

PBM

Issue 26

Unearthed

The Mysterious Realm of Play-By-Mail Gaming

26th Insidious Issue!



January 29th, 2023

Who is conducting strange PBM experiments?

PlayByMail.Net

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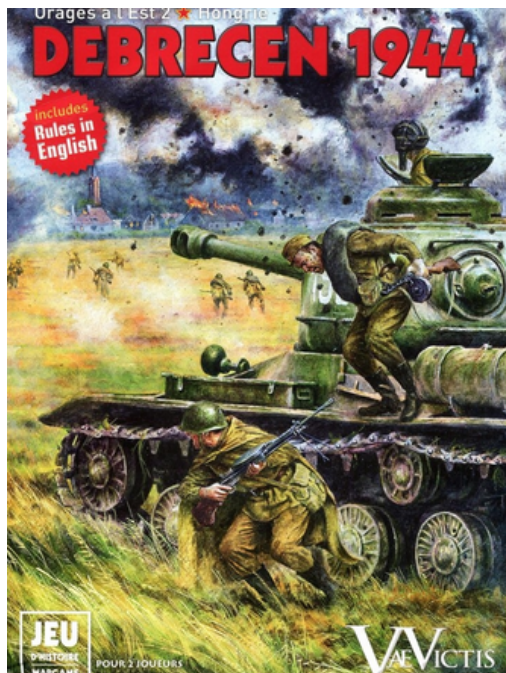
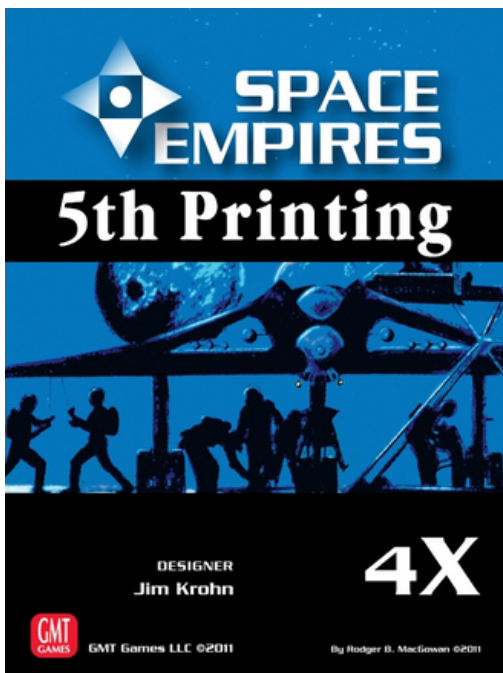
Civilize!

Mistakes, Mishaps and Idiotic Moves: Gaffes in Postal Gaming!

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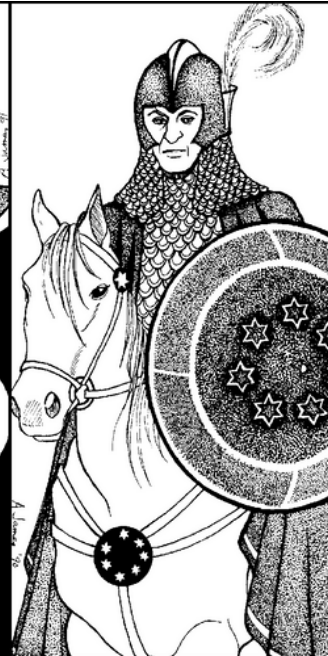


*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
 Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
 Nine for Mortal Men, doomed to die,
 One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
 In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

Middle-earth PBM



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A Sorcerer King Seeks His Due

One of the closest finishes in Alamaze championship history

Dan "Wookie Panz" Warncke

Part 2 of 2

When we last left King Vanigus of the Sorcerer Kingdom, the valiant AM had left legions of quality troops dead on the slopes of Ramhorn, and piles of dead apes outside of a village on the shores of the Tempest Sea - where an attempt to plunder a village failed. Lady Pine fought on bravely for many seasons and more battles waged, but her power diminished. At one point, a regional spell caught a group of Druids, and it was revealed that the clever Lord Rellgar had been scoffing relics from Darkover, taking advantage of the warfare that raged to pilfer encounters.

SO continued to raise orcs and ghouls, and the fight shifted into the Crown Coast, as he searched for the hidden capital. Not a single population center was safe from the concealed and warded emissaries of the SO. On the 25th season, the region was finally under control, and recon of other regions has progressed. At this point, it seems a major war between RD, GN, and NE, has pitted some lethal players against each other in Triumvia, Zanthia, and Krynn. DU is joining the battle, as well. On another front, BL led by the skillful DuPont, has been fighting UN in the Untamed lands since early in the game, and it looks like Nyvaria is ripe for the taking.

Turn 30 status points show SO in 6th place, surely not on a path to victory, but perhaps a podium position, if we pick up the pace rapidly?

More turns pass as SO King Vanigus continues to recruit, builds forged weapons and armor, replaces and promotes and replaces the political corp, finally takes the now deserted AM hidden capital.



Dan "Wookie Panz" Warncke

The Sorcerer King

While on the trail of BL, a wrinkled old crone crept into the SO camp, one night. She said her name was Flo, and she wanted to trade protection for some of our holdings for a few coins and a hot meal. She mentioned something about bundling, and we secured protection for some villages in western Darkover, before she disappeared.

Ravens reveal there is a BL sea town with a great castle in the Endless Sea that will have to be taken by force, lest the BL capital transfer to it later. On the 32nd season, several groups are transported there, and combined for the task, as concealed emissaries flood the region. The following turn, the battle is fought, and the regional control slips to neutral. The highest wizards

are needed for spells, and the SO force cannot quite reach the BL capital, as it is too far south.

On turn 35, the BL capital has fallen, and our forces have flowed into Untamed, where BL had many more holdings. The UN had surrendered, but DE was also in the area fighting BL. With no time to locate the hidden UN former capital, DE holdings had to be taken to secure the region.

With control of Untamed, our forces now have 4 regions, and we are flowing into Pelinor, but the DE of Agent Orange is putting up a fight. For the first time, our emissaries are failing missions, despite the odds seeming to be in their favor. *Those dastardly DE Princes are screwing with reaction levels!* Several pc in Untamed are

of the fighting there has destroyed many of the other population centers. There are just one village, 3 other towns, and the major city of Imril left there. The SO forces get their marching orders, and relocate for the final battles on turn 39, while our other holdings are fortified.

Our final chance comes on turn 39, and a possibly fatal error has occurred. Two of our army groups have marched to the same town in Triumvia! At best, we will have the city and two out of 4 towns, and it may not be enough for control.

Not only that, but that always clever Rellgar has shown up in Darkover with all four of his groups! Reports of his emissaries come from several hamlets. Fortunately, that

ALAMAZE

... Return to the Lands of your Fathers ...



contested by DE, but our groups are on the verge of taking Pelinor. We have been trying to protect our holdings, and have built 12 great castles across the lands, and a legendary at our capital in the Sea of Triumvia.

On the 38th season, WA shows up in Pelinor with 4 army groups. After sitting against the wall for the whole dance, he shows up for the last song, wanting to get his dance card punched.

With both the DE and WA contesting Pelinor, it's time to rethink things. I have a large population at my capital in Triumvia, and all

protection we bought from Flo many turns ago has revealed several DU Princes in our villages, and arrangements are taken to give them a sleep session.

Everything possible is done to increase population to hold Darkover and take control of Pelinor and Triumvia. Two legendary castles are completed, as well as 8 new bazaars, 1 forum, and 2 great temples. Every builder in the empire is put to work, and the granaries and treasuries are emptied. *Will it be enough?*

The final turn arrives, and our Rex victory check has failed, and yet, we somehow eked

out a victory by lion's share. Rellgar is scarcely 3000 points behind, and Dwellomir a few hundred points behind that. Control of Darkover continued, with the 2 slept princes and the building improvements making a difference of 49,657 citizens retained. Getting substantial in Triumvia and breaking DU control there is also a major factor.

This has to be one of the closest finishes in Alamaze championship history. Thanks to all of the players for a great game, and of course to RY Vor and Uncle Mike for bringing us such good play balance in their creation.

Here is a link to the thread where you can also find comments from some of the other players:

<https://kingdomsofarcana.net/forum/showthread.php?tid=16448>

Thanks again for the work you do Charles.

Dan a.k.a. Wookie Panz

Alamaze Terms

AL - ALCHEMIST	LI - LIZARD MEN
AM - AMAZONS	LY - LYCANS
AN - ANCIENT ONES	NE - NECROMANCER
AT - ATLANTEANS	NO - NOMAD
BL - BLACK DRAGON	PI - PIRATES
CI - CIMMERIANS	RA - RANGER
DA - DARK ELVEN	RD - RED DRAGON
DE - DEMON PRINCES	SA - SACRED ORDER
DK - DEATHKNIGHTS	SO - SORCERER
DU - DRUID	TY - TYRANT
DW - DWARVEN	UN - UNDERWORLD
EL - ELVEN	WA - WARLOCK
EM - ELEMENTALIST	
FF - FAIRY FOLK	p1 = Power 1
FO - FORGOTTEN	p2 = Power 2
FT - FREE TRADERS	p3 = Power 3
GI - GIANTS	p4 = Power 4
GN - GNOME	p5 = Power 5
HA - HALFLING	p6 = Power 6
IL - ILLUSIONIST	

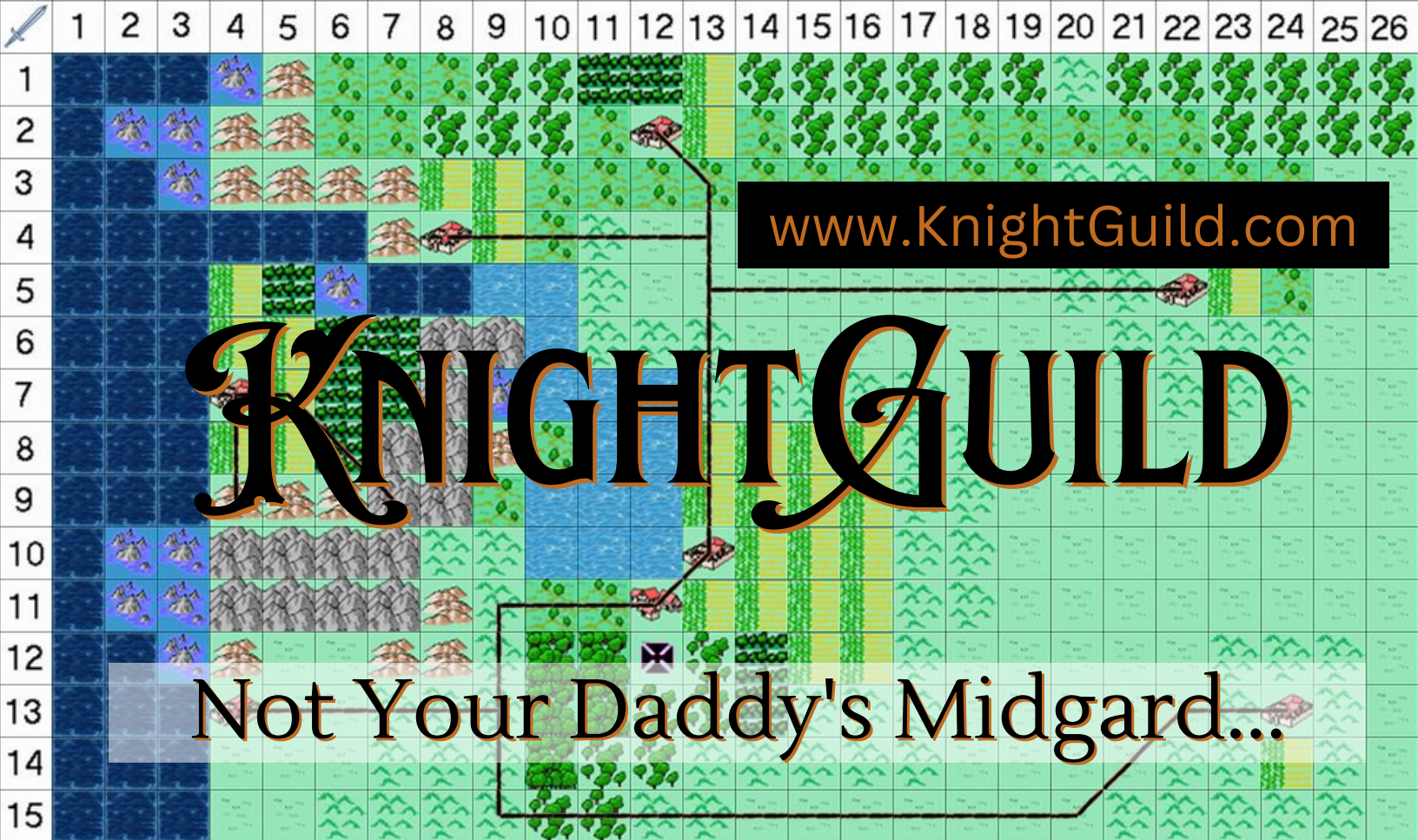
pc = Population Center

Victory By Lion's Share Is The Sorcerer Kingdom!

Game End Status Points

Place	Kingdom	Player	Results - 40	Grand Total
1	(SO) Sorcerer	Wookie Panz	50,307	70,568
2	(DU) Druids	Rellgar	43,960	67,492
3	(AN) Ancient Ones	Dwellomir	42,346	66,815
4	(WA) Warlock	HabeusCorpus	36,385	60,118
5	(DE) Demon Princes	Agent Orange	22,584	39,976
6	(HA) Halfling	Senior Tactician	22,984	39,681
7	(NE) Necromancer	The Painted Man	16,667	30,591

Alamaze.Co



www.KnightGuild.com

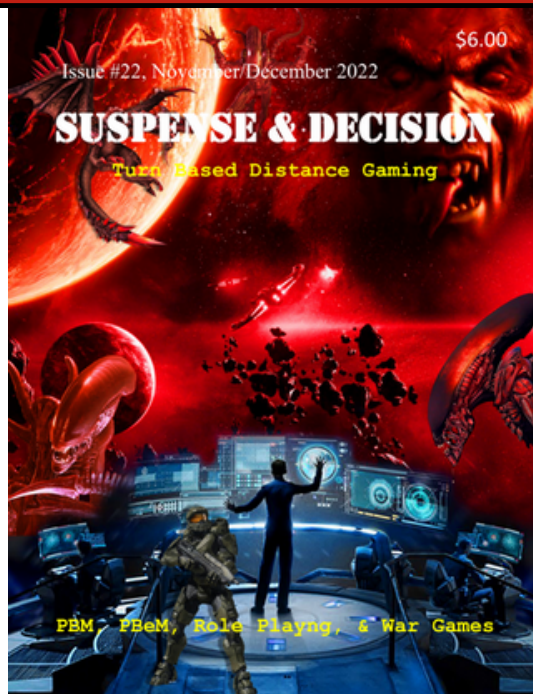
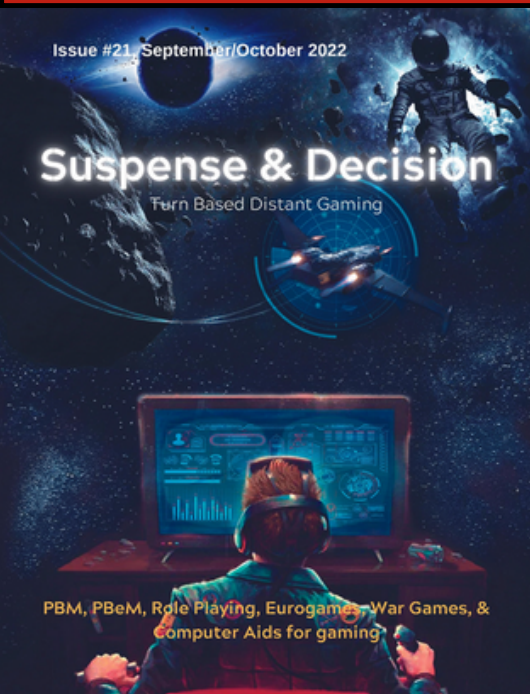
KNIGHT GUILD

Not Your Daddy's Midgard...



Suspense & Decision

"Looking for information from the different game companies for the 'Spokesmen Speak' column. If you have an article to submit, please do." editor@suspense-and-decision.com





Atlantis: New Origins

atlantis-pbem.com



Suspense & Decision



Daemonrift 3

The Armageddon War

STARWEB™

WHAT MONSTROUS FATE AWAITS?

A noob enters the fray of multiplayer Alamaze

Charles Mosteller

What in the hell was I thinking? Who am I kidding? I wasn't ready for this – not *this*.

Be that as it may, here I find myself wandering lost through the big, thick rulebook for Alamaze in 4th Cycle, Maelstrom. From front to back, it's a whopping 293 pages long. Yeah, let's see *you* trying to cram for this test. This is no pushover game, that's for damned sure.

I don't know what to do, and that's equally true on any number of different levels. Any chance that the other players will take pity on me? Maybe. Something about a "chivalry bonus," according to one veteran of the game, an Alamaze forum user called **uncledarkside2**.

Basically, that means that the other players in this game of Alamaze know that I'm new to the game, and as such, none of them will attack my kingdom before Turn #7 (unless I attack them first, of course). Hmmm. . .surely, there's some way to turn that to my kingdom's advantage?

This so-called "chivalry bonus" must be akin to a gentlemen's agreement among players in the Alamaze player community, because a quick electronic search of the rulebook didn't uncover any mention of it.

Alamaze players have a reputation for being a competitive bunch, and what that translates into is that, if I am to survive for any real duration of time, at all, then I must be on my

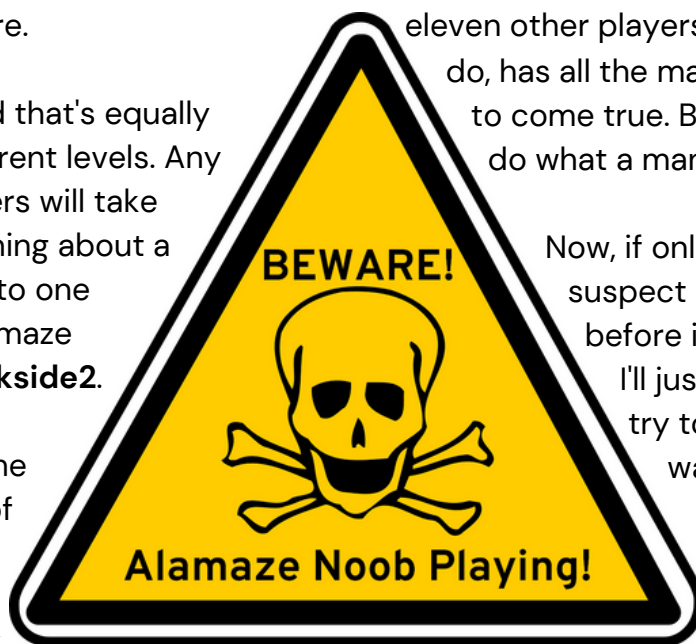
toes. *Woe is me!*

Before joining this multiplayer madness in game form, I played a couple of solo player tutorial games. Let me tell you, right now, the tutorial doesn't unleash the full force of the game's options upon you, like the multiplayer version does. Me not having a clue what to do, versus eleven other players who know *exactly* what to do, has all the makings of a horror story about to come true. But sometimes, a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

Now, if only I knew what to do. But I suspect that it's gonna a lot worse, before it starts to get any better, so I'll just have to bite the bullet, and try to either find a way, or make a way. There's really nothing else that I can do. As such, I have already begun trying to milk other players in the game for advice. I grasp more

than I did only a few short hours ago, when I first joined this game. toes. *Woe is me!*

This particular game, Game 5644, is set to process turns every 48 hours. Already, I've bungled that, as my mind was focused upon the time that the game started, Turn #0 (which is where you receive your kingdom's set-up information after the game launches). Instead, what you've got to do is to pay very close attention to when the previous turn processed, rather than the initial turn, because the **Ready** button lets turns run early. *So, stay tuned!*



Letter in a Bottle

B₃ **E**₁ **L**₁ **I**₁ **N**₁ **D**₂ **A**₁

D₂ **U**₁ **N**₁ **K**₅ **S**₁



Word from Exlsles

Mateus Rose...*the story so far.*



Word from Exlsles

Mateus Rose...*the story so far.*

- Falsely accused by an evil stepmother – Check!
- Banished to the Lonely Coast – Check!
- Met Princess (in disguise) – Check!
- Rescued said Princess – Check!
- Fallen in love with same (naturally) – Check!
- Discovered self to possess Wizard calibre power – Wait a minute?!

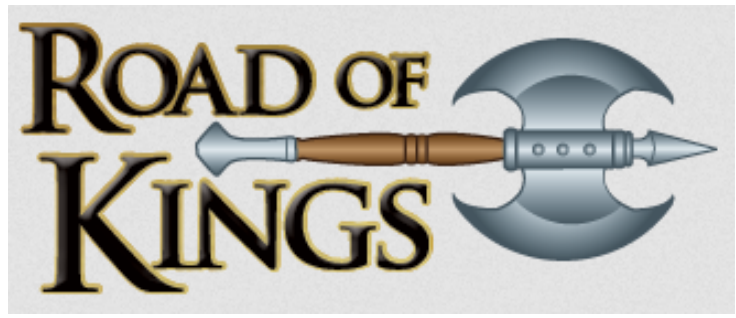
The Lonely Coast
was created by
Creighton Broadhurst
and is being used
with permission from
Raging Swan Press.

Belinda Dunks



For more information, please write to:

David Fair
P.O. Box 88600
Steilacoom, WA 98388



Renaissance



The Legendary Adventures of Max and PooSmack

Andy Bentley

It's been an uncomfortable week. Charles blew so much smoke up my arse in PBM Unearthed #25, I am now 97% smoke by volume. It has proven difficult to perform functional tasks with such a distended colon. My main concern though, is that if I accidentally loosen the already tenuous grip on my sphincter, someone may needlessly trouble the fire brigade. On the plus side, with the recent infusion, I am now probably delicious to eat.

Fortunately, I have the current Mrs. Bentley to regulate any ego inflation, wondering why I couldn't have made the same effort with my wedding speech. I tentatively try 'nerves?', she doesn't believe me. She is right not to.

I have two offspring, Son1 and Son2. Son1 is an adult now, a recent demotion, and likes to do healthy activities in the outside. He's always loved playing board games, though, and has a wicked capacity for learning rules, particularly long-winded, nebulous, or dynamic ones - *especially if this results in the public evisceration of his father.* This year, he has a work placement at, I kid you not, a ski resort in Australia. Ritually humiliating me is going to be difficult for him, unless he can conspire to do it remotely.

Son No2 is five, nearly six, years' of age. We were chatting at the coffee shop about his big brother's adventures on the other side of the world, and I mentioned that I had some chums that I played games with in Australia. His eyes widened and his ears pricked up. I've played the parenthood game long enough to immediately perceive the corner I was about to paint myself into. This wasn't going to end well, and by that, I



mean I would have to interact with my child on a non-superficial level, and on a Sunday too.

"What are their names?"

"Well, one of them is called Peter, and he runs the game."

"What does 'runs the game mean'?"

One vigorous arc of the paint saturated brush pushes me backwards. I endeavour to make this relatable, a weak attempt at an easy exit...

"It's like Peter has loads of Lego figures in his attic, and we all send him some letters, and he moves the Lego figures around the room. Would you like a biscuit?"

He leans forwards, widens his blue eyes even further and locks his gaze on mine. I realise there is no easy exit here.

"What are the other people's names?"

I'm struggling here, most people use a pseudonym, 'WidowFunker' is going to raise too many questions. I lean in, too, eyes matched in aperture, the fellow conspirator... .

"One of them is called Max... and guess what?... He's a cannibal!"

Idiot.

"What is a CANNIBAL!!"

I release all hope. I will have no time to myself, this Sunday. I might as well try and enjoy the ride.

"A cannibal is a human that eats other humans." I'm safe with this, my son knows no fear, but I make an effort for the benefit of the surrounding customers. "But Max doesn't really eat other people, just in the game. So when Peter moves the Lego figures around, if Max's Lego people come into my village, they will eat all my people up."

"Wow! Can I play?"

"Hmmm!", I seriously consider this for a moment. He'd be an easy but probably flaky ally; I reflect that this is probably how all my allies view me, it may be genetic. I decide that Peter would likely consider this recruitment a rort (see Tribenet The Mandate, Chapter 29: Player Ethics).

"Let's play our own version when we get home, and if you like it, you can play it when you're older."

Within thirty minutes, we are back home, and each have a stack of blank index cards to hand, a pen, and a Lego figure. We also have a small green John Deere tractor to send our orders across the room. The hastily improvised rules

are simple, each player writes an order, sends it in the tractor, and the other player executes the order on the Lego figure. The dog has taken his place on the back of the sofa, he knows to stay out of the way when games are in play, good boy. This might be fun after all.

T1P1 - My Lego man is called Max. Please move him on top of the window sill.

I have to keep it simple, he's five and I'm a bit simple.

T1P2 - Yoo can pitend that yooo can mooth the Legow man.

I do. What a tragic waste of an order. I try not to make this too much of a lesson, just one petty correction per turn perhaps? I write 'Lego' patronisingly on the card to model the spelling. I used to be a teacher, I am well practised in patronising children.

T2P1 - Please move Max under the foot stool.

I see a positional advantage here, but also worry that I might finish the game too soon. I shouldn't worry, he's going to finish it much sooner than that for us.

T2P2 - Mooth the Legow on top oth the che.

His manners are appalling, and he has learned nothing. He will pay for this second negligent 'w'. I see some discarded Lego wands in the fireplace from a Christmas Harry Potter set, he won't expect magic.

T3P1 - Put a wand in Max's hand.

I take too much time placing my orders, and my face betrays the killer move, as the tractor rumbles across the carpet. He may not be a

strong reader of the written word, but he can certainly read body language. I was just beginning to enjoy this, but I now sense the end is very near.

T3P2 - *Miy Lego man is cald PooSmack.*

So this is how it ends, potty mouth.

"Do you kiss your mother with those lips?"

"Whad'ya said?" He's a bit deaf in winter.

"Nothing."

He will do everything he can to sabotage this, now, the foul language is just the start. The correct spelling of Lego was just thrown in to rub my nose in it. Sure enough, PooSmack is now experiencing flight. The dog leaves the room.

"Would you like to play on your Nintendo Switch instead?"

"Yes." He heard that just fine.

Game Over. I have my Sunday afternoon back. There is perhaps more than one saboteur here.

This is a familiar pattern, a rollercoaster of engagement. The sum of our participation remains constant. Whilst his enthusiasm is high, mine is trailing, then as soon as he senses my interest being piqued even slightly, his drops like a stone. There is sometimes a blissful moment where it crosses at an equal level of involvement, and I congratulate myself on my exemplary parenting skills. At most other times, he'd be better off in foster care or living with wolves.

That's not fair, he's still young and probably not ready for PBM, yet. I'll give him two more chances, then I'll fill the forms in. But I have learned a valuable lesson... PBM games are much easier to write than I initially thought.

Anyone for a game of 'The Legendary Adventures of Max and PooSmack.'?



HEROIC FANTASY

Play-By-Mail
Adventure Game



Heroic Fantasy - a play-by-mail game of magic and mayhem; where you control a party of humans, elves, dwarves, fairies, leprechauns, ogres, or even a troll or giant. Your characters explore a dungeon maze looking for magical and valuable treasures while fighting off monsters, traps, and sometimes even other players! Each of your characters moves independently, so you can split up into several parties, all for the same price. The game is fully refereed, and has been running since 1982. Write for our free PBM catalog, or send \$2 for a copy of the rules to HEROIC FANTASY.

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QUEST

OF THE

GREAT JEWELS

ONLINE
ONLY



Civilize!

Civilize!

Troy Hooper

So, what is life like in the Bone Age? Basically, brutal. It is an unfortunate fact that accidents happen, and people will get hurt, some will even die, just doing everyday activities (though in effect, this only affects Hunting and Scouting). When your first person gets injured, two things become apparent:

- a) an injured person may not work the following turn, and
- b) if you do not heal an injured person, they will die.

Fortunately, Healing is one of the skills a tribe starts out with, so unless you foul up your orders in the following turn, this should not happen. If day-to-day incidents affecting your tribe are not bad enough, there is always the threat of combat. While

there are no T-Rex running around (to my knowledge), there are enough other things that may well attack you, or even try to eat your people, as Two Crows recently discovered:

It was a dark day, one that the omens had not forewarned us about, when our scouts returned with news of the attack. In scouting the region to the east hoping to find a rumoured flint deposit, our unit encountered ten Kobolds, who with no provocation, nor warning, attacked. The fight was thankfully brief, with all the Kobolds being slain, but at a heavy cost to our scouts.

When the battle was over, it became clear that four of our braves had been slain outright, four more had various injuries that would need attention, lest

they, too, died.

Each round of combat is resolved simultaneously for each side, taking into consideration the numbers on each side, their weapons, along with the attackers' Combat skill and the defenders' Defense skill, all of which results in a number of 'wounds'. This number is modified down by the defenders' armour (which is usually zero, I mean, when was the last time you saw a caveman in chainmail?) to give the number of wounds to be inflicted. Half of the wounds (round down) are converted to fatalities, the rest become injuries. If there are more wounds than there are people to apply them to, the excess injuries are applied to already injured people, a second injury resulting in death.

Combat continues into a subsequent round, only if the attacker had given an instruction to follow up. The anticipated process is for an attack to consist of one combat round, to inflict as much damage as possible, then fall back to assess the situation. An attack would normally only be pressed further, if all the defenders have been overcome, and then, to the victor the spoils - *well, more like, to the survivors, the spoils!*

Thank the ancestors that these vile creatures were armed with just crude wooden clubs. Had they been armed with bone spears, like our scouts, the outcome would have been completely different. Learning from this, we have dramatically increased the production of bone spears, so that all our scouts, and not just the hunters, are suitably armed. If the rumours of flint turn out to be true, stone spears will follow.

Better weapons will allow your tribe to inflict more wounds, armour will help lessen the number of wounds inflicted against you, though practical armour in the Bone Age is effectively none. Skills assist greatly, Combat increases your effectiveness in attack, while Defense will decrease the effectiveness of those

attacking you (as well as giving your civilians a chance to run away, should things go really bad for your fighters).

As a result of our first fight, we have instructed the braves to train others, so as to spread their martial skills throughout the tribe. Healers have been tasked with preparing medication to improve their ministrations, while ways are being thought as how better to prepare our camps against any would-be attackers. All of this so that when trouble next finds its way to our tents, we shall be better prepared.

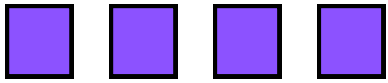
What with various NPC units able to attack your tribe, the logical question is, 'Who can I attack?' Technically, you can attack anything, be this the trader units, 'wandering monsters', NPC tribes and even trader settlements. Your success is going to depend on many factors, starting off with what you consider to be a 'success'. Attacking trader units that you encounter may get you a short-term gain, but word may well spread of your hostile nature, and so deny you such opportunities in the future, and that could include trader settlements. The 'wandering monsters' are fair game. In fact, later in the game, you may well have to remove all of these from a given area, before you may settle.

Attacking NPC tribes may be tempting, but it is hazardous. They are likely to fight back with the same sort of strength your own tribe can muster, unless you have developed some form of combat tactics to give you an advantage.

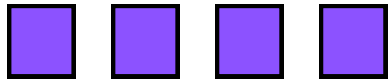
I must be thankful that the tribe seems contented with my guidance, and that, for the present at least, I can manage their wants and desires. I worry that, should jealousy of those we have met ever flare up into conflict, it would not be a good result for all concerned. It is clear that mere survival in this brutal land is no longer enough, the tribe needs to better itself. It needs to grow, not just physically, but spiritually, and perhaps more importantly, culturally.

Troy Hooper
(playtester)





PBM Links



Now featuring highlighted games each issue!

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

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Duel2

DungeonWorld Adventures

DungeonWorld Estates

DungeonWorld: Daemonrift 3

Empires

Engarde!

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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!

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

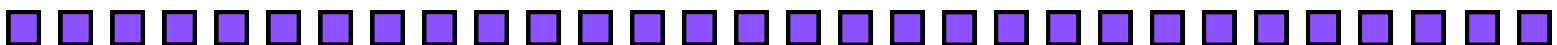
Regime Change

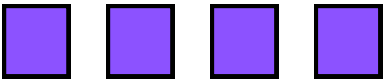
REN1493

Renaissance

Riftlords

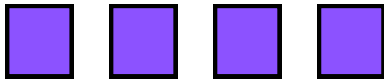
Rome is Burning





PBM Links

(Continued)



- 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

God Save The Zine

Issue 1



This is a Diplomacy zine from:
 Stephen Agar, 3 Hadham Hall, Ware, SG11 2AU, UK. Email: godsavethezine@gmail.com

DEADLINE
Friday 24 February 2023



Other Links

Tabletop Spirit

- To Win Just Once



Mistakes, Mishaps and Idiotic Moves:



Gaffes in Postal Gaming!



Wayne

Have you ever had a PBM turn come back and thought, “Doh! Why did I do THAT!” Or did you ever read through a turn, laugh and wonder “What the hell!” was your opponent thinking? I think we all have, at one time or another, but here are my experiences from decades in postal gaming. Once again, the usual caveats apply: these are experiences seen through my eyes, and some were a LONG time ago.

My first “What The Hell was he/she thinking?” moment came in Crasimoff’s World. (CW).

CW was a hand-moderated PBM, run initially by KJC Games in the UK. The game was based around a fantasy, sword and sorcery type setting, where you played a team of five individuals, that for the most part, all stuck together. To set the scene, a little background is needed.

My clan visited a town in the game, where a local barkeep was offering one silver piece for each “Swampie” head brought back to him. The reason: the barkeep simply didn’t like Swampies. A considerable amount of players saw this as easy cash, so I thought I’d get in on the action. I traveled to the nearby swamp, and lo and behold, I saw a Swampie. From the moment I set eyes on them, my clan pitied them. Humanoid in shape, but with webbed hands and feet and the head of a toad, they shambled about not causing harm to a soul.

So rather than hunt them down, I talked to them. After a few turns, convincing them I meant no harm, they took me back to their

main encampment, where, if they wanted, they could have easily have wiped my party out. I spent the best part of 10 turns talking to them and learning their ways. The Swampies were at one with nature: they could talk and control most of the animals in the swamp, they could make both medicines and poisons from the local wildlife and flora - *indeed were skilled Herbalists.*

In the end, I thought these creatures were too cultured to be hunted, so to REALLY convince them I was on their side, I went through an elaborate ceremony, and converted to their god B’romdin, the god of animals and creatures.

Once I earned their trust, the first thing I did was to organise their defences. With the help of magic and natural nature-based skills, we set up single file choke points, Cul de Sacs and all manner of defences, including Traps. I had just read a book on the Vietnam war, so my head was full of traps set by the Vietcong. I set them all: Punji Sticks, Snake Pits, The Mace – you name it, it was out there. We then put signs up on the outskirts of the Swamp saying: “*Keep Out! This area is trapped with poisonous traps and guarded by vicious carnivores! Only death awaits you here!*”

Here is where I saw my first idiotic move in a PBM game. Swampie scouts advised us that there was a players clan on the fringes of the swamp, so from a safe vantage point, we watched them. They totally ignored the signs, went straight down a booby trapped cul de

sac in single file and on horse back (!), and sure enough, it wasn't long before the horse of the lead character's horse went fell down a poisoned Punji trap, and died almost immediately. Despite this, the clan moved onwards, and a few yards later, the lead character, now on foot, got impaled by a Bamboo whip trap. I could see he was badly hurt and was poisoned. The GM halted the turn there, to basically give the clan a chance to leave.

Unfortunately for the clan, the player never took that chance. With their clan priest casting both a Healing spell and a Cure poison spell, the players clan continued moving onwards! Straight into a snake pit trap. Another dead horse, and this time, the lead character died, as well.

To add insult to injury, the players clan could see a 30 ft long crocodile making its way speedily towards them at the end of their turn. I fully expected them to stay, but next turn they turned tail and fled. Funny, the Swampies were hardly ever bothered after that! All this could have been avoided, and there is something to be learnt here: If the GM gives you a chance to get out; *Take it!*

I made my first personal major PBM faux pas in Saturnalia, a single character, hand-moderated UK fantasy, sword and sorcery-based PBM. Again, a bit of background is needed for context. I played a very evil guy called Coup De Gra who worshipped the God of Death, Renchu, and he was convinced he was the son of the aforementioned deity.

A couple of players in the game had unwittingly and unknowingly freed a very powerful Demon of Renchu, Lord Storm, and he made his way to the largest Renchuite aligned city in the area. My character was in

that city, and he immediately swore fealty to him. In return, Lord Storm gave my character a ring that fit on the wedding finger of my character's sword hand. This ring was magical, and gave my powerful character even more powers, especially in areas my character had relative weaknesses in. It was all hunky dory, until a chance meeting took place with an old mage mate of mine who pointed out that Storms' ring was doing more than enhancing my powers!

It was, in fact, acting like a GPS! Not only was it telling Lord Storm where I was, what I was doing and what conversations I was having, it also had the dormant power of allowing Lord Storm to totally control me, whenever he wanted to!

I couldn't have this, so I did some research and found that another Renchuite Demon, called The Great Khan, was magically confined to a tower and hated Lord Storm. A long trek ensued, and I got to Khan's tower, knowing that I would be able to easily go in and come out of his prison. I went in and told Khan that I wanted rid of Storm's ring. Khan told me he wanted a better look at it, and asked me to place my wedding finger on a marble table – and no sooner had I done so, there was a blur of movement, a scimitar appeared, and he chopped DE Gra's finger right off. *Doh!* I should have seen that coming!

Company Commander
by
Jason Oates' Games



Luckily enough, the GM, Simon Letts, didn't let the impediment of a lost ring finger affect my fighting ability that much, but I did fight with minuses after that! I'd just like to commend Simon for his GM'ing of The Great Khan, who was Lord of Assassins, as he came across as one of the most frightening of NPC characters I'd ever met in any game.

Whilst I am writing about Coup De Gra, two other player errors spring to mind. One player spent ages tracking down Coup de Gra, and eventually found him in an abandoned warehouse. Now I hate PVP and killing another player character is an anathema to me, and I'm pretty well known in PBM circles for not killing off characters. The player that tracked me down was pretty sure his character was on a par with my character, as far as combat was concerned, and, as the GM explained on my turn sheet, he put on his turnsheet, "*My character will fight to the death!*"

On my turn sheet, I made it very clear in my orders, that I did not want to kill this character and tried my best not to do it. In the end, we fought, I won and the character died. He didn't need to fight to the death but sometime you catch the tiger you were hunting, and then you have to work out what to do next! His character's death was totally avoidable.

Another De Gra story. My character and a mate's character were traveling in game, when we came across a player character's camp. We saw him, and we were pretty sure he saw us. We planned to sneak up on him at night when he was asleep, and tie him up, loosely, steal his horse and then leave him where he was, as he was only a few miles from the nearest town. Apparently, as the GM informed me, this player had a cunning plan, which was to pretend to go to sleep, jump up and surprise us and fight us.





Unfortunately for him, getting up from a prone position when being approached by two powerful player characters from differing directions and into a fighting stance was very implausible. Saturnalia combat rules didn't work like a Bruce Lee fight, i.e. everyone approaching you does so individually and in an orderly queue! Lying on the floor as a precursor to a fight was not the best plan ever made! In short, we grappled him, knocked him unconscious and left him loosely restrained. By the time he regained consciousness, he has pain on the back of his head and his forehead – *a very small price to pay for meeting two of the most evil characters in the world of Saturnalia.*

Well until he saw his reflection, some cad had carved RLA on his character's forehead. RLA stood for Renchu Liberation Army, the organisation I was the head of.

I've saved what I consider the best mistake for last. Neil Packer owns this story, and if I have got anything wrong, Neil, please correct me. It is called the Bullhead story, and is legendary in PBM circles.

Neil ran the Northern half of Saturnalia, which was vastly different from the South. Think long, cold, snowy vistas, a Nordic style existence in a harsh, unforgiving world. Neil gets a start up for a character called Bullhead, and Neil send him up the initial start-up materials, including some rumours. One of which was, *"A princess is being held captive in a castle on an island across the sea."*

The character then sends in Bullhead's first turn proper to Neil. It reads as follows; *"I get in a boat, cross the ocean, attack the castle, kill the guards and rescue the Princess."*

Neil considers the situation with a wry smile, and writes a lengthy turn in return to the player, explaining that maybe it would a good idea to reconsider his plans, as to cross the ocean to any island costs coinage, and he just about has enough to get on a boat to the nearest Isle. He also doesn't know what isle the said Princess is held captive on.

Bullhead's next turn comes in. "I spend all my money on the fare to the nearest island, cross the ocean, attack the castle, kill the guards and rescue the princess."

Neil writes back explaining that Bullhead gets on a boat, and indeed lands on an island, whereupon there is indeed a castle. However, this castle is very highly patrolled by guards who look very professional and competent. As Bullhead has minimal arms and armour, and even less combat experience, rushing the castle may not be the ideal idea? Maybe he should reconsider his options?

Bullhead's next turn comes in. "I attack the guards, enter the castle and rescue the Princess."

Neil's next turn reads something like this: *"Full of bravado, you charge the castle and attack the guards. The first guard you attack easily outclasses you, and within seconds of the*

combat, runs you through and kills you. Your death is mercifully swift.”

Enclosed alongside the turn was a fresh start up for a new character. Unfortunately, the player that was the legend behind Bullhead, was never heard from again!

I'll close with a mistake made by my postman that personally cost me. I was playing Midgard, many years ago, which was (and maybe still is!) a computer moderated wargame that allowed you to have three actions that were hand moderated. I decided to play a position aligned with the Cult of the Dark One, a pagan group that followed a deity whose aims aligned with death, destruction, demons and bloodshed.

I submitted a turn, and for my three hand moderated actions, I wrote a vivid text that described how we danced naked round a bonfire, sacrificed some of our members to our god, drunk their blood, got drunk and fornicated gratuitously, all in the name of the Dark One. The GM really got into it and wrote a very candid and carnal response, which was really well crafted.

However, at the time, I lived in a block of flats at Number 59. As I was getting the lift up to my flat, a neighbour stopped me and said that another neighbour at No 49 had received a letter for me, but was too frightened to give it to me???? I went and knocked at No 49's door, and when the woman saw it was me, she literally threw the letter to me, the door slamming shut immediately after. What she threw at me was my Midgard turn. The postman had delivered my turn to the wrong address, the woman at No 49 had opened it, read it in horror and told my other neighbours what was inside!

From that day onwards, many of my neighbours shunned me. If I was waiting for a lift, they'd take the stairs. If they were with their kids, they would steer them away from me. If I said "Hi!", they would blank me. I tried to explain to them it was a postal game – *but hey* – have YOU tried to explain Postal Gaming to the uninitiated?

Thanks Postie – *whatta mistaka to makea!*

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FREE



"You herd it
here first."

Vincent van Goat: the one-eared Clan News mascot

The Clutch



elcome to another short issue of
Clan News. Hopefully by next
issue, we'll be back to a longer
format based on Clan input.

Please help out by
participating in the
[Clan News Survey](#).
You'll be paid 20 gold
in-game for one to
two minutes of your
time filling in the survey. Please help me
understand what you want from this newsletter.



Clan 595 is launching his City Special Event in
this issue of Clan News. Check out page two for
information concerning the Oakenloch
Commodities Exchange. I'm excited to participate
in this upcoming event.

We've scheduled an audio chat on the Tribe Talk
Discord to take place Saturday afternoon in the
USA, Saturday evening in the UK & Europe,
and Sunday morning in Australia. It's hard to
find a time that works for all time zones. I hope
you can join us. Details are provided in the
#audio-chats channel of the Discord server.

Until next time... don't forget to feed your goats.

Raven Zachary, Yáahl, Clan 540



Image by Jean de Froissart via Wikimedia Commons

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Contribute

Submit your content to Clan News.
Contributors are paid in-game. See the last
page of this issue for more details.

Clan News Issue #62 deadline:
6 February 2023 @ 8:00 UTC



Notices

Some comics and an anonymous trade deal. A
selection of great (and paid!) notices in this issue.

Check out this month's clan notices
starting on page 5 of this issue.



Turn Deadline

Orders for 820-11 are due on 29 January 2023

Australian Eastern: 20:00

UK: 9:00

UTC: 9:00

USA Eastern: 4:00 / USA Pacific: 1:00



What lies beyond your door?

Charles Mosteller

A B movie or B film is a low-budget commercial motion picture. In its original usage, during the Golden Age of Hollywood, the term more precisely identified films intended for distribution as the less-publicized bottom half of a double feature (akin to B-sides for recorded music). However, the U.S. production of films intended as second features largely ceased by the end of the 1950s.

- A quote from Wikipedia

Low-budget is an apt description for my whole approach to "promoting" play by mail gaming. B movies is one of the very first things that I think of (along with comic books from bygone eras), when PBM comes to mind.

Some might frown, when comic books and B movies are mentioned in the same sentence, or in the same article, with PBM gaming. They're not a "cultured" art form, some might lament. What in the world do things as diverse and as distant from PBM gaming as comic books and B movies have in common? *It's called imagination.*

Imagination and the ability to tap into one's imagination. When you're young, imagination is your very best friend (other than perhaps your dog). Imagination is an instant ticket to anywhere! It's better than a Willy Wonka Golden Ticket, in fact.

Entire worlds never before imagined become reality. All kinds of adventures suddenly appear. You can watch (or read) and participate, at the same time. You get carried away to some other place. You meet creatures - and people - that you could never have imagined all on your own.

Comic books, B movies - these are catalysts. They are portals, they are doorways, to the infinite that lies beyond. Just out of sight, just out of mind, these alternate realities and other dimensions are capable of instantaneously materializing. All that it takes is a spark. All that it takes is a catalyst of some sort.

And to me, comic books, B movies, and PBM gaming are all hard-wired directly into the very core and nexus of my imagination. They share a commonality. I make room in my mind for all of them. It's a darned shame that we sometimes find it hard to let go of our imagination, huh?

"Grow up" is the term that they used to use to describe what you needed to do. Put all of that stuff away! Get real, why don't ya?

But some things, you just never really want to let go of them. Not entirely. Not 100%. Are you daft? Have you gone crazy?!

The Creature from the Black Lagoon still inhabits my mind. It still roams free in the wilds of my imagination. There is no scarlet letter to be found upon it, nor upon a countless number of other things that take up space in my imagination that seems to be without limits or bounds.

That guy that turned into a little fly on Shock Theater - he's still there. Cylons are everywhere. Space ships. Aliens, Bigfoot. The bigger, the better. The more, the better. More, dammit! I said more, not less. Do you just not understand?

Imagination has no boundaries to it. It's not something that you can just put a fence around. You can't wall it off. It's there. It's always there.

Just there.

And honestly, it doesn't take one heck of a whole lot for it to be unleashed upon an unsuspecting world, upon an unsuspecting little old ordinary me.

If it weren't for Hyborian War, as vintage of a play by mail game as has ever existed, then my mind - *my imagination* - would never have wandered as it has through and across the Hyborian Age. Yes, I know there are books. I am aware. I remain cognizant of that little fact.

And for some, books are sufficient. For a few, for a select few (or was it countless millions, if not billions?), books will always suffice. But my imagination takes its own paths. It walks and it roams and it wanders whithersoever it will. For it, you see, is the freest part of me.

It's a place where dinosaurs still roam, and it's a place where they share the same time frame as people. Dinosaurs eat people all over the place inside of my imagination.

There are explorers, and places and things to be explored, there. There's never an end to them all, and all of them are ever worth revisiting - *time and time and time, again!*

Alien invasions from other worlds happen with frequent regularity across the entire mindscape of my imagination. There are always starfarers flitting to and fro amongst the stars and across galaxies, there. And did I mention inter-dimensional travellers? *You bet!*

Even when I make the mistake of entertaining the thought, the barest of thoughts, that life is boring, or that the day is boring, I can always rely upon my imagination to prove me wrong.

PBM games, these play by mail games of which I frequently speak, are not just games. Just like comic books of old and just like B movies, PBM games are portals to so much more. PBM games are stargates of the mind. They are wormholes, traversable wormholes to the very essence of life, itself.

For life was never intended to be a path to the dead end that we perceive as boredom. Boredom is an illusion that we craft to deceive ourselves. PBM games are like keys to open that door which stands between you and your imagination.

What lies beyond *your* door?



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