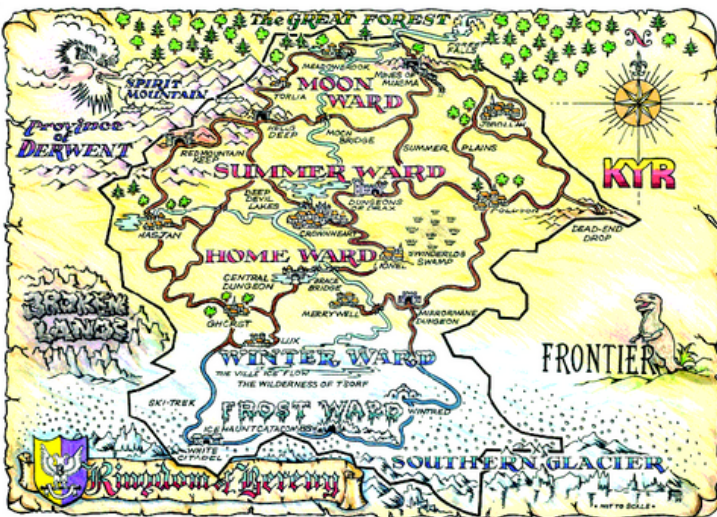


MADHOUSE

Comics, Games, Cards and Collectibles



MADHOUSE.UK.NET



The Kingdom of Bereny is a complex kingdom with a rich history and is probably the most 'civilised' nation in the world (of those known at least). Nevertheless, outside of its city walls or busy towns the land is rife with monsters and fell creatures preying on those foolish enough to fall into their clutches. It is a land of law and order, where the King's royal armies enforce a fair rule. It is also a land of great danger, where grizzled adventurers brave the inhospitable regions to keep the ever-growing tide of evil races at bay.

DO YOU DARE JOIN DUNGEONWORLD?

MADCENTRAL.CO.UK

A Greater Destiny Awaits!

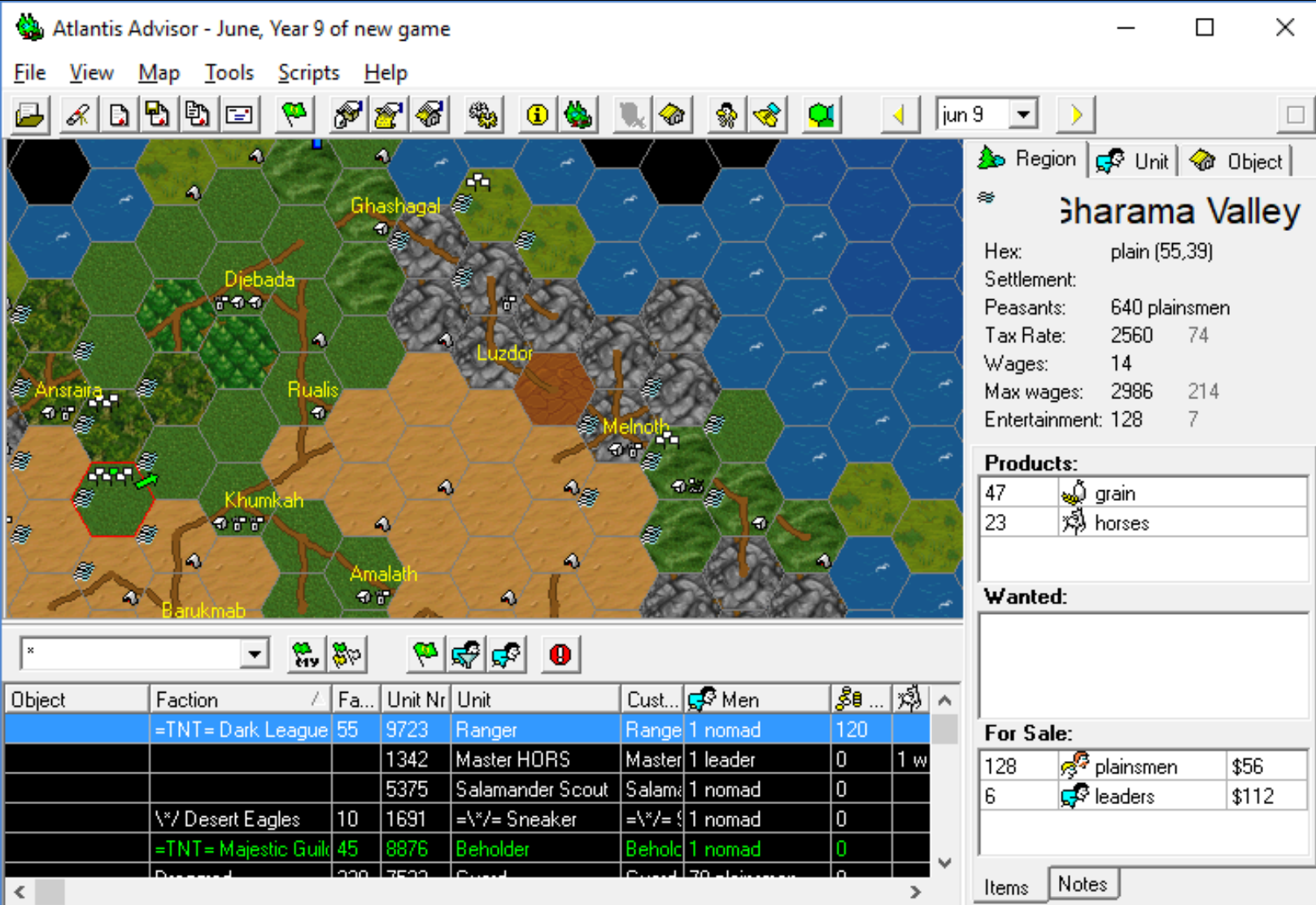
Galac-Tac

The Masters are gone!

talisman-games.com

Atlantis Advisor - June, Year 9 of new game

File View Map Tools Scripts Help



Region Unit Object

Sharama Valley

Hex: plain (55,39)
Settlement:
Peasants: 640 plainsmen
Tax Rate: 2560 74
Wages: 14
Max wages: 2986 214
Entertainment: 128 7

Products:

47	grain
23	horses

Wanted:

For Sale:

128	plainsmen	\$56
6	leaders	\$112

Object	Faction	Fa...	Unit Nr	Unit	Cust...	Men	
=TNT=	Dark League	55	9723	Ranger	Range	1 nomad	120
			1342	Master HORS	Master	1 leader	0
			5375	Salamander Scout	Salam...	1 nomad	0
/	Desert Eagles	10	1691	=/= Sneaker	=*/=	1 nomad	0
=TNT=	Majestic Guilt	45	8876	Beholder	Behold	1 nomad	0

HEROIC FANTASY

Play-By-Mail Adventure Game

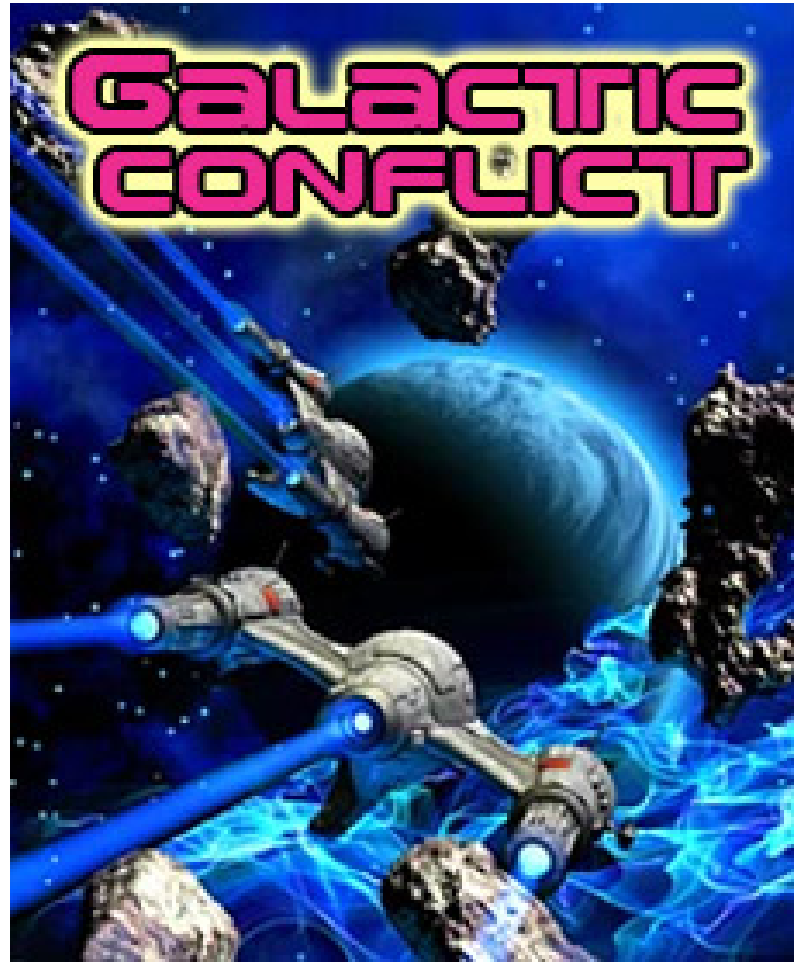
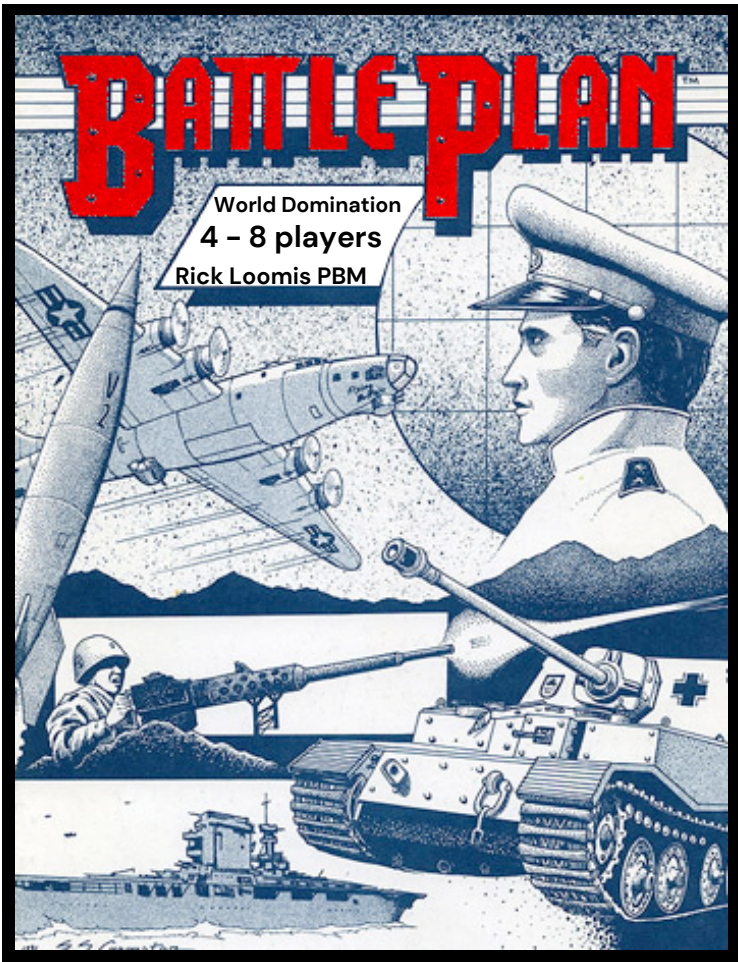


Arezzo -1:17

Tabuk 3:17

ERESSEA

<https://www.eressea.de/>



Suspense & Decision



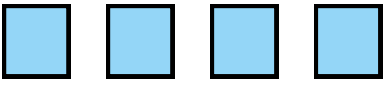
PBM Links

2300 A.D. - The Great Game
Adventurer Kings
Agema
Ancient Empires
Alamaze
Austerlitz
Atlantis Miskatonic
Atlantis: New Origins
Atlantis PbeM
Battle Plan
Clash of Legends
Combat Conditional Podcast
Company Commander
Continental Rails II
Covert Operations
Dark Age
Diplomacy World
Duel2
DungeonWorld Adventures
DungeonWorld Estates
Empires
Engarde!
Eressea
Extra Time
Extra Time: Chairman
Feudal Lords
Fire on the Suns
Flagship
Forgotten Realms



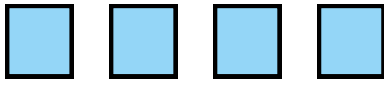
Galac-Tac
Galactic Conflict
Gameplan
Gameplan Baseball
The Glory of Kings
Heroic Fantasy
Hoopplan
Hyborian War
Ilkor: Dark Rising
Imaginary Wrestling Association
It's A Crime
KnightGuild
Legends
Les Petites Bêtes Soyeuses
Liminal En Garde! *NEW*
Lords of the Earth
Middle-earth PBM
Mobius I
Monster Island
Nuclear Destruction
PBeM - Spiele
Phoenix: Beyond the Stellar Empire
Quest
Quest of the Great Jewels
Raceplan
Regime Change
REN1493
Renaissance
Riftlords





PBM Links

(Continued)



- Rome is Burning
- RSW: Retro Space Wars
- Run Chase
- Scramble for Empire
- Slapshot
- Soccer Star
- Soccer Stats
- Spaceplan
- Star Chase
- Star Fleet Warlord
- Starweb
- Stellar Conflict
- Summit PBM
- SuperNova: Rise of the Empire
- Suspense & Decision
- Takamo
- The Isles PBM
- Throne of Cofain
- TribeNet
- Victory! The Battle for Europe
- War of the Dark God
- World Wide Battle Plan
- Wraith



Other Links

- Tabletop Spirit
- To Win Just Once



SURVEY ON HYBORIAN WAR

*3 Questions Posed to Ten Players of the Game

**** Players 6, 7, & 8 Respond ****

Q. In your personal experience, what player-controlled kingdom in Hyborian War would you say is the hardest kingdom to play - and why?

ROKer Sorivar

My hardest kingdom would be either Border Kingdom or Darfar. I haven't played BORD, and I am currently playing DARF. Both kingdoms share some similar problems, powerful foes on the border and little room to expand before running hard into a neighbor.

BORD is surrounded by enemies and it has an a significantly inferior military to its neighbors. Its saving graces are its treasury and court. NEME is a bound ally because of victory conditions, but NEME has its own problems and often isn't able to keep BORD on its feet.

DARF has not much of a treasury, only an ok court, goes broke easily and starts with no allies. There really isn't a reason for neighbors to ally with DARF. DARF's victory conditions require pieces of its immediate neighbors and its neighbors also want pieces of DARF to win. It is rough position to start in.

ROKer davidbwade

I'd have to go with Brythunia. You are hemmed in with 3 hostile kingdoms (Zamora, Nemedra, Border Kingdom), and eventually Corinthia. Your diplomacy is limited to one character, and you may or may not others in time to help. Your expansion is into the teeth of some of the best militaries in the game (Nemedra, Corinthia) or eastward into the low wealth steppe provinces which will put you at odds with Turan and potentially even Hyperborea.

ROKer BuckDharma

I need a lot more experience...

But for my two cents, I think Darfar might be the toughest opening spot? My personal view is that I place kingdoms into four slots.

1. Nations with very strong positions.
2. Nations with good starting positions.
3. Nations with a fairly challenging starting positions.
4. Nations that start in the toughest positions.

Category 4 to my eye so far is Darfar, Pictland, Border Kingdom, Koth, and maybe Kosala. (A case for Juma, but I am putting them in 3.)

Whereas I put the following in category 3....
Juma's Kingdom, Kambulja, Punt, Shem, Brythunia, Zingara. (Maybe Keshan.)

The problem is, I am a far ways yet from having personal longer term data. I am making judgement calls on outside info and such. For example, a lot of people would rank Juma in category 4. And I can see a case. But I have done well with the nation...I think JUMA is very weak to begin with....but has some things going for it.

I need to play Darfar, but to my eye, it is in a tighter spot than Juma's Kingdom to open the game.

Q. What one piece of advice, more than any other, would you give to someone who is brand new to playing Hyborian War?

ROKer Sorivar

My biggest piece of advice is to understand game diplomacy and how it works with various kingdoms. Some kingdoms don't start with much diplomacy in the court. Other kingdoms have a huge diplomacy pool and they will be a major player on a diplomatic stage because of their court. This has NOTHING to do with player to player diplomacy.

Unless it is a no contact organized game, player to player diplomacy is vital. Not only can players share vital information to your kingdom, but they might be persuaded to join with you in a campaign against a mutual foe or perhaps even stop attacking you. Player to player deals are a thing.

ROKer davidbwade

Talk with veteran players and use the online resources that are available, particularly at Warbarron.com.

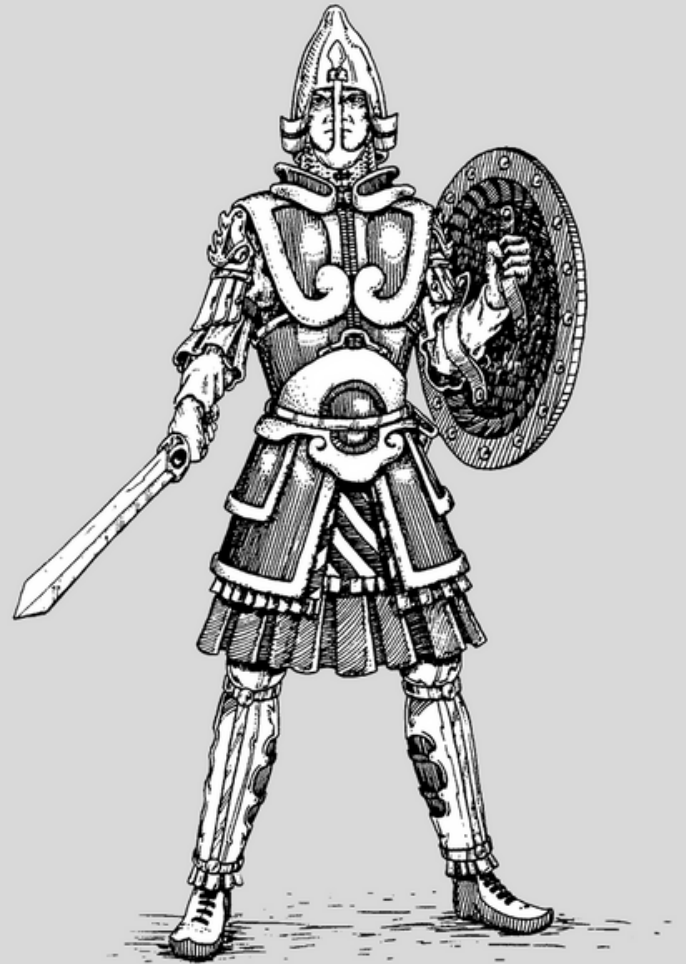
ROKer BuckDharma

1. Give yourself some time. Like a year...just to get the hang of the game. Not to master it even.

2. Read all you can on RoK community boards. Study the threads dedicated to all the kingdoms...but also discount nearly everything you read there. It can be very useful info, but it is -not- gospel. I find there are a number of answers for how to go about things for many situations and kingdoms...each specific game of HW is a unique snowflake.

3. Talk to players. Find a few you like, and toss around ideas now and then, eve i games you are not in together or allied.

4. Don't worry too much about winning. Find things to do that are fun and interesting. Winning may come....but by far it is not the only way to have a great time. Wanting to win is all well and good. Needing to win to feel satisfied may not be the best way to have fun however.



Kambuljan Warrior

**HYBORIANTM
WAR**

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Q. In your considered opinion, what one aspect of Hyborian War do you think is the best designed, out of them all?

ROKer Sorivar

I think the best designed part of Hyborian War is the court actions. What do characters do? Why are character peace years actions as important as war seasons actions? Do your nobles always go off to war or do they actively rule to keep the people happy? Do your heroes always go off adventuring? How characters are used is every bit as important as how many troops you have and what your armies doing.

ROKer davidbwade

Kindgom diversity. Each kingdom has a real flavor to it and is a unique experience.

ROKer BuckDharma

My favorite thing about the game design is that it is overall well balanced. Players are not well balanced...and not all games begin and stay full. Unplayed kingdoms reduce the balance...sometimes in a dramatic way as the specific game unfolds. But the design itself is pretty cool...very asymmetric, yet with a good bit of balancing.

I say that even though I think some balance tweaks would be wonderful if they could be implemented! But overall....pretty great bit of design vision.



* **Note:** The above image will take you to the pbem-uplanet-eu channel on the PlayByMail.Net Discord, if you already have a Discord account created.

Renaissance

RENAISSANCE is a multi-player, PBEM and PBM, historical simulation game running continuously since 1981. It features a variety of military options, an elaborate mercantile system that makes use of the inter-relationships among some two hundred types of trade goods available for trade, plus feudal, ecclesiastical and municipal hierarchical organizations. All this takes place on a worldwide backdrop of 4,000 locations, each of which is heavily researched and reflects over one hundred pieces of data. Actions are carried out by characters (referred to as "personae") who belong to historical families. Families consist of one to five personae controlled by one player.

Moves are due once every three weeks. Turn results are sent out within 48 hours of the due date for orders. The fee to control a family is \$4.40. There is an additional fee of 20 cents per action ordered. Players whose account is fully up to date as of the due date for the turn receive a credit of \$1.50.

For a free set of rules, or to join the game, contact:

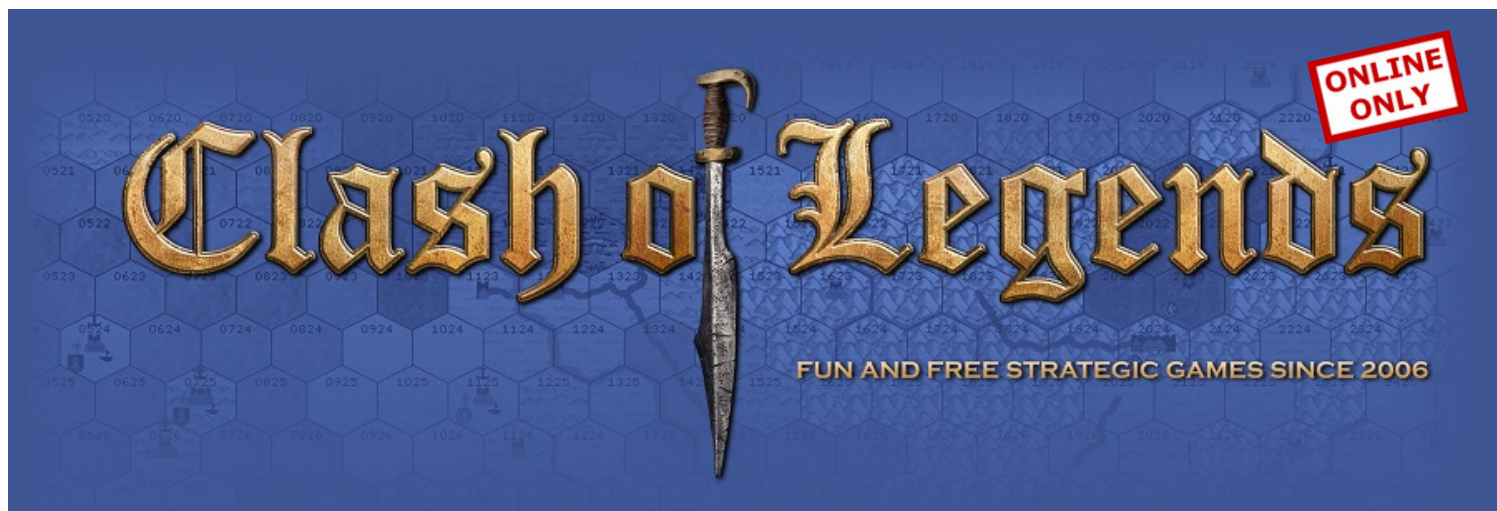
cjxanthos@gmail.com

REN1493 is a smaller, online version of **RENAISSANCE** that is set in Italy and adjacent areas. Actions can be carried out by the player at any time. There is no fee for playing one character.

To join this game, contact:

cjxanthos@gmail.com

ONLINE ONLY



PBM Unearthed wishes you



a very Merry Christmas!