

# Suspense & Decision

**Quest of the Great Jewels**  
**Empires at War 1805**  
**Fallen Empires**  
**PhoenixBSE**  
**Galac-Tac**  
**Cohorts**

**ISSUE**  
**14**

*"We're back for  
the new year!"*

**2017**

**JANUARY**  
**2017**  
**ISSUE**

***A PBM Magazine for the 21st Century!***



# Madhouse UK

The world's leading turn-based games company



[www.madcentral.co.uk](http://www.madcentral.co.uk)

---

# DUNGEONWORLD

---

# SUSPENSE & DECISION ISSUE # 14

January 2017

Daring to dream big!

Published by: PlayByMail.Net ©2017



**Editor:** [Charles Mosteller](#)

**Assistant Editor:** [Bernd Jaehnigen](#)

**Staff Writer:** [Jim Kemeny](#)

**Cover Artist:** [A. Kaviraj](#)

\* We want YOU to join our staff!



*In the last issue, I posed the following question, "Surely, there must be a better way?"*

*The intervening months between then and now underscore the truth that inheres in that proposition. The harsh reality is that, to do anything at all would be better than what I have actually done - which is nothing.*

*To be certain, there have been some good intentions. There always have been. The entire history of PBM gaming is full of good intentions, though. It is the road to Hell, and not to Utopia, that is paved with good intentions. Good intentions have not gotten the job done. Indeed, they will never get the job done! That's just a fact.*

*Historically and traditionally, PBM magazines have enjoyed a long legacy of publishing issues late. This, I assure you, is not our finest hour! Instead of getting better, a colorable argument exists that it's getting worse. Zero reliability. No frequency of publication to speak of. The current approach is a total wreck! This much, I think, is indisputable.*

*Yet, against all odds and against all realistic expectations, this issue has now made its way into your hands.*                   **- Charles**

# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

## Issue #14 - January 2017

**To trek unchained and to boldly go!**

<b>6</b>		<b><i>Bloodbath in the North: BR57 - August 686</i></b> by Peter Perrin
<b>14</b>		<b><i>Empires at War 1805: Waves of Joy or Holes to Hide</i></b> by Dan Bronson aka Louis XVII
<b>18</b>		<b><i>Galac-Tac: Turn Processing Sequence</i></b> by Davin Church
<b>24</b>		<b><i>Cohorts: Veil of Entropy</i></b> by Paul Mouchet
<b>28</b>		<b><i>Ridin' Out the Storm: A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 3</i></b> by Douglas Neman
<b>32</b>		<b><i>Fallen Empires: Marchwood – Part B</i></b> by Colin Danks
<b>38</b>		<b><i>Caliphate Nights: Moving Day</i></b> by Sid Razavi
<b>42</b>		<b><i>Quest of the Great Fool: My Adventures in Zorplia</i></b> by Bob McLain
<b>52</b>		<b><i>Where We're Heading</i></b> by Charles Mosteller

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #15**  
**JANUARY 20th, 2017**

Editor's Note: Send all submissions to: [PlayByMail.Net@gmail.com](mailto:PlayByMail.Net@gmail.com)



# \*Spotlight On Talisman Games\*

**Talisman Games** has a long history. Founded in 1982 as a Play-by-Mail (PBM) game company, we have gone by many names. In 1993 we discontinued all of our PBM products and brought up a BBS, but the BBS environment was soon superseded by the up-and-coming Internet. From there, it was a short jump to the Web.

[www.Talisman-Games.com](http://www.Talisman-Games.com)

Talisman Games is an old-fashioned company with some old-fashioned games, but we're now making use of the web environment to make them easier for you to enjoy.

We're providing an on-line competitive gaming site, starting small (only the first game is running at present), but eventually with [several different games](#) to choose from.

*Now Recruiting...*

Innovative scientists required for ongoing military research and development work.



**Design • Build • Conquer**  
Play Galac-Tac at [www.talisman-games.com](http://www.talisman-games.com)



**Please consider submitting something for a future issue!**

# Bloodbath in the North

## BR57 - August 686

Peter Perrin

Marcin breathed heavily as he rubbed his hand along the course fabrics of the moon emblazoned banner. He expected to feel an immediate change in his senses, as he had been told that the banner had magical properties that enabled a man to see in the moonlit sky as clearly as if the sun was out. He saw no noticeable change in his vision, but then the fog that had been summoned by the priests of the **Alliance of Light** blanketed the area up to the walls of El Dorado so gave little chance for light to pass through in the daytime. Pushed by the man behind he moved forward following the shadow of the man in front, taking care to watch his footing for any trip hazard among the gloom. He knew he was still a long way from the walls of the **North Born** city, but with every step he took he expected the city to appear out of the fog. Every few minutes a flaming missile would streak overhead and the crash of stone on stone could be heard ahead. He knew the walls were hundreds of yards ahead of him but he still strained to see them through the swirling fog.

He had studied the walls before the fog

had been summoned just like the rest of the men in his unit. Most of the landward towers had been heavily bombarded by the great siege machines of the alliance. The **Company of the Elk** had overseen the work, and the tops of all the towers were now unusable for mounting machines upon. The wooden hoardings that lined the walls and the gatehouses had been destroyed by lesser machines, and though the defenders had worked their carpenters through the long nights to repair and replace the damage what was left of them were pitiful and would offer no protection from the assault.

Like most of the men around him he was confident of victory. The commanders of the **Alliance** had a solid plan

and had come up with counters for all of the enemy's options. The plan had been well described to the army and everyone knew their part as well as an overview of the assault as a whole. In his mind he once again ran through his part in the battle. He could hear the others around him muttering prayers to the goddess, and others to the gods of the **Iron Empire**. He knew little of their religion but their warriors were as tough as any he had met and were well disciplined.



**Peter Perrin**  
of  
**Fallen Empires**

The man in front of him stopped suddenly and took his place in line and Marcin took a pace to his right and stepped into line next to him. He looked about himself and could see the ranks of men disappearing into the fog and breathed deeply once again, desperate to remain calm in the night.

He heard screams up ahead. The attack had begun then. The men around moved nervously around him, eager to begin the assault and have this long night over as soon as possible. Long minutes passed before any more noises were heard. The first crash of metal upon wood made Marcin and those around him jump in shock. His heart was racing now. Another crash sounded through the gloom. Then another. The sound bounced off the nearby hills and then off the walls, creating a long echo like the ringing of a blacksmiths hammer. He had seen the great battering ram known as **Rancaboc** being prepared in the camp, and could only imagine what damage its massive metal head would be doing to the heavy doors of the city. After the fifth crash he heard another noise from ahead. The heaving of the men ahead sounded much like an team of oarsmen pulling from a harbour, but within a couple of minutes the sound of heavily laden wheels took over as the siege towers began to move with more speed. He knelt down in time with the

The glow lit up the area ahead of the advancing men, and Marcin realised he was now less than fifty yards from the walls of the city.

men in front of him and they lifted the long ladder as one.

With a tug from the lead man he moved forwards with the rest of his ladder crew. The groups to either side began moving with them, though they did not carry ladders but hefted wooden pavise large enough for many men to stand behind. The walk through the fog was eerie. The flaming missiles had now ceased, but other flames could be seen up ahead. A new batch of screams suddenly filled the night as one of the siege towers suddenly burst into flames. The glow lit

up the area ahead of the advancing men, and Marcin realised he was now less than fifty yards from the walls of the city. The lead man quickened the pace upon seeing the target so near. The thuds of arrows hitting dirt and flesh could be heard, and the man in front of Marcin dropped suddenly with an arrow protruding from his face. He

heard a soft mew from the man before stepping past him and onwards towards the wall.

A hundred heartbeats later and the front man stopped just short of a defensive ditch ahead. The enemy had been busy in the fog and had filled it with stakes and caltrops. Luckily for the attackers their ladders could span the ditch and still reach the wall tops. The front man turned away from the wall and dropped the feet of the ladder by his own. Marcin



and the ladder crew continued moving forwards, swinging the ladder up and over to place it against the high wall. Marcin heard a panicked yelp as one of the men ahead slipped and fell into the ditch. No one had time to help the man; instead they drew their weapons and began the climb over the spike filled death trap.

He was the third man on the ladder.

Those ahead of him grunted as they climbed as quickly as possible. He took a more measured pace knowing that they would require time to

swing their heavy axes and clear enough space for him to get onto the wall. He hooked his axe over his left wrist and looked up as the walls crest appeared from the gloom. He could have stared at the sight for hours had he been given the chance.

The moon lit the battlements with silver brilliance. He could see every feature of the walls and its defenders so clearly that he nearly lost his grip on the ladder. After the dim lightless fog he had spent the last few days in this felt like awakening from a dream.

He watched as the lead man took a heavy hammer to the face and fell off the ladder into the fog, the man ahead of him was struck in the side by three crossbow bolts and span off the ladder

spraying blood all over Marcin. He kept moving as an arrow flashed past his face. He heard the man below him scream as he fell from the ladder, but still he kept moving. Five rungs left. Two rungs left. His hand grasped the wall as the heavy hammer glanced off his breastplate, blowing the air out of his lungs. He swung himself over whilst breathing in the purest air he'd tasted in days, unhooking his axe just in time to deflect the next blow from the hammer. With a savage backswing he opened the defenders throat with the razor edge of his axe. With a quick blow he took out

**A sword blow came in from his left and he slipped in the hammerer's blood, crashing to the floor as the blade sliced through the air above his head.**

the swordsman's knee and scrambled to his feet in time to knock aside a spear thrust and punch the man in the face with the butt of his axe. The man slipped in the same blood as Marcin and fell off the back of the wall.

He span round in time to see a fresh group of defenders form a shield wall only paces away. He leapt towards it and brought his axe down to smash against the top of the closest shield, pulling it forward and down to open up a gap in the wall. Another battle axe came from his side and split the shield bearer's skull with a pop. Marcin and the newcomer made short work of the remaining two men throwing one off the wall and hacking the spear arm off the other. Seeing no one directly ahead he spun to check their



rear and saw more men of the alliance had reached the wall and were heading off to clear the other direction. He turned back and charged towards the rear of men who were fighting others who had crested the wall. His axe made short work of them and he realised that with that last kill he had no one more to fight.

He sat on the wall and waited for the next stage of the battle as the magical fog clearing behind him. There was still fighting further down the wall but he had done his part. He looked in at the second wall the defenders

had built since the siege began. It was low and thin but the trebuchet and catapults used to break the towers and hoardings could not reach it and so it would require some other strategy to break. Finally a siege tower reached the wall fifty paces

or so to his left. He and the men round him rose and made their way over to begin unpacking the cargo of the towers. The ramp dropped and immediately engineers started passing out the pieces of the Scorpion catapults and pointed out where to place them. In less than half an hour the first of the small machines was loosing their shot at the low wall. Within an hour there were dozens of the machines launching at the wall.

Again Marcin took the opportunity for a

The pioneers who dug the tunnels had begun their work as soon as the siege had begun and had spent many weeks digging through dirt and rock to enable the elite troops a way in to the city.

sit down and looked towards the gatehouse where **High Priestess Taria** and her acolytes began their work. He looked once more to the small wall and could see that the shot was being mostly concentrated on one area of the wall in front of the captured gatehouse.

Hundreds of shot were launched at that site and suddenly there was an unearthly rumble which shook the wall he was sat on. The bombarded site crumbled to nothing in front of him and he heard the war horns blow signal to the next phase of the attack.

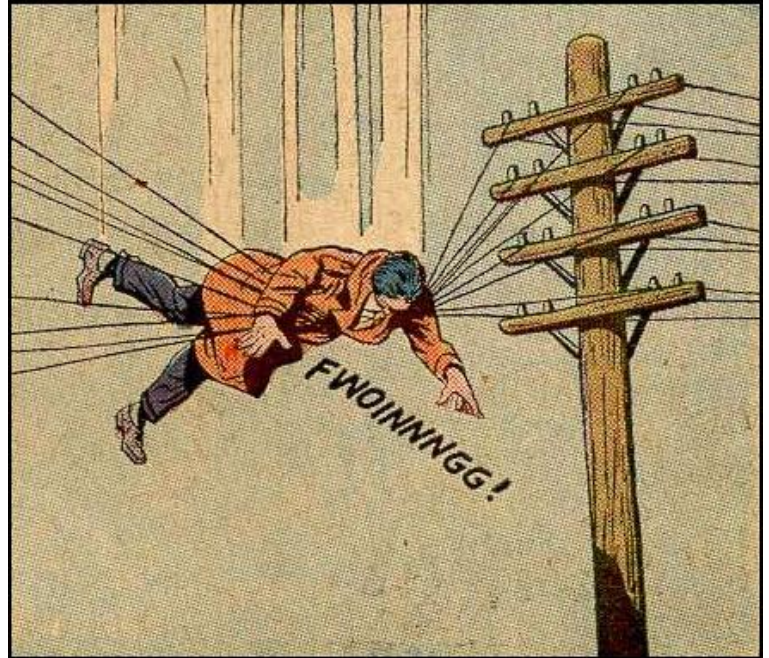
The ground shuddered once more as the thousands of heavy cavalry of the Alliance headed through the gate and towards the breach in the wall. He knew many would die in the charge but he could not imagine it failing to break through the hole in the **North Born** defences.

He looked on as **Alliance** troops burst out of warehouses behind the enemy defences. He saw the cavalry strike the breach and punch through the stunned defenders. He heard the screams of men and horses as the combat ensued. The **Alliance** elite struck the rear of the walls minutes later and Marcin knew the battle was won. He stood up as the rest of the alliance foot troops marched through the gates to begin the fight within the city and turned suddenly when he heard screams behind him.

Leaning over the wall he saw through the thinning fog hundreds of **North Born** troops pouring out of a siege tower further down the line and he could do nothing but watch as they hit the flank of the advancing men. Horns blew and drums beat as the reserve cavalry of the Alliance swung round from the far side of their encampment and galloped towards the aid of their fellows. Hundreds died before the cavalry arrived, hacked down in disarray by the counter attack. Finally the cavalry arrived and forced the enemy back from their assault, but they were unable to break their shield wall.

The **Alliance** troops had by now regrouped and began to form up to face the new threat. Their assault was halted by the sound of war horns in the city. Marcin turned as the horns blasted out the sound of victory behind him. He saw the white flag flying, the city was theirs.

# DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU.



# PLAY PBM!



# FALLEN EMPIRES



**Lead your tribe to glory, run a mercenary company, build the strongest settlement or be a political master on the continent of Clantium in Fallen Empires - a play by email Role play/Strategy game.**

Fallen Empires is a Role Playing game by email. Each turn you, the player, send in your instructions as to movement, actions etc. to the Games Master (GM). The instructions are partly in the form of calculations on a spread sheet, and partly in the form of written instructions.

Email us at for more details: [fallenemp@gmail.com](mailto:fallenemp@gmail.com)

Or look at our Facebook page: <http://goo.gl/2rKO5Q>

Or read some of our Battle, Historical or Alliance reports: [http://www.scribd.com/james\\_perrin\\_9](http://www.scribd.com/james_perrin_9)





Connecting Generations

[www.Queen-Games.com](http://www.Queen-Games.com)





# Is NUCLEAR WAR unavoidable?

Is Nuclear Escalation inevitable? Is Nuclear Proliferation inescapable?  
Are Weapons of Mass Destruction ever going to be found?

We don't know either, but we do know that the card game NUCLEAR WAR is the most fun you'll ever find in a box that size.

Originally Invented in 1965, this game makes fun of the very idea of trying to "win" a Nuclear War. 2014 marks the 49th Anniversary of the invention of this hilarious game. **Watch our website for news of the special 50th Anniversary edition.**

Nuclear War has THREE expansion sets: Nuclear Escalation, Nuclear Proliferation, and Weapons of Mass Destruction. All these games should be available at your favorite local game store. If not, you can find them on our webpage at [www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com) or you can mail us a check or money order (add \$5 postage if you are in the USA, or \$19 postage for outside the USA).

We accept Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express, and Paypal.

**Suggested US retail prices:**

**Nuclear War - \$29.95**

**Nuclear Escalation - \$29.95**

**Nuclear Proliferation - \$29.95**

**Weapons of Mass Destruction - \$19.95**

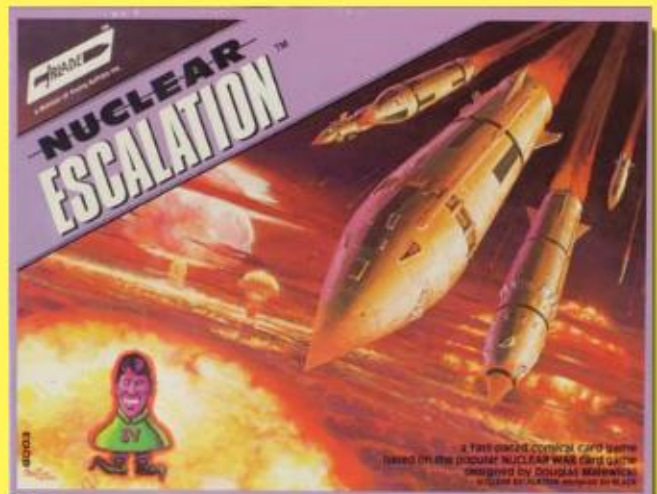
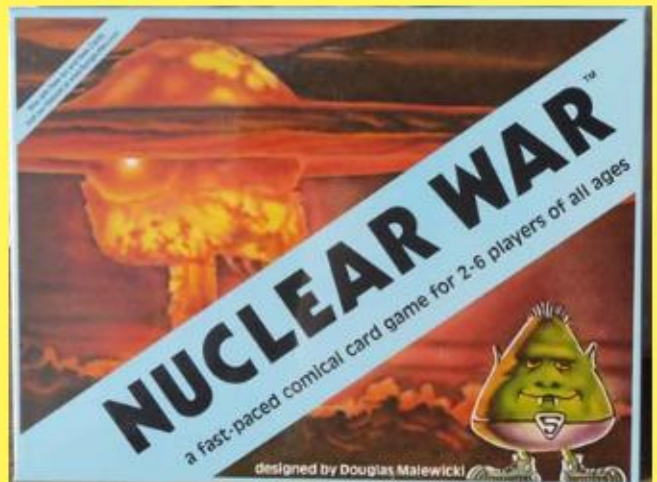
**Flying Buffalo, Inc.**

P.O. Box 8467

Scottsdale, AZ 85252

[www.flyingbuffalo.com](http://www.flyingbuffalo.com)

[games@flyingbuffalo.com](mailto:games@flyingbuffalo.com)



# Empires at War 1805

## Waves of Joy or Holes to Hide

Dan Bronson aka Louis XVII

I started playing [Empires at War 1805](#) two years ago when I accidentally fell upon its banner somewhere on the internet. As a Napoleonic times enthusiast I was intrigued by the graphics and immediately created an account. But just two days later, I almost gave up on the game: The tutorial game had some issues and I never managed completing my 'training,' so I gave up in frustration. *(Note to GMs: you have to improve the tutorial somehow, it is the first impression of the game and it kind of put you off)*

A month or so later, and after being bored, I returned to check out the website again. It was then that I watched the tutorial videos which were easier to understand, and then had a go on the game manual. Things began to become a lot clearer, and suddenly I became much more interested: The game definitely deserved my attention.

On my first game I was more or less playing silly. Probably did every mistake in the book and my reign was short-lived. But I caught myself going to work

in the morning, and the first thing I did after making coffee and before starting on work emails, was to log in to check what had happened in my turn. There is a lot of anticipation while waiting for an EaW turn, every month something can happen that will either bring you waves of joy or send you searching for a hole to hide.



In the game you control an Empire of the early 19th century. I would definitely not describe it as a historical simulator since it is biased for balance reasons, but there is still a lot of Napoleonic flavor involved in graphics, troop types and gameplay. In the past I managed to conquer France with the

Confederation of the Rhine, which is the equivalent of today's France conquering the USA, so not really historically accurate but entertaining nonetheless. You manage the economy and the military might of your nation, as you always ponder the question: invest more in economy or in the building of more armies? Even when you manage to answer this, politics kick in and



everything blows up in your face: In game 28 in which I am playing Holland, I had a very successful alliance with Great Britain, Naples and Prussia. We were leading the game in terms of VPs and relative power for some time, when everyone else in the game attacked us... not sure what we will do here, we are certainly losing the war unless something changes politically. You never know until the very end what other players have in store for you, one day you enjoy your supremacy, the next you fight with your back against a wall, fates change so suddenly, not unlikely in those times.

In game 21 the exact opposite happened: There was a leading alliance, winning by far, until the point they decided to attack me and my ally (we were playing Italy & Naples and had defeated Morocco in North Africa).

After a short but very violent defensive campaign, we managed to turn the tide on a game that was thought impossible to turn around. Truth be told, our opponents underestimated us a bit, seeing that the campaign in North Africa had not ended and tried for a quick victory. So they didn't attack us in a very organized fashion, and paid a high price for it: After many months of hard fighting, they lost the game to one of our allies on the other side of the map... Egypt. I finished with the largest army in Europe, but still no win for me in terms

**After a short but very violent defensive campaign, we managed to turn the tide on a game that was thought impossible to turn around.**

of victory points, just the satisfaction of survival against superior (initially) forces.

Probably the best game so far was the one I played with Sweden in game 26 where I invaded... (with the help of Poland, and others later) Great Britain! We managed to take half of Scotland before eventually the British army pushed us back behind fortifications, where we held our fort for many months. Britain was my ally initially, and in that game I had successfully invaded and defeated Russia, but made peace with my opposition when I realized how close

I was to winning Britain. After informing my ex-ally that I cannot give him the game without a fight, I tried to stop him. The brightest moment of that game, was the final MASSIVE naval battle, the largest in any Empires at War

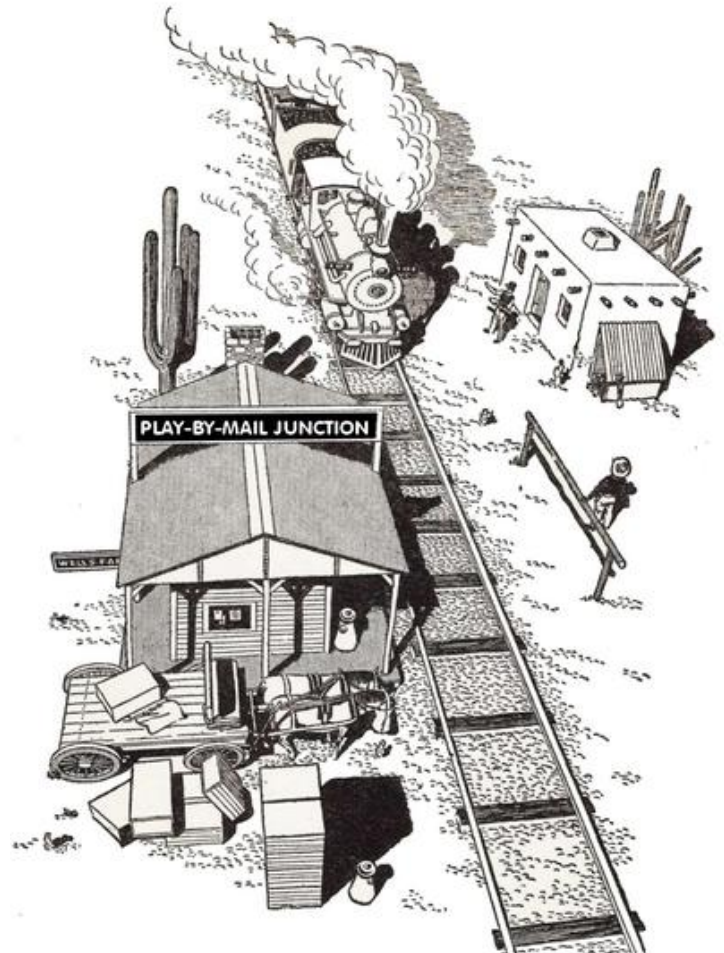
game so far, involving hundreds of vessels from both sides, with 7 nations participating! We did win the huge naval campaign vs Britain and its allies in the end, but too late as Britain won the game... I finished the game number 1 on naval power this time, but guess what, no win for me again.

I am now into game 35 which is just beginning... aiming to go for a kill early on so that I can finally have good chances for winning. Who knows what the future holds, diplomacy is intense

already and I have already received a number of threats... so it's looking good already.

To conclude a long letter, I think I became an addict to this game. I like the way it plays, the anticipation, the politics, the community of helpful but – oh God – extremely competitive wargamers. This is one of the games that you understand right from the start – it was not developed for mass-scale commercial use, but as a labour of love by people who enjoy playing games. If only the GMs (who I know have full time jobs and only work on this project part time) could spend more time on it, I believe we have only scratched the surface of the true potential of this game & system.

At the moment looking forward to the new Iberian scenario.





***It began as a speck on a map...*** a speck marked "home". A lone star amid hundreds, yet from it you envisioned a great empire spanning the galaxy. Patiently, with determination and creativity, you crafted that empire. Exploring, exploiting, expanding. Designing space-going vessels to carry your dream to the farthest reaches, to defend it and help it to grow.

***But you were not alone.***

The Others, too, had dreams and visions. Their fleets, alien and strange, have turned towards that one shining star at the heart of your empire.

**ARE YOU READY FOR THEM?**



**GALAC-TAC** - the classic game of galactic conquest, bringing fun and challenge to the PBM world since 1982.

**Make new friends! Make new enemies!**

For more information, or to sign up as a player (for only \$5/month!), visit

**[www.talisman-games.com](http://www.talisman-games.com)**

Payments accepted via PayPal, credit or debit card, or check.

***For a limited time, 12 free bonus months after your first paid month.***

# Galac-Tac

## Turn Processing Sequence

Davin Church

When players submit their turns for [Galac Tac](#) (a game of space conquest) and it's time to process them, what really happens under the covers? I'd like to present a technical overview of the way in which Galac Tac turns are processed to shed some light on the mysteries behind the scenes. Understanding this sequence can help explain more about how you should put your turn together, and why.

First, all the submitted turn sheets are collected and placed in a random order for their initial processing. As mentioned in the Galac Tac

rulebook, actions fall into one of three categories: Before Movement, Movement, and After Movement. Other activities (such as combat) also occur after movement is complete. (Strictly speaking, an "action" is the game command that you enter on your turn sheet and an "order" is the behavior that a ship is expected to perform.)

### The Before Movement Phase

In this phase of processing, each player's turn is examined one action at a time,

strictly in the order they were submitted. The action is first checked for errors of both syntax and context. For instance, you can't load a battleship into a carrier's hangar bay, and you can't load cargo into a ship that's already at full capacity, even if the actions are typed correctly. All actions will be listed on the first page of your turn report, and any error messages will be shown here alongside the offending action.

Now Recruiting...

Industrious colonists to establish and manage new outposts for the Empire.



Design • Build • Conquer

Play Galac-Tac at [www.talisman-games.com](http://www.talisman-games.com)

If the action is a "Before" type, then it is executed as soon as it has been validated. For instance, a LOAD action immediately places cargo in a cargo bay, and an

ASSIGN action links fighters to their supporting hangar bays. A JOIN action can be used to assemble ships into logical fleets which can then be given orders as a single unit, and the CLASSIFY action creates a new ship design so a later BUILD action can request the construction of a ship of that type.

Some "Before" actions simply take immediate effect, such as CLASSIFY or LOAD. But a number of them (along with all the "Movement" actions) are

used to give "orders" to a ship or fleet, such as DEFEND or PATROL. (Giving orders to the flagship of a fleet applies those orders to every ship in the fleet.)

If the action is a "Movement" action, the ship's destination is recorded at this time, though the movement itself does not occur yet. If the action is an "After" action, then the game position simply gets a notation of what needs to be done after movement and any resulting combat have been handled.

After all the actions have been reviewed, their initial processing will be complete, but the final results of many of these actions are yet to be determined.

### **The Movement Phase**

Once all the turn sheets have been dealt with, it is time to actually move the ships to their listed destinations. While moving, ships do not actually occupy any space in between the starting point and destination. They simply "jump" from one to the other, and thus there is no concept of "passing" anything else (empty space, star systems, or other ships). All the ships are moved effectively at once, since the movements themselves do not affect one another.

However, there is a special case here. Each ship has a maximum speed (the distance which its engines can move it in one turn). If you have requested that a ship move farther than it can go, it will move in a straight line exactly to its maximum distance and there it will stop for the turn. Be careful when making

long voyages that one of these "stop over" points does not leave your ship somewhere (such as a hostile star system location) that might be dangerous or otherwise undesirable. If such a ship is not given other orders to the contrary next turn, then it will continue on its journey at that time.

### **The Combat Phase**

After ship movement and before anything else happens, we have the potential for

conflict. If ships from two or more empires end the turn in the same coordinate location (whether there's a star system there or not) then there will be some sort of disagreement.

If ANY ship at the location has combative orders (e.g. Attack or Defend) then combat will ensue and all ships present will be drawn into the conflict, even those on peaceful missions and those without weapons.

**There is no formal alliance system in Galac Tac so there is never a completely peaceful coexistence for multiple empires in the same place. If combat begins, every empire shoots equally at every other empire in a blazing free-for-all.**



If ALL ships (even if they have weapons) are on peaceful missions (e.g. Chart or Colonize), then a "cease fire" will occur instead. A cease fire will cause most ships' orders (with a few exceptions) to be cancelled and those ships will not perform their orders this turn.

There is no formal alliance system in Galac Tac so there is never a completely peaceful coexistence for multiple empires in the same place. If combat begins, every empire shoots equally at every other empire in a blazing free-for-all.

After any combat is resolved, if a single empire claims total victory (no ships remain of any other empire), then the remaining ships may continue to perform any orders they have.

Combats have a time limit in any given turn, so it is possible for well-matched combats to end with ships still alive from more than one empire. In that case, non-combat orders from all ships are cancelled and will not be performed this turn.

Any damaged fighters that live through the combat will automatically return to their assigned hangar bays, and will be repaired automatically by their support teams – a great reason to use fighters!

Any empire with ships remaining after a combat will receive a combat report detailing all the ships in the system (including enemy ships) and what became of them (how damaged they were, which were destroyed, etc.). If an empire had no ships survive to send back such a report, the ships simply get labelled as "missing in action" and no other information is available.

Ships remaining after combat may be given new orders next turn, of course. Leaving the system should be a serious consideration for any empire that wasn't clearly victorious.

Now Recruiting...

Historians to produce the definitive ongoing record of our conquest of the galaxy.



Design • Build • Conquer

Play Galac-Tac at [www.talisman-games.com](http://www.talisman-games.com)

## The After Movement Phase

After movement and combat have taken place, ships will then perform any orders they have been given. Chart orders will chart a system, Colonize orders will begin colonization, Refit orders will update the ship to the latest tech level, etc..

In addition to ship orders being handled, changes to star systems and the empire as a whole are also dealt with at this time. Star systems may turn into colonies or production centers when their development is complete, enemy systems may be destroyed, missiles (ammunition) may be manufactured,



scientific research is performed, etc.. Importantly, this is also the time when new ship construction actually occurs.

Many tasks cannot be performed at a star system if enemy ships remain there after combat is concluded. This is particularly important for building new ships, so don't fail to win any battles in your own production systems or your ships there won't have any construction work done on them.

If any enemy ships are left in one of your colonies or production centers (whether combat occurred there or not), your system will automatically send you a frantic report how big of a fleet (and whose) has encroached upon your territory, hoping for some immediate assistance. This is in addition to any combat report that any of your surviving ships may send.

### Reporting

Following turn processing is the generation of formatted reports for each empire. In the old days, these would simply be printed and mailed, but of course now the reports are available immediately on the web site mere seconds after the turns are processed. So now the "suspense" is just waiting for the turn deadline to pass so that you can begin the "decision" process for your next turn!

**Talisman Games**

<http://www.talisman-games.com/>



**PBM VISION  
IS  
POWERED  
BY  
IMAGINATION!**





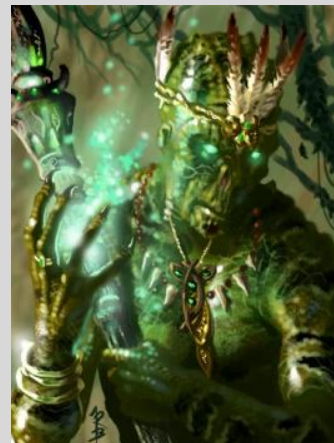
## ALAMAZE PRESENTS DUEL! PLAY FREE!

DUEL! is our new introductory game to Alamaze for just two players on the beautiful new Centauria map. Simplified by having just one opposing kingdom to consider and some elements like sea power removed, it is the best way to learn Alamaze. Join with a friend, or join solo and ask to play DUEL! with a mentoring experienced player to show you the ropes.

Alamaze is the preeminent fantasy strategy war game that has won Origins Game of the Year and broad acclaim including in Dragon Magazine from Shogun designer Michael Gray.

As we introduce DUEL! to readers of Suspense & Decision, we are offering a **free game** of DUEL! to those readers who sign up (no credit card info needed, no invoice, no obligation) and mention this promotion.

Get an account and into your free game by just providing your email address, name, and Alamaze persona in the simple form at [www.alamaze.co](http://www.alamaze.co) (not com) and explore our forum at <http://kingdomsofarcania.net/forum/index.php>. Rules and Resources are also available there. We look forward to seeing you in Alamaze soon!





# COMPANY COMMANDER

## Modern Small Unit Combat in the Third World

- ✓ Individual Tanks and Vehicles
- ✓ Artillery & Support Weapons
- ✓ Naval Units
- ✓ Individual Aircraft loaded with Individual Ordnance

- ✓ Headquarters
- ✓ Command Posts
- ✓ Logistics

- ✓ 10-man Infantry Squads
- ✓ 4 Types of Infantry
- ✓ 5-man Support Units
- ✓ Commanders & Officers

- ✓ Email and Postal Play
- ✓ Massive Map Area
- ✓ Free Rules and Map Online

Contact: [jason@jason-oates-games.com](mailto:jason@jason-oates-games.com)  
Website: [www.jason-oates-games.com](http://www.jason-oates-games.com)



# Cohorts

## Veil of Entropy

Paul Mouchet

I have been working on a new PBM game now for, well, way too long. I think it started sometime around 1992 and then has been an on-again, off-again relationship since then. In the past four years however, it's been more on-again than anything else. I have written the game in about 5 different programming languages with a variety of orders/turn delivery strategies. I'd like to think that each time I rewrote the game, it got significantly better. My most current version of the game is called Cohorts and it's being written for Windows 10 and Xbox One. The reason why I chose that platform is a discussion for another day.

People have wondered why I'd devote so much of my time to developing a game that is for such a niche market as PBM. There are a few reasons really, but the really big reason is that I love the play style of PBM games. They're deep, rich and diverse. They're typically complicated and detailed. But for me, what I really love about PBM is that it forces you to slow down,

take your time, and really think about what it is you want to do for your next turn. There are no saves. There are no do-overs. You often have teammates to work with, allies to consider and enemies to worry about. In short, PBM games are great fun.

When I started writing Cohorts I

**When I started writing Cohorts I really wanted to create a game world where choices mattered.**

really wanted to create a game world where choices mattered. The race of your characters or military units has a significant outcome as to their strengths and abilities. The lands you hold allow the creation of weapons, armor,

mounts, etc. that possibly no other player can create. The terrain significantly affects movement and combat outcomes. The quests and adventures that you complete can change the landscape of the game world in either a small or a significant way. Lastly, I wanted the game to be more of a set of rules that module designers could create their own game worlds to play in. The designers could try to for deep, complicated game worlds

that could hold hundreds of players at once or they could create a much more scaled down version where they might just invite a few friends to join them in a closed game.

So, off I went writing down my design, trying to imagine the sorts of things a module designer might want to see in their world. I thought the best way to do that was to create a huge game world and let my own

module requirements push the limits of what the game system could handle. This module is called Veil of Entropy and it features five planes of existence where Gods and mortals alike struggle to survive what will surely be a battle of epic proportion.

It took me about 4 months to code and test that design. Once the game system itself was developed I started working on the user interface (UI) components, the game master tool set and the module data itself. It's been a little more than six months since I've started and I'm not really sure how

close I am to completion. The game is being played in Alpha Test right now, but it's only a subset of the rules. It's also only a subset of the game world, with barely enough detail for players to run a party of characters through a dozen or so quest chains.

The alpha testing really brought to the forefront an issue that had been nagging at me since I started the module design. Even at two

turns a week, which is pretty fast by PBM standards, the players were never going to get through the game world fast enough to discern if the factional victory conditions were even close to being balanced. Ideally, as far as I'm concerned, victory conditions for team-play games like this should be

diverse (each team has their own unique set of goals) but they should all take about the same length of time to complete (assuming equally skilled players).

My estimation is that a game of Veil of Entropy will last for about 100 – 130 turns. Even at two turns a week, my testers would take well over a year to complete a

**My estimation is that a game of Veil of Entropy will last for about 100 – 130 turns. Even at two turns a week, my testers would take well over a year to complete a game.**

game. Then trying to tweak, balance and retest would become nearly impossible to respond in a timely fashion.

To solve this testing issue, I decided to create a single-player stand-alone version of the game. A player could start up a game of their own, select a faction to play and run through the game as fast as they wanted to. Since there are no real-player opponents to contend with, I estimate a player might be able to play a full game in just a few days. This would start to give me some timely feedback on areas in the module design that can lead to a more balanced set of victory conditions and paths to victory for each faction.

In addition to making it possible for my testers to quickly play the game from beginning to end, the standalone version also lets players "practice" in a sandbox of their own. This lets them try out various tactics and paths to victory without potentially ruining months of game play just to try something new. After learning the ropes in Player vs. Environment gaming, they can forage into the Player vs. Player environment, which is where the real PBM fun comes in – large scale team vs. team mayhem. At the time of writing this, the standalone version is about a week away from

delivery to the alpha testers. Time will tell whether or not I've created something meaningful and playable.

For anybody that would like to get an early peek at the game, send me an email at [paul@mouchetsoftware.ca](mailto:paul@mouchetsoftware.ca) or join our [Facebook group](#) "*Cohorts Game System*," to get a look at some early screen shots and videos of the game.

Cheers,  
Paul



**Paul Mouchet, creator of the *Cohorts* system, with his dog, Buddy.**



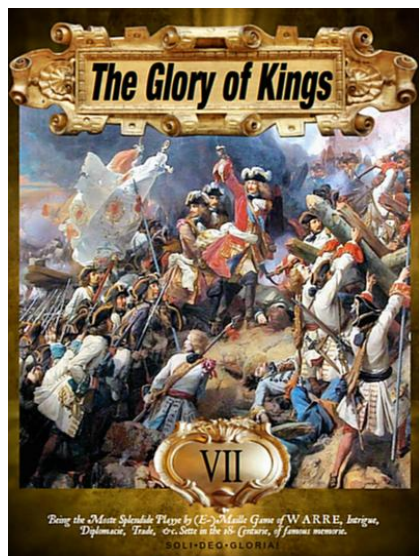
# The Glory of Kings

AGEMA's blockbuster game of 18<sup>th</sup> century warfare and diplomacy, **THE GLORY OF KINGS** puts you in the role of a king, prince, pirate or lord. The only thing you need to take part is a copy of the rules. You can take part either by email, or by the post.

This is how you can join:

1. Purchase a copy of the rules, available as a download from Wargames Vault, or directly from the publishers as a pdf sent by email or we can send a copy through the mail as a printed version. The publisher's website can be found at [www.agema.org.uk](http://www.agema.org.uk).
2. Once you have the rules, email AGEMA asking a list of currently available game positions. The email address to use is either [agemahotmail@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:agemahotmail@hotmail.co.uk) or [news@agemagame.org.uk](mailto:news@agemagame.org.uk).
3. Choose your position, and email AGEMA your choice on one of the above email addresses to make it has been reserved for you.
4. Please visit the AGEMA website to make a payment to set up your game account. The payment should be made on the Pay for Turns page on the bottom right part of the home page at [www.agema.org.uk](http://www.agema.org.uk).
5. AGEMA will then send the set-up details of your position, including the in-game newspaper, any letters available, and relevant maps as well as state-specific files.

The game newspaper will tell you the date the next turn is due in to AGEMA. Well done, you are now playing **THE GLORY OF KINGS!** Game turns are typically processed once per month.



# Ridin' Out the Storm

## A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 3

### Douglas Neman

#### **Weather Report: 3500-03**

I'm beginning to regret snapping at Central Command over the repair video. I think we're being punished for it.

CC sent us to a star system so far away it took an entire fortnight to get here. Do you know how many things there are to do on a ship like this, and how fun it is to do all of those things for an entire fortnight? Rex and I are *really* getting tired of checkers. (We tried chess. We read the rules, set up the pieces, and just stared at them for a while. Then we went back to checkers.)

Other star systems were closer, but we were ordered here. Someone's eager to find an enemy outpost or scout ship. Too eager. But of course, they wouldn't admit that, even if we had the nerve to question orders. Which we don't.

Emperor Diaper-Rash should concentrate on colonizing worlds and accumulating the resources he needs to build an empire. Instead, he's gone hunting, because he needs instant gratification. Easy for him; he's not the one in the unarmed scout ship.

Maybe we can surrender to the first enemy we meet. I figure, one look at our emperor and they'll take pity on us. Hell, I would.

Rex says I'm engaging in armchair psychology. I say I'm stating the freaking obvious. Doofus can't even run an empire right. If he's gonna take us to war, can we at least have a leader who knows what he's doing so we can be on the winning side? Is that too much to ask? Maybe we can surrender to the first

enemy we meet. I figure, one look at our emperor and they'll take pity on us. Hell, I would.

Rex and I both feel it: we're being thrown to the wolves. I guess that's why we felt a little reckless. Coming into the system, Rex took the ship in close and buzzed a couple of the outer planets. It was

dangerous and stupid, but I didn't care. I felt the same way.

Then we passed a gas giant with magnificent rings. We saw this planet's sunrise from space, with three of its moons coming into view, and the sunlight sparkling off its rings in all kinds of different colors. Rex and I both just stared. We were overcome with emotion for moment, in the silence of our little ship. It was...beautiful.

But we had to leave the ringed planet behind and search for the little rocky ones. I was glad to leave it behind. Something that beautiful should remain untouched by our ugly little war. Sparkle on, big guy!

And the kicker? No enemy outpost. No enemy scout ship. No enemy fleet. Not even an enemy restaurant. A complete lack of any enemy in a system which yields only two PV per fortnight. Ha! Serves 'em right. It really does.

And, of course, CC got upset with us for delivering the bad news. Because obviously, it's all our fault.

Their response? Another system so distant that we'll barely get there in a single fortnight.

Rex and I just looked at each other. Neither of us said a word.

The other scout ships are exploring worlds close to the home system. We're the only one being sent in a direct line as deep into space as we can go.

While we were setting the course, Rex said, "Boy, Admiral Brighton *really* hates you!"

"Everybody loves me," I said. "It must be you."

"I. Don't. Think so."

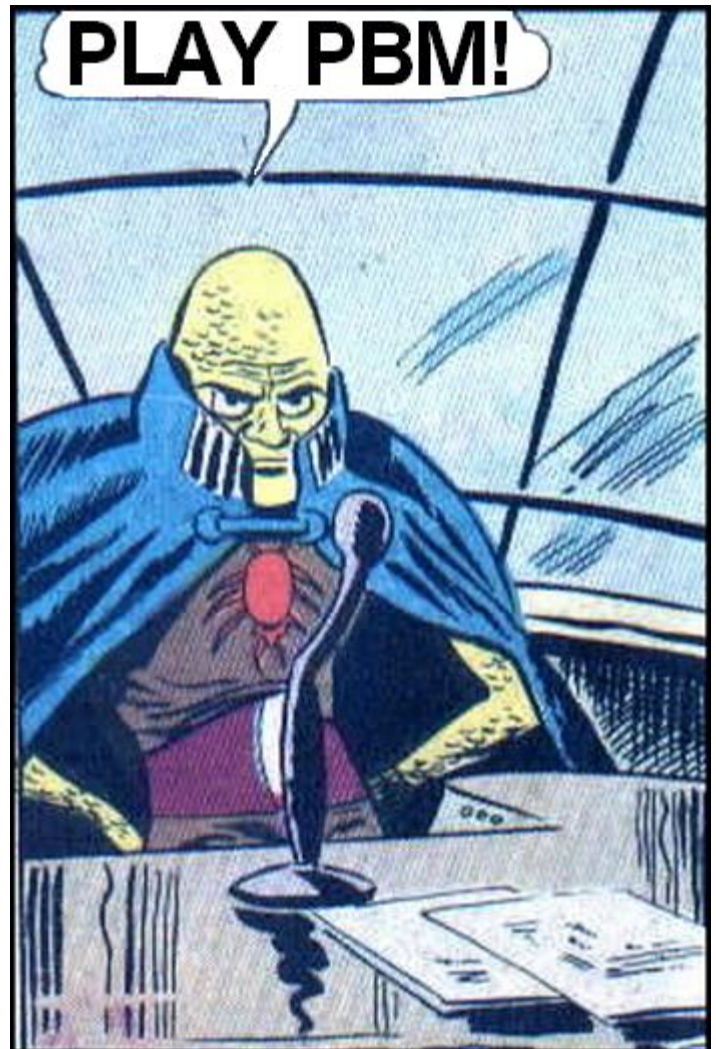
"Look at it this way," I said. "Since the galaxy wraps around on itself, with no center and no edge, if we keep going in a

straight line, we'll get back home."

"And that's a good thing?" Rex asked.

I didn't really have an answer to that.

We punched the hyperdrive and pulled out the checkerboard.



**PlayByMail.Net**

on

**Facebook**

**CHECK US OUT!**



# Clash of Legends

FUN AND FREE STRATEGIC GAMES SINCE 2006



**Fun and free strategic games since 2006!**



[Scenarios](#)

[Game Rules](#)

[Like Us](#)

***Play Clash of Legends!***



# T r i b e N e t

TribeNet is an immersive game of Tribal Diplomacy, Expansion, Exploration, and Conquest set in a dynamic multi-player world.

There are no 'character types', so you, as a player, get to decide the fate and future of your Clan: All of your successes, and any of your failures, rest solely upon your choices and decisions.

The vast world is rich in geography, resources, and dangers, making the open-ended game fantastically diverse and intriguing.

New players are joining weekly, and now is a great time to get involved, as new world areas are being populated.

*Request a start-up, today!*

# Fallen Empires

## Marchwood – Part B

Colin Danks

Following on from my article about the mechanics of the game in Issue 11, I will continue on the journey, so far, of Marchwood.

From my start up information, Marchwood is a coastal settlement blessed with a deep water bay with 50 foot cliffs protecting the settlement from the sea. Trade in wildebeast. My population is 900, of which only 600 are warriors (split between Guards, Archers, Cavalry, Mounted Archers, Officers and a couple of Generals). I have 18 warrior specialists and 30 non-warrior specialists, all split evenly between the different skills.

I do not have a navy, but I do have the foundations for one, as I have shipbuilders and my men-at arms can produce Sailors, Marines, and Sea Captains. My first act as ruler of Marchwood is to throw away from any Navy ambitions, as my meagre resources would be split between too many avenues. I, therefore, re-train my shipbuilders to stockmen. My other reason is my stockmen can catch wild horses, which I can sell to local merchants (which you can do every turn,

via your spreadsheet). This will help increase my income every turn.

**First 5-10 turns:** Using my army, I scout the areas surrounding Marchwood, and find they are rich resource areas containing wildebeasts, wild horses, groves of dates and coconuts and such like. Ah, I remember that wildebeasts were mentioned in my start up. I, therefore, carried out an action (every turn you are allowed 1 major and 2

**My first act as ruler of Marchwood is to throw away from any Navy ambitions, as my meagre resources would be split between too many avenues.**

minor actions). I sent out my stockmen to find out if I catch these wildebeats, and sell them to my local merchants. GM came back and said, "Yes, you could sell them for 18 gold/beast, all you have to do is to gather them." So, an extra line is now added to my stockmen costing 3cp/widebeast to catch. Now that I have 12

stockmen (as I retrained my shipbuilders), I have 240 cp/turn to spend. I, therefore, could catch 80 per turn and make a profit of 1440 gold, if I sold every turn. However, my stockmen also have to catch and train horses for my Cavalry, so I cannot spend all my points in just catching wildebeast.

The remaining turns, I increase my



population, build more weapons and armour, and upgrade my stats for the army (Vitality and Training can be increased 1 point each, via the spreadsheet. Organisation and Morale can only be increased by detailing major or minor actions. Try and increase your Vitality every turn, regardless of anything you do. Vitality is one of your most important stats, as when you are in a battle, this is reduced, as your troops get tired).

I also start to build better defences for the settlement. You start off with a 6 foot high wooden wall, and need your Masons to, firstly, exchange it for a stone wall, and then increase the size up to 18 feet in height). This is a very long term project, but in the end, you will have a more secure settlement. The Masons already know what to build, but you can add extra building projects, by carrying out major actions.

What you can do every turn relates to your population size. The bigger the population, the bigger your army size, the more income you have, and the increase in the number of specialists. It is really important that you do this early on in the life of your settlement, to ensure you have the numbers to match what you plan to do.

**What you can do every turn relates to your population size. The bigger the population, the bigger your army size, the more income you have, and the increase in the number of specialists.**

**Turns 10-20:** Feeling confident! My army is now growing in strength and size. I hire some merc units to help in the training, and now go in search of fighting! You can actually plan the game with or without battles, depending on how you wish to play. As I said, each area of the map can be scouted, and depending on the features found, will decide your action. I found, fairly early on, a small village of Goblins. Rather than formulate a battle plan and attacking the village (and following up this attack on the rest of their allies), I have actually been cultivating their leaders more, so now I have a ready reserve of troops and creatures which I can use to assist me in any larger battles to come.

There are two major cities around my location - one to my north (Teluna) and Furn Necolis to the south. I have been trading with Teluna for a number of turns now, allowing me to buy better arms and armour, and to carry out other trades. With my major actions, I managed to gain a non-aggression pact with their leader. This now allowed me to seek adventure to the south.

Reaching out to Furn Necolis, it appears they are at war with their neighbour, Safe Haven (Not very safe for them, as

they found out!). Furn Necolis was preparing an invasion fleet, and asked for assistance from Marchwood. My turns were now tasked to allow a portion of my resources to be gathered for the attack on the city. If I help Furn Necolis to win, I gain experience, gold, and any resources which I can "liberate". So, I prepare, wait for the invasion fleet to come to Marchwood (and hope and pray they are not going to double cross and attack me), and head over for the attack on Safe Haven. I have prepared a battle plan detailing on how my troops are going to fight, what losses to expect, and what my overall aim will be (This can be as long or as short as you like, but I think the GM likes to read these, also).

**Below is a small portion from the battle report which the GM produces (BR 36 – The War of Two Cities).**

When a player enters a large battle, the GM actually writes a one or two page "Storyline," which gives you a good feel for the game. (All of the battle reports can be found on their websites, and are good reading on their own.)

Carlos watched, as the soldiers of Furn Necolis marched past the warehouses he had been ordered to protect. They

carried a spare ram from one of their ships, with a bronze head cast in the form of a great sea serpent. In front of them marched their allies from the settlement of Stone Oak, carrying tower shields covered in hide soaked in sea water. The gates of Safe Haven were said to be weak, after an assault some years ago by the Varyag host of Rhufgar the Flayer. He hoped for the sake of the attackers this was true, otherwise, they would die before the gates that had stopped those raiders.

The men before him readied their weapon, and were ordered to march double time towards the gates. Within minutes, the harbour was emptied of troops, and bells and screams could be heard from inside the city.

The soldiers of Furn Necolis were lining the streets all around him, waiting for the gates to break, and for them to have their go at the defenders. They were well organised, but their weapons and armour was inferior to those of the Company. Carlos expected many of them to die this day. The steady boom was finally replaced by a crashing, splitting noise, and cheers rolled down the

line from the gates. The men before him readied their weapon, and were ordered to march double time towards the gates. Within minutes, the harbour was emptied of troops, and bells and screams could be heard from inside the city.

What I was also planning with another player, was an attack on an NPC settlement to my south. The agreement

was, I would ask the GM to run this settlement, and my ally (who was a sea tribe) would take the movable items. Again, we both formulated a plan in which I would attack from the north, and allow his ships to get into Stone Oak and secure it from the south.

It was a success, but as I read the battle report from the attack on Safe Haven, my mouth dropped wide open. My allies at Furn Necolis had allied themselves with Stone Oak, where most of Stone Oak's army was attacking Safe Haven with my troops.....Oops, as they say! Sufficient to say, I spent a number of major actions pacifying the population of Stone Oak and their army. When the army returned (GM controlled, at the time) I must have done enough, because they were integrated into the settlement with no problem.

**Below is part of the battle report from BR35 – An Empire in The South.**

There were fewer defenders on the wall than he expected, but the man before him had already discarded his broken spear and was swinging a hand axe overhead in a blow that would crush Brandon's skull in a heartbeat. Time seemed to slow for Brandon. He knew he

could not draw his weapon in time to save himself. All his anger left him, and he breathed out slowly and readied his soul for the afterlife. The man before Brandon frowned at him, and blood ran from his mouth. Falling to his knees revealed the fletching's of an arrow in his back, and Brandon looked in relief at the man who had come to his aid.

The General's plan had worked. The distraction caused by the attack on the main gate and the feigned attack to the east had drawn enough men from the harbour to allow the Sea Spears to sail in. They had opened the eastern gate, and let the mounted force in. Men were streaming over the walls around Brandon. He would learn shortly afterwards that most of the defence force had been sent to help in an attack against the city of Safe Haven. But for now, Brandon was alive, and Stone Oak had fallen.

**Turn 20-30:** Well, that was enough excitement for me. I have spent the last 10 turns consolidating my position. My population is now maximum size allowed for the size of settlement I have (which you can increase via major actions). Defensive-wise, I'm now happy with the fortifications and all I have done. My army, my mercs, my allies, and my satellite state are now co-ordinating very



well, although a drain on my gold reserves. I have 77 warrior specialists and 135 non-warrior specialists. I have building projects to increase the happiness of my population, and the Military Academy I have built is now reaping with rewards.

### **What to do in the early turns:**

Now that I have been playing for a while, I can suggest the following should be done (some of these projects take a while to mature).

- 1.** *Increase your population to the maximum* – This will give you the gold and the specialists to carry out the tasks.
- 2.** *Ensure that you army stats are increased, especially Vitality.*
- 3.** *Gather a few magical members for your inner circle.* These people will take time to grow their powers.
- 4.** *Scout each area around your sphere of influence, and the ones which are of interest, do something.* I was given some fertility charms, and I left them alone for 15 turns, as I didn't know what to do with them. Now, my wolves are increasing in numbers every turn.
- 5.** *Get trading with the cities around you for arms and armour.* These are the best places to increase the power of your army. Also, even just buying 1 item of each will allow you to manufacture, after some research.
- 6.** *For defences, start your wall building early.*

**7.** *During a battle, your archers will use all their arrows until you tell them to stop.* In other words, build as many arrows as you can afford.

I hope I have given you a flavour of the game, and that you will try any of the positions which are available. The GM is very helpful and the costs in real money is not much.

Contact the GM: [fallenemp@gmail.com](mailto:fallenemp@gmail.com)





KJC GAMES  
presents

CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

QUITE SIMPLY MAKES IT

AHEAD OF THE GAME.

PHOENIX

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE

<http://www.phoenixbse.com>

# Caliphate Nights

## Moving Day

**Sid Razavi (Player Phoenix 1995-1998 then 2008 to now)**

The whirling motor-blades of the craft kicked up a thick fog of crimson dust as the rear wheels set on the mud cratered surface. The gravity was thick like soup. The front-wheel thudded to touch, pulling at the safety harnesses of the shaken occupants. The marines, already drained by pulling hard Gs in the descent, unbuckled with relief and checked their gear, loading their packs and rifles. The youngest grunt got out first, heaving and spewing the contents of his stomach until he settled himself. More experienced troopers lurched out after him. If they were comforted by the recruits display they only showed it by friendly taunts and jabbing their fists on his helmet as they passed.

Last out of the high-g lander marked SUV-86 was the General: black buttoned up jacket, matching gloves, side-pistol and thick UV goggles worn with an indifferent coolness. As the chopper made its ascent away, he took out a Parejo cigar and cut the end. He took a moment to appreciate the rich smell. Grown and hand wrapped on Jericho, he never took a mission without one at hand. Enjoying it would have to wait until the job was done.

The fragmented remnants of hive workers and guards lay strewn in a mess of liquified silicate and ooze.

The marines fanned out and secured the landing site as the scout set up the triangulation beacons. The cave entrance leading to the hive was less than two clicks north. The General set the mission timer on his vacuum sealed mechanical watch before giving the barest nod to the squad. They set off in a measured pace, blood thinners working to keep their hearts pumping in the torturously thin atmosphere.

The countdown reached the first mark and supersonic booms were heard overhead. The squad braced themselves, the mortar stands and magazines were secured on the ground. They watched the flash and smoke ahead before the ground tremors hit them. Lifting the equipment back up, they continued to the cave mouth now billowing out smoke. Putting on their face masks and infrared hooded lamps, they darted in quick motions providing covering support arcs in rotating overwatch guards.

Their enviro hazard meters flashed warnings about bio contaminants and close proximity fires as they waded through steaming pools of ashen goo and the burned sinews of the hive walls. The



fragmented remnants of hive workers and guards lay strewn in a mess of liquified silicate and ooze. The walls were sheared by plasma burns and the clouds of shattered thick carapaces.

The tunnels stretched deep below the mud flats but the bombers had used precision markers planted weeks beforehand to hone in on their targets.

The hive were experts at rooting out human tech but the boffins had doused some workers with crafted genome identifiers that were otherwise benign before reintroducing them back to the collective.

This hive was not particularly big but it was relatively isolated. It made for a perfect target for the mission. The wasteland of melted organic computers integrated into the structure indicated it had been sophisticated. Its call for help would have a response before the second mission time marker. By which point the General intended to be past the Karman line.

The brood chamber lay ahead behind a solid wall of calcified biomass. The workers had thrown themselves into a sacrificial pile a dozen thick to protect

The brood chamber lay ahead behind a solid wall of calcified biomass. The workers had thrown themselves into a sacrificial pile a dozen thick to protect the queen from the oncoming superheated plasma. It had worked too, as predicted. Hive were tough sons of bitches.

the queen from the oncoming superheated plasma. It had worked too, as predicted. Hive were tough sons of bitches. The squad positioned itself into three crossing fire lanes and the scout set thermal detonators at the identified fractures in the obstacle. The personal shield generators held as the explosion roared upwards past the squad, leaving two human-sized entry points. Grenades

filled with inhibitor gas were thrown in and the squad followed securing the interior.

The General stepped inside and stood for a moment, appreciating the defiant posture of the hive queen within. It made a typical display of dominance, rising to its full height and expanding its intricate webwork of wings on its thoracic segments. The effort didn't illicit so much as a flinch from the steadfast human.

"*Your majesty,*" he said curtly. The Terran basic transmitted over short-

range subspace. If the tone was sarcastic, nothing of it remained in the translation.

The General saw the dim blue light of attached neural receptors activate and knew the queen understood him. The response came after the briefest of

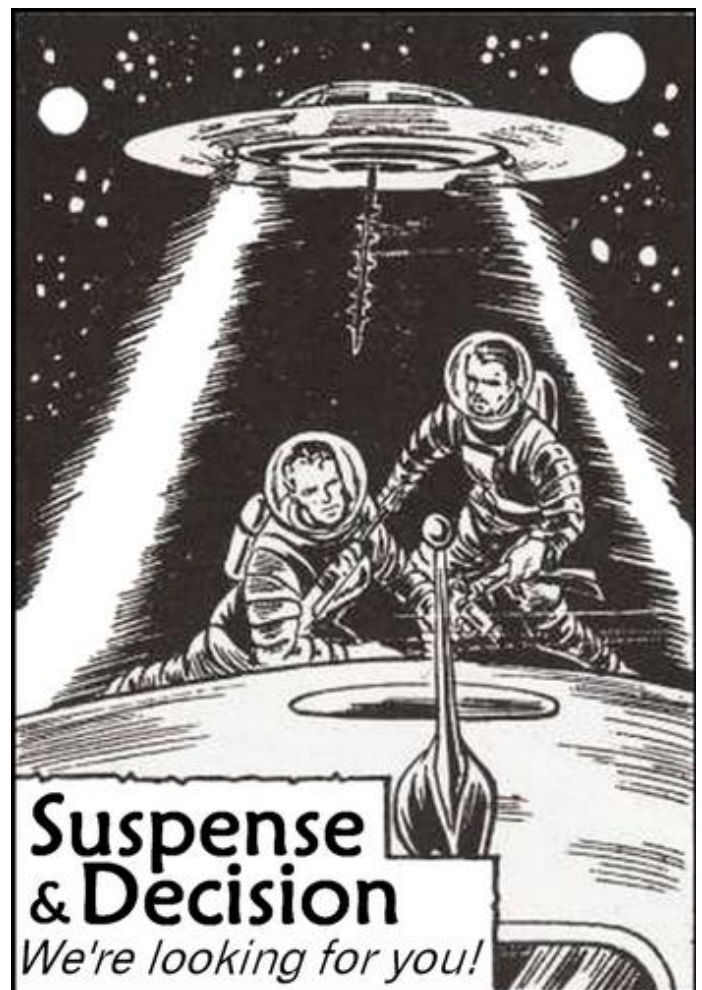
pauses, the subspace meta data rich with shrill anger and despair: "Why?"

"It's moving day."

The queen tried to lurch forward, intending a swift motion to decapitate the intruder but inhibitor gas had dulled her awareness. Sonic nets had already pinned her to the spot and her motion only increased the tension and brought the giant form crashing to the ground, anguish and fear distinctively measured by its pheromone release. The marines finalised her restraint by drilling metallic bolt pacifiers into her thorax. The nearby subspace echoed briefly with a tortured scream before unconsciousness took over.

As the marines dragged their prize out of the caves, the General took off the breathing mask and put the cigar he carried to his mouth. Finding some matches in his breast pocket, he lit and puffed until the tip was a glowing ember. The scout set the communication relay before him and handed him the handset.

"Come in, Sierra Uniform Victor. This is Scott. The breeder is ready for transport. Over and out."



# Quest

IMMENSE  
POWER  
AWAITS  
YOU!

Build great citadels!

Destroy  
and  
ravage!

# of the

Hoard  
great wealth  
and  
powerful  
talismans!

**CHOOSE YOUR RACE!**

**Azoni - Quintag - Rilris - Slenth**

# Great Jewels

Rule vast provinces!

**Zorph Enterprises**



# Quest of the Great Fool

## My Adventures in Zorplia

Bob McLain

[Quest of the Great Jewels](#) (QJ) is sort of like a terrestrial version of [Starweb](#), with greater tactical scope and a bunch of talismans that do magical things. It started as a play-by-mail game in 1983, which is when I first gave it a spin, and now all these decades later, after a long, long hiatus, it's still a play-by-mail game, in "beta test" by the original developer and moderator, **Mike Shefler**.

Shefler sold the game at some point in the 1980s to **Rich Van Ollefen**, of [Flying Dutchman Games](#), who ran it for a while and then sold it to me - through an intermediary, if memory serves. I did nothing with the game, the same as I did with all the play-by-mail games I bought in the 1990s, and eventually sold it to **Jeffrey McKee**, who enticed Shefler to reprogram it in Fortran. The circle of life.

The beta test is now on turn 6. From what I can tell, the game runs flawlessly. I haven't encountered one hiccup. Shefler says there have been a few, all minor.

QJ is a typical explore/expand/exploit

game, set in the hexagonal world of Zorplia. Its essential elements are provinces and leaders. Your provinces levy troops, raise zorans (wealth), and house garrisons that can do such things as build roads and citadels, and raid adjacent provinces. Your leaders enable you to move troops, zorans, talismans, and other items, such as siege engines and battering rams, to other provinces,

You might even take on a dragon, attempt to breach one of the Forbidden Cities to capture a Great Jewel, or run afoul of the indestructible Drevonyx.

where you'll likely fight neutral garrisons, at first, and then the troops and garrisons of other players. You might even take on a dragon, attempt to breach one of the Forbidden Cities to capture a Great Jewel, or run afoul of the indestructible Drevonyx.

As you conquer provinces and build your empire, you'll acquire talismans. Many of these magical, portable artifacts are scattered across Zorplia. Some are necessary to gain entry into the Forbidden Cities. Others convey an advantage, usually tactical, such as the Philosopher's Stone (its province has a double levy but raises zero taxes - everyone is too busy thinking to work), Zombie Master (resurrects some of the troops killed in a province that turn and

adds them to its leader's army, presumably as zombies), and X the Unknown (we just don't know).

The successful player will master the logistics of mustering troops to central pick-up locations, ferrying zorans to provinces where they're most needed to build roads (which decrease the time it takes leaders to traverse that province), citadels (which aid in defense), and specialized items like siege engines and ships. If you have what you need, where you need it, when you need it, you'll be hard to beat.

A wrinkle is the various racial attributes of the four character types: *Azoni*, *Rilris*, *Quntag*, and *Slenth*. Each gets points for doing certain things, has combat advantages and disadvantages over the other races, and enjoys swifter movement over its home terrain. As a

Quntag, for example, I get points mostly from owning provinces, just like an Empire Builder in Starweb. I have no combat advantages (but also no disadvantages) over the other races, and I move best across clear terrain (it takes my lazy troops twice as long to cross forests and mountains).

QJ is a simple game. The rules don't get in your way, and within a few turns you'll have mastered most of what you need to know. There used to be a lot of games

like QJ, back in the late 1970s and 1980s, before developers kidded themselves into thinking that play-by-mail games with complex rules were inherently better.

For me, and probably for most of you, the joy of a play-by-mail game is meeting all sorts of interesting folks and having the luxury of time to get to know them and to plot in detail their eventual demise - or if you're a nice guy, making new friends for life who'll answer your emails but who probably won't show up at your funeral.

**The secret is to keep pace with everyone else and keep your eyes open for an adjacent player who isn't too bright or who might have missed a turn.**

My first two turns in QJ were the same as they are in any play-by-mail game of this type. I moved outward from my home province and tried to grab as many provinces as I could before running into my neighbors. The secret is to keep pace with everyone else and keep

your eyes open for an adjacent player who isn't too bright or who might have missed a turn.

By the end of turn two, I still hadn't met anyone else. But I did get a surprise. Mike Shefler, the moderator and also one of the players, sent me his turn report by mistake. It's understandable. His character name is PAZOZIE, mine is PULPHERO. If you're tanked up on gin, they look identical. (Not that I've known Mike Shefler to tank up on gin, but I

don't know him that well.)

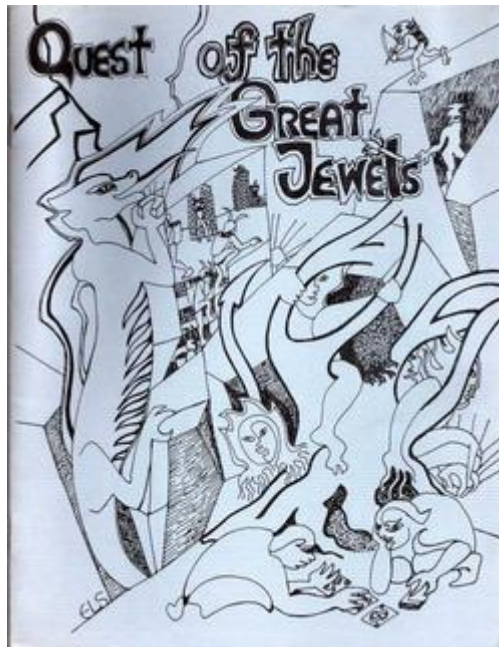
This posed a moral dilemma for me. Well, no, it didn't. I saw right away that PAZOZIE, a Rilris, was my southern neighbor, sharing a border with me of several provinces. In other circumstances, I'd take advantage of this serendipity and attack PAZOZIE on the next turn. What an advantage I'd have! But then I realized two things: Mike Shefler designed the game and moderates it; and he's privy to every player's turn report, including mine.

I know Mike wouldn't use that information to his advantage, at least not consciously. But it might still influence his actions, no matter how hard he tried to forget that he just saw one of my main forces poised to attack an important province of his, and he was intending all along to send reinforcements there anyway, just in case...

What a mess. And besides, I can't beat Mike Shefler at his own game. So I let him know of his mistake, asked him for my actual turn report, and made an alliance with him. Instant secure southern border.

I saw on Mike's turn report that he had met two other players: OAKNSHLD, an Azoni, and ZENCAT, a Slenth. OAKNSHLD and I shared a narrow, one-province

border, though we hadn't run across each other yet. ZENCAT was on Mike's southern border, and so irrelevant to me (unless I wanted to attack Mike, which of course I didn't). I recognized the name ZENCAT as one used often by Dale Perkins, a Starweb veteran and a relatively aggressive gamer. Just because I like to optimize my odds, I wrote to Dale and asked whether he was in the game. The email bounced. I could probably come up with his current email address by asking mutual acquaintances, but I decided to let it be.



To my north, I ran into two leaders owned by another Rilris, FLAMINGO, each with a large number of troops (at least they were large for this stage of the game). I didn't like the looks of that. I knew those leaders were just exploring, not invading, but FLAMINGO might get the idea that I was a weak player because I explore with wimpy one-troop leaders. We've got to nip this in the bud.

But I had a big problem. Who was FLAMINGO? By the time I sent him a diplomatic message through the game, with my email address and a plea to contact me, it might be too late. There was only one thing to do. Go to playbymail.net and scour the QJ threads in the forum to identify the people who had shown interest in joining the beta



test. I sent email to each of them: "Hey! You in the game?"

I got an immediate reply from Jeffrey McKee, who owns QJ (because I sold it to him) even though Mike Shefler runs it. "Yeah, I'm in the game," he said. "I'm FLAMINGO. Who're you?"

I'll remember to put a little extra in the collection box this Sunday, because clearly God loves me.

"Neighbor! I'm PULPHERO!" I wrote back. "There's another Rilris to my south, but I only have room in my life for one Rilris, and I want him to be you." (PAZOZIE, forgive me.)

From there, we hashed out a border and agreed to a non-aggression pact. I now had secure northern and southern borders on turn three, and I had a steady source of fresh troops thanks mostly to a super province, "B3", that levied 25 troops per turn. But what good is troops if you have nowhere to send them?

FLAMINGO told me that he had just run into two players: WOMBAT, an Azoni, to his west, and TORTUGA, a Slenth, to his south. WOMBAT was far away from me. But if TORTUGA was to FLAMINGO'S south, then he was roughly to my east. I asked FLAMINGO if he'd be interested in teaming up and taking out TORTUGA. His

reply was less than ideal, though very wise: he wanted to contact both WOMBAT and TORTUGA to see whether they were friendly. As far as I was concerned, TORTUGA could show up at my door with presents for my kids, and I'd still want to kick him in the nuts. But no hurry. I hadn't met TORTUGA yet. Any invasion was at least two turns off.

As far as I was concerned, TORTUGA could show up at my door with presents for my kids, and I'd still want to kick him in the nuts. But no hurry. I hadn't met TORTUGA yet. Any invasion was at least two turns off.

Then my inbox dinged again. (It really doesn't ding; I don't know how to describe the noise it makes when I have new email, but it's not a ding.) Joey Browning, one of the short-term editors of US Flagship back in the 1990s, had replied to my inquiry about QJ. He was NOT in the game, though he wished he hadn't missed the deadline to join it. Maybe if someone dropped out, he'd take the position.

That gave me an idea. I wrote to Mike Shefler and asked him whether anyone had dropped out of the game, because Joey Browning wanted to play. Someone HAD dropped out of the game. Joey was in. Maybe TORTUGA was the dropout, and Joey would pick up that position.

*What fun!*

Then Joey went radio silent. He didn't reply to my emails or to Mike's emails. Mike asked me what was up with Joey,

and I began to feel bad about putting Mike to all this trouble for nothing. So I told him that if Joey didn't get in touch soon, I knew another old-timer, Dane Knight, who had played QJ long ago and would likely be interested in the beta test.

Two days went by. Then I heard from Joey. Family matters had taken precedence over gaming. A few minutes later, I heard from Dane Knight. "Hey, pal, I'm in the game. OAKNSHLD. Who're you?"

Forget the collection plate. New Bibles for everybody! Not only did OAKNSHLD share a narrow border with me, he had just run into three of TORTUGA'S leaders. Wimpy leaders, with one or two troops apiece.

When my head stopped spinning, I nailed down a non-aggression pact with Dane, securing yet another slice of my empire, and told him of my plans to invade TORTUGA. He was down with that. In fact, he had an opportunity to annihilate one of TORTUGA'S leaders that very turn. It didn't take much to talk him into it, with the promise that I would move large forces eastward to plow into TORTUGA'S western provinces on the same turn that TORTUGA would (presumably) move forces southward to deal with OAKNSHLD. If FLAMINGO then struck from the north, we'd have TORTUGA but good.

Slenths like TORTUGA get points from killing the troops of other players. They \*have\* to attack someone, eventually. Plus, their natural fecundity (they levy more troops than the other races) gives them a numbers advantage, especially as the game goes on. By eliminating TORTUGA now, I'd remove a future threat to my empire and push my borders farther east, with minimal risk.

I love it when a goal appears. It clarifies thought and action.

**But now the electrical charge of imminent slaughter has sizzled these doldrums to dry powder.**

Before all the diplomatic and political development of the past few days, I had expected to sit down and write another ho-hum set of orders, focused on ferrying

troops and zorans, cracking the logistics on how to conquer the several garrisoned neutral provinces within my empire, and maybe building a few roads and citadels. But now the electrical charge of imminent slaughter has sizzled these doldrums to dry powder. The roads, the citadels, the neutrals, the logistics can all wait, as I focus every synapse to plotting an eastward-ho movement of troops toward the border with TORTUGA - which I shall cross next turn.

Immediately, two problems arose. First, I don't know anything at all about the provinces to my east; maybe they're controlled by TORTUGA, maybe they're still garrisoned and defended by neutrals. Or they could be Forbidden Cities or

dragons. This ignorance is easily dispelled by sending a single man from the garrisons of each of my eastern provinces on raids into adjacent provinces.

This is slightly counter-intuitive, as a "raid" implies an armed incursion. And you can indeed send small or large forces from your garrisons on raids into adjacent provinces, hoping to conquer them. Succeed or fail, however, you get a report on that province. A one-man raid will (almost) always fail, but it will always snag you a report. I guess you'd call it a reconnaissance.

My second problem is that of distance. My big levy provinces, including B3, are not that close to the TORTUGA border. In fact, given my lack of roads and some inhospitable forest provinces, it'll take me two turns to reach the battlefield. I can build roads to halve the movement cost of moving through those newly "paved" provinces, but I don't have enough zorans where I need them, \*right now\*, to pay for the roads.

Another not-ding from my inbox signals the arrival of a new dilemma. Dane Knight is getting cold feet about attacking TORTUGA so early in the game. If he doesn't do it, then TORTUGA won't

muster his forces south, creating for me the opportunity to flank him from the west and finish this campaign in the most relentless, crushing manner possible. How to get Dane back on the team?

I've got it! Act ignorant. It works for me all the time. I suggest to Dane that he send TORTUGA a diplomatic message and apologize for the attack in G8,

**Succeed or fail, however, you get a report on that province. A one-man raid will (almost) always fail, but it will always snag you a report. I guess you'd call it a reconnaissance.**

claiming that TORTUGA's invasion of three of Dane's provinces left him no other choice. Of course, only a dope would mistake TORTUGA's tiny forces as anything but what they are: early turn scouts, not invaders. Dane also tells TORTUGA that he has moved armies to his side of their border (TORTUGA will see those anyway), but he didn't cross the border because he hopes that maybe negotiation is

possible. TORTUGA might buy it, and Dane seems happy with the plan. Even if TORTUGA \*does\* accept Dane's explanation, he'll still move some armies to the south, just in case, and that accomplishes my goal equally well.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this turn was sending diplomatic messages to TORTUGA and WOMBAT. In general, I \*always\* contact other players as soon as I meet them, and ideally before I meet them, if I can figure out who they are. I made sure to tell



TORTUGA that I bordered FLAMINGO and OAKNSHLD, his two neighbors. I expect that TORTUGA will rush off an email to propose that I help him against OAKNSHLD. Or maybe he'll be cautious and just mention that OAKNSHLD nailed one of his leaders, hoping to gauge my reaction. I will, of course, respond.

There's that non-ding again, this time heralding the arrival of the turn three results. Dullsville. FLAMINGO kept his word and withdrew from a contested province to let me have it, just as I withdrew from another contested province to let him have it. I found a second Forbidden City. I fully explored the strip of neutral provinces along my coast, finding nothing of real interest or value. I'll have to send troops to conquer them. I didn't run into TORTUGA on my eastern frontier. So far, the only other player I've met is FLAMINGO.

Something's not right. I don't know what it is. I need more information. So I put on my fedora and become my famous alter-ego, Sam Shovel, digital detective.

Maybe I missed an important clue in the playbymail.net forum. I see that Jeffrey McKee, our pal FLAMINGO, uses "phx1jjm" as his user name there. I Google it. Wait a minute. What's this? A player with that name participates in

what seems to be an online Starweb clone called RSW. I'd never heard of that game before.

And look here: ZENCAT is in the very same game as PHX1JJM. ZENCAT, of course, is in QJ, to the south of my neighbor PAZOZIE. In the RSW forum, ZENCAT refers to PHX1JJM as "Jeffrey", and he asks about another player in the game with a similar name: PHX1JSA.

Jeffrey identifies PHX1JSA as a business partner - "Jeffrey Scott", with a last name starting with "A". JSA, natch! So I Google PHX1JSA.

In RSW, "Jeffrey Scott" has used the name TORTUGA.

This is big-time, baby. FLAMINGO and TORTUGA likely entered the game together, and know of each other. But FLAMINGO didn't tell me that. He said that he'd have to contact TORTUGA and see whether

he's "friendly". And this is *after* I invited FLAMINGO to join me in an invasion of TORTUGA's turf. Are they now plotting against me? I made FLAMINGO confirm a non-aggression pact between us, but if I had a dime for every non-aggression pact that meant more than a cup of spit, I'd have zero dimes.

It's also a strong possibility that FLAMINGO and TORTUGA are aware of ZENCAT, and possibly the three have already decided to work together.

**Something's not right. I don't know what it is. I need more information. So I put on my fedora and become my famous alter-ego, Sam Shovel, digital detective.**

Where does this leave me?

OAKNSHLD obliterated TORTUGA's leader, as planned. Without some fancy diplomacy, a war between them is likely. I'm on my side of the TORTUGA border, poised to invade his western frontier. Should I? First I'll tell FLAMINGO what I've discovered and see what he says.

I learned from OAKNSHLD that he ran into ZENCAT, to his southwest. What's to stop TORTUGA and ZENCAT from flattening OAKNSHLD? But ZENCAT has been aggressive in his expansion, conquering a province adjacent to PAZOZIE'S home. Maybe the two of them will fight?

Where *\*does\** this leave me? I have to expand somewhere, since I score points for owning provinces. So *\*not\** attacking someone isn't an option. I can invade TORTUGA, as planned. Or I can wheel to the southeast and smash-grab some OAKNSHLD provinces. Yes, I got him into the game, and we're informally working together, but them's the breaks. If he goes down, however, it'll strengthen TORTUGA more than it will strengthen me, perhaps leaving me open to a joint FLAMINGO/TORTUGA invasion after OAKNSHLD dies.

Or I can get in touch with ZENCAT and attack PAZOZIE. Between the two of us, we could take him, easy. But then I'd be surrounded by what might be a pre-

game alliance of ZENCAT, FLAMINGO, and TORTUGA.

Whatever I do this turn will determine the rest of the game.

Non-ding! FLAMINGO again. He's made an alliance with TORTUGA. It's a rather loose alliance, as he says he won't interfere if I invade TORTUGA, but he might step in should the battle start going my way - step in against me, of course. He also claims to know most of the other players in the game.

There's only one thing to do. Make an alliance with TORTUGA myself. If I do that, I'll have secure borders around my entire empire, except for the single province where I border OAKNSHLD. Well, I suppose that part of my

border is secure as well, because OAKNSHLD and I have an informal pact, based on our knowing each other for a few decades. I can't let that stand in my way. It won't be the first time I've stabbed him. He's a beautiful guy, and I'll remember him at Christmas.

So, if I want to expand, with minimal risk, it has to be into the OAKNSHLD empire. I should be able to slice off four, maybe five of his provinces, ahead of TORTUGA laying waste to the rest.

Non-ding! TORTUGA. I asked FLAMINGO to put us in touch, since we haven't met in the game. It went pretty well. I

**It won't be the first time I've stabbed him. He's a beautiful guy, and I'll remember him at Christmas.**

admitted that I was poised to invade him - honesty is the best policy! - and he shrugged it off. Doesn't talk much, this guy. I like talkers. Do I really want to work with this guy? At my age, I get to say "screw it" a lot.

Non-ding! OAKNSHLD. Hey, buddy... Yeah, I moved some big-ass leaders just this side of TORTUGA. Yeah, I'm ready to move them into battle this turn. (I didn't say into \*what\* battle.) Say hi to the grandkids.

Close one.

*Why is life so HARD?*

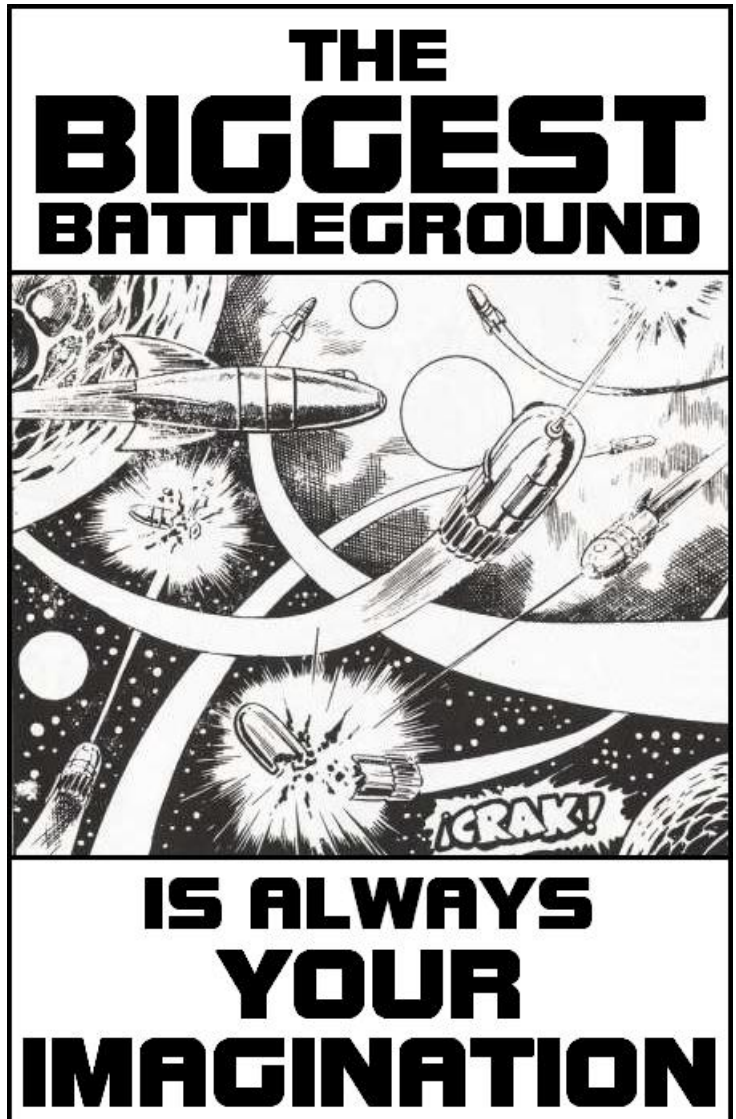
[**A last-minute update:** WOMBAT turns out to be Australian programmer Jim Eadie, who's working on QJ turn management and mapping software. Fair dinkum fella! And his ally, DOGPANTS, is Mike Shefler's son, Chris. When I last played QJ, Chris was in elementary school. That gives us a lot in common, as I often act like I'm in elementary school.]

And that's all I can tell you, for now.

THE NON-END

PS. Oh, what the hell. I stabbed FLAMINGO.

**Quest**  
**of the**  
**Great Jewels**







# ALAMAZE

RESURGENCY MARCHES ON IN 2017!

## Dragon Magazine

Issue #131

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



## White Wolf Magazine

Issue #11

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

## Paper Mayhem Magazine

Issue #19

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

## Flagship Magazine

Issue #11

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

## Paper Mayhem Magazine

Issue #28

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

**ALAMAZE IS BACK** WITH REFRESHED RULES, OUR NEW RESURGENT MAP, NEW CUSTOM GAME FORMATS, TWICE-WEEKLY TURNS, A GREAT VALUE SUBSCRIPTION AT \$19.95 A MONTH FOR ABOUT 9 TURNS — ABOUT \$2.20 A TURN. TURN RESULTS AVERAGE OVER 20 PAGES. OUR PLAYERS HAVE STARTED MORE THAN 200 GAMES IN THE LAST 3 YEARS, SO ABOUT A NEW GAME EVERY WEEK AND CREATED MORE THAN 30,000 FORUM POSTS. DESTINY BECKONS: **COME TO ALAMAZE!**

Visit the website and Signup at: [www.alamaze.co](http://www.alamaze.co) Register for the Alamaze forum and claim your kingdom at [www.kingdomsofarcania.net](http://www.kingdomsofarcania.net).

# Where We're Heading...

Houston, we have touchdown on Issue #14. Do you copy? Over.

Wow! On the one hand, I can't believe that we didn't arrive here a lot sooner, and on the other hand, I'm surprised that we've arrived here, at all.

It took us until January of 2017, but dagnabbit, we made it. We look a bit rough, maybe, and we're definitely way past our original due date, but our stay in the Twilight Zone did not prove to be permanent, after all.

So, with the midnight clock of January 8th, 2017 bearing down upon me, I am firing my keyboard on all thrusters, in an attempt to get this issue finalized and into the hands of our waiting readership - the faithful few who still retain an interest in our magazine and in all things PBM. Surely, I can think of something to say

for this column, and especially after so much time off.

I believe that 2017 will prove to be a great year for *Suspense & Decision*. I believe that our readers will see it return to regular publication. I believe that we will grow our readership, and that this magazine will be reinvigorated with life.

As a New Year's Resolution for 2017, I do hereby resolve to transform this magazine, to make it better, to make it reliable, to make it live up to its moniker of being a PBM magazine for the 21st Century!

We may not can solve all of the problems that seem to manifest themselves to this magazine's detriment, but I am determined, my commitment is redoubled, to solving at least some of those very same problems that

threaten to sink this PBM publication, once and for all.

Somewhere over the horizon, just past where any of us can presently see, is Bernd with his own spin on a game-related publication - something that he calls *PROG*. That is the tentative name for it, anyway. But that is another story for another day.

I have recently registered a new domain name:

[suspense-and-decision.com](http://suspense-and-decision.com)

This dedicated website will eventually see all back issues of this magazine hosted there for download. It will not replace [PlayByMail.Net](http://PlayByMail.Net). It is where you will be able to download all future issues of the magazine, and its focus will be upon the magazine, itself, and not on all things PBM-related.

Starting with our very next issue, Issue #15, we will be implementing a 'Three and Go!' rule, whereby I will begin finalizing issues for publication, once I have three articles submitted by people other than myself. This will result in shorter issues, but it should boost the frequency of publication.

That's not to say that no future issue of *Suspense & Decision* magazine will have no more than three articles in them, but it will hopefully help us to avoid any future droughts in publishing.

Sure, we've failed numerous times in the past, but if at first you fail, then try, try again. The alternative is to not try again - and for all of our (my) failures, this PBM magazine isn't quite yet ready to give up the ghost and call it quits, altogether.

So, if you can see your way clear to give us another chance, with both your readership and your article submissions, then maybe this

magazine can prosper, yet, with your help and your devotion to the larger cause - the cause of Play-By-Mail gaming.

In spite of the long gap since our last issue, several expected articles and interview responses have yet to materialize. So, I will probably hold off on announcements of what will appear in the next issue, for the foreseeable future. A pool of material will have to be built up, before we can implement this concept with any real degree of effectiveness.

A special thanks goes out to Steve Tierny of [Madhouse](#) for letting me run an ad for his company in this issue. He's probably long since given up on seeing this issue come to print, but *Madhouse* has long been one of the crown jewels of the Play-By-Mail industry.

If you are a PBM game company or game moderator, or involved with a lineal descendant of the same, and you are receptive to the idea,

then in the coming weeks and months, I would like to try and organize a few of your games for you. If you're not interested, that's fine. The *Hyborian War* player community has benefitted from players organizing games of *Hyborian War* for a number of years, now. I think that other PBM games can benefit from this type of approach.

Speaking of [Hyborian War](#), I am still hopeful that I can, along with the help of Lee Kline at [Reality Simulations, Inc.](#), get some Alternate History Scenario variants of *Hyborian War* up and running. Time is always an issue for Lee, but I think that this concept holds great merit, and will prove to be popular with the player community of *Hyborian War*, once we get it up and running.

And to the *Hyborian War* player community that gathers over at Lloyd Barron's [The Road of Kings](#) website, I will begin providing more details about this Alternate History



Scenario concept soon, hopefully starting with Issue #15. I had hoped to include some details in this issue, but sometimes plans get changed, for better or for worse. I'll dig up my notes, though, and try to write an article at length to better explain what I have in mind. Ultimately, though, RSI has to implement what we come up with, so it has to be kept manageable and feasible. I think that it is.

The silence of this magazine over the last several months notwithstanding, there really are some very exciting developments going on in the realm of PBM Gaming and its lineal descendants.

[\*\*Tribenet\*\*](#), [\*\*Quest of the Great Jewels\*\*](#), and [\*\*Cohorts\*\*](#) all come to mind. Some really fabulous stuff, people! It truly is.

[\*\*Alamaze\*\*](#) is forging ahead, and God only knows how I am going to find time to figure some of these new games out (Learning curves are

unforgiving and demanding tyrants, you know!), but there's just way too much tempting games out there for me to not be immersing myself more in at least some of them, if not all of them.

I'm going to tackle [\*\*PhoenixBSE\*\*](#) (Or at least try to, once again!), and I'm also going to dip my toes into [\*\*Galac-Tac\*\*](#). So many games, so many learning curves. I probably won't master all of them. I probably won't master any of them. But maybe I can have some fun trying my hand at them.

It can be frustrating, I'm sure, for your local PBM magazine to not come out when you are expecting it. Likewise, it can be frustrating trying to grow interest in the Play-By-Mail hobby when game companies and game moderators fall silent or don't bother to run advertisements for their game products. Hopefully, at least a few of you GMs out there will join me in redoubling your own commitment to

growing the broader PBM player base and interest in the hobby, itself.

For those who don't yet know, my beloved Mama had a stroke, recently. This isn't why Issue #14 was so late in coming out, but neither did it stop this issue from getting published. Just, if you will, keep my Mama in your thoughts and in your prayers, going forward. *Know that I appreciate you doing so!*

Honestly, for all of the misfortune that this PBM magazine has seen over the last several years (The majority of which was self-inflicted, no doubt.), honestly, I really do feel that the best years of *Suspense & Decision* magazine are ahead of us.

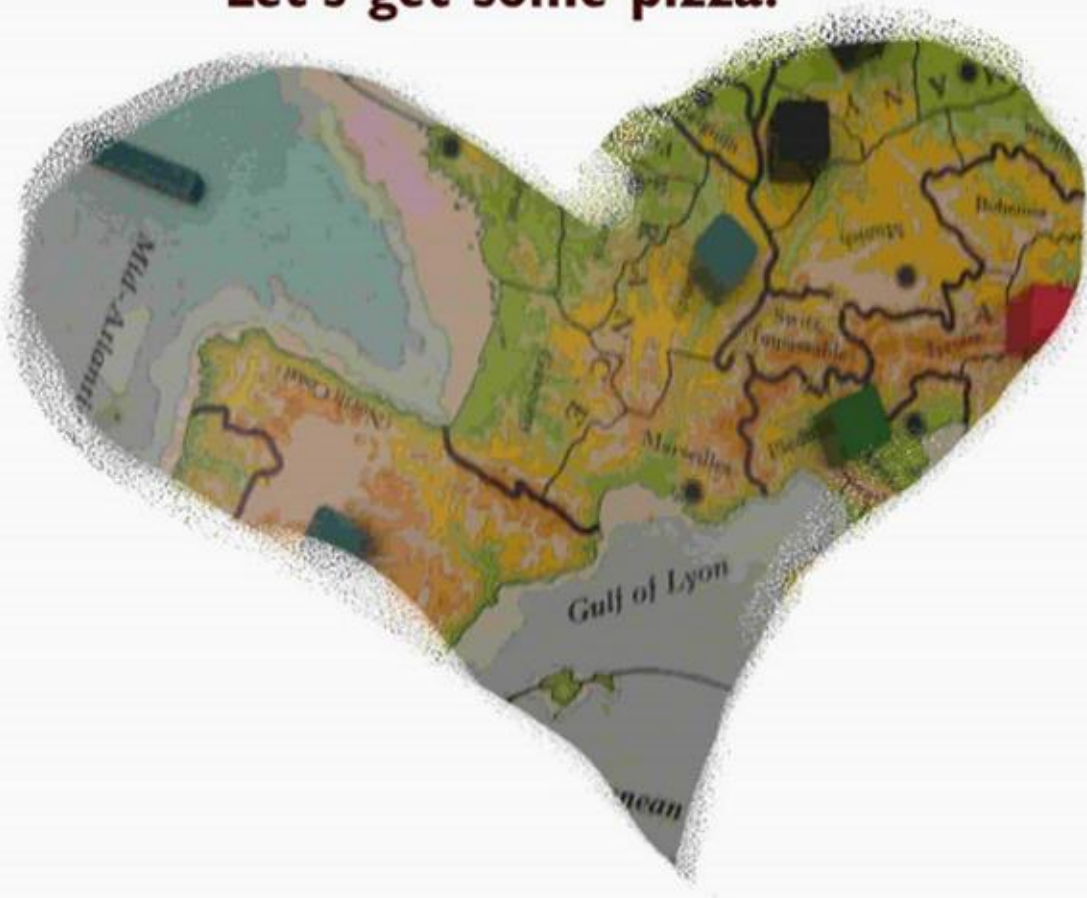
You are free to think otherwise, of course. You always are.

Even if this issue's contents disappoint you, perhaps the fact that *Suspense & Decision* has returned will not.

It's good to be back!  
*Happy gaming!*

# Diplomacy World #136

After I lie to you, invade you, and destroy you...  
**Let's get some pizza!**



[www.diplomacyworld.net](http://www.diplomacyworld.net)

## Winter 2016 Issue

PLAY

# HYBORIAN WAR™

IMPERIAL CONQUEST IN THE AGE OF



HYBORIAN WAR™ is a Play-By-Mail game which allows you to rule any Kingdom in the Hyborian Age of Conan. Your Kingdom will respond to your every command with its own unique armies, leaders and culture — Authentically recreated from the Conan series.

In the imaginative setting of Play-By-Mail gaming you can play against 35 players from all across the nation. Each game turn your commands, and the commands of the rulers surrounding you, will be resolved simultaneously at our processing center. After each turn you will receive back extensive written accounts of your countries fortunes in the battle, intrigue, diplomacy and adventure which is HYBORIAN WAR™

Now you can create the legends! Forge by your decisions the tumult and glory of the Hyborian Age. Your game turns will be simple to fill out but will cover a fantastic range of actions you may take ... Across the Hyborian world, from the howling Pictan



wilderness in the west, to slumbering Stygia gathering her wizards, to the Hyrkarian kingdoms with riders in steel and silk and gold, to the fantastically helmed armies of the Khitai and Kambulja in the east, the cry of empire fills the air.

Send forth your tested lords and generals to lead the host. Send forth your spys and heroes to steal the treasures of the world, kidnap a mighty noble, or even assassinate your foes most gifted wizard! Decree the policies of your land, giving your subjects good government or bad. Call forth your priests from their temples to speak prophecy and council. Command such wizards as you have for the tide of war may turn upon their arcane magics. Rule and conquer! The jeweled thrones of the earth await thy sandaled tread.

[www.reality.com](http://www.reality.com)

© 1995 Conan Properties Inc. All rights reserved.  
Trademarks of Conan Properties, Inc.

[csr@reality.com](mailto:csr@reality.com)

voice: 480-967-7979

fax: 480-894-2028

**WRITE US FOR OUR FREE, NO OBLIGATION, SET-UP AND RULES  
REALITY SIMULATIONS, INC., P.O. BOX 22400, TEMPE, AZ, 85285-2400**

Turn fees are \$5, \$7, or \$9/turn depending on the size of country you chose to play. Join the tens of thousands nationally who are enjoying the vivid interactive games only made

possible in the last few years by recent advances in computer technology. PBM — the fastest growing gaming industry in the nation.

**Hyborian War - Duel2 - and Forgotten Realms play-by-mail games**